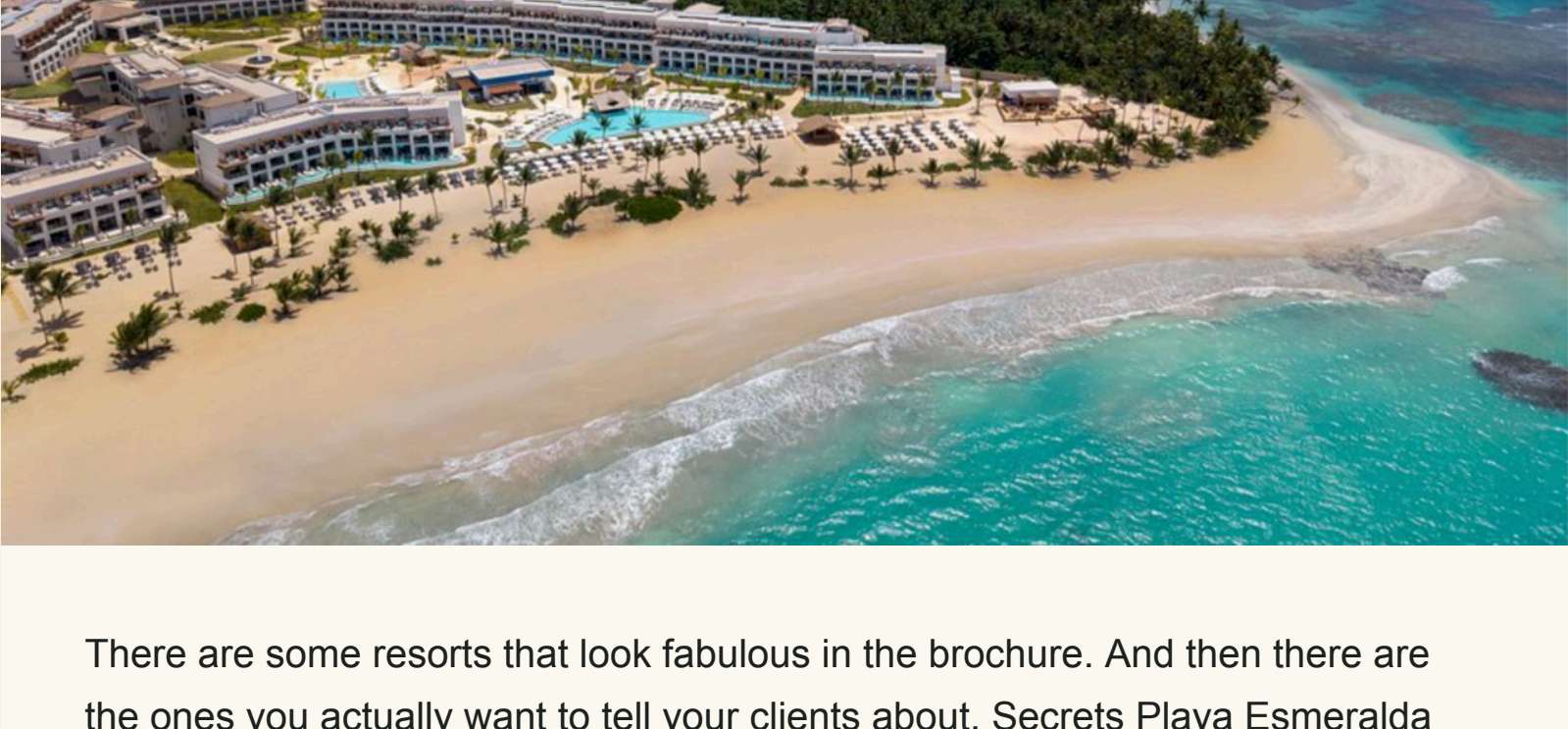


Secrets Playa Esmeralda

Miches, Dominican Republic — Adults-Only, All-Inclusive

By Tracy · Stay Inspired. Travel Better.



There are some resorts that look fabulous in the brochure. And then there are the ones you actually want to tell your clients about. Secrets Playa Esmeralda falls somewhere in between — and that's exactly why I went to find out for myself.

I recently spent a week at this adults-only, all-inclusive resort in Miches while attending a training conference — the perfect excuse to do what I love most: experience a destination firsthand, put on my travel-advisor hat and figure out who would be happiest at this resort.

Miches is one of those places that still feels a little like a secret. Located on the DR's northeastern coast, about a 90-minute transfer from Punta Cana International Airport, it feels noticeably quieter and less developed than the more familiar resort areas — and that seclusion is one of the resort's biggest selling points. Secrets Playa Esmeralda sits along a gorgeous stretch of Caribbean beach, surrounded by lush landscaping, beautiful pools and plenty of places to park yourself with a cocktail and forget what day it is.

Best For

Couples wanting a quiet, uncrowded Caribbean escape built around beach, pool and relaxation.

Maybe Skip If

You're a serious foodie who chooses a resort primarily for its culinary program.

The Room

Suite Life

A+



Every accommodation here is a suite — an immediate leg up over properties where "luxury room" just means a slightly larger hotel room. Mine was spacious, comfortable and thoughtfully appointed: a wonderfully comfortable king bed, