

# PARADISE? FOR REAL!

Cap Cana lives up to its billing as “The World’s Next Great Destination”



I admit it—I’ve become leery of all the catchphrases, clichés, and superlatives that resort marketers use so liberally when hyping their properties. After all, how often have you heard that a resort’s attentive staff will “anticipate your every need” and the spa will “rejuvenate your senses”?

So I was duly skeptical before I visited Cap Cana, which boldly bills itself as “the world’s next great destination.” But after a far-too-short stay, I am a believer—this 30,000-acre resort community on the eastern tip of the Dominican Republic truly is a paradise.

The master plan for Cap Cana, which is roughly twice the size of Manhattan, features three Jack Nicklaus Signature golf courses, more than 6 miles of coastline with 3 miles of the softest white-sand beaches, the largest inland marina in the Caribbean—complete with 500 slips for yachts up to 200 feet in length, three five-star hotels, and a multitude of fine dining as well as casually chic restaurants. It’s no exaggeration to say that this resort community is reinventing how fortunate travelers and second-homeowners will spend their precious leisure time in the 21st century.

Take, for example, the Caletón Beach Club, the first facility completed at Cap Cana. You immediately notice the superb architecture of the clubhouse, restaurant, and bar, enhanced by a palapa roof, the finest stonework, colorful tile and masonry, and a variety of hardwoods that look as if they were harvested hundreds of years ago from an ancient rain forest.

Ensnared in welcome and gracious hospitality I was ushered into the restaurant for a lunch of grilled lobster risotto in a light saffron sauce. After I finished the refreshing meal, I changed into my trunks and headed to the swimming complex, which includes a massive

**WHETHER FROM THE** coastline, the pools, or the tee boxes, the Dominican Republic's Cap Cana views will delight your senses.



blue-tiled pool in the shape of the numeral eight. Through a small cluster of palms below the pool I found a secluded ocean cove with 200 yards of talcum-white sand bordering the ridiculously clear and tranquil Caribbean Sea, a variety of small cabanas, the most comfortable beach loungers—each with its own snug-fitting terry cloth slipcover, and a beach bar. Here I exercised my limited knowledge of the Spanish language and ordered “una cerveza, por favor.” The server delivered the local beer, Presidente, a wonderfully smooth lager.

I rank the entire beach club a 10½ out of a possible 10—easily the finest that that this veteran traveler has ever seen. Only my desire to experience the entire property and my lack of sunscreen kept me moving on.

Cap Cana offers the perfect getaway for golfers with the first of three Nicklaus Signature golf courses, Punta Espada, scheduled to

open this August. The seaside track is ripe to be played, but Sam Logan, an affable Texan who serves as the general manager of Golf Operations, would not allow me to rip any divots from the virgin fairways and tees. Sam and I discussed if we’ve ever seen or heard of a golf course with more holes (eight) that lie smack dab on the edge of the ocean. Pebble Beach, St. Andrews, Ballybunion, Cypress Point—clearly some of the finest golf courses in the world, but no—not one of them plays along the ocean as frequently or dramatically as Punta Espada. While Jack Nicklaus is known for his 18 major victories and 73 PGA tour wins, it’s pretty clear to me that Punta Espada may someday roll off the tongue of golf aficionados with almost as much frequency as Jack’s historic win at the 1986 Masters. Suffice it to say that Punta Espada will be on a very short list of must-play golf courses for serious players and passionate duffers alike. The course will become private in several years so play it now while you can. Not to worry though—Nicklaus is about to get started on his second seaside track at Cap Cana with the third to follow, and those two courses will always be open to resort guests.



The Sanctuary, Cap Cana’s first hotel, is scheduled to open in January. I’ve already placed dibs on the largest of their 176 luxury five-star suites for next year’s Spring Break. At 5,920 square feet, it should be large enough for my family of four. Our private teak deck will rest gently on a coral outcropping, we’ll have an abundance of infinity pools to choose from, and eight restaurants will cater to our

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every craving from seared tuna to Kobe beef.

One of the two-bedroom suites is already completed, and the stone and wood finishes, amazing ocean views, and outdoor shower in a walled courtyard will make for a holiday experience that would bring a smile to Donald Trump, your next-door neighbor, and everyone in between. Nothing at The Sanctuary is ostentatious though—rather the architecture, materials, floor plans, and flow appear timeless and casually sophisticated.



**WHEN COMPLETED**

Cap Cana will offer the only full-service marina between the Turks and Caicos and Puerto Rico. The resort's 500 slips will accommodate 150-plus-foot yachts.

In the waning hours of the late afternoon, I learned that my host, Ricardo Reyero, had saved the best for last. Ricardo is the Sales Director for the Alta Bella Fishing Lodge at Cap Cana, a five-star condominium hotel scheduled for completion in 2008. Its 300 condominiums, 100 bungalow-style hotel suites, and wide variety of boutique shops and restaurants will sit alongside Cap Cana's impressively large marina and appropriately feature a Venetian theme. All of the one, two, and three-bedroom condominiums will come with a complete array of hotel services, and the owners will have the option of placing their residences in the hotel's rental pool. The developer and architects who built The Sanctuary will build the Fishing Lodge, ensuring that the quality and landscaping will be equally impressive.

The residences, some with more than 3,000 square feet of interior and deck space, are clearly a bargain, ranging in price from \$400,000 to \$1.70 million for the beautifully furnished units—comparable condominiums in Miami, Las Vegas, or Naples, Florida, would easily cost three times as much. Couple the affordable pricing with no property tax for the first 10 years of ownership, no closing costs, and no annual maintenance fees for owners who place their units in the

hotel's rental pool, and potential owners may find it difficult to pass on this ground-floor opportunity. Ricardo told me that 50 residences will be sold through a priority reservation this November—I am seriously considering depleting my children's college funds to stake my place in line.

The most impressive feature of the Fishing Lodge is a 400-foot-long infinity pool that stretches the entire length of the 10 luxury condominiums being built in Phase 1. Owners can literally jump off their rear decks into the water, swim to the pool's edge, step out onto the marina's dock, and saunter onto their awaiting yachts. It's so decadent yet wickedly sexy that if I were 15 pounds lighter and had a yacht, I'd make a return visit to the Fishing Lodge to do just that.

Alas my trip came to an end, and it took only eight minutes for the driver to whisk me from Cap Cana to the modern, clean, and safe international airport at Punta Cana. With direct flights from many U.S. cities, getting to Cap Cana couldn't be easier . . . unless you're flying in yourself.

I'll come back many times to Cap Cana. The color of the water, the feel of the sand, the green fairways of Punta Espada juxtaposed with the turquoise Caribbean Sea, the fabulous marina, and the superior architecture

and build quality—it all adds up to "paradise." This large, masterfully designed resort and second-home community has few peers

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anywhere in the world, and what started out in my mind as a cliché ended up being a right-on-accurate statement: Cap Cana truly is "the world's next great destination." To see the property continue to evolve will undoubtedly be a delight for those lucky enough to experience all that this 21st-century resort community has to offer. 🏠

For more information on *The Sanctuary Hotel* please log on to [altabellahotels.com](http://altabellahotels.com) or call 809.562-7555. For more information on *The Fishing Lodge at Cap Cana* and ownership opportunities please log on to [fishinglodgescapcana.com](http://fishinglodgescapcana.com) or call 866.717.1700.