

Cancun Famil with Virgin Australia & Club Med November 2014

Hola!! Wow what a wonderful famil with a great group of Queensland agents from all over the state.

Arriving at Brisbane International Airport we all checked in for our flight to LA with Virgin Australia (sorry no upgrade available) so economy seats it was and as a group also at the back of the plane. It wasn't a bad flight as we left at 11am and arrived at 6am into LA. We disembarked into the newly upgrade Terminal 3 Tom Bradley International Terminal and went straight through customs without delay. All 12 of us were cleared and ready to go in about 45 minutes.

Transferred to Hilton Garden Inn at Marina Del Rey. Great location only 10 minutes for the airport by transfer and also only 10 minutes walk to Venice Beach. The Hop On Hop Off bus has a stop right outside the hotels front door so some ventured off to Santa Monica while others caught up on some sleep.

Great hotel as all Hiltons are. This one would be great for a one or two night stop overs with a restaurant and bar located within the hotel itself but many, many more restaurants just a walk away at the Marina. The walk to Venice Beach brings you to the Pier and then a short stroll to the right puts you smack bang in the middle of the Venice Beach precinct with all the muscle men you could ask for. The rooms very huge and well appointed.

Four of us ventured off to the Staples Center to watch the LA Clippers v San Antonio Spurs basketball game. We bought our tickets online at www.stubhub.com which allowed us to choose how much we wanted to spend and where we wanted to sit. Great VIP seats for only US\$85. Well worth the money for the atmosphere. You can get all sorts of tickets for all types of events on this website. It is also advertised at the arena itself so must be a good one. These seats also had service available at them so you didn't have to leave and get food or drink. Just order, pay and it was delivered to you.

After what seemed like only a couple of hours sleep we were back at LAX at Terminal 2 (not renovated and therefore little shopping or eating choices) to catch our flight with Virgin America to Cancun. Similar aircrafts but better service as you can order your meals/snacks and pay using the inflight entertainment screen. Receipts are then emailed to you for your convenience. It is then delivered to you individually rather than waiting for the cart. We were also luck enough to get a glitch in the system and watch On Demand Movies for free instead of the usual US\$8. Just remember your headphones or pay the US\$5 for their headphones, which you then keep. This was a 4 1/2 hour direct flight, so after our 13 hour flight from Brisbane to LA it wasn't that bad.

Cleared customs in Cancun with a unique push of a button to see if you needed to get your bags searched or not. Green for go and Red for stop. Quite a strange set up but only 3 had their bags searched so hold up wasn't too long.



2 SUVs took us to Club Med Cancun which is located only about 30 minutes from the airport. It is one of the first resorts along the peninsula which is great for airport transfers and tours. First drop off, last pick up so less time on the bus.

Wow what a resort. As I am sure you all know, Club Med is a fantastic place for families to holiday. All-inclusive everything except your tours and spa treatments and of course any shopping from the boutiques etc. We arrived later in the afternoon so after our room locations were given out,

which was all individual, we freshened up and met at the bar for cocktails before dinner. Buffet dinner together with a Mexican theme on that night. Different themes on every night with different dress requirements if you so wish to participate. So much to choose from as per all Club Med resorts.



Back to the bar again after dinner to enjoy the salsa dance lessons and the markets that were all set up around the pool and bar and then on to the night club which is set up in their theatre room. They even had a mechanical bull you could ride if you wanted to, which some did. It is so nice not to have to be concerned about how much you are drinking or eating when you know that it is all paid for before you arrive.

Next morning we had breakfast at leisure and then a site inspection. The Club Med Cancun resort is quite large. There is the main area which has the reception, theatre, bar, buffet restaurant and pool. The rooms then spread out for some way along the beach front and also the lagoon area. The family interconnecting rooms are all located in a similar area right next to the Mini Club. All rooms are really colourful going along with the Mexican influence and each block has its own name.



The Mini Club, Petit Club and Baby Club are all located near this area with their own pool and facilities for all to enjoy. They are currently renovating this area to incorporate a fabulous new water park for the kids to use as well. The kids were in pretty small groups as you noticed them going to lunch or dinner. There seemed to be about 20 kids in the Mini Club and 12 in the Petit Club during our stay. As the Mini Club is incorporated in the price of the holiday it is such a great value.

