

Atlantis Bahamas: A Marine Life Paradise



By [Judy Koutsky](#) March 9, 2017

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If you love marine animals, Atlantis at Paradise Island in the Bahamas is the place to go.

Home to the largest open-air marine habitat in the world, [Atlantis Resort](#) has more than 50,000 marine animals and 250 species throughout its expansive property. The star of the show is Dolphin Cay, the resort's interaction and education center, where the focus is not only on fun, but on conservation and education. I recently went to Atlantis with my five-year-old son, Matthew, who couldn't get enough of the marine life.

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Marine Interactions at Atlantis



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Visitors can swim up close to and feed hundreds of stingrays in the Stingray Lagoon.

There are dozens of different programs for kids and adults. Here are some of the most popular ones:

- The **shallow-water dolphin interaction** takes place in waist-deep water with one dolphin, two trainers, and a maximum of ten guests. You get to touch the dolphin, give it a kiss, and feel its teeth and belly. Matthew was a little hesitant at first, but the trainers are so good that by the end of the experience, he asked to do it again.

- The **deep-water dolphin interaction** is for those who wanted a little bit more. You and the kids swim with dolphins in the deeper, center part of the cove for closer and more intimate contact. In-water interactions last 30 minutes and the complete educational experience lasts approximately 90 minutes.
- The **Jr. Ultimate Trainer for a Day Program** is good if your child is into animals. Kids ages 6-10 experience firsthand what it's like to be a dolphin and sea lion trainer. They'll work alongside Aquarists to feed fish and sea turtles and learn what goes into caring for a variety of sea animals.
- I especially loved the **Stingray Experience**. Matthew and I (along with a trainer) fed and swam with hundreds of hundreds of Cownose stingrays and colorful, tropical fish. We fed the stingrays and felt their silky-smooth skin. Again, Matthew was a bit hesitant at first, but the trainers are so amazing and he was soon able to get over his fear and slowly make his way into the stingray world. When the time was up, he asked if we could stay longer.

Slides, Rides, and Pools at Atlantis

Of course, while we spent a ton of time with the animals, we still participated in the tons of other water-related activities Atlantis has to offer, including **Aquaventure**. This endlessly entertaining water experience contains millions of gallons of water, 20 swimming areas, 11 pools, a seven-acre snorkeling lagoon, 18 water slides, both fast- and slow-paced river rides, and a life-size replica of a Mayan Temple.

We really liked the **Splashers**, a children's water play area and pool. It's basically a massive Mayan-themed water play area with two enclosed spiral body slides, one open spiral body slide, and a child-friendly version of the famous Mayan Temple Challenger slides nearby. For the adventurous kids, Splashers has cargo nets and rope bridges for climbing, plus water cannons, fountains, and water wheels for endless soaking. For a bit of wet thrill, be sure to stand under the 320-gallon bucket that regularly showers water-lovers below with 8,000 gallons of water per hour. Other swimming areas for younger guests include the **Ripples Pool**, with miniature slides, and **Poseidon's Kid's Pool**, with fountains and in-water play structures.

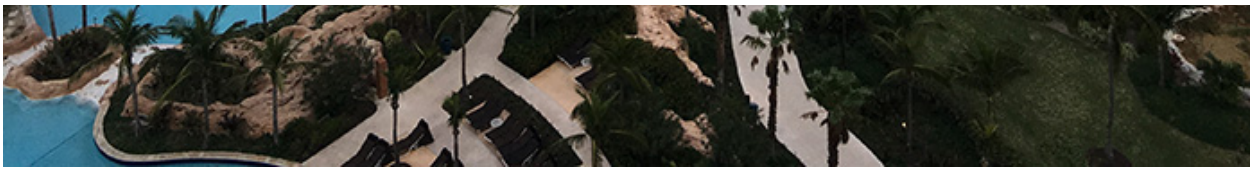
I'll admit, Matthew and I are not so into thrilling slide rides (of which there are many, for those who love it), but we loved the slide that goes through the shark tank (we literally were inches away from dozens of sharks).

No matter what your love—thrill rides, a marine adventure, or simply sunning by the pool—Atlantis has something for your family's adventure level.

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Hotel Rooms at Atlantis





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Atlantis Resort is located in Paradise Island, Bahamas

We stayed at the **The Reef Atlantis**, which has 497 rooms and is perfect for families traveling in groups or for multigenerational travel. The beach is just steps away and all rooms have private balconies overlooking the ocean and white sands. The rooms also have a kitchen area, which is perfect for families who like to make their own food and can enjoy eating on the balcony. Plus, if you stay at The Reef Atlantis, you have access to the private Cascades pool.

Dining Options at Atlantis

Going out to dinner has always been a treat for my family, so Matthew and I thoroughly enjoyed sampling the resort's many dining venues. We had our first dinner at Nobu Matsuhisa's famed restaurant **Nobu**, which has amazing sushi (the wait staff helped Matthew learn to eat with chopsticks). At **Seafire Steakhouse**, we both had filet mignon that rivaled any I've had. Matthew especially enjoyed the all-you-can eat buffet at **Poseidon's Table** and we had a special 6th birthday dinner (where the staff sang to Matthew) at **Olives**, the yummy Italian restaurant. The diner-style fare at **Murray's** was a good breakfast option, while the creative Caribbean food at **The Bahamian Club** was a nice sampler of local cuisine. We had succulent ribs at **Virgil's BBQ** and ordered pizza and ice cream in the **Marina Village**.

We left Atlantis a little heavier from all the good food, more relaxed from all the fun, and full of memories of swimming with the dolphins and stingrays—a good time for both big and small.

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Main image: The author and her son meeting a dolphin up close.

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Judy Koutsky is an award-winning writer and editor and her work has appeared in over 30 publications, including Conde Nast Traveler, Travel + Leisure, Redbook, Parents, Scholastic, and Prevention. She writes often about travel, parenting, health, and lifestyle. Follow her @JudyKoutsky or visit her website JudyKoutsky.com.

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