

SP VISITS THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



Relax poolside.



Ready for your bath? This hotel's butler draws it for you. Don't worry, he doesn't stick around to help you in.

BY HOPE S. PHILBRICK

The last time someone drew a bath for me, I'd guess I was 5 years old. But when the butler introduced me to room 7208 at the Iberostar Grand Hotel Bávaro in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, he explained that if I asked him (or whoever was the on-duty *mayordomo* at the time) to fill the Jacuzzi bathtub for me, I'd get a nice surprise. It sounded like an offer I shouldn't refuse. And so, after a day spent in meetings, I decided to treat myself to a little "me time" and asked Tony to have my tub ready by 6 p.m.

I entered the bathroom to find candles, bubbles and rose petals—the trifecta of bath-time fun! It looked so romantic (like a set stolen from "The Bachelor," minus the bastard) that it seemed a darn shame I was alone. But I stepped right in and savored my good fortune, sipping a glass of iced champagne and thoroughly enjoying the spectacular view of the beach that was visible from my watery sanctuary. If your idea of a bathtub necessity is a rubber ducky, this isn't the place for you: Iberostar's new Grand properties are adults-only resorts where the focus is on luxury.

Iberostar has tailored several services to facilitate what they call "self-pampering."

I interpreted this phrase as an invitation to give myself permission to let others pamper me, and thus followed up my bath with two phone calls: first, calling room service with my dinner order and next, phoning house-keeping to request a pillow from the pillow menu. Ahhhh.

Launched in 1930, Iberostar Hotels & Resorts is a fourth-generation Spanish-owned company with more than 100 properties in 15 countries—of the 23 resorts located throughout the Caribbean, six are in the Dominican Republic. There are three Iberostar resort categories: beach and all suites, which are both family-friendly, and the new (and most upscale) Grand Collection that's exclusively for adults. In Punta Cana, three properties (representing each category) sit adjacent to one another and comprise the Iberostar Bávaro Golf & Spa Resort: Iberostar Punta Cana, Iberostar Dominicana and Iberostar Grand Hotel Bávaro.

The Iberostar Grand Hotel Bávaro is a five-star, all-inclusive resort where upscale means opulent. All of the 260 suites, 13 oceanfront grand suites and one presidential suite are outfitted with custom-made furniture, flat-screen TVs and whirlpool tubs with ocean or garden views. Throughout the place, the décor seems to flaunt grandeur with its fluted columns, decorative friezes,

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Iberostar Grand Hotel Bávaro
Punta Cana, Dominican Republic
888-923-2722
www.iberostar.com

GETTING THERE

The Iberostar Grand Hotel Bávaro is located about 45 minutes from the Punta Cana International Airport. (Delta offers nonstop flights from Atlanta.) Taxi service from the airport to the resort is approximately \$35.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

The CDC recommends that you see your health-care provider at least four weeks before visiting the Dominican Republic, as vaccinations and medications may be recommended to prevent diseases including malaria. For details, visit www.cdc.gov/travel.



domed ceilings, marble floors and super-sized chandeliers.

Available amenities include personalized butler and concierge services, 24-hour room service, nightly shows and live music, an ocean-view fitness center, an Internet café, two pools, six bars, and six restaurants—plus access to 13 more bars and 10 more restaurants located in the neighboring Iberostar properties.

What's more, for an extra charge, there's also access to an on-site spa, a nearby golf course and PADI-certified SCUBA Center that offers lessons, plus equipment and boat rentals. And the good news is that these extras aren't overpriced: I enjoyed a relaxing 50-minute massage for \$90—quite a deal, especially for a fabulous world-class two-story oceanfront spa!

Among the on-site dining options at Iberostar Grand Hotel Bávaro: an international buffet, a grill snack bar, a gourmet restaurant, an Italian restaurant, a Japanese teppanyaki and a steak house. With 24-hour room service also available, there's no need to go hungry.

The stated Iberostar goal is to create not just a place to stay, but a place that stays with you. Mission accomplished: I'll always remember my stay there as where I felt like a millionaire for a few nights. **SP**

PHOTOS/RICHARD KOHLER