Around past the 'family' blocks was the trapeze and the water skiing area. At Club Med Cancun that waterskiing and wake boarding are included in the price. It was a great system with first come first skiing concept in place. If you finished your turn and wanted another you just added your name to the bottom of the list and waited. They had everything you would need but not overly conscience of having the ladies wear wetsuit pants. It seemed to be up to the individual to put them on if you wanted. The guys in our group went out 3 times and had a great time. There were 3 boats in operation so the wait wasn't too long at all. They took beginners right through to the experts so could cater for all levels of skills. The waterskiing also operated for most of the day which allowed plenty of opportunity for everyone to have a turn.

Trapeze is always a great draw card for the Club Med resorts. Certainly not something you will find at other resorts. You need to be aware of the available timing for this. Kids clubs take priority in the morning and have assigned times to visit. Adults are invited to participate from 4pm until 6pm. You are not allowed on if you have been drinking alcohol. The first hour is for the trials and practices and then the 2nd hour you can progress to the 'catch' if you wish. One of our girls gave it a try and found it absolutely fabulous. She did say that there wasn't a great deal of instruction given prior to going up and found it a little difficult to understand the instructions when hanging upside down.

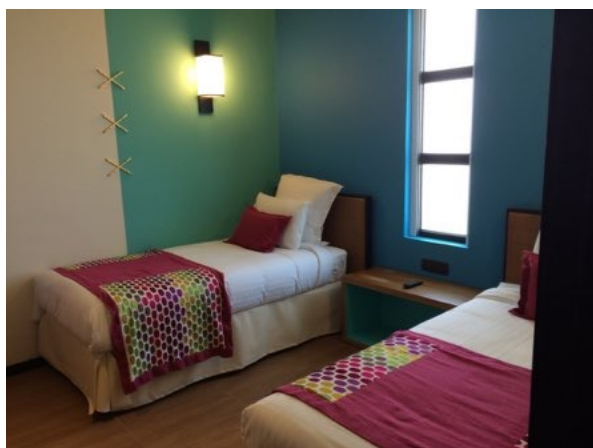


The group she was with had been before and were a little more advanced so she seems to think they may have thought she knew what she was doing. Anyway she loved it nether the less.

There is a new block of rooms that have been built ideal for families in a block located closer to the entrance of the resort. It is a golf buggy ride to get around there from the main area and

beach. This area has its own reception area and a beach in front of the block to use. It is also located just near the water activities such as kayaks, windsurfers, sailboats etc. It is also just near the Mexican restaurant which offers all meals throughout the day.

The rooms in this 3 story block are mainly 2 bedroom apartments rather than interconnecting rooms. Standard apartments have 1 bathroom and the Deluxe apartments have 2 bathrooms but all have 2 toilets. The 2nd bedroom is quite small and has 2 single beds in it but allows all the family to stay in one apartment.



Room capacity is 2 adults and 2 children but you could fit another child on a rollaway or cot in the parents very large bedroom if you needed. For families of 3 or 4 kids I would still stay with the lead-in interconnecting rooms. There was a lift facility in this block for the likes of pushers etc. The apartments have balconies if on the 2nd or 3rd level with the Deluxe rooms having a cabana bed on the balcony as well.

The 5 Trident 'Jade' building was beautiful. With its own reception and 24hour concierge there was not much more that you would need. This area has its own pool and bar and is located very nicely in the middle of the resort. Walking distance to anything you might want to see. It has a beautiful outlook over the sea with a gorgeous green grass area for all to enjoy just next to the pool. You are provided with the top shelf liquor at this bar at no extra cost.



'Jade' will cater for all holiday needs. It has Deluxe interconnecting rooms that would easily fit a family of 5 with the option to put an extra bed/cot with the parents. The Jade also offers room service for all meals if you would rather stay in and relax in your own room with your breakfast brought up daily and options for lunch and dinner available. So for the family that can stretch their budget a little further this is definitely the area for them.

'Jade' is also located on the Ecopark area of the resort where the snorkeling is offered. You aren't even allowed to wear sun cream in this area to protect the fish and reef. All snorkeling gear if provided and life vests must be worn.



