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# CALM BEFORE THE STORM

TRAVEL

TRIP REPORTS

By **Sandy Bornstein** on November 22, 2024

**5 MIN READ**

# **An Unpredictable Multi-Generational Florida Beach Vacation**

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Special occasions can be a prime time to travel. Exploring a new destination while celebrating a birthday adds to the experience. In the aftermath of my husband's death, I didn't expect to be on the road for my birthday. However, I couldn't pass up the opportunity when my third son suggested that it might be more enjoyable to be on the beach. Widows need diversions during birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, and special occasions.

While many September travelers visit destinations displaying fall colors, we chose to head south for a beach vacation. An oceanfront condominium was a perfect setup for my three- and five-year-old grandchildren. I was content to spend leisurely days on the beach and at the pool. Within a few steps of these amenities, we could access a fully equipped apartment. Due to scheduling conflict only one of my four sons' families could participate in this idyllic trip.



*View From our Oceanfront Condo at Siesta Key Beach.*

Before finalizing our plans, I asked my son if he was concerned about going to Florida during the hurricane season. He didn't anticipate an issue and suggested that I focus on the quality time that I would be spending with his young children. With reasonable rates and less crowds, it sounded ideal and worth the small risk.

Our nonstop Denver to Tampa flight and rental car pick-up were uneventful events. On our way to our accommodations, we stopped for a carryout order and groceries. Less than two hours later, we unloaded the car at our Siesta Key Condo as we listened to the distinct sound of waves rolling onto the nearby shoreline.

This particular property had multiple perks. In addition to a fully equipped deluxe kitchen, we had the option to eat breakfast at an onsite restaurant. Surprisingly, the breakfast was included in the price for our stay. There were pool and beach attendants who catered to our needs. Umbrellas, lounge chairs and towels were also available for no charge.



*Bornstein Family Walking at Sunrise at Siesta Key Beach. Photo by:Jozie Jennings Photography.*

Within no time, I saw how much my grandchildren loved the ocean, the swimming pool, and the beach. The first couple of days passed quickly as we rotated between the pool and beach locations. Some food items were available at the property, but we preferred to take advantage of our convenient location by ordering from local restaurants that offered fresh fish.

The beach offered a treasure trove of seashells, some of the best that I have collected in years. My daughter-in-law came well prepared with a couple mesh pouches which she packed with an assortment of sand toys. These outdoor activities kept my grandchildren engaged and happy. At dinner time, I happily returned to the beach to observe the magnificent sunsets.



*Calmness Before the Storm. A morning photo at the beach.*

The ocean was exceptionally calm in the morning. We enjoyed a sunrise photoshoot one morning and were fortunate to experience a beautiful pastel sky. As the sun moved overhead, the waves became more substantial.

A calm morning ocean made it possible for my daughter-in-law and me to try paddleboarding for the first time. It was a bit overwhelming since the beach attendant offered no instructions. After decades of downhill skiing, I was confident that I could maintain my balance even if I encountered an unexpected wave. More concerning was the hidden marine life that lurked beneath the ocean's surface.

Within no time, I was on my feet and paddling. My initial fear dissipated as soon as I realized that I could do it. Like so many other firsts, I was glad that I made the effort to try something out of the ordinary like paddleboarding in the ocean. I don't know how many grandmothers take up paddleboarding as a new sport. It's hard to say when I'll be presented with another opportunity to have a companion who is willing to paddleboard with me.



*Sandy Bornstein Paddleboarding with Daughter in law off the coast of Siesta Key Beach. Photo by: Aaron Bornstein*

After getting settled in our routine, the reality of hurricane season was upon

us. Our phones started to receive evacuation text messages. With Hurricane Helene fast approaching the coast, we needed to leave our remarkable location and travel inland.

On my birthday morning, I walked the beach for the last time. The soft sand was already filled with debris that was washed ashore in the middle of the night. The amazing array of seashells were no longer visible. Birds were flying in haphazard patterns as they sensed the impending storm. Instead of spending another glorious day on the coast, we were headed to a safer place.



*Sandy Bornstein Walking at Sundown. Photo by: Aaron Bornstein.*

Technology provided advance warning of the storm along with the ability to



book new reservations without much notice. Phone apps enabled us to avoid crowded thoroughfares as an abundance of other people were traveling away from the coast. When I raised my children, this type of scenario would have created considerably more stress.

Our best option was to head to the Orlando area. We reserved a rental home with a private pool about 20 minutes from Disney World. While it did rain at night, we were able to enjoy time at the onsite pool and at the Magic Kingdom under partly cloudy skies.

It had been decades since my husband and I took our children to Disney World. Faint memories entered my consciousness when we arrived at the Magic Kingdom by boat. More recollections consumed my thoughts as we battled the crowds and humid conditions. My grandchildren were thrilled to have an unexpected day at this unique place. Their smiling faces told the whole story. Even though long lines at amusement parks are usually not high on my “to do” list, I am fortunate that an unpredictable hurricane offered an opportunity to experience Disney World with two of my eight grandchildren.



*Disney World's Magic Kingdom.*

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*Photos curtesy of Sandy Bornstein and credited photographers.*

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**Sandy Bornstein**

Sandy writes about family, intergenerational, and active midlife adventures highlighting land and water experiences. After living as an international teacher in Bangalore, India, Sandy published an award-winning book, *May This Be the Best Year of Your Life*, as a resource for people contemplating an expat lifestyle and living outside their comfort zone. Check out her website: <http://www.thetravelingbornsteins.com/>