



AS LUXE WOULD HAVE IT

COSTA RICA'S EXCLUSIVE RESORTS FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA

A private beach on the Exclusive Resort property.



by **BARBARA BARTON SLOANE**

What's your idea of a great vacation? A destination on your dream bucket-list, good friends to join you, amazing activity options, beautiful surroundings and fine service – perfect, right? Who could ask for anything more? Well, actually you could. There's something that can make your dream vacay utter perfection. And what is that, you ask. Two words: *Exclusive Resorts*.

62

Exclusive Resorts is an elite, private vacation club that takes your get-away a bit further, from the merely nice into the realm of the truly exceptional where, as a member, you'll enjoy access to hundreds of luxury, multi-million dollar residences in dozens of the best destinations in the world, coupled with the brand's hallmark, personalized service that handles all the details. At each re-

sort there is a dedicated Service Manager to assist with every aspect of planning your trip and an on-site team at your chosen destination will insure that all is ready when you arrive. Imagine what you can do with *nothing to do*.

From the beaches of Maui or Los Cabos, the ski slopes of Vail and Telluride to the cities of San Francisco and New York - or sailing aboard *The World* - the extensive choice of world-class destinations is yours and as a member you can do it again and again, year after year.

My Exclusive Resorts experience took place in wild and wonderful Costa Rica, that Central American country replete with sandy beaches, grand adventures, wonders of nature and scintillating culture. Specifically, I was on the peninsula of Papagayo in the northwest Guanacaste region of the country, surrounded by a volcanic landscape of high cliffs and rocky Pacific Ocean coves. Its



A fairytale-like scene in Costa Rica.

interior is crisscrossed by river rapids, waterfalls, and verdant forests full of wildlife. Think monkeys and toucans and much, much more. In recent years, Papagayo has evolved into an ecotourism destination with several hotels and scores of outdoor activities that range from adventurous to relaxing.

The Papagayo Peninsula is one of Exclusive Resorts' flagship destinations located within 30 acres of lush jungle and my residence was a sumptuous two-story, four-bedroom affair that sat on a hilltop with grand ocean views and a private infinity pool. Shortly after I arrived, so did my in-suite masseuse who performed her magical maneuvers on this writer, somewhat dazed but deliriously happy, whose journey from big city to remote jungle was accomplished in just a few short, head-spinning hours. The therapist set up her massage table on my expansive patio with the sea shimmering in the distance, a decidedly pleasant way to be welcomed to Exclusive Resorts!

During my stay I dined al fresco by the pool under a star-splashed sky at the Poro Poro Beach Club, the resort's on-site restaurant. Surrounded by exotic flora and fauna and jungley sounds, this was a repast to remember with great food and a friendly, welcoming staff. From time to time, I was startled by a large bat that swooped low over the pool but hey, this was Costa Rica after all and it added a little color and action to my tropical scene. Another evening, I opted to try Exclusive's in-residence dining. My very own, personal chef prepared a superb dinner of asparagus, porcini mushrooms, pesto risotto and char-broiled beef tenderloin. Chocolate lava flow cake ended this delightfully decadent experience leaving me feeling like a happily sated VIP!

I took a shuttle to the Kiwanda Maji region for a short hike to view four waterfalls, the Rincon de la Vieja volcano, and a sodden rainforest. I visited a working Kiwanda farm with some cute baby goats and a supremely proud-looking black bull (close by I spied a



A private pool on a villa terrace.

wobbly, doe-eyed 3-day-old calf!) Lunch was at a pretty restaurant next to a sapphire- blue lake.

My final day, I boarded a catamaran for a private sunset cruise in the Gulf of Papagayo. When the captain dropped anchor, I snorkeled a bit and though I didn't see any marine life, being submerged in warm, crystal-clear water was a thrill unto itself. Sipping a cocktail while enjoying a large school of dolphins frolicking several yards away as the sun set in an explosion of gold and orange was a perfect end to my Costa Rican adventure - made most memorable in the skilled, expert hands of Exclusive Resorts. *The only problem? Where in the Exclusive world do I choose to vacation next?* **T**

64

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

www.exclusiveresorts.com



An Exclusive Resort villa terrace.