The beach is extra sweet in Clearwater, Florida

Sand and sensational food make this a must-visit Florida destination

I'm sitting in the sand in Clearwater, Florida, looking out at one of the most beautiful sunsets I've ever seen. My hand casually touches the sugary sand as it cascades through my fingers. The temperature is perfect as I inhale the sweet ocean air. This is like every experience on a beach, right?

Wrong.

So what makes Clearwater so special?

First, I'm sitting down for a dinner in the sand — literally. My table and seat are constructed entirely out of sand. I'm being served a five-course meal by the Hyatt's SHOp American Seafood Grill — and it's spectacular.

Dinner in the Sand with friends during Sugar Sand Festival in Clearwater.

Behind me is 1,000 tons of sand that has miraculously been transformed into beautiful works of art sand sculptures.

It's one of the many incredible things I saw at the inaugural Frenchy's Sugar Sand Festival (part of the 60th anniversary of Fun n Sun Festival) this year.

The 10-day event is just one of many events Clearwater has become known for, to encourage tourism, bring the community together, and create a niche for itself in an ever-saturated beach state.
One of the amazing sand sculptures at the Sugar Sand Festival in Clearwater.

It's also probably why it was recently voted Florida's best beach town by USA Today.

Clearwater is a destination that makes you feel welcome the moment you arrive. And I'm not just talking about the people who work in the service industry. I mean the locals, too.

The traffic actually stops and motions for pedestrians to cross over to the beach, and the locals smile and talk to you. It's more than just a beach town; it's a tight community that takes pride in itself.

![Clearwater Beach](image1.jpg)

The dining experiences in Clearwater offers up something for everyone and is a gastronomic delight. From the famous grouper sandwich at Eat My Shorts Beach Cafe, to the fine dining experience at Caretta on the Gulf at the Sand Pearl to appetizers at Jimmy's Crow's Nest on the rooftop of the Pier House 66 Marina Hotel (which provides beautiful views of Clearwater).

The activities are boundless. A few of my favorites included riding bikes along the beach-line, riding the waves on a jet ski, para-sailing above the crystal-blue water, dolphin watching on a dinner cruise, fishing excursions for the whole family.

![Dolphins](image2.jpg)

Famous resident, Winter the Dolphin, with friend getting a treat at the Clearwater Marine Aquarium.

Two other noteworthy mentions are the Clearwater Marine Aquarium (which is known for its groundbreaking work in marine rescue, rehabilitation and release and education). And a fun exhibit to
take the kids to is "Writer's Dolphin Tale Adventure", which provides a behind the scenes look at the filming of the true-life movie "Dolphin Tale" that took place in Clearwater.

I stayed at the Hyatt Regency Clearwater Beach Resort and Spa. My room was enormous and I had an incredible view of the beach and ocean. My suite had a full kitchen, which came in handy when I wanted to cook for myself or store something in my fridge. The view from the pool on the 16th floor is perfection. They even had live entertainment at the pool, which enhanced the experience. One day I even took one of their 20 air-conditioned poolside cabanas. If you are planning to spend the day at the pool with kids, I highly recommend renting one.

Side note: This hotel also provides a children's pool area, a Camp Hyatt kids club and a spa worth checking out (if you truly want to start your vacation out right).

What I discovered most about Clearwater is that it's laid back, inviting and more than anything else – it's fun. What more could a person ask for?

For upcoming activities in Clearwater, you can check them out here: www.visitclearwaterflorida.com

Note: This trip was provided by the City of Clearwater

Read more Articles from Kelley Scarsbrook

Twitter.com/empoweringmoms

© COPYRIGHT - POSTMEDIA NEWS