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Island time at Paradise Point

A quick drive south of O.C., the 44-acre tropical escape is an idyllic playground for families.

by *Debbie Lavdas*

As my family and I strolled to dinner – meandering through lush pathways and waterfall lagoons, and guided by tiki torches – there was a relaxed ease to our steps, and vacation smiles abounded. It was a charmed day on the island, complete with jet skiing, bike riding and beach time. To top off the night, we'd light a bonfire, relax in Adirondack chairs and let the s'mores take shape. With the moonlight on the water, my heart was full with simple moments as the kids licked the gooey chocolate off their fingers and frolicked at the water's edge.

Paradise Point Resort & Spa is a 44-acre island



Debbie with her dog, Kodi. Paradise Point welcomes petite pooches 15 pounds and under.

escape tucked away in Mission Bay, minutes from the heart of Downtown San Diego. The tropical resort offers California beach bungalow-style guest rooms amid gardens and tranquil waterways. Indonesian-inspired art adorns the lobby. A fun, colorful blend of Hawaii and Gilligan's Island, the resort offers the same easy bay-side access available at O.C.'s Newport Dunes. Paradise Point is a wonderfully playful getaway for families – so much so that Forbes dubbed it one of the Top Ten Family Resorts in the World.

This watery wonderland – and, in fact, the entire California coast – was discovered by Portuguese explorer Juan Rodrigues Cabrillo in 1542. Fast-forward to the 1960s, when a successful movie-producer-turned-hotelier decided to create an exotic South Seas atmosphere with lagoons,

PHOTO COURTESY OF PARADISE POINT RESORT; AUTHOR PHOTO PROVIDED BY DEBBIE LAVDAS



The full-service marina rents everything from sailboats and powerboats to paddleboards and jet skis.

waterfalls, cabana-style cottages and, of course, a picturesque view of Mission Bay.

While the island's acreage is vast and expansive, it doesn't feel that way. Everything is quaint and intimate, and it all becomes familiar after only a short while.

The island's marina offers everything you could want: kayaks, paddleboards, sailboats, Duffy electric boats, motorboats and jet skis. What a treat it was to travel to nearby San Diego to jet ski – versus driving four hours to Laughlin, where we usually visit to do this. My kids were wildly giddy zipping all around the island on their three-person jet ski. And while my husband was playing like a kid, I saw a sparkle in his eyes that I usually don't see on resort stays.

Another member of our family really enjoyed himself: our Pomeranian, Kodi. Welcomed everywhere we went, Kodi focused on the ducks and other wildlife, and loved the attention from all the friendly two-legged island natives. Paradise Point is a pet-friendly hotel for dogs 15 pounds or less.

Overall, rarely have I found a resort so approachable, unassuming and relaxed as Paradise Point. At other locales, we are usually quieting the kids, getting dressed up for dinners and being very mindful of our surroundings. However, Paradise Point felt more like home away from home, with the rewards of a beach, bonfire and bay-side beauty right outside our front door. It is indeed a genuine vacation retreat for families, allowing us to leave the hectic pace of Orange County far behind. 



The resort's entrance and lobby perfectly set the scene for a relaxing, fun-filled tropical escape.

ISLAND ACTIVITIES

Explore and play at five pools; 14 beach and poolside bonfire pits; a full-service marina with sailboats, powerboats, kayaks, jet skis and paddleboards; an 18-hole putting golf course and tennis courts; bicycles and Segways; plus a spa, fitness center, several restaurants and more.

DINING DO'S

Don't miss Caveman Pizza on the island. It's tiny and tucked away in a cave (really). Stop by, grab a cheap pizza for dinner, then take it back to your Bungalow bonfire pit. Also, Barefoot Bar & Grill offers scenic waterfront dining, and Chef James Ausem is always up for off-the-menu creations. He delightfully catered delicious cuisine for my family of vegetarians.

FARE ADVICE

Bungalow Suites offer a mini-fridge and a microwave, so feel free to bring snacks, drinks and some groceries. There's also a stocked Island Market you can walk to if you forget anything. (Also, remember to bring your beach toys.)

Paradise Point Resort & Spa
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paradisepoint.com

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY PARADISE POINT RESORT