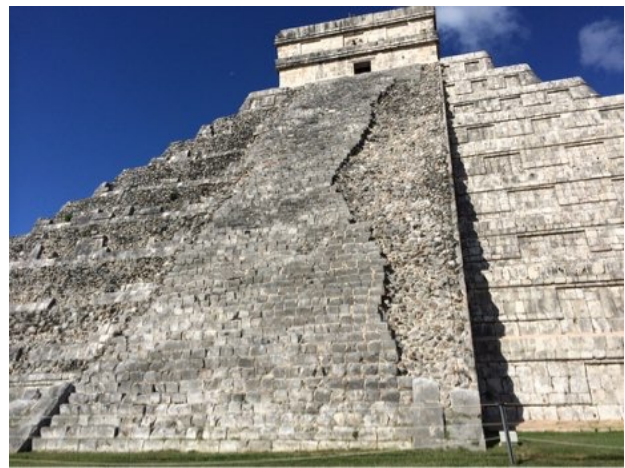
There are 2 specialty restaurants available to enjoy at the resort. Las Cazuelas is the Mexican Restaurant which offers breakfast, lunch and dinner. You are required to book a day prior to have dinner at this restaurant. It is an a la carte arrangement for dinner and offers a very different atmosphere than the buffet restaurant. We enjoyed lunch here after our site inspection and indulged in wonderful salads and grilled meats.

The other specialty restaurant is La Estancia. It is an Argentinian Steakhouse so when you are in desperate need for some red meat this is the place to go. Again you are requested to book a day prior to enjoy your dinner here. This restaurant is also set up for late breakfast which is 10.30am to 12 noon (I tried this after our night out at The City nightclub but still couldn't eat anything) and offers an a la carte type breakfast menu. Afternoon snacks are also served here from 4pm to 6.30pm for those like us who went out on a tour. This is also an a la carte menu but not a snack more like a small meal. Anything and everything is available.

Like all Club Meds there is food available in some form or another from 7am to 11pm. Breakfast, late breakfast, lunch, afternoon snacks, dinner and bar snacks. If you are hungry there is something wrong with you. We had a couple of girls with allergies (gluten & dairy) and neither had any problems finding something to eat at all meals. They would even fetch gluten free bread from the buffet restaurant and bring it to the specialty restaurants.

We were lucky enough to enjoy a tour to Tulum & Playa del Carmen and incorporated the Grand Cenotes as well. Some of us ventured out on our own tour of Chichen Itza. Both were fantastic.

Club Med arranged our tour to Tulum and we booked our other to Chichen Itza with Viator while there are the one Club Med offered clashed with our Tulum tour.



Make sure you do the Early Bird tours as the places fill us so fast. We were the only ones at Chichen Itza for an hour or so, so got some great photos before the crowds arrived. Make sure you have a guide as well as the information is incredible.

Club Med Cancun works on a different time frame from the rest of Cancun. They are 1 hour ahead so that they can capture the sunset at a better time but this can be a little confusing when you venture outside the gates. They will also only exchange USD, Euro or Canadian Dollars so make sure your pax change their AUD either at the airport into Mexican Pesos or into USD before heading over there. The exchange at the airport was better than you get on the streets. All shops and markets will take USD or Mexican Pesos. Make sure you barter at the markets. At least halve it and then see how you go. There is an ATM at the resorts main reception but for 2 days it had run out of money.

Club Med is at the start of the resorts along the Cancun peninsula. It is about a USD\$25 taxi ride for 4 into the heart of the nightclub area but well worth the journey. You can take the bus for USD\$10 each way but really a taxi is better and they are really clean. The other end of the peninsula is where the nightclub action is if you are so inclined. There are also loads of restaurants and other bars if you need to be part of the 'local' atmosphere and not just the resort atmosphere. Pricing is pretty reasonable outside the resort for food and drinks with Coronas only USD\$2 each.

I can't say the 20 hours of flying in 1 day was not great coming home but the flight was not so full from LA to Brisbane so we got a bit of room to spread out with at least one seat in-between us all. I do recommend that you don't do this in 1 week, enjoy the USA for longer while you are there but definitely venture down to Cancun Mexico and enjoy a wonderful relaxing or activity filled stay at Club Med as there is something to do for everyone in the family.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask and I will endeavour to answer them for you.

Regards
Cathy

