



# gulfside getaway

*The newly renovated suites at Edgewater Beach Hotel in Naples offer a stylish dimension to the city on the Gulf—and a perfect place for your next great escape.*

**By Linda Marx**

With a colorful lobby emulating the energy of South Beach and renovated suites resembling what you might expect on an exotic Caribbean island, The Edgewater Beach Hotel in Naples is perfect for a family weekend getaway.

The only all-suite beachfront hotel in Naples, the Edgewater Beach has a long and lasting relationship with this charming west coast Florida city. The hotel is located on 250 feet of sandy white beach along the Gulf of Mexico, where warm water, beautiful sunsets and outdoor sports enjoyed in balmy weather make this beach area a perfect weekend respite for families, couples or singles seeking solitude and a few healthy days of sun, swimming, boating, cycling and shopping. (And yes, fine dining.)



OPPOSITE: The warmly lit lobby of the Edgewater Beach Hotel; the famous Naples pier at sunset; the hotel pool overlooking the Gulf.

But don't assume the pace is always slow. After a recent trip to the Edgewater Beach, I was amazed that the once laid-back, Gulf of Mexico resort town has grown up. Not only does it attract many Europeans and Canadians to give it an international flair, but Naples comes alive with excellent restaurants, polished poolside bars and late-night clubs.

Nearby, the Waterside Shops at Pelican Bay houses high-end shopping like Saks Fifth Ave., Louis Vuitton, Burberry and Cartier. Boutique shopping and gallery browsing are also the main attraction on Fifth Ave. South and Third St. South, two quaint areas in Old Naples oozing old Florida charm. The Naples Art Museum has a Dale Chihuly glass ceiling and top impressionists; the city has a philharmonic orchestra; and the romantic Opera Naples offers wonderful entertainment with a whiff of Naples, Italy. For the children, visit the zoo, lagoon waterpark, swamp sanctuary, or take a trek to Everglades National Park.

Back at the hotel, there are plenty of kids' programs to hold their interest when they aren't enjoying the Edgewater Beach's two outdoor heated pools (one is a two-lane lap pool) and oversized poolside chess game.

The hotel has a Four Diamond rating with 125 redesigned one- and two-bedroom suites. Each has a living room, dining area, modern kitchen and glass balcony with views of the Gulf, pool or palm-lined courtyard. The suites are created in a sophisticated coastal design, modern but not cold. Ours was done in soothing blue with neutral accents to reflect the tones of sand and sea, decorated with artwork highlighting Naples scenes and smooth glass mosaics.

The suite's kitchen is appointed with dark wood floors, a shimmering blue tile backsplash, beautiful full-sized stainless steel appliances, and an eat-on granite kitchen bar. A Keurig coffee-maker, toaster and microwave, and a full supply of round-edged white china selections, modern glassware and functional flatware are at the ready for families who want to dine in.

At the center of the bedroom is a comfy king-sized bed dressed with white linens and fluffy pillows. A large flat-screen TV, iPod docking stations and free Wi-Fi fulfill the needs of technophiles.

Best of all, families can spend the day doing what they love. For those who just want to lounge on the beach, the hotel has private umbrellas, tents and beach beds for rent. Paddle boarding and other water activities are encouraged, as the Gulf is generally calm and flat. Others may want to sit around the pool and read, enjoy a light lunch and drinks at the pool bar, or just snooze in the gentle breeze. There is a hotel fitness center, and massage therapists will visit guest rooms on request. (Late afternoons, plates of homemade cookies with milk are placed on a lobby table for guests to enjoy.)

Cyclists will be happy here in Naples, where bike rentals are available everywhere, and the hotel can make arrangements for

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: The Fifth Avenue shopping district in Downtown Naples; a fire pit on the beach; the beach view from the hotel; a roomy, comfortable suite; an elegant plate from the Coast restaurant.



you if you're interested in taking a spin. Besides enjoying new vistas, breathing fresh air and traveling from one destination to another without the frustration of traffic congestion, you're bound to spot a lot of cyclists around the hotel and the entire Naples area, since there are so many foreign tourists who love to spend holidays there.

At dusk, ride the hotel's electric trolley to the historic section of town. The Naples Pier, which stretches serenely out to sea, is the scene of colorful sunsets that grow more beautiful as winter turns to spring, and it's a favorite spot for strolling, fishing, and gazing at the famous Naples sunsets.

Wind down the day with a cocktail in the Edgewater Beach's colorful and fluid lobby bar, followed by dinner at the Coast restaurant, which extends outside onto a romantic terrace overlooking a raging fire pit. We enjoyed heirloom tomato and buffalo mozzarella salad with fresh basil and aged balsamic before entrées of pan-seared grouper with lime risotto and buttery broccolini and delicious Tanglewood chicken with rainbow Swiss chard and root vegetable hash. For dessert, the flight of cakes—coconut, chocolate, key lime, strawberry shortcake and tiramisu—was the ideal sweet ending. The next morning, with the sun shining and the birds chirping, we enjoyed breakfast on the same terrace overlooking a lone sailboat gliding along the peaceful waters of the Gulf. After indulging three days of such laid-back luxury, I felt both calm and invigorated. And what could be bad about that?

*Edgewater Beach Hotel, 1901 Gulf Shore Blvd. North, Naples, 239-403-2000; www.edgewaternaples.com.*

