

REVIEW: Trump International in Panama



I had very high expectations for this hotel. It was essentially the highest rated luxury hotel in Panama City, and Trump hotels generally have great service and well thought out

and luxurious accommodations. However, I should've known something was off when I arrived and the front desk wasn't even staffed.

You see, this hotel was originally developed as a condotel (Hotel + Condo units). Many didn't sell, and as a result this happened: Condos not doing so well at Trump Panama. The result is a grand plan for a stunning hotel, crippled by high vacancy rates and low staffing. The rooms at the hotel weren't terrible, except that they hadn't seemed to have been well thought out. For one, Panama is a very hot environment, and there's a significant amount of humidity. Whenever the patio door was opened, condensation would form on the massive marble floors making them downright scary to walk on.

The rooms also lacked any real separation between the bathroom and the beds which was odd, and due to the shape of the building there were odd acute angles which made the rooms seem smaller than they actually were. My neighbor also approached me in the hallway one day to tell me his A/C hadn't been working the entire duration of his stay and the front desk wouldn't give him a different room when it was obvious that the hotel was at high vacancy.

The gym was large, but the equipment was old and needed changing. The pool had an amazing view, but the chairs had rust developing on them, and there never seemed to be sun because most of the pool area was blocked by the building during the middle of the day.



The rooms weren't terribly decorated but had odd space planning



The pool may look stunning in the pictures but the view is of swampland and the building blocks most of the sun

PROS:

- The low price of the hotel makes up for its lackluster performance
- The hotel is easy to find because of its size

CONS:

- The decor is spartan and of low quality
- The dining options at the hotel are subpar
- The pool is one of the highlights due to its view, but look closely and you'll notice that its located right above swampland and the sun is blocked most of the time by the building itself
- The service is mediocre at best

SECRETS:

- Use UBER for quick travel to and from destinations
- Check out the rooftop bar which is accessible from the side entrance where the Casino is
- Before booking here, I would recommend looking at the Hard Rock International as an alternative option

OTHER STUFF IN PANAMA:

- Getting lost in Casco Viejo is a great way to spend a day or two (or three in my case). There's a lot of restaurants and other interesting sights in the old section of Panama but one place that I really enjoyed was Tantaló. It's a hotel but with a restaurant downstairs and a bar upstairs. It's got great views of the city from the rooftop, and when downstairs you've got a variety of delicious tapas and drinks. Definitely check this place out!
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REVIEW: The Turtle Bay Resort in Oahu

The very last trip I took before throwing my life on the internet was this one a few weeks ago at the end of April. I will preface this by saying, **It's Not the Ritz, but it ain't bad.**

I attended my buddy's wedding and stayed at two different locations while on the trip. The first few days were at the Turtle Bay North Shore Resort which happened to be my very first experience there. The last few days were at the Trump Waikiki.



The views from the hotel were exquisite, and although I was a bit hesitant to pay the close to \$3,000 tab for just a short three nights (In their defense I did book very last minute,

and opted for an UPGRADED ROOM – be careful to do this as some of the other rooms are OLD), I must say that it was quite an experience and well worth it. A majority of my expenses also coincided with in-resort activities such as the spa (well worth it), and the dining experiences throughout the hotel.

Total Payments

-2941.98

Balance Due 0.00

I have received the goods and / or services in the amount shown hereon. I agree that my liability for this bill is not waived and agree to be held personally liable in the event that the indicated person, company, or association fails to pay for any part or the full amount of these charges. If a credit card charge, I further agree to perform the obligations set forth in the cardholder's agreement with the issuer.

Guest Signature: _____

57-091 Kamehameha Hwy, Kahuku, Oahu, Hawaii 96731
Phone 808.293.6000 | Toll Free 1.800.203.3650 | Reservations 1.866.827.5321



So as I test and iterate my blog i'm going to start off with a format where I go with the pro's and con's of the hotel that I chose (usually a Ritz, but not in all cases), and then a synopsis of whether I think it was a good choice. I'll also throw in some interesting tidbits of the actual location and places I think are worth visiting while you're at the locale that i'm blogging about.

