

Written by Administrator
Monday, 25 October 2010 17:54 -

Please, don't tell Snooki, but fall is a great time to relax at the Jersey Shore -- especially Atlantic City.

The smack down princess of MTV's "Jersey Shore" reality show -- and the throngs of other summer visitors -- won't be making the casino scene again until next summer. But, in the fall, the sun is still warm enough to take a stroll on the boardwalk or beach and most hotels

offer reduced rates. And, of course, the casinos are always open...

A weekend girls' getaway is just what we needed, and Atlantic City offers a change of scenery plus ocean views without the long trip. Hop on a flight in Boston and you'll be rolling at the craps table in about an hour. And that includes time to pick up your bags. The airport is incredibly convenient and easy.

There are more than 30 hotels in Atlantic City itself, and more in the surrounding area, but the lovely 800-room Water Club at Borgata has a great view of both the city and the bay. Behind the hotel, which shares a casino with its sister hotel, the 2,000-room Borgata, you can see the city's 7.5-megawatt wind farm which produces enough electricity to power 2,000 homes. Good thing, too, because Atlantic City has a lot of lights. It's a pretty impressive sight when driving in on a dark night.

With its casino, nightclubs, music stage (The Black Crowes perform Oct. 30), event center (comedian Jerry Seinfeld performed two shows while we were there and singer Harry Connick Jr. will perform Oct. 29), high-end shops and both casual and fine dining, you could spend your whole weekend at the Borgata without getting bored.

Our room, on the 28th floor of the Water Club, was a couple of steps above the usual, with a super-comfy bed and pillows, and it was decorated with warm tans and browns. Following the water theme, the bathroom had an oversized glass shower door with myriad spray options.

Continuing the relaxing water ambiance, the hotel's Immersion Spa offers world-class treatments with an unparalleled view of the coastline. With lounging areas, a workout room, a 75-foot indoor lap pool, co-ed whirlpool and separate areas with a Swedish sauna, whirlpool, cold (52 degrees, burrr!) dip pool and "rainforest" shower areas for men and women, you might

never want to leave the spa. Try a hot stone massage and your relaxation will be complete.

As non-gamblers, we weren't in Atlantic City to play craps or even the slot machines -- we were there to relax, forget about work and eat.

We felt like we were really getting away from everyday cares the moment Stephen Kalt welcomed us to his inventive restaurant, Fornelletto Cucina & Wine Bar. The celebrated chef of Wynn Las Vegas and the former Spartina in New York, Kalt opened the restaurant a year ago and offers diners a getaway from the hubbub of the casinos in a wine cellar-like setting. Decorated in stone tile and marble, it seems like you're having dinner in an Italian villa.

There's a lot to see in Atlantic City, and it's impossible to do it all in a short weekend stay. To get an overview of the city, with its familiar street names that are forever inscribed in the Monopoly board game, take a \$2.25 trip on an Atlantic City Jitney (www.jitneys.net) or small buses that run 24 hours a day and stop at all the casinos.

We enjoyed dinner at FIN inside the Tropicana resort, a new restaurant making use of many local and regional ingredients and fish. After dinner, shop at one of the many stores along the casino's Cuban-themed corridor, including a great Tahari clothing outlet.

Or, step over to the neighboring Chelsea, a pink boutique-style hotel that doesn't have a casino and was recently renovated. Have a drink on the fifth floor at C5, a fun dance club that also has living room-style areas for conversation and relaxation. In summer, there's a fun outdoor cabana pool area for mixing it up with music.

If you're the active sort, from 6:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. you can ride a bike on the boardwalk and take in the whole 4-mile stretch. Bring your own or rent one at B&K Bike Rental (609-287-8341) at North Carolina Avenue, next to the Resorts casino.

Still open in the fall, visit the famous Steel Pier at Boardwalk and Virginia Avenue with its amusement rides and games. There's historic Boardwalk Hall and salt-water taffy and fudge shops, kitschy stores and, oddly, a lot of places offering inexpensive manicures and massages.

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It's a mix that is strangely attractive and interesting.

There's also high-end shopping on the Atlantic City boardwalk at the Pier Shops at Caesar's with stores like Tiffany's, Gucci and Betsey Johnson. The Walk, just off the boardwalk on Michigan Avenue, has 100 factory outlets including a Coach store where we scored some great deals. They'll soon be opening even more stores there with a planned expansion in 2011.

Where to eat

Fornelletto at the Borgatta.

Make sure to try: Handmade mozzarella cheeses and the grilled veal chop with delicate artichokes, sweet figs, tiny chestnuts and crimini mushrooms. For dessert, order the tira misu, or for something really interesting, try the dark chocolate budino with Nutella, hazelnut butter crunch and mascarpone cream. (Our waiter, Guiseppe from Rome, informed us this was the best dessert in the place. He was right.) Call 609-317-1000 or go to www.theborgata.com.

FIN at the Tropicana

Be sure to try: The blue crab macaroni and cheese and the incredible variety of fresh oysters on the raw bar. At FIN, opened just this past summer, chef Demetrios Haronis, a native of Wildwood, uses many fruits, vegetables and fish native to New Jersey and the region. They don't call it the Garden State for nothing. He also has wines made right in New Jersey. We ordered the enormous seared Cape May Sea Scallops and Maryland soft-shell crabs, which really were whales. At Brighton Avenue and Boardwalk. Call 609-340-4000 or visit www.tropicana.net/fin

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If you go

Travel: Visit the Jersey Shore - Atlantic City, N.J. - Salem Gazette

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Atlantic City Tourism & Visitors Authority, 609-348-7100, www.atlanticcitynj.com

The Water Club at Borgata, 800-800-8817, www.thewaterclubhotel.com

Tropicana Resort & Casino, 800-843-8767, www.tropicana.net

The Chelsea Hotel, 800-548-3030, <http://thechelsea-ac.com>

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