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TRAVEL TALES

HELPFUL HINTS FOR THE JEWISH TRAVELLER

By **MIKE COHEN**

MYRTLE BEACH:
For many years now my family has contemplated a summer vacation in Myrtle Beach (www.visitMyrtleBeach.com), dubbed "the jewel of South Carolina." In early winter, we had a family meeting and decided that the time had come to finally experience a week in the area popularly known as the Grand Strand. I can now enthusiastically share with readers how extraordinary this place is. In fact, there was nowhere near enough time to see everything on our "to do" list. That means a return trip

is an absolute must.

The area welcomes more than 16 million visitors a year and it is quite clear why.

Myrtle Beach has everything you could possibly ask for to have fun year-round, but I must say that sitting by the pool or the ocean on a hot summer day tops my list. There is an endless array of activities to enjoy.

WHERE TO STAY:
We stayed at the Island Vista (www.islandvista.com), a resort locally owned by the Chapman family that
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EYE ON MONTREAL

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the local crew, aged 25 to 55, are: Avi Ickkovits, Warren Roll, Shuly Vorhand, Morty Stern, Michael Fischer, Allan Rosen, Eli Bernholtz, Andrew Friedman, Leon Steinberg, Arie Reingott. Ickovits, Roll, Stern and Reingott actually made their way from Montreal to the starting point in Connecticut by bike. Roll was the newest addition to the Montreal team. In the span of two months he was not only able to raise over \$100,000 himself, but also help train participants. Some

might remember Warren and more specifically, his daughter Jayden, from her battle with cancer and the search for a stem cell donor. "Thankfully, Jayden is doing well and is in remission," says Guttman. "Warren undertook this race as a way to give back to our organization." Ickkovits raised \$111,000 and the others between \$2,800 and \$12,000. Please see my blog for a complete summary

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TRAVEL TALES

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has been in the Grand Strand area for decades. The hotel originally on the property was called the Sea Island Inn and was torn down in 2004 and rebuilt as a luxury resort two years later with a wonderful fine dining restaurant called The Cypress Room where we enjoyed a nice dinner and breakfast daily. Many of the waiters who work at the restaurant have been here for decades, dating back to its previous incarnation. The resort, with 149 rooms,

is centrally located in Myrtle Beach, but in a quieter section of the strip and is surrounded by residential homes and no other hotel towers. It has a very homey feel to it. I have never met such a polite staff, from the maintenance man to the front desk personnel.

All units are ocean front suite/condo style. We reserved a one bedroom suite with two queen beds in the separate bedroom and a nice pull down Murphy bed, as well as a

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TRAVEL TALES

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sleeper sofa, in the living room. The unit also has a full kitchen with dishes and silverware, a washer/dryer, a dining room table, three comfortable chairs, two televisions, an in room safe and an oceanfront balcony. Suites range in size from 677 to 2,300 square feet and are highlighted by elegant traditional furnishings

such as shuttered headboards, rich draperies and bed coverings, tile flooring, granite countertops, plush carpet and floor-to-ceiling windows offering amazing ocean views.

Parking is made simple here, with two multi-level lots. We rented a car from Alamo at the airport, which generally has the best deals, and with our GPS and some printed Google map directions we had no trouble finding our way around.

The hotel has a fitness and health centre, wireless internet and indoor and outdoor pools. The resort's swimming complex features an indoor and outdoor pool area with a wide range of water amenities. We absolutely loved the pool setup. I felt like I was on a tropical island as our space was just steps from the beach and looking straight ahead at the gorgeous ocean. You can rent chairs and umbrellas right on the beach from the lifeguards.

Island Vista's gourmet restaurant, The Cypress Room, is located off the hotel's main lobby and features an array of European-infused low country dining selections including signature dishes such as crispy fried oysters with roasted red pepper tartar sauce, bourbon creamed corn and sweet potato hash, and pecan-crusted trout, with herbed butter noisette served over Basmati rice with wild mushroom ragout. Our group shared a crab and lobster timbale appetizer and sampled the risotto with provencal vegetables, roasted asparagus and red onion marmalade with lobster and the fish special of the day, a perfectly grilled Mahi Mahi. We also ordered room service on a few occasions, which enabled us to enjoy longer days at the pool.

There is a large Food Lion Grocery Store just a

short drive away. We stocked our fridge immediately with bottled waters and other staples.

The hotel has facilities for the disabled and is handicapped accessible. There are ramps at the front and rear entrances and the hotel has purchased its own beach accessible

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wheelchair. They have a lift to assist the physically handicapped to go in and out of the pool. Some rooms have walk-in showers and benches and chairs to sit on. It is important to share any special requests when making a reservation. For more information about Island Vista, readers can call 800-548-0767 or visit IslandVistaResort.com.

JEWISH COMMUNITY: South Carolina's Jewish population is just under 14,000. Myrtle Beach has enjoyed exponential growth in year-round population, tourism, business opportunities, and employment in the past decade, and so has the Jewish community and the kosher amenities. The Chabad Shul, Heichal Avraham, welcomes all guests for daily Shachrit, mincha/maariv and Shabbat. It is located at 2803 North Oak Street and can be reached at 843-448-0035. There is an orthodox synagogue, Beth El, at 404 Calhoun Drive; a Conservative congregation, Temple Emanu-El, at 406 65th Avenue North (Temple Emanu-El was founded in 1963); and the reform Temple Shalom at 4023 Belle Terre Boulevard. Across the state there are many other synagogues (www.mavensearch.com). The Bi-Lo Supermarket at 1241 38th Avenue is open 24 hours a day and has frozen, refrigerated and dry kosher sections. Info: (843) 626-7400 or (843) 626-7400. For details email info@koshermyrtlebeach.com. For those seeking kosher meals, the Jerusalem Restaurant is located at 205 North Kings Highway.

DINING OUT IN MYRTLE BEACH: There are approximately 1,700 full-service restaurants in the area and it's no surprise that seafood is one of the primary cuisines available.

We liked what we heard about Thoroughbreds Chophouse (<http://thoroughbredsrestaurant.com>) at 9706 N. Kings Hwy and The Aspen Grille (www.aspen-grille.com), located at 5101 North Kings Highway. Thoroughbreds has become widely known as one of the locals' favorite fine dining restaurants, serving only the finest beef and ultra-fresh seafood. It's a meal you won't soon forget. The Aspen Grille, owned by Chef Curry Martin, is another must stop on the dining circuit. Dishes here are based on traditional Southern cuisine, with Chef Martin's own personal twist adding to the dining experience.

Mike Cohen's email address is info@mikecohen.ca. Follow his travels at www.sandboxworld.com/travel and on Twitter @mike-

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