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## Costa d'Este: South Beach Flare Comes to Vero

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In the first installment of Weekend Getaways, I chose an oceanfront resort within short driving distance of Fort Lauderdale that is owned by Gloria and Emilio Estefan. Its name is Costa d'Este, which loosely translated means "the only gay-friendly destination in Vero Beach".

The resort was opened by the Estefan's in June 2008 and has become a pearl of the Treasure Coast. Costa d'Este provides an exclusive oceanfront oasis with 94 luxury guest rooms, a signature restaurant and bar, infinity-edge pool, full-service spa and fitness center.

Costa d'Este exudes a comfortable elegance and urban sophistication. Sleek yet cozy, the hotel's design balances substance and style, without being indulgent. An oval reception desk composed of honey-toned teak and backlit onyx welcomes visitors as they enter the lobby. Modern accents adorn the walls, which becomes illuminated by candles in the evening. A far cry from any other resort in town.

Our guestroom was as elegant as the lobby. As we entered, we caught a glimpse of the marvelous marble bathroom and oversized shower. Not to mention the stunning view of the Atlantic. Custom furnishings and backlit teak headboards created multiple accent points. Amenities included flat-screen television, i-Pod docking station and Egyptian-cotton linens.

The bi-level Spa at Costa d'Este is embellished with sea-grass and Mother of Pearl mosaic tile wall coverings, limestone surfaces, and marble—walnut furnishings. There are four treatment rooms, where guests can enjoy a variety of treatments and holistic products. As my boyfriend and I entered the treatment room for our couples massage, we were greeted by the soothing sounds of rippling water.

In celebration of the Estefans' heritage, the resort's intimate 85-seat restaurant signature restaurant Oriente, features gourmet fare inspired by Cuba's Oriente region. Oriente's wine cellar is stocked with South American, Spanish and Californian selections, as well as French, South African and Australian vintages.

For our starters, or what they call "little plates", we chose the Cuban Roll, which is a chilled sushi-like roll consisting of Beef Ropa Vieja, Coconut Rice, Plantain, Avocado, Piquillo Pepper Soy Chimichurri. The roll was very unique in presentation and although I was expecting a warm dish, was pleased with the taste. In addition, we enjoyed a portion of Sizzling Chori Gambas, seared shrimp and chorizo sausage with homemade sofrito. This dish had more of the flavors I am accustomed to in traditional Cuban-style cuisine.

Oriente offers a nice selection of entrees ranging from Arroz con Pollo to Le-Quebecois Veal Chop Milanese. We opted for the Lamb Chop special and Oriente Paella. The lamb was definitely the better of the two dishes. The seasoning on the lamb, as well as its temperature was perfect. On the contrary, we found the paella under seasoned and the calamari tough. Guests at a neighboring table enjoyed the Ropa Vieja and recommended we try it on our next visit.

The bar at Oriente features a customized cocktail menu with Cuban, Spanish and Caribbean favorites, plus sought-after micro brews and homemade sangria. Cuban coffee drinks are also served throughout the day and the hotel offers a complimentary daily mojito happy hour.

For a memorable, yet relaxing weekend getaway, I highly recommend a visit to Costa d'Este.

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