

**TURKS AND CAICOS, BEST VIEW VILLA
TRIP ADVISOR REPORT
MARCH 7-16, 2008**

Our family enjoyed a fabulous trip to Providenciales March 7th to 16th, 2008.

We went with our 3 sons, ages 12, 11 and 9.

We live in Ontario but flew out of Buffalo because the flight times were far more convenient. We travelled U.S. Airways from Buffalo to Charlotte and then from Charlotte into Provo on March 7th. Lucky for us we missed the huge snow storm that hit Southern Ontario and upper New York State on March 7th, 8th.

The U.S. Airways flights were fine. We arrived in Provo a little late because of heavy rain delaying our takeoff from Charlotte.

We were met at the airport by a representative of Grace Bay Car Rental which we had arranged in advance. We were also met by Kathy Owens, one of the property managers with Prestigious Properties through whom we rented a villa in Turtle Tail on Bristol Hill called "Best View".

Grace Bay was excellent with respect to the car rental. The vehicle was a full-size 4x4 as requested and although somewhat Spartan was fine for our purposes during our stay.

Kathy Owens led us to "Best View" Villa which is gorgeous and spectacular. If you are looking to rent a private villa, you can't go wrong dealing with Kathy Owens and Prestigious Properties. They did a fabulous job and everything was exactly "as advertised". If anyone needs more information on "Best View" let me know via a posting and I would be happy to e-mail additional information.

By the time we got to the villa and settled in, it was about 4:00 p.m. so we swiftly headed out to IGA Graceway to stock up on groceries for the week. We bought mainly breakfast and lunch foods planning to eat dinners out almost every night. We of course stocked up on alcohol as well. IGA is very well stocked and was one busy place that Friday evening. Prices are slightly more expensive than you find in Canada and the U.S. but not unreasonably so. The takeaway pizza counter is very good. Our kids ended up having 3 pizzas from IGA Graceway during the 9 days of our stay and they loved the pizza and said it was one of the best they had ever had.

After returning to our villa with our groceries, we headed to Turtle Cove and ate the first evening at Sharkbite's. It was very busy with Happy Hour just ending but we enjoyed a very nice meal which included the "Firecracker Conch" which is very spicy but was outstanding. Our server warned us that it was very spicy and he was right. We loved it. Sharkbite's is a fairly traditional roadhouse-style restaurant with an island twist. It is perfect for kids as the menu includes basic pasta, burgers, etc. Sharkbite's is right on the water at Turtle Cove and kids keep occupied by looking at all the boats and by

looking out at all the fish swimming right below the restaurant deck. Sharkbite's has mounted 3 or 4 underwater spotlights in the water just off the restaurant deck and it illuminates the water so that the many fish can be easily seen which kept our kids occupied while we waited for our food.

On Saturday morning, we decided to do some exploring so after a nice breakfast at our villa we headed out to Malcolm's Road Beach. You take the Leeward Highway towards downtown and then turn off towards Blue Hills which takes you down the Millennium Highway. We turned right off the Millennium Highway to go down to Blue Hills Road so we had a nice view of the water and decided to stop in for lunch at "Horse-Eye-Jacks" which is right on the water. It is located right beside the "Da Conch Shack". We didn't get to eat at the "Da Conch Shack" since there's really not much there for kids to eat. Our meal at "Horse-Eye-Jacks" was very good and it was wonderful sitting outside on the oceanside patio shaded by nice palm trees and umbrellas. The "Cracked Shrimp" was excellent. On a second trip later in the week we had the "Horse-Eye-Jacks Nacho Platter" which was also fantastic. Our kids had the typical children's fare and were very happy. Just off the oceanside deck the kids can go down and play on the beach while they wait for their food. They can wade in the water as well.

A trip to "Horse-Eye-Jacks" or "Da Conch Shack" will inevitably result in you buying a cleaned conch shell from one of the local boys who are selling them. There are hundreds of discarded conch shells all over the place but the local boys sell the cleaned and polished shells asking \$10 or more for the large ones and \$5 for the smaller ones. We offered \$5 for one of the larger ones and the vendor accepted gratefully.

To get to Malcolm's Road Beach you follow the Millennium Highway or Blue Hills Road right to the end where it comes to an intersection with two dirt roads. The one to the right heads off to Northwest Point and the Northwest Point Resort. The other dirt road to the left heads to Malcolm's Road Beach and to Amanyara Resort. The road to Malcolm's Road Beach is pretty bumpy and rough but we navigated it without any difficulty in our 4x4. It is wide enough in most spots that you don't need to worry about squeezing by any oncoming traffic. There is one point where the road is very narrow right at the top of the hill where the antenna is and you would be well advised to honk your horn repeatedly as you negotiate that turn in case there is traffic coming the other way.

