

# Sanctuary Cap Cana Golf & Spa

Dominican Republic's five-star, luxurious oasis debuts.

JUDITH GLYNN



Unprecedented luxury at the Sanctuary includes a panoramic view of aquamarine beaches, swaying palm trees and the "small village" layout of the property, all within the realm of quiet seclusion for your guests.

When I began several years ago with the luxury-style idea for the Sanctuary Cap Cana Golf & Spa, nobody believed in it," said Félix Felipe, president of Altabella Hotels, which is the Spanish entity that built and manages the new hotel in the Dominican Republic. But he's a visionary man with over 30 years' of hands-on experience in the hotel industry. He also had a passion for an ultra-exclusive oasis that wouldn't resemble a hotel but have the perfect number of suites with oceanfront views, all within a "small village" concept.

His dream was finally realized in December 2007 with the opening of this phenomenal, 176-suite, five-star property located on the Dominican Republic's southeastern tip and within the recently created Cap Cana gated community. The Punta Cana International Airport is 10 minutes away.

By mixing Caribbean, Colonial and Hispanic architectural styles, the small-village concept created buildings that appear to have been built over time. Unlike a cookie-cutter hotel layout, here your client will find winding paths, pastel-colored buildings, thatched-roof suites, wrought-iron lanterns, gurgling fountains, a tower for viewing the landscape and high-end boutiques interspersed with small corners that capture an aquamarine ocean view along the hotel's two-mile stretch of private beach.

Felix knows many of his discerning clients by name and their preference for an "at home" feel, hence, no cubbyhole rooms here. A standard Junior Suite is 675 square feet in size

and increases substantially to two 5,550-square-foot Luxury Suites that are situated on a private island. The color themes are subdued beige, tans, ochre and soft rose-colored prints combined with the finest woods, tiles and marble. Bathrooms have a deep tub and separate toilet (with bidet) and shower areas.

The luxury concept must have a high standard of gastronomy attached to it, which explains the distinctly different dining experiences at the Sanctuary. Five of the eight planned restaurants are open. Renowned chefs prepared and tested their dishes for one year on site before the hotel opened. Three times a day the hotel's private *yolas* sail beyond the nearby coral reef to harvest mahi-mahi, red snapper and spiny Caribbean lobster to deliver to the kitchens. Le Divellec is for seafood lovers and under the auspices of Jacques Divellec who is a two-star Michelin Guide Parisian chef and restaurant owner. Entrees here range from \$25 to \$40. David Crockett's is the Argentinean-grill-themed steakhouse where a 12-oz. Angus prime sirloin steak costs \$35. The Blue Marlin sits atop the water's edge where the gentle waves can be heard beneath your feet. This menu varies from fish to Spanish paella and the atmosphere is a casual, open-air experience where gazpacho costs \$12. Casabella is the breakfast and lunch spot with an a-la-carte menu, as well as Continental, American or Japanese breakfast options. And your guests will love the salad bar decorations that are hand-carved from hard cheese or dried ice covered with chocolate.