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A MILLION THINGS WE LOVE ABOUT PLUNGE BEACH HOTEL

Just down the road in Lauderdale-By-The-Sea is Plunge Beach Hotel, a super contemporary oasis. This beach front hotel has been completely redone with a modern and whimsical feel. If you're looking for a quick staycation or a place for your "out of towners," take the Plunge.



A MILLION THINGS TO LOVE ABOUT

PLUNGE

BY SUSAN ROSSER

A middle-aged couple finds the fountain of youth in Lauderdale-By-The-Sea

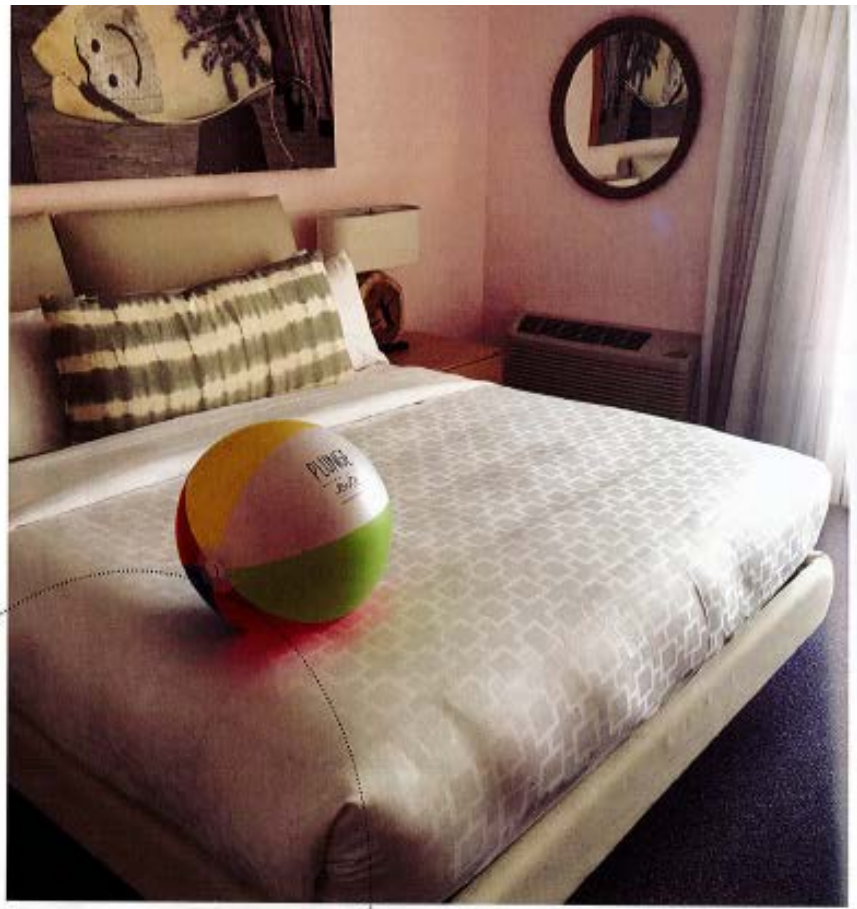


Details. Details. It was clear from the moment my husband Richard and I entered the aptly-named Plunge Beach Hotel, that no detail was too small for its creators to consider. In fact, what separates Plunge from the hyper-competitive beach hotel market are the smaller things that make you smile — and sometimes even laugh. Who doesn't love a waiter wearing a t-shirt emblazoned with the phrase "I hate tips — said no Juan ever."

et's start at the beginning. The front desk was completely covered with retro-style surf, skate and travel stickers. For me, these stickers served as both a funny reminder of my seventh grade algebra notebook, and a personal re-boot for the weekend. Immediately, I knew this was not an ordinary, stuffy and corporate hotel. We clearly had entered another world — one considerably more hip and youthful than our typical universe. The lobby decor was a clear tribute to the modern-industrial SoHo loft, but with plenty of more personal touches that made us feel welcome. The colorful and plush furnishings served as a warm contrast to the cement grey floors and exposed duct work on the ceilings. So while there is a distinct and edgy "look how cool and hip we are" thing going on, we were also acutely aware that we were just steps from the ocean. (The three colorful surfboards mounted on a lobby wall drove that point home.) ♦

Even the walk to our room was fun. The royal blue hallways are lined with white, funky picture "frames" that are hand-painted directly onto the walls framing historical photos along with old-timey scenes of Florida. A hand painted white wave runs the length of the hallway — another vivid reminder of the beach. In fact, the artwork throughout the entire hotel has been carefully curated to amplify the cutting-edge style of Plunge.