There is a small parking lot at Malcolm's Road Beach and the beach is absolutely gorgeous. It is rocky in spots but if you walk down towards Amanyara Resort which is just South of the entrance to Malcolm's Road Beach, there is a large beautiful white sandy section. The same applies if you walk further down to the North where there are wide expanses of sandy white beach. The beach right in front of the parking lot is somewhat rocky but provides excellent near-shore snorkelling. In particular, there is an enormous coral fan about 100 yards offshore slightly South of the Malcolm's Road Beach parking lot and that large coral fan is absolutely teeming with thousands of fish. We enjoyed our snorkelling so much at Malcolm's Road Beach that we returned 2 other times later in the week.

In addition to eating at “Sharkbite’s” and “Horse-Eye-Jacks”, we also ate at “Hemmingway’s” which was very good. We went on one of the evenings which had live music which was fantastic. We managed to reserve a spot up on the deck which is great because you can see the water as the sun is setting and you have a good view of the live entertainment as well. The food at “Hemmingway’s” was very good. The service was slightly slow but we really didn’t mind given the setting and given the fact that we were being entertained at the same time. We ate at “Hemmingway’s” twice, once for lunch and once for dinner and on both attendances the food was very good.

We also ate at “Tiki Hut” in Turtle Cove. It was good both times. We went on Wednesday evening on a recommendation from our property manager as Wednesday evening is chicken/rib night. Despite having a reservation, Tiki Hut was absolutely jammed and we had to wait quite some time before we actually got our table. It was worth the wait. The chicken and ribs were fabulous and very moderately priced. Considering how busy it was, we got our food and drinks fairly quickly and we were quite impressed with the service once we got to our table.

Just a warning if you are going to go to “Tiki Hut” on Wednesday night, make sure you get a reservation; even with the reservation you might have to wait. It is one busy place on Wednesdays! The other evening we went was much quieter and the food was very good.

We also ate at “Aqua Terrace and Bar”, once for breakfast which was excellent and once for lunch which was also very good.

Another evening we ate at “Calico Jacks”. We went hoping for live music but it was Friday night and the live music didn’t start until 10:00 p.m. and by that time we were ready to return to our villa for a late night swim and a movie. We were sorry we missed the music but the food at “Calico Jacks” was very good. Fantastic pasta dishes! It definitely has more of a bar-like feel late on Friday evening, but that is to be expected.

As we enjoyed our villa so much, on 3 evenings we actually ate at home buying steaks and seafood from IGA Graceway and of course those excellent pizzas for the kids. We visited “Sharkbite’s” for dinner later in the week a second time and while most of the food was good, one of the kid’s burgers was enormously undercooked. We ordered it to be cooked medium-well and it was rare/raw throughout. My son didn’t eat more than a couple of bites before we realized that the burger was undercooked. We pointed this out to our server and, disappointingly, nothing was done other than a credit for $\frac{1}{2}$ of the cost of the meal which we thought was very poor. Unfortunately, this second experience overshadowed what had been a good first experience at “Sharkbite’s” our first night in Provo.

We visited Northwest Point one day which is a more harrowing drive given the narrow pathway you have to navigate in your vehicle to get right out to the Point. It is again a beautiful beach and worth the drive if you want to explore some uninhabited and deserted beaches. We actually liked the Malcolm’s Road Beach better than Northwest Point. The wind was blowing quite hard the day we went to Northwest Point so it was fairly choppy which didn’t make for good snorkelling.

We also spent one day at Sapodilla Bay. You have to be careful to find the beach access. You head towards South Dock and after making the right turn on to Sapodilla Bay Road, you make a fairly quick left down a dirt road for beach access at one end of the Bay. The first time down there, we missed it and couldn't find any beach access because it is not marked. The views of Chalk Sound and Taylor Bay are absolutely stunning and make the trip down that way well worthwhile. Sapodilla Bay is a beautiful, shallow, soft white sandy beach and you can go out a long way before the water gets deep. It is perfect for kids swimming and for playing in the sand.

