



I used to live in Ft. Myers/Naples—and going to Sanibel/Captiva was as exciting as going to Niagara Falls when I grew up in Buffalo. But that was then.

Captivating CAPTIVA

WHEN I LIVED IN SOUTHWEST

FLORIDA in the late 80's and early 90's, I recall how rickety the bridge to Sanibel used to be. But just like how Sarasota upgraded to the beautiful Ringling Causeway, Lee County also built a sensational span onto the islands.

Before Erin and I drove out to the northern tip of Captiva for our 24-hours at the South Seas Island Resort, we wanted to stop for lunch at the iconic Cheeburger Cheeburger. I told her it was a half-mile up Periwinkle Way, but she said the GPS was telling her otherwise. (I recall a scene from the TV show "The Office" where Michael

honored the GPS directions and drove into a pond.) I recalled where the restaurant had been 20 years earlier and didn't need technology to tell me otherwise.

Turned out the restaurant had moved.

A short-time after I had egg on my face, I replaced it with ketchup. We had a great lunch, complete with fries, a drink and ice cream for dessert. The new location is four times the size of the previous one and getting seated and receiving great service was a breeze. (www.cheeburger.com.)

Refreshed from our pit-stop, we enjoyed the 30-minute winding drive

northwest to our secluded destination. This drive is truly beautiful—and reminds me of the expression, "enjoy the process not just the final product."

We stayed in one of the nicest units I've ever seen in a resort. I was shocked to unlock the door and see a full kitchen, dining room, living room, bedroom, view of a pool and the Gulf of Mexico...and a staircase to another level! Upstairs was two more bedrooms and another bathroom! Wow!

We went back out and walked a few hundred yards to a plaza across from the entry gate where we rented bikes for our stay. We toured the nooks and



crannies of the “village of Captiva.” There is beach access at the foot of each road, as well as restaurants and shops along the streets.

Coming back inside the resort, we rode our bikes for a mile to reach the main pool, restaurants and a view of the Gulf of Mexico. Each seat was taken and families were everywhere. Make no mistake, this is a resort that is family-friendly!

We saw a wedding party convening on the grass in a secluded area overlooking the gulf. Truly storybook. I was struck by the colors of the bright green grass, the deep blue sky, and the stark white chairs lined up for the ceremony. Erin noticed the adjacent tables and place settings, complete with lights overhead for the evening’s fun. (Last time I was at South Seas, it was for a good friend’s wedding. The ceremony was flawless, but unfortunately the marriage was not.)

We had time for a quick game of tennis on the resort’s freshly-painted hard courts. We wish we had time for the fitness center, a yoga class, water-sport rentals, an island cruise, or golf

on the nine-hole executive course. We’ll have to come back.

We returned to our two-story suite and changed for dinner. We were able to catch a trolley back to the gulf-side restaurants. (South Seas Island Resort is shaped a bit like the letter “H” on its side: Activities in the front and back—connected by a long road lined with beautiful homes and condos.)

We had a wonderful lobster dinner along the water at the Harbourside Bar & Grill, complete with baked potatoes and broccoli. Erin had Pinot noir while I went for a cold beer. The meal was 5-star and the service was impeccable. It was the most relaxing stress-reducing meal I’ve had in a long time.

We took the trolley back to our suite and turned in for the evening.

We brought along our own bagels and enjoyed the provided coffee in the kitchen. The appliances and settings are in place for a full meal, but we weren’t that motivated. Plus we didn’t want to be late for our his-and-her massages across from the guard gate at the Kay Casperson Spa. Even though we have completely different



preferences (deep-tissue versus light), we both had wonderful experiences.

We returned to our suite for a final time, loaded the car and headed back out to that wonderful tropical drive back across that nice bridge and reluctantly rejoined the rest of the world.

We hope to make this an annual visit. — Ray Collins