



When you absolutely, positively want to be on the water *Lido Beach Resort delivers, plus a lot more*

LET ME START THIS FEATURE on the Lido Beach Resort on an unusual note. I want to mention other hotels...but not by giving them mention in a feature on Lido Beach Resort (LBR). Rather, it's to build a case for what I like most about the refurbished and updated LBR.

When I travel, I like to stay at places with swimming pools. My years in Florida have made me part dolphin I guess in that I really like to be in water to relax (but not catch food). This goal has been greatly denigrated by unnamed hotels that offer pools (great!), but when you go there, the pool is stuffed to capacity with kids (I assure you I do like them) who are unsupervised (I don't like that).

I may be the adult in the room, but I'm not going to discipline another person's child nor am I going to burden the hotel staff. What can they do anyway since these folks are paying customers? This has happened not once, not twice, but four times in the past few months making for a disappointing trend: indoor and outdoor pools are often stuffed with unsupervised kids making it impossible to have a pleasant swim.

I assure you, I play well with others, but with indoor decibel at the SHRIEK level and with kids jumping and splashing well

beyond their personal space, I am not a happy hotel guest.

So that long wind up was a way of saying that I was delighted to find that Lido Beach Resort has a family pool and an adult pool. Hurray!

I have been at the former version of the LBR over the years - mainly for events in their ballroom. One of them was, in fact, a West Coast Woman event. I've also walked past it many times on my beloved

Lido Beach. Lido Beach is never as busy as Siesta Key and not as inaccessible as Longboat Key, but it is blessed with a smaller white sand beach that's often a lot less crowded. And yet, you can literally walk to some of the best restaurants in the area plus visit a variety of shops on St. Armands Circle.

Lido Beach Resort is located smack in the middle of the Key, just to the south of the Lido Beach public pool that is be-

ing refurbished. Your first trip question is what kind of accommodation. The Tiki Building offers rooms and kitchenettes that are located in the resort's four-story main building. Located behind the main lobby and adjacent to the Tiki Bar, these accommodations have everything you need.

The other choice would be the 14-story Palm Building. All guest rooms, junior suites, and suites located in the Palm

Building were renovated in 2016 with the oft-used "beach casual" motif which really is perfect for Florida.

Choices in the Palm Building include a King Guest Room (king bed, full kitchen facilities, balcony); a Junior Suite (king bed, full-size sleeper sofa, full kitchen, dinette, and balcony); or a Full Suite (separate bedroom with a king bed, balcony, living area with full kitchen, sleeper sofa and dinette).

So I'll make the choice for you: stay in the Palm Building and get a room facing the beach as high up as you can get. And if you have kids, get the Junior Suite or Full Suite (which has two rooms) and that way you'll have the dine-in option. Though I was traveling solo, it's nice to order room service and nibble on leftovers later. Plus you can sleep in and make a cup of coffee without leaving your room.

You can thank me later when you set foot on that balcony for the first time. Then you'll know you made the right choice. The view is expansive and so quiet you can hear the waves lapping 24/7.

After you're settled, explore the pool area or, like I did, hit the beach. Eat at the Tiki Bar so you can say you ate fish within feet of the beach (true, that) and, you can bring non-hotel friends to join you,



continued on next page

travel feature continued



Renovated King Room



Renovated Full Suite with two bedrooms

giving them bragging rights as well. Hey, this is Florida: do the thing that most of the country can't do - especially in winter - have a beer or cocktail while dressed like you're headed to a Jimmy Buffett concert all while outside in beautiful weather with the Gulf not too far away.

There's a parking garage for your car if you drove. Or hop on the free resort shuttle to take you to St. Armands. The Circle offers shopping and even more places to dine. Stroll at night and get an ice cream cone or buy some fresh-made fudge.

Dining Options

In addition to the Tiki Bar, there's another option called Café Lido. You can dine breakfast, lunch and dinner inside or semi-outside in a pleasant tropical setting. Go for the Angus beef burgers and local fish. You can also order food sent to your pool-side (how decadent) and to your room which has the added bonus of not just the beautiful view, but an encounter with LBR's ultra friendly staff who come from all over the world. The woman who served me one day was from Ukraine which was interesting.