During our stay, we also visited Grace Bay beaches at Coral Gardens which is beautiful and provides excellent snorkelling near shore. We also accessed the beach by Smith's Reef just East of Turtle Cove. There are 2 beach access points down Turtle Cove Drive which is just off Lower Bight Road. The beaches are again absolutely deserted. There were only 3 or 4 people on a 2 or 3 mile stretch of beach the day that we went. The snorkelling at Smith's Reef is very good although again we still liked Malcolm's Road Beach better for the snorkelling. The snorkelling at Coral Gardens is extremely good although the best area of reef is presently roped-off for protection purposes as the reef has obviously been damaged and is trying to be revived.

We also did some great snorkelling on the South Shore. Best View Villa has its own man-made reef right at the entry point to the water just down the stairs from the villa which provides great snorkelling especially for kids and beginners. The water is very shallow, very calm and the 2 man-made reefs are small but perfect for children or anyone else being introduced to snorkelling. We also kayaked out to Little Five Cays which are about a mile offshore from the villa. Fortunately, our villa came equipped with a 2-man kayak and a 1-man kayak which made it great for us to explore out on the water. There is also a gorgeous small crescent-shaped sandy beach just beside Best View Villa which again is perfect for swimming with kids as the water is very calm, very shallow and the beach is beautiful white sand.

We did the SNUBA excursion with Jodi Taylor of SNUBA Turks and Caicos. She is located at the Windsong Resort on Grace Bay. I have done scuba diving before and wanted to introduce our boys to it. SNUBA is a combination of snorkeling and scuba. You get to go down about 20 to 25 feet after instruction. The heavy scuba tank is mounted on a raft at the surface and you are hooked up to it via what is essentially a 25 foot breathing line. Otherwise, it is just like scuba diving. You have a mask, a regulator and fins and your tour is guided by Jodi Taylor. Jodi was awesome with the kids! All of us rated the SNUBA excursion as one of the high points of our trip to Provo. If you want an introduction to scuba diving without the hassle, time and cost of a resort course, then a SNUBA tour with Jodi is definitely highly recommended!!

While snorkeling is great, the SNUBA experience allows you to get down deep and really see the undersea world close up. Our 3 boys managed it without much difficulty. Our 9-year old was slightly anxious but managed quite comfortably to get down to a depth of 10 or 15 feet where he was quite comfortable and followed along with the rest of us even though we were down deeper at about 20 or 25 feet. We saw sea turtles, a giant barracuda, squid, parrot fish, puffer fish, etc. Jodi really did a fabulous job and I highly recommend SNUBA to anyone who is considering it. We were under water for

about 40 minutes. The entire experience took about 2 hours by the time we got oriented, received instruction from Jodi, got in the water, came out, had a debriefing, etc. It made for a wonderful afternoon.

One other afternoon, we went on the 3-hour “Beach Excursion” with Silver Deep. While it appeared slightly disorganized, it turned out that the Silver Deep tour was fabulous. We went out to Iguana Island (Little Salt Cay) which was fun for the kids. We then anchored at a reef for about 40 minutes of deeper water snorkeling which was great. Our Captain (“Alex”) then took us to a deserted beach where we searched for Sand Dollars and enjoyed a nice long leisurely walk on a completely deserted spit of sand. The rum punch was great aboard the boat. There were ample soft drinks and lots of water for the kids and the boat we went out on was well-shaded. It also had a glass bottom portion of the boat so that those who didn’t want to partake in the snorkeling could look down and see the reef and the marine life.

On the way back, Jo-Jo the dolphin made an appearance and we all had wonderful video and photo opportunities. Jo-Jo swam right up to our boat and surfaced completely a number of times and Captain Alex stopped the boat so that we could all enjoy. Jo-Jo and at least one other dolphin came right up to the boat swimming around it and enjoying all the attention for at least 5 minutes.

We recommend the Silver Deep beach excursion for families. It worked out to be more than the promised 3 hours and we all returned to the dock very happy and having enjoyed our afternoon excursion very much.

We also did a one-day pass at “Beaches” just to experience that as the kids wanted to enjoy the pools and waterslides. It actually turned out to be quite a nice day and the one-day pass includes all of the Beaches amenities including all your food and drink. The best part of “Beaches” is the “French Village” pool and complex.

Unfortunately, we didn’t make it to South West Bluff or Long Bay Beach. We wanted to experience both of those as well but will have to save those for the next trip.

If anyone wants any more information on Best View Villa or anything else about our trip, feel free to post a reply and we would be happy to oblige.

We are definitely going back to Provo again next year. This was our third trip but first with the kids and our first staying at a private villa. It is definitely a completely different holiday experience, one that should be attempted by anyone with a sense of adventure and independence.

We hope this helps some of you.

All the best. Save travels to Provo and back home again.

The Thompsons.