

Majestic Elegance: A Luxury Resort at a Middle Class Price

Five Stars for the Middle Class ? ? ? ? ?.

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A young couple stood midway down on the curving stairway leading from the upper entrance lobby to the vast lower lobby whose open arches lead to the gardens, wedding chapel and outdoor nightly jazz club. A little back from the base of the stairs, a tall, slim man in a light blue shirt and dark slacks took a picture of the couple.

It is a friendly gesture for staff members to help guests take home photo memories. When he returned the camera, I asked if he were a security guard. I was thinking that this was mighty well-mannered person in such a low-level job. He said, "No, I am the manager."

My jaw went slack. I was taken back by the fact that a manager would be doing something so mundane and trivial as taking a photo of guests.

That is how I met Jose Gutierrez, the general manager of the five star Majestic Elegance in Punta Cana, the Dominican Republic — a French-trained chef and a son of Spanish parents living in Paris.

As it ended up, it is his casually helpful manner and cuisine skills around which revolve the workings and success of this resort.

Service in the Service Industry

Gutierrez spends most of his working hours in the front of the house.

Most of us in the travel business think of a manager spending most of his time in his office. Of this Gutierrez says, "In the service business you can not receive second hand information from your staff. It is always better to be there and know exactly what is going on. Besides the rules of this house are against management spending most of the time in an office when the show is running. We respect the way others manage their properties, but we think they do not have the same results."

Over the past seven years, I have stayed and/or dined at many of the high-end and large resorts in the DR. There were times when the beds were more like used military cots, pancakes were served burnt and even the Dominican staple at breakfast, mangu (supposed to be hot), was served cold. Two of those single cot-beds would be pushed together for a honeymoon couple who requested a king size bed. That does not quite make it for American standards, does it?

Most of those resorts are closed, upgraded themselves in the face of honest competition or vacationers have moved to the



Jose Gutierrez, general manager of the new Majestic Elegance, Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, at his vantage point where he surveys all he rules.

newly built, modern, luxury resorts, particularly on the Dominican Republic's east coast. Of which the Majestic Elegance is one.

6.5 Restaurants, Plus One What?

The "point five" derives from the all-day lounge with continental breakfast and light lunch in each of the two sections of the adults-only Elegance Club. These are on the beach end of the two wings of the resort.

Each Elegance Club wing has one bedroom suites on the beach, a roped-off private beach area, an exclusive-use pool with Bali beds and swim-up suites for garden level units. Each suite has a Jacuzzi, as do all the units at the resort. Better than home.

The problem with such a set up is it makes life so much better than home, so much more replete with creature comforts, that home seems entirely inadequate. On the plus side, you

wanna come back for this sort of treatment real soon. Hence the origin of the word: re-sort. Makes sense, yes?

The plus one: to have five stars, a resort has gotta have a 24-hour restaurant. And these guys got one that cannot be beat — it is comfy, cozy, and very private. It is the guests' own room. Late night champagne supper in the Jacuzzi would do, yes? 24-hour room service included. Yes, included. Spoil yourself rotten.

One thing that makes for luxury is not only escaping the hum-drum of our day to day routine, but also getting more than we expect. So it is with the restaurants, of which there are six — sort of.

By way of example, breakfast and lunch in Flavours international buffet restaurant.

At home breakfast is fast-food time. Emphasis on fast. There is a continental breakfast on the beach in the palapa hut and breakfast for the club guests in a private table-service dining room.

But most guests eat at the buffet. And for good reason: variety, quality and speed. Find what you want at ten stations. No waiting. OK, sounds like other buffets. So what is the big deal? Well, success lies in the details.

One of the details here is the omelets. At most resorts there is and omelet station with a line. Who wants to wait for eggs while the rest of your food on the plate gets cold? Or show up at the table and others have finished their meal while you were online? The cooks make a variety of mini omelets which are on the warm table for you to chose from "now." Take two or three different kinds. No waiting. Nice touch.