By the time we reached our ocean-front room, I had completely forgotten about my stressful week at work. (Do I even have a job? I wondered.) Finding a beach ball on the bed was just icing on the cake. Even at 53-years-old, >>>



TOP Each cool and contemporary guest room is adorned with a playful beach ball. LEFT Surfboards mounted directly on a lobby wall serve as beach inspired artwork. ABOVE A sign outside the coffee shop is a reminder that this is a hotel with a sense of humor.



FAR LEFT Hand-painted frames with retro photos line the hotel hallways. LEFT Plunge has an eclectic collection of art sure to bring a smile.

DINING OPTIONS

The Octopus Bar and Restaurant

The stand-out restaurant at Plunge is The Octopus Bar and Restaurant, which is completely open to the lobby and makes for great people watching. The funky gastropub and eatery serves an eclectic menu in tapas style or larger portions, and is open daily from 4pm to 10pm. Guests can mingle around a large, semi-circular, copper-topped bar, or chill in one of the many colorfully plush lounge seating areas.

A sampling of Octopus's appetizing, tasting-sized menu options include: salmon rilette topped with fried capers, lemon and crème fraiche; coco mussels in a kaffir-lime coconut broth; Napa cabbage with grilled country bread; and fried clam strips with roasted onion aioli and red peppers. Tapas prices range from \$11 to \$15.

For those who've worked up an appetite on the beach, larger sized portions include Florida shrimp tagliatelle drizzled in a tomato-lemon fondue, thyme and tarragon; and grilled tri-tip roast with seared heirloom tomatoes. Entrée prices range from \$13 to \$25.

"Octopus has a distinctive and artsy vibe so we created the menu to have a sassy spin on traditional American comfort foods," said Will

Silbernagel, Food and Beverage Director.

ABOVE Grilled octopus with white beans TOP Tagliatelle with Florida shrimp

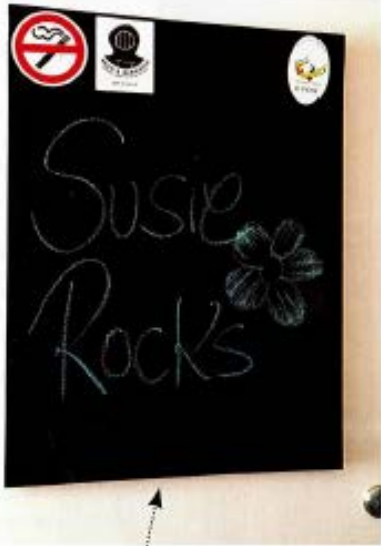


Backflip Beach Bar & Kitchen

Kick back and relax at Backflip Beach Bar & Kitchen the ultimate laid-back beach bar. Serving local brews and rum-fueled cocktails that would make Hemingway smile, their fresh juice-infused drinks have just the right amount of kick. Sit back and listen to the waves. Hungry? Dig into street tacos, delectable sandwiches and fresh salads, served right out of the beach kitchen so you never have to take your toes out of the sand.

Bean & Barnacle

Kick-start your day at Bean & Barnacle the coffee shop and market with local, fresh-brewed Wells coffee, served alongside platters of sweet, delicious pastries and breakfast sandwiches. Later, drop by for hand-carved artisan sandwiches and other savory, easy-to-snag selections. For a cool treat after the beach, enjoy a gelato.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Oceanfront room; a "grassy" ottoman room decoration; industrial style light fixtures at the entrance; a view from the beach; there is a chalkboard in every room — we used ours for love notes. Don't hate us.



«« when I see an inflated beach ball, I feel compelled to tap it up in the air like a small child. Other room furnishings included a dresser/desk unit and nightstands made of thick plywood with intentionally unfinished edges, adding to the industrial feel. We agreed that our favorite touch was the ottoman made of a green and grassy fabric adorned with red and orange fabric maple leaves. Each room also has a chalkboard, which we used to leave little love notes to each other during our weekend — a tangible reminder of why we decided we needed a weekend away in the first place. Plus, it was just sort of fun seeing who could write the cutest note on the board. ●

Soon after check-in, we headed out to the beach for a quick swim in the ocean and a cocktail at Backflip, the hotel's bar on the beach. Our plan was to have one drink, shower back at the room and then head out to dinner. However, we couldn't think of anywhere we would rather eat than right there on the beach. We stayed for dinner (and a few more drinks with names like "Tweet me Ishmael" and Bigger Boat Needed") and had a variety of street style tacos — our favorite was a tie between the garlic shrimp and the cauliflower and chickpea.

With its edgy and contemporary flair, Plunge Beach Hotel still manages to be a warm and inviting hideaway with a great sense of humor. There are hilarious signs, funny staff t-shirts and original modern art to keep you smiling. All weekend long, I had the feeling I had been invited to a party with the cool kids — and that I was actually one of them. ●

Plunge Beach Hotel is located at 4660 El Mar Drive in Lauderdale-By-The-Sea between A1A and the Atlantic Ocean.