



ONE TANK TRIPS

By Ray Collins

Half the fun of going to South Seas Island Resort on Captiva is getting there. The tropical, winding, two-lane road from the Sanibel-Captiva toll booth to the resort itself is 15 miles of palm trees, glimpses of the Gulf of Mexico and the small village area of Captiva itself. The island's main road all but dead-ends into the resort where you check in and leave the real world behind. That 30-minute drive from the toll booth certainly sets the tone.

Established in 1972, this luxurious hideaway spans two and a half miles of shell-laden beaches framing the tranquil waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Despite being hit hard by Hurricane Charlie with devastating damage, outside of a few stubby trees in the wooded areas, it's hard to tell Charlie was ever here. A \$140 million dollar renovation has made the resort even better than it was before.

The royal blue hard-surface tennis courts are toward the front. The staff is friendly and helpful trying to set up matches. We took a lesson from the pro, and also got to hit with the assistant pro who was a solid 5.0 player.

South Seas hasn't been known as a hot-bed for tennis—but management is taking active steps to change that. Plans include increased efforts to step up the tennis program in the community with more clinics and more tournaments.

It's a unique lay-out at Southseas. There are condos, tennis courts and a small pool at the front of the resort. And then a couple miles down the interior road,



restaurants, a marina and pools. (You can rent bikes, take the free trolley, or drive your own car to get back and forth.)

There are 465 guest rooms and you have six different options for accommodations. They range from renting a private residence in a Marina Villa, or the

Harbourside Guestrooms which provide the convenience of a hotel. Rates fluctuate depending on the time of year.

The main pool complex includes a waterslide, a jacuzzi, and private cabanas that can be rented by the day. One of the pools includes a "zero entry" shallow end, the kind you can walk right into from the deck. The pools are literally just a few feet from Pine Island South. It's a stunning juxtaposition—a pair of beautiful and active pools on the banks of the tranquil water.

There's an adjacent restaurant called "The Point" featuring a Carib-

bean grill menu. It's one of several restaurants on the grounds that range from fine dining to beachy casual.

The yacht harbor is over 2 thousand feet of dock that can accommodate boats up to 130 feet long.

The 9-hole "executive golf course" features nearly continual views of the Gulf.

Just outside the front gate is a shopping area where you can get anything from a bathing suit to a cup of coffee. Yes, Starbucks has even invaded this little piece of unspoiled paradise.

There are also half a dozen Old Florida restaurants within half a mile of South Seas—including the popular Green Flash restaurant. That's named after that elusive split-second of green that's been said to flash just as the sun sets.

Food isn't a problem on or around campus, nor are different things to do. Enjoy the drive, enjoy the view, and be sure to hit some tennis balls while you're there!



Ray Collins plays 4.5 tennis in Sarasota and owns a media company. For information, go to RayCollinsMedia.com.

LUXURY, LEISURE AND TENNIS at the Tip of Captiva

