

# **Punta Cana, Dominican Republic**

by Camille Pepe Sperrazza

## **Nickelodeon:**

You know how Disney appeals to both adults and kids? Well, Nickelodeon has that same market in mind with this upscale, gourmet inclusive, designed-to-impress resort sure to "wow" the entire family.

The top-of-the-line room is the Pineapple Suite - and you will enter through a free-standing giant pineapple. Inside, there are whimsical touches galore - the adorable chairs, dangling swing, retro television, and artwork. Your own private outdoor pool with lounge chairs awaits, and there is a butler at your disposal. There are three other similar Super Pool suites, but the pineapple is one of a kind.

Should these be booked, there's luxury to be found in the swim-up suites where open glass doors lead right to the pool. Views of the beach and swaying palm trees add to the sense of serenity. The living room and king-size bed accommodates 2 adults and 2 children or a total of 3 adults.

Among the dining options is the ultra-modern Spacewalker Restaurant which promises "interstellar" international cuisine. Another restaurant, "Burgers" features a glitzy, truck with functional kitchen. It is surrounded by seating that reflects the diner theme.

Nickelodeon Place is the indoor and outdoor space where kids get to interact with characters, slide into a pool of balls, and maybe get sprinkled upon by the giant bucket of water that swings atop one of the lazy-river pools.

While the kids are entertained, the adults can relax at their own lovely spaces located throughout the resort.

If you've done Mickey, consider Nicky.

## **Royalton Punta Cana and Memories Splash:**

Walk into the lobby of the Royalton and expect to be dazzled by the view that overlooks part of the resort and extends to the ocean. This 5-star all-inclusive, caters to families, and it also has an adults only section. The beach is shared. The Diamond Club Rooms are located closest to the beach, but with only 407 rooms, nothing is too far away. The garden view rooms are still spacious, and contain the same Dream Bed mattresses.

When you stay at Royalton, you can dine at any of their 5 restaurants and also at the restaurants of its sister property, Memories Splash. In addition, you'll have access to the huge on-site water park located at Memories, a big attraction. This water park is open only to

guests of these resorts, from 9 am - 5 pm, and although they are both all-inclusive properties, for safety reasons, no alcohol is permitted at the water park.

Guests who stay at the 4 1/2 star Memories Splash do not get to use the facilities at the Royalton, but can access the beach via that property as Memories is not beachfront. Free WiFi and calls to US are perks offered at both resorts.

