

SOUTH & CENTRAL AMERICA

Sandos Caracol Introduces All-Inclusive Eco-Tourism

by Eleanor M. Wilson

Sandos Caracol Eco Resort & Spa adds a new dimension to the all-inclusive menu for mass-market hotels. Set on a pristine beach in Mexico's Riviera Maya, 78 three-story villa-style units skillfully blend in with the resort's eco-friendly surroundings.

When management began removing cluttered jungle undergrowth, 16 cenotes (sinkholes) were uncovered on the property. These deep wells were sacred to the Mayan culture, and so the eco-resort idea was born. It also presented a great opportunity to involve guests in hands-on experiences promoting conservation.

In addition to the usual recycling, energy saving and water conservation, several social activities that guests enthusiastically pursue have joined the all-inclusive list. The eco tour, run by a veterinarian, introduces wildlife living on property among many rescued animals. Cats even have their own Cat Café beside one path. Boardwalks wind through the trees and shrubs, past whitewashed room units and around cenotes. Here and there, signs describe the wildlife visitors are seeing: toucans, peacocks, Mayan bees, etc. Enchanted participants can continue the experience by snor-



keling and swimming in the cenotes, or taking a romantic boat ride across these ponds. Throughout the year, expeditions are organized for beach clean-ups, turtle egg protection, identification of the many iguana species on the property, and Kids Club eco-workshops. A veritable eco paradise was cleverly created on this 70-acre resort.

Sandos Caracol is not all about the environment. Paths around the serene grounds also lead to watersports on the beach, a full-service spa and fitness gym, a theater presenting live shows nightly, six themed restaurants, 11 bars, a disco, and the fabulous Aqua Park. Kids young and old can try its 17 water slides, run through the water spouts, shower under the 'raining' palms, and splash around a water bucket area.

A surprising range of accommodations among the resort's 1,000 rooms come at price levels to fit almost every budget. For just a few dollars more per person per night, Select Club guests enjoy enhanced amenities and many perks such as preferential reservations at all specialty restaurants; private check-in; a welcome fruit basket; liquor bar in addition to the mini bar; coffee and coffee maker; a Select Club private pool, snack bar and terrace with cushioned lounges. The Select VIP Clubhouse by the beach provides Continental Breakfast plus cocktails and canapés; free Internet service, lockers, showers, changing rooms, a library, bar and waiter service, teak sun beds, hammocks and umbrellas.

This unique resort is part of Grand Coral complex, entered via a long road past other hotels and residences which are no longer visible once you are on Sandos property. A Nick Price golf course is presently under construction at Grand Coral. When completed, Sandos Caracol guests will have tee time privileges.

Sandos Selling Tips

"Remind agents about our website for special deals paying 15% commission," said Jacques de Paep, Director of Sales & Marketing-Americas. "Travel agents should profit from selling Sandos Resorts, whether they book from our website or through a wholesaler. We don't insist on website reservations only, and commission checks are sent as soon as full payment is received."

By late summer, Sandos Resorts should have in place a Travel Agent Loyalty Program based on volume sales. For a certain number of bookings, agents receive free nights to be used personally or sold for profit. Keep in mind that commissions paid on all-inclusive rates earn at a higher level. Advise clients to make reservations for themed restaurants on arrival. For a 7-night stay, a visit to 4 restaurants is a reasonable expectation. There is no restriction on the number of visits to one restaurant. Visit www.sandoshotels.com.

