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# Panama City Beach: Not Just for Spring Breakers Anymore

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16 August 2013



Believe it or not, Panama City Beach has evolved over time into a prime family getaway destination. Find out where to stay, what to eat and how to make the most of this surprisingly idyllic destination.



STORY BY:  
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Years ago, Panama City Beach, situated along the beautiful Emerald Coast of Florida with sparkling white sand and gorgeous green water, found itself the destination of choice for college students. Having passed through Panama City Beach during these rowdy times, I was understandably concerned about what a vacation in the area would be like with my grown daughter and seven-year-old grandson as we headed to the beach this summer. After having just spent a week enjoying all this lovely destination has to offer, I can assure you that your family will have a lovely time.

We split our stay between the Bay Point Wyndham, located a few miles away from the beach on St. Andrews Bay, and the Laketown Wharf Resort, located right on the beach. Both destinations were equally perfect for families and each had its own special offerings.

A two-bedroom villa at the Wyndham with a kitchenette made it easy to keep snacks and drinks available and offered the perfect sleeping arrangements for our family. With five gorgeous pools, onsite restaurants, an incomparable spa and a world-class golf course, this resort is idyllic. One of the amenities we enjoyed the most was a free shuttle out to Shell Island, an unspoiled and quite lovely national park located just a few miles away. Look for dolphins on the way!

The Laketown Wharf Resort, with one- to three-bedroom luxury condos, four pools, a new restaurant and coffee café opening soon, and a location just a few steps over a wooden boardwalk to the beach, was the perfect place for our beach-loving family. Every single condo overlooks the beautiful Gulf of Mexico and



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has a fully stocked kitchen which we always appreciate when we travel. Eating out can get pretty expensive and it's nice to stock your kitchen with the makings for a nice breakfast and lunch, and then enjoy the fresh, local seafood for dinner.

We enjoyed that fresh local seafood at Pineapple Willy's, right across the street, as well as at Captain Anderson's and the two restaurants at the Bay Point Wyndham. When we were ready for some entertainment aside from lolling on the soft white sand beach, we spent an incomparable day at the Gulf World Marine Park. I have seen a number of marine parks in my travels and innumerable dolphin shows but I have never seen anything like this place. The park itself is small but immaculately clean and all the animals seemed to be well cared for and very content. The dolphins had such close relationships with their trainers that they actually allowed the trainers to work in the tank with them and their young babies which were the cutest things we had ever seen. There are several different wildlife shows every day and my grandson enjoyed every single one.

One of the best days we had was spent on a catamaran with Paradise Adventures. They offer a variety of cruises and experiences but we chose to head back with them to Shell Island on the bay side where they have moored a wide variety of inflatable slides and climbing toys as well as kayaks, snorkelling equipment, and paddleboards. Everyone on the catamaran had a ball strolling on the beach, playing on the equipment and enjoying watersports.

Now that I know how beautiful this area is and how much fun is offered for families, I will be heading back to Panama City Beach soon. In my opinion it's the perfect family beach destination!

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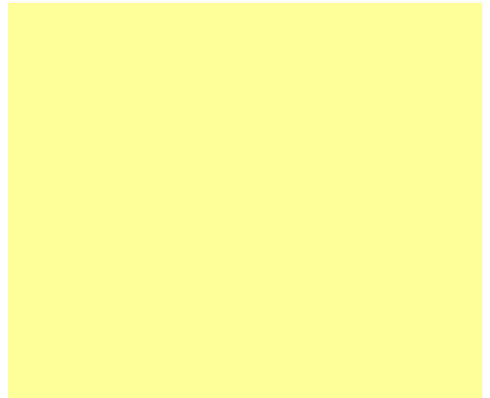
## JAN ROSS





After a lifetime of travel, Jan Ross can pack a bag and hit the road with very little notice, although she will always have a little black dress and some snazzy shoes in there. She loves to travel with her husband of more than 35 years as he is a great photographer and she is often way too busy having fun to think about taking pictures. Active travel or relaxing, she is up for it all!

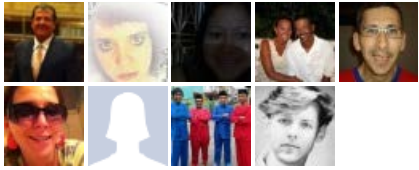
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