

# Turks and Caicos, Feb 2016

## Places we stayed this trip:

### **“Meridian Club”, Pine Cay Turks and Caicos.**

Meridian club at Pine cay is well known for being INFESTED with no-see-ums. There is very poor maintenance (toilet barely worked, bikes non-functional for examples). Menus are much less varied than the website claims with skimpy portions. An expensive “all inclusive” should include wine with meals and transportation to get around the island (since bikes do not work, the golf carts should not cost the extra \$20 per hour).

The Meridian Club is grossly over-priced. The “hotel” is essentially a fund-raiser for the Homeowners association.

### **“Villa Del Mar”, Providenciales (Provo), Turks and Caicos,**

The Villa Del Mar was just perfect – close to the beach, quiet, comfortable rooms and swimming pools. A perfect place to relax between island activities. The staff was all so helpful and friendly. Making us want to return. It is walking distance to town, the beach and many restaurants... both fancy and “local” with wonderful offerings. We had some “bad” weather, and it did not matter as we relaxed in the pool as the wind howled overhead.

**Fish identifications** are done using three guides by Paul Humann and Ned DeLoach titled “Reef Fish”, “Reef Creatures” and “Reef Coral”. The “Fish” book is only fish, the “Creatures” book includes many genera including arthropods, cephalopods, mollusks, worms, sponges, jellyfish and more. The “Coral” book includes many types of corals, algae and sea plants. Sometimes confirmation includes searching the hypothesized fish in Google images. The fish, algae and land animals are identified with a high confidence but the sponges and corals are to a lesser degree of confidence. Often algae imbed themselves in sponges, making them green or purple when the base color is brown, for example. Identification corrections are welcome!

## About the Photography:

Bob used a “**GoPro 4 Black**” and Sharon used a **RICOH WG4** underwater camera. Both are excellent cameras. Most of the land pictures used an iPhone 6S.

To get good pictures underwater, the key is getting close to your subject. Try to shoot on sunny days. When diving down, be careful of your bubbles, as many great shots get ruined by bunches of tiny bubbles between you and the subject. Most pictures are then shoved through Photoshop where “Auto Levels” removes constant background colors and some (few) needed “Shadows/Highlights” adjustments if in dark shadow of a cave or coral. I never use color balance or Hue/Saturation alterations. The pictures were then loaded into iPhoto for rotation and cropping. The iPhoto “Export/Web page” function was used to build the index sets for the webpage. The controlling “buttons” in the website are simply hand written in HTML pointing to the iPhoto built sets.

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## Restaurants (With “\*” ratings)

\* **“The Flamingo Café”** The four of us ordered different menu items, but they all were the same, packaged slightly differently and very mediocre in flavor with a pittance of filling. It was very disappointing.

\*\* **“Meridian Club”** Lunches were nearly vegetarian with very meager portions of meat. Dinner portions were skimpy. Of our 5 dinners, two were sent back as being awful, but the second offering was good. Inconsistency is a real problem there. Often the servers were curt – we experienced this when we asked for more than 2 slices of bacon at breakfast or more than a thin shaving of Prime Rib.

\*\*\* **“Magnolia Wine Bar & Restaurant”** The Tuna was great but the lamb was cold and muttoney. The servers were surly and inept. The view was spectacular. We will surely go back even with the shortcomings. They really need to think about staff training.

\*\*\*\*\* **“Mango Reef”** We enjoyed fresh fish and our waiter Felecia was wonderful. We shared a large portion of Mahi Mahi that was perfectly prepared. Being right on the harbor, the atmosphere was wonderful. This is a place to come to more than once.

\*\*\*\*\* **“Big Al’s Island Burger”** This local eatery makes a delicious burger in many variations. Their pretzel bread bun was wonderful. Their tenderloin was perfectly prepared and an excellent cut.

\*\*\*\*\* **“Three Queens”** This is a real island treat. We had the fish and ribs and both were very good. It is a truly local establishment with all the character and flavor that includes. It is a wonderful place to stop.

\*\*\*\*\* **“Caribbean Café”** where we enjoyed a delicious chicken Roti that was so authentic and perfect. The atmosphere is local with Asian overtones. The food is all made with excellence by Miss Doreen and oh, so delicious. It is easy to get to, being close to the airport. Don’t miss it!

\*\*\*\*\* **“Bugaloo's”** We enjoyed Fish Fingers and Lobster and both were absolutely perfectly prepared. The seating was outside at the amazing tables that wrap around the trees with the sea providing the backdrop. The staff was very helpful and delightful. This place is definitely worth the bumpy road to get there.

\*\*\*\*\* **“Seaside Café”**: There is seating either near the bar and live music, or up on an open deck facing the ocean. We chose a table nearest to the ocean and it was delightful. We had lobster and Fish & Chips and both were excellent. The staff were all very friendly and helpful. This is a great place for a relaxing dinner or...

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## Beaches and Snorkel Sites:

**Reef north of Pine Cay:** A boat is needed to get there, but the snorkeling was spectacular with squid, octopus, large Nassau grouper and so much more. The reef is very healthy and full of sponges, corals, sea fans, sea whips and thousands of fish.

**“The Aquarium”** is a bay between Pine Cay and Water Cay on the south side of the islands. Many fish congregate as a nursery. There were many upside down jellyfish there and also saw porcupine fish, barracuda grey snappers and two lionfish. There was also a small turtle. It was too far away to get a good look at it (green or hawksbill).