

# Where Have You Been?

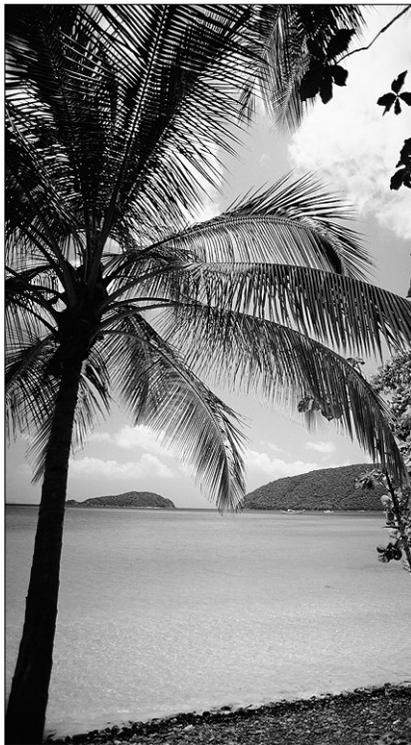
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## Caribbean Vacation to St. John

**W**e recently took our first Caribbean family vacation to St. John, a small island in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Since our two boys have celiac disease, I did research in advance to determine whether St. John would be gluten-free friendly. We chose to stay at the Westin St. John, one of only two resorts on the entire island, for a few reasons. First, I researched the gluten-free options there, and we were able to book a villa which included a full kitchen. There was a small grocery store 1/2 mile from our villa, so I knew at the very least we could cook meals in our villa. Second, I emailed the Food Services Director to make sure there would be gluten-free options at the hotel. While there was no dedicated gluten-free menu, he sent me copies of their menus and assured me that he could prepare a number of gluten-free options. Third, we could use our stashed up Starwood Points to get the villa for free!



While I felt confident that the grocery store and Westin would provide all of our gluten-free needs, I did hope that we could try out some of the local restaurants in Cruz Bay, the main town on St. John. Luckily, one of my husband's colleagues was heading to the Westin a couple of months before us, so I asked her to keep an eye out for gluten-free information on any of the menus at the local eateries. What a fabulous resource – she returned with an entire page of notes on every restaurant that they went to – detailing whether or not they had a gluten-free menu and whether they could accommodate gluten-free diners. Based on her information, we made dinner reservations at three restaurants in advance – one had gluten-free items indicated on the menu and the other two were gluten-free knowledgeable.



In just the 2 months separating our visits, all three of the restaurants had produced menus denoting which items were gluten-free! We had wonderful dining experiences at each one. The Ocean Grill had delicious seafood – the

mussels were my boys' favorite. Rhumb Lines featured outstanding Pacific Rim and tropical cuisines. All-you-can-eat shrimp was a highlight at The Lime Inn. Our dinners at the Westin were very good as well.

I did pack some gluten-free food in our carry-ons and suitcases, since I did not know what foods would be available at the store and to avoid paying a premium for items on St. John. For breakfast and lunches, we ate the food we brought and bought some food at the local grocery store, which contained more gluten-free specialty items than I could have imagined: crackers, cookies, bread, etc. In addition, we were able to purchase perishable, naturally gluten-free breakfast and lunch foods (eggs, cheese, deli meats, fruits, vegetables, milk, juice, etc.).

Our trip to St. John was wonderful. The snorkeling was amazing – we saw tropical fish and sea turtles. We also chartered a boat with Lion In Da Sun for a day-long adventure to the British Virgin Islands. And, happily, we had no issues with our gluten-free dining.