We got only a peek of the new dining venue called Drift which was not completed at the time of this visit (November). We've been told it should be open this month, but check their website. From what I've seen, the view will be breathtaking — one of the best in Sarasota. You'll be able to dine or sip cocktails or have your wedding or any other event there as well. And you can dine there even if you're not a hotel guest.



The Royal Tern - a protected species and Lido Beach frequenter

Island Exploring

The hotel will keep you entertained with its beach, restaurant, pools and beautiful rooms with a view. You'll inevitably flake out and chill with little more to show for yourself than a collection of beautiful shells which Lido offers in abundance. And that's the way to do it.

But if you want to explore, South Lido Beach is unique. Since it's located at the southern part of Lido, it wraps around the tip and thus gives you no waves, but an expansive beach facing Big Sarasota Pass (which separates Lido from Siesta Key) and Sarasota Bay. It's a great place to picnic and kayak. South Lido Park consists of 100 acres containing a variety of coastal habitats influenced by the Gulf of Mexico, Big Sarasota Pass, Sarasota Bay, and Brushy Bayou.

You can bathe in the Gulf and Pass, as well as picnic and hike in the wooded areas. Bird watching and canoeing may be enjoyed near the center of the park at Brushy Bayou. But note that because of the convergence of different bodies of water, currents run swift in some areas of the shoreline thus this area is posted no swimming.

One of my favorite ways to experience Lido Beach is to bird watch. Four species have used Sarasota's beaches for thousands of years: Snowy Plover, Wilson's Plover, Least Tern and Black Skimmer. Sadly, their numbers have plummeted due to the increase in human population, especially along the shoreline.

In spite of the decline, past efforts have shown that intense monitoring can stabilize their numbers. So, depending on when you visit, you may see signs protecting their nests and gathering places. Follow the rules and leave the birds their space.

I always look for Terns, Snowy Plovers and my personal favorite, Black Skimmers. The latter are a state threatened species with only about 3,600 left in the state. The Lido Beach colony is made up of about 700 adults, which makes up about 20 percent of the entire population of the species.

Exploring On & Off Island

If you want to explore, Mote Marine is one island up on City Island which is just south of Longboat Key. You'll see



Take a boat ride with a Mote scientist on their Sarasota Bay Explorers

beautiful marine life and animals inside and out.

Special note: take a boat ride with a Mote scientist on their Sarasota Bay Explorers. Have an exciting, hands-on, educational and fun on-the-water experience guided by experts who can tell you what you're looking at. They offer hands-on eco-adventures on the Sea Life Encounter Cruise, Guided Kayak Tours, Nature Safari and more. I have done this boat ride a half dozen times and still enjoy it and gain something from it every time. Plus, you get a different perspective and view on the water versus on land.

You'll encounter dolphins, manatees, osprey, eagles and other marine birds in their natural settings. Ticket Prices: Combo Ticket (includes a boat ride and admission to the Aquarium): \$46 for adults age 13 and older; \$39 for children ages 3-12. For more information and reservations, visit Sarasota Bay Explorers or call (941) 388-4200.

If you're feeling ambitious and want to get to the mainland to explore, Sarasota has lots to do such as Selby Gardens and The Ringling Museum or you can take in a show at a half dozen local theatres. Shopping is spread all over the county as are restaurants. Deciding on which restaurant to go to will be one of your few "dilemmas."

Lido Beach Resort Amenities

- ★ 300-foot beach
- ★ Two pools (one for families and one for adults only) and three poolside Jacuzzis
- ★ 222 guest rooms and condo-style suites, each include private balconies
- ★ Tiki Bar
- ★ 24-hour fitness center onsite, along with beach volleyball
- ★ Shuttle service to nearby St. Armands Circle
- ★ Two on-site restaurants and lounges

Summing it up:

You can enjoy Lido Beach Resort several ways: Have an event there in their new ballroom, a staycation when needed and have visitors and relatives stay there for holidays and weddings. Then there's the Tiki Bar (hotel guest or not) and later dine with a great sunset view.

So, if the sound of waves lapping the beach and lulling you to sleep doesn't do it, maybe it will be the moon rising high in the southwest. Yep, it's all about the view and LBR delivers in a big way. Reservations and specials at www.lidobeachresort.com.

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