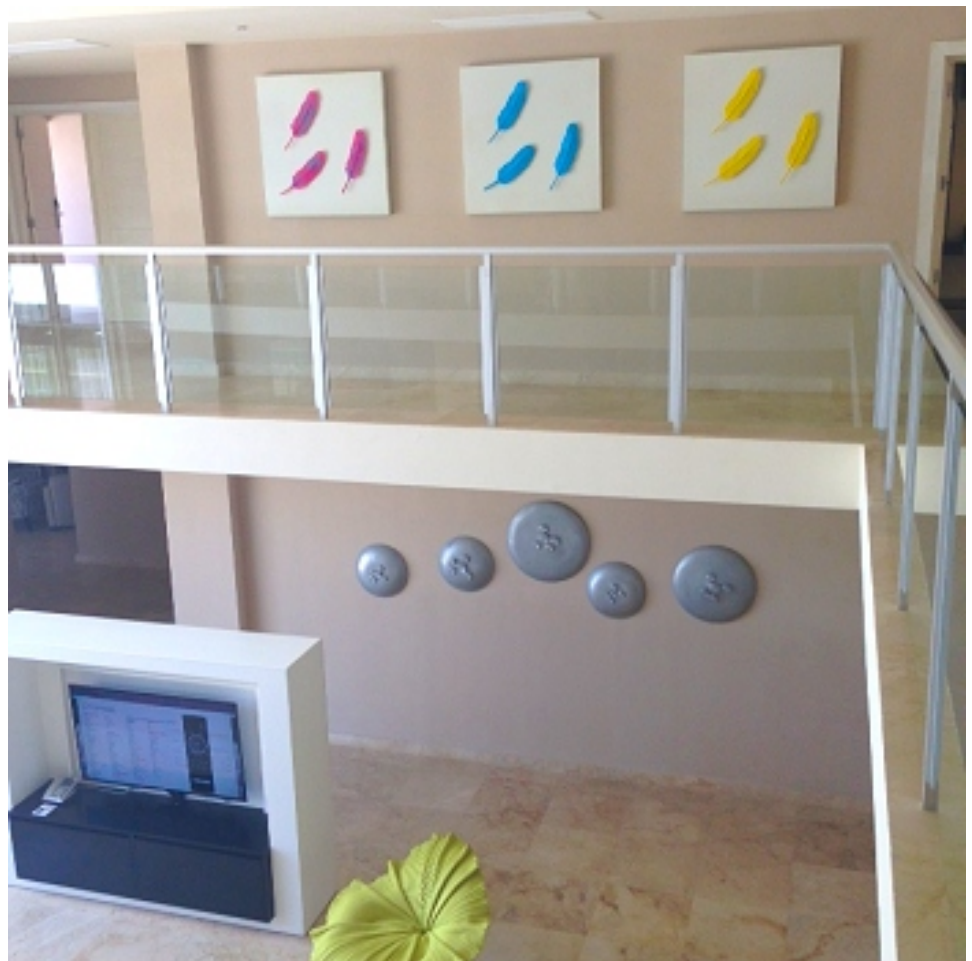
### **Chic Punta Cana:**

The name says it all!

It's chic, urban, and ultra-modern, a 5-star adults only, all-inclusive that opened in 2015, one of Blue Diamond Resorts, the same company that owns the Royalton.

The Chic Mansion is stunning! It contains 6 bedrooms and can accommodate 12 adults - perfect for bachelor and bachelorette parties or adult families. Filled with gorgeous artwork, it truly is a mansion in every sense of the word. There's so much space, you may never bump into some of the people living with you. Relax on beautiful white couches, with plush purple pillows that beckon in the huge living room. Or, unwind at the private pool and lounge chairs. There are hot tubs, a pool table, dining room and a wine cellar. Of course, there's butler service, too. Amenities galore, including private transfers to and from the airport and the services of a chef. Stunning.

### **Part of the interior of the Chic mansion:**



Besides the mansion, there are 319 other rooms, and entry level ones are also lovely, with walk-in showers and iTelevisions. The majority contain king-size beds so anything else must be requested. There are no elevators so be prepared to climb to the third floor if your room is located there.

Among the entertainment - a belly dancer performs at the Middle Eastern restaurant; and there is a "mermaid" show in a tank that can be viewed while outdoors. The coffee bar offers

hot and frozen drinks, plus snacks.

The serene spa, with Turkish bath, is a beauty, accessible to Diamond Club rooms. Others pay a nominal fee to enjoy it for the day. Guests who book a spa service can also use the spa the same day of treatment.

Free WiFi and free phone calls to the U.S.

### **Iberostar:**

There are four resorts, all located within the same complex.

**The Grand** is the upscale, top-of-the-line resort for adults only. Among the perks: a personal butler; raw seafood served every afternoon at the buffet; and lobster grilled to order, daily, at just about any of their restaurants, including the buffet. Chocolate bars and jars of peanuts are replenished room snacks. The lead category rooms are spotless and spacious, with hot tubs, double sinks, and walk-in rainfall showers. What I especially liked - not a trace of dampness in the room, a pleasantry not found at many Caribbean resorts anywhere.

You won't fight to find a lounge chair by the pool or by the beach as this resort is about relaxation and service. The grounds are walkable, and rooms are located in different wings of the same building. As you stroll, you'll discover flamingos and ducks living in the still waters that surround the premises.

There's an indoor theater with nightly show at 10 pm. The huge boat on the grounds turns into a disco in the evening. Reservations are required for the French, Italian, Japanese, Surf and Turf restaurants.

