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Meeting Elmo and Sesame Street Friends at Beaches Turks and Caicos Resort

A Caribbean vacation at a Beaches resort was the best vacation idea for my family. Sesame Street-themed activities entertained the kids while couples-only activities entertained the adults.

By **Judy Koutsky** | January 23, 2012



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As a mom of two small boys, a 3-year-old and an 11-month-old, I loved the idea of vacationing at the Beaches Turks and Caicos family resort in the Caribbean. I had heard about the resort from other families with small kids. It was such a hit with them, they returned there year after year. For most families, the resort's biggest draw is its partnership with Sesame Street (The Caribbean Adventure with Sesame Street), which includes themed activities and a drop-off kids' camp. My older son loves Elmo and his other Sesame Street friends and I loved the idea of a camp, a perfect solution for adults who want to spend some time alone. Most resorts don't allow kids under 3 years old, so it was great to find a place that accepts little tykes, giving parents a break.

The resort was a quick 10-minute ride from the airport (short car rides are essential when traveling with kids) and JetBlue offered direct service out of New York (nonstop flights are another must). We stayed in the Italian Village section of the resort, the newest of the three village accommodations,

which had suites with plenty of room to spread out. Even better, the suites had separate kids' rooms with bunk beds and cribs (upon request).

Enjoying a Sesame Street Extravaganza

The camp is open from 9:00 to 5:00 during the day and from 6:00 to 9:00 in the evening, and is part of the all-inclusive package, so it doesn't cost extra. The camp even gives parents a special cell phone (also at no additional cost) to use in case any problems come up; this gave us an added sense of security (and we were happy it was never used). At the camp, there's a plethora of activities: Story Time with Elmo, Explore with Grover, Dance with Zoe, and Bake with Cookie Monster. Depending on when you drop off the kids, camp counselors will take older kids to lunch and dinner. Babies are fed on premises with the food parents provide.

My husband and I didn't enroll our kids in camp the first day -- we wanted to hit the beach first -- but we dropped them off the following afternoon before our couples' massage. When we had a "date night," the kids played at camp in the evening. Although we felt some guilt for not spending all our time with our sons, the kids loved the camp as much as we loved having a few hours to ourselves. My older son made friends instantly, and he enjoyed all the activities and the super-energetic counselors. The baby also did really well with the specially trained and loving babysitters.

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Making a Splash at Pirate's Island Waterpark

water park

Even better, there are other Sesame Street-themed activities going on every day, so the kids never get bored. There's a weekly parade, a nightly stage show, and character interactions throughout the day. Two of our favorite activities included the character tuck-in at bedtime and the character breakfast (both require additional charges). After putting our kids in their pj's, we told them a special guest was coming to bedtime. A knock at the door revealed Elmo, wearing his own pj's. He did some "nighttime stretches" with the kids and then read them a story from an oversize book. After posing for a few pictures, Elmo tucked them into bed and said good night. (This was the highlight of the trip for my older son.) At the character breakfast, all the Sesame Street characters walked around greeting little diners. They stopped for photos, danced, and played with kids at each table. At the end, there was a big Conga line dance party.

Of course, there's more to the resort for the whole family than just Sesame Street. There are several swimming pools with small wading areas and there's an expanse of beachfront space. There's also plenty to love at the Pirate's Island Waterpark. The 45,000-square-foot water haven is one of the largest aquatic playgrounds in the Caribbean, with seven water slides. A 650-foot lazy river glides swimmers through a enchanting mermaid trail, past a mystical grotto, and under a gushing waterfall. For older kids, there's a SurfStream simulator (a wave machine that lets kids try out surfing in a safe environment) and a pirate ship to explore with cannons, slides, and water sprays.

When everyone is hungry and it's time to eat, the 16 resort restaurants make it easy to find something for even the pickiest palate. Our family pick was Kimonos, the hibachi-style restaurant with a talented chef who entertained the kids with knife tricks, food flips, and humor.

What really made this a special vacation was that we enjoyed so much as a family. As parents, we had enough downtime for relaxing at the spa and the beach, and dining at the adults-only Le Petit Chateau. Meanwhile, the kids were constantly being entertained with fun Sesame Street activities, at and away from camp. Spending time apart made our together time extra meaningful and memorable -- a win-win for everyone.

Beaches Turks and Caicos

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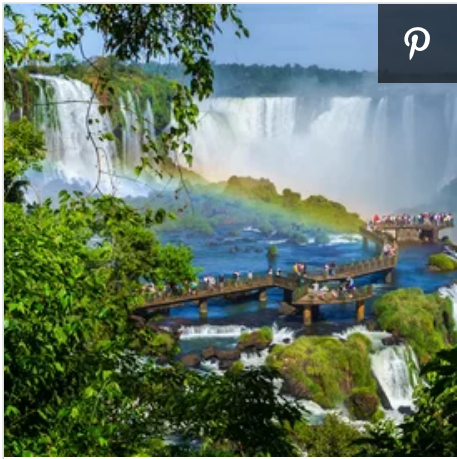
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By Judy Koutsky



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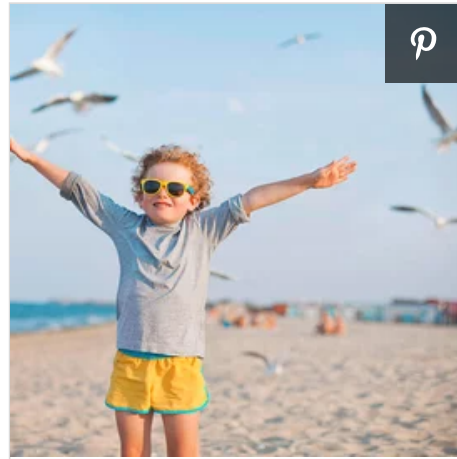
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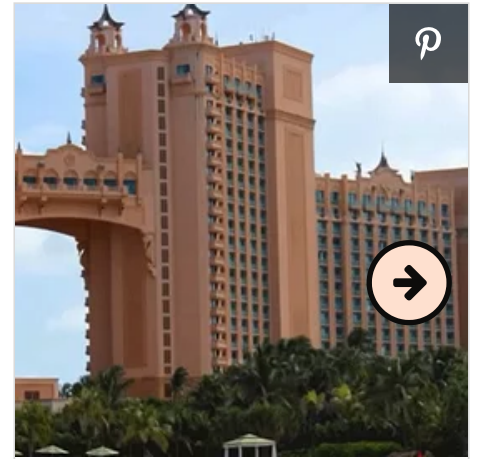
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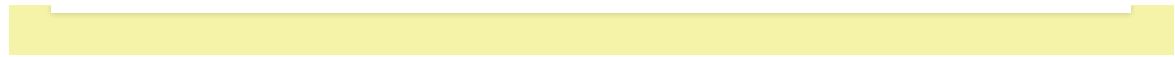


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