PROS:

- Lots of privacy – this place is on a peninsula, and it is beautiful, surrounded by water on almost 270 degrees and with its own private beach, cabanas, an incredible restaurant at the golf course, and its own nightclub where locals from the North shore come to hang out
- Impeccable attention to service and detail – the staff were well trained, greeted everyone and tried their best to remember names when they could. One day the elevator went out and we had to use the service elevator and

staff did their best to maintain decorum even when they had to use the service elevator for purposes of running the hotel

- I'm a foodie, and the food here was actually pretty impressive for being a resort. Most resorts suffer greatly when it comes to dining options, but knowing that their guests are basically 20-30 miles from the nearest major city (Remember, this is North Shore Oahu), they went ahead and spent the money to develop a stand up menu.



- The food options on the North Shore aren't actually terrible. There is a conglomerate of food trucks just a few miles southwest of Turtle Bay towards Hale Ewa town and you can find plenty of grub there

CONS:

- Well if you like nightlife, the only option is the club

downstairs in the hotel, that's about it. Unless you want to ride in a (often hard to find) uber/lyft back to the south shore of the island and hang out in Honolulu

- The rooms, albeit nice, have very thin walls. You would think for resort oriented towards couples and umm, lovers, you'd have thicker walls, unless the concert of love is what they were going for.
- The pool was very nice but needed some upgrades, it was showing some wear and tear


SECRETS:

- If you get a chance, try to book the oceanside villas, or one of the Turtle Bay multi-bedroom villas and split it with your friends. The Oceanside Villas come with some cool little toys including a **very badass Hawaiian wood guitar** for you to play with and some **high end binoculars** from which you can watch the whales all in the comfort of your own room. The multi-bedroom villas are relatively cheap for what you get and the price breakdown makes more sense than the regular rooms. They are spacious, newly appointed, and well equipped.
- If you need a drink early in the morning (don't judge), you can always go to the bar at the golf club, it's 5'o clock there 24/7.

OTHER STUFF IN OAHU

- Having been to the islands quite a bit growing up, due to family being there and all, i'm often asked what to do when you're in Oahu. Here are a few of my faves:
 - Visit the trucks on the North Shore, Giovanni's is the original shrimp truck and go for the garlic scampi, but if you can't make it there, there's another group of trucks next to the Trump Hotel in Honolulu which does the same job
 - Go to Hanauama Bay and snorkel the hell out of that place. Try to go early in the morning before

there's too many people in the water and the sediment is kicked up – making it hard to see the fishies. Bring your own packed lunch because its hard to find food around there when you're exhausted and done trying to maintain flotation trying to snap that perfect fish selfie

- Eat Eat Eat – Yelp has a great variety of suggestions but I recommended Sweet E's Cafe for brunch or breakfast, it's incredible stuff-yourself-to-the-gills breakfast and brunch food. There's a reason why people get big on the islands, the food is amazing, and you couldn't surf enough to salvage that calories in vs. calories out thing if you started exploring all the spots in Honolulu
- Have a drink at the original Dukes Waikiki. This is where the King drank, and surfed, and drank some more. Beautiful views at sunset, add a 151 floater to your drink and be a beast about it, I swear all your worries will melt away. If this place is too busy, go next door to the beautifully restored plantation-esque environment that is the Moana Surfrider and enjoy those same views next to 100+ year old Banyan tree sitting right in the middle of the bar. 
- If you want to go to one of the top 10 beaches in the world, it's at Kailua, on the Northeast side of Oahu. This white sand stretch is beautiful, and one of my favorite things to do is rent a car, throw on my board shorts and sandals, pick a direction, and just drive from beach to beach until the sun sets. Hawaii was made for this type of lackadaisical approach and I recommend you try it out!