When you stay at the Grand, you have access to the other three resorts which are all family-friendly, but unless one plans to go to the casino, located at the Dominicana, or perhaps use the gym at one of the other facilities, I can't imagine why one want to.

Ask the front desk for a ride in the golf cart to Caribbean Street, a small area of souvenir shops, on the premises. You'll get a glimpse of some of the other Iberostar resorts within the complex. Free WiFi, but no free calls to the US, a flaw that needs to be addressed.

### **Iberostar Bavaro Suites:**

This is the four-star family-friendly property, and it is more of a nature setting, with rooms spread out in their own smaller units (but several rooms can be located without one unit).

It is here that the kid-friendly slides and water activities are located. If families stay at the less costly Iberostar Dominicana and the Iberostar Punta Cana, their children can only access this area when they participate in the Kids' Club activities.

## **Iberostar Dominicana and Punta Cana:**

Both resorts have the same price point, but my first impression was that the lobby of the Dominicana was nicer. It is also the resort where the casino is located.

## **Riu Republica:**

This adults only, 4-star, all-inclusive resort just opened June 2016, and has modern appeal, with a lobby of hot pink cushions and steel-colored hanging lights and ceiling fans.

It is a brand new beachfront structure, with 1007 rooms, four restaurants, and four bars.

The Riu properties are always appealing, and provide excellent value for the money. The spacious rooms are bright Caribbean-blue and white, with large bottles of liquor at your disposal. Bathrooms have a nice, walk-in shower, but, incredibly, no shampoo is offered, an oversight I hope will be rectified. For now, bring your own.

## **Breathless Punta Cana:**

"Live Big. Breathe Deep" is the motto of this trendy, all-inclusive adults only, modern resort which caters to couples and singles. White couches with bright green and purple pillows decorate the lobby, and there's music to put guests in a party mood. If you are looking for a resort with some night life, The After Dark Bar stays open until 2 am, and the resort does host single parties so guests can meet and mingle. There are hot tubs on the balconies of all rooms. No reservations are needed at any of their 11 restaurants; it's first come, first serve. Free WiFi.

## **Excellence Punta Cana:**

Upscale, 5-star adults only, beachfront, with 456 rooms.

A buffet is offered for breakfast and lunch, and it's a lovely presentation and quality. In the evening, there is lobster to be consumed at The Lobster House, one of 10 restaurants.

The resort offers sports such as tennis, basketball, archery, miniature golf. Beautiful white ducks grace the grounds, and lazy river style pools connect to each other. Yet another pool is two-tiered, with a waterfall that rains down from the top level.

Rooms are attractive, with light wood colored floors, clean decor, and hot tubs, but actual bathrooms may be small in some rooms as the modern sinks are located outside the toilet area.

Brides who marry here can opt to arrive for the ceremony in a horse-drawn carriage.

## **Excellence El Carmen:**

I saw this facility while it was still under construction. The adults only all-inclusive was slated to open September 2016.

I was able to view the swim-up junior suite rooms with huge walk-in showers and lovely views.

## **Grand Palladium Palace Resort and Spa:**

With 2,000 rooms, this resort has something for everyone.

It's a sprawling, family-friendly complex, with pockets for adults only, and all levels of service. \$3 million dollars was invested in the kids' club which offers zip-lining, movies, and lots of other activities. It is open without fee until 11 pm each night, offering mom and dad plenty of alone time. In addition, it may just be the only resort that has a baby club for toddlers, ages 1-3.

There's a nice junior suite loft with a king size bed and hot tub on the ground level; couch, television, and second bathroom, upstairs. Junior suites are spacious, with modern design. The staff speaks many languages, as the resort hosts guests from all over the globe. There are handicap accessible rooms and free Wi-Fi.

Ready to book your vacation here? Contact "Commodore" Camille today.

This article was accurate when it was written, but everything in life changes. Enjoy the journey!