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Cayman Islands: Ritz-Carlton Grand Cayman



The opening of the Ritz-Carlton Grand Cayman was delayed by Hurricane Ivan in 2004.

By CAREN OSTEN GERSZBERG
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THE BASICS After a one-year delay — thanks to Hurricane Ivan of September 2004 — the long-planned Ritz-Carlton has finally opened its doors. Set on the island of Grand Cayman, a British territory and a thriving banking center, the Ritz is all about tasteful opulence, with partnerships with La Prairie spa and Eric Ripert, chef of Le Bernardin in New York, ratcheting up the luxury factor on an island already known for its first-rate diving and snorkeling.

THE LOCATION The hotel is set on 144 acres that extend from Seven Mile beach, a stretch of pure white sand along the Caribbean waters, to the North Sound. The Ritz-Carlton is divided into two buildings: one, the Waterway, faces the lagoon and houses the lobby, restaurants, spa and guest rooms; the other faces the ocean. The buildings are connected by a long, furnished corridor that doubles as a gallery of local art (for sale, of course). The Waterway rooms are the least expensive and also look out over a water channel, the hotel's smaller pool and the golf course (to be ready for play in April).

THE LOBBY Inside the front door, guests are greeted with a welcome table set with chocolate-chip cookies and fruit punch (there is a bottle of rum for those craving an instant tropical buzz). Just beyond is the Silver Palm Lounge and a smokers' terrace; the

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entire hotel is nonsmoking except for this terrace and the bar.

THE ROOMS The Ocean View double I stayed in was a comfortable size (480 square feet) with two queen beds covered in 600-thread-count linens from [Italy](#), and a balcony with two rattan chairs and a table overlooking the bigger pool and the beach beyond. Among the furnishings were a club chair, a marble-topped table, an armoire with TV and DVD player, and a desk equipped with high-speed Internet access (Wi-Fi Internet service is \$10 a day). A rattan ceiling fan circulated the air nicely.

THE BATHROOM The bathroom was spacious, light and basically nondescript (save for a missing trash can and a Siamese fighting fish that swam around a vase on the counter). I was hoping for La Prairie products, given the spa's presence on the property, but made do with the soaps, shampoo and conditioner from Lady Primrose.

AMENITIES Nick Bollettieri, a former instructor to [Andre Agassi](#) and [Monica Seles](#), is the name behind the tennis program (there are three clay courts and, for Wimbledon would-be's, one grass court), and the golf course was designed by [Greg Norman](#). The Silver Rain spa is the first in the Caribbean for La Prairie. Nature lovers of all ages can take part in a program linking ocean life and education by Jean-Michel Cousteau called Ambassadors of the Environment. (I loved both of my experiences — a kayak trip through nearby mangroves and snorkeling with a school of rays.)

ROOM SERVICE An extensive menu is available for 24-hour in-room dining with some limitations between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. — but still good choices like Caesar salad with sautéed shrimp (\$14.40) and a black truffle chicken club sandwich (\$12). The children's menu includes a grilled cheese and tomato sandwich with fries for \$7 and spaghetti with pomodoro sauce for \$6. A morning pot of coffee arrived at my door 11 minutes after it was ordered.

THE BOTTOM LINE Luxury doesn't come cheap at the Ritz. During the high season, through May, rates start at \$699 for a Waterway room and \$929 for an Ocean Front room, and go as high as \$5,000 for the 2,400-square-foot Ritz-Carlton suite overlooking the ocean. (Rates dip to \$299, Waterway, and \$499, Ocean Front, during the lowest season, Sept. 5 through October). Ritz-Carlton Grand Cayman, Post Office Box 32319, Seven Mile Beach, Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands, (345) 943-9000; www.ritzcarlton.com.

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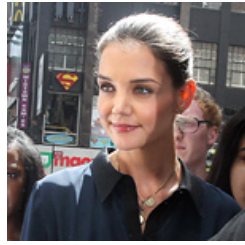


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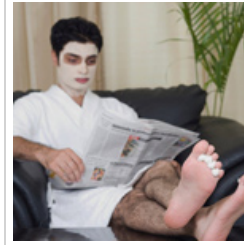
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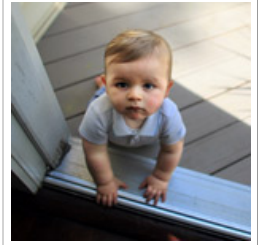
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