

DESTINATIONS

CARIBBEAN, THE BAHAMAS AND BERMUDA

# COCONUT BAY Beach Resort & Spa

Here's an inside look at a solid, mid-level, all-inclusive hotel in St. Lucia.

AFTER TWO APPEARANCES on “The Bachelor,” ABC’s hit reality show centered around newlyweds-to-be, St. Lucia showed the world all of its glamorous five-star resorts that attract affluent clients. But what about the island’s more affordable properties? You’re not going to find any Best Western or Hampton Suites hotels on “The Bachelor” anytime soon here, but there are some high quality, mid-level resorts for clients who aren’t looking to break the bank. And **Travel Agent** thinks we may have just visited St. Lucia’s best in this category.

Meet **Coconut Bay Beach Resort & Spa**, an 85-acre resort that recently invested \$5 million upgrading the hotel

Harmony Concierge Junior Suite Oceanview is one of about 30 rooms that have access to two private concierges.

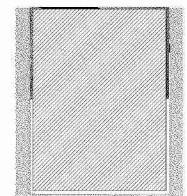
and is a great fit for both couples and families. Although its offerings for the former are impressive, the strength of this resort can be found in how it caters to families, simply because it has no other strong competitors in that market in St. Lucia. There are no Beaches Resorts or other such popular family chains here. In that sense, Coconut Bay Beach Resort & Spa could be in a league of its own.

This 250-room resort feels like two different hotels in one as it strictly separates families from couples using its Splash section, which houses a Kids’ Club, a family swimming pool and room accommodations for families, and its Harmony side, home to an adults-only pool, the hotel’s spa and other accommodations strictly for guests 18 years

and older. Agents should note, however, that clients staying in the Harmony wing are allowed to use the facilities of the Splash side, but Splash guests 16 and younger cannot use the facilities of the Harmony side.

Room refreshments continued this year with new tiling in bathroom showers in over 80 percent of the resort’s guest rooms, including Gardenview, Oceanview and Premium Oceanview categories. The décor in the Gardenview and Oceanview rooms in both the Splash and Harmony wings was also updated, including repainting, new headboards and contemporary linens.

We stayed in room #465, a Harmony Concierge Junior Suite Oceanview, which is one of about 30 rooms that have access to two private concierges.





Guests of these rooms get a personal cell phone to call any of the two concierges on the floor who serve essentially as butlers for guests. They can perform anything from arranging dinner reservations to taking care of personal requests. The best part of the room, however, was the balcony, which offers views of just about every highlight of the resort from the ocean to the gardens to the swimming pools and bars. Rates for these rooms range from \$663 to \$929 a night. All come with top shelf alcohol, beer and snacks. In fact, the only rooms that do not come with alcohol in the mini-bar are the standard rooms.

**THE SPA:** The Oceanfront Kai Mer Spa, located on the Harmony side, received its own renewing treatment of fresh paint and new tiling throughout its 11,000-square-foot serenity areas. The reception area was modest with a simple welcoming station stocked with various refreshments, including the delicious watermelon-flavored water.

**Travel Agent** highly recommends the Kai Mer Tranquility Massage for spa lovers who enjoy a classic massage without all the bells and whistles. We have tried everything from hot stone to hot sea shell massages before, but this traditional full-body massage was performed to perfection as our masseuse, Ange, hit all the pressure points and spent the perfect amount of time on each body part. The treatment is priced at \$99 for 60 minutes. Tipping is encouraged; we recommend a 20 percent gratuity depending on the level of guest satisfaction.

**THE KIDS' CLUBS:** The CocoLand Kidz Klub was also quite impressive and had some unique offerings for a kids' club. There is a mini-zip-line, a small paint-ball area and an outdoor playground with sprinklers. At the CocoLand Waterpark, St. Lucia's largest, the quarter-mile plus Lazy River was resurfaced and convenient new public restrooms were added to the adjacent Splash Pool Deck. Parents can even rent free cell phones here so they can periodically check in on their children.

**DINING:** The three best restaurants here are also the ones where reservations are required: Silk, which serves

Asian cuisine; Capri, for Italian dishes; and Calabash, specializing in Caribbean cuisine (ask for the bacon jam). It's recommended to reserve a table the night before, but clients should still be safe booking the morning of.

There are also some "pop-up" dining venues along the resort. For example, clients can actually book a dinner in the shallow end of the adults-only pool (which comes up to most people's ankles) for \$109 per couple, including top shelf food and drink items that are not included in the room rate.

**ACTIVITIES ADDED:** New to the activities are wind surfing (conditions permitting) and Rums of the Caribbean. The latter includes tastings with a rum master who provides guests with

and with the launch of new beach and pool-side waiter service, guests can order signature drinks while relaxing under new cabanas.

We also loved the simple towel racks where clients are free to help themselves to a towel without the hassle of getting and redeeming towel cards, as many all-inclusive resorts require. (Guests who fail to return said cards by the end of their stay are usually charged the cost of the towel.) At Coconut Bay, there are full towel racks at both the family and adults-only pool.

Bartenders will be mixing their signature cocktails at the expanded Lobby Bar, featuring a 360-degree service area ensuring this popular gathering spot will be hotter than ever, with new fire pits



The Kai Mer Spa offers signature organic therapies in oceanview treatment rooms.

samples of the bounties of St. Lucia and the top spirits of the Caribbean. The entertainment staff will also premiere new performances and live shows for the coming season.

**Recent Upgrades**

Physical refreshments can be found at the resort's adults-only Harmony wing, which now offers an expansive new pool and Jacuzzi-style hot tub, bringing the number of Coconut Bay pools to five, the second at Harmony. The Harmony Pool Bar has also been enlarged,

and a gazebo offering intimate spaces to sit back and socialize as the sun sets. Additionally, a refurbished reception area will greet arriving guests with a new water feature showcasing a resident bronze turtle and lush landscaping. Even the Coconut Bay gift shop was revamped to provide more floor space.

Work also began on enlarging the wedding site at Coconut Bay's Eternity Beach. The additions expand the event offerings possible for ceremonies and receptions that can include food and beverage service.

—JOE PIKE