Nice Touches

The main dining room and the restaurant on the beach both have paella. None of the "only for two and it will be 45 minutes before you get it," routine. It is there every day, on the buffet, ready to eat now. As much as you want. How many resorts can you count that have paella served like this.

And for dinner, chose the buffet and a man can go in wearing shorts. A bathing suit and a shirt, if you wish. As a rule, resorts require slacks for men at dinner, even in the buffet. My question is: Whose vacation is this anyway?

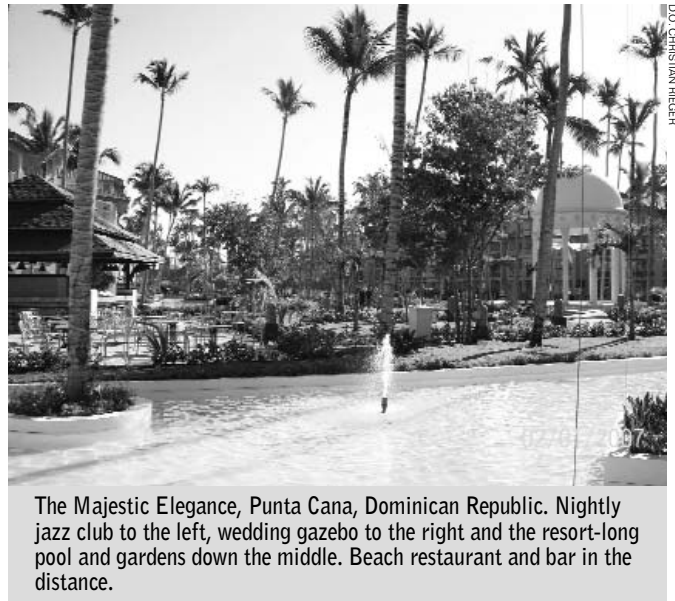
Apparently it is the Majestic Elegance's question as well. They have decided it is ours. So, no slacks it is. But for the other dining rooms, the steak house, the continental, the Italian, the Japanese, have a dress code.

The Suite Side of Life

The Majestic Elegance has 600 rooms distributed in two different wings with 4 room types in each section.

Majestic Elegance has pool and garden view rooms accommodating up to four adults and and children. It is for adults 18 years and older.

Have a dog or cat whose middle name is Spoiled Rotten?



The Majestic Elegance, Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. Nightly jazz club to the left, wedding gazebo to the right and the resort-long pool and gardens down the middle. Beach restaurant and bar in the distance.

Now it is your turn. The Majestic Jr. Suite is on the first floor of the club sections with direct access to the swimming pool and small garden and an indoor and outdoor Jacuzzi. Max equals two people.

All suites throughout the resort have walk in showers with European style hose type shower and an overhead, rain type showerhead with three side shoots that actually work. The latter will be everyone's favorite because you are immersed in water, like a strong rain shower, but warm and v e r r y comfortable. And heady. All units have flat screen TV's and Internet connection (pay for use).

There are nine bars (All scheduled for different times of the day), including the fast service, swim up bar in the 1300 foot lagoon style, zig zag pool. Not a day went by that people were not having a grand time among friends and new friends. Wanna speak with the manager? Chose tea time at the main lobby bar.

And off course there is the casino, located at the Majestic Colonial at a two-minute walk, gym, spa, golf near by (328 yards away from the hotel), a very large, better-than-Las-Vegas theater with over-stuffed wicker chairs, supervised kids club for children, Nintendo's for children in kids club, Caribbean street with boutiques (jewelry, cigars, souvenirs, mini market, photo shop, pharmacy, clothes), gazebo for weddings, 24-hour medical center, two integrated Jacuzzis within the main swimming pool, ATM machine, lighted tennis courts, ping pong, pool tables, darts and a soccer field. Elevators in each building. Handicap rooms available.

July and august rates per couple per room range from \$1560.00 for a standard junior suite to \$2820.00 for a elegance club ocean front suite

**Majestic Hotels, Info@majesticresorts.com,
www.majesticresorts.com/en/H2/HotelMajesticElegancePuntaCana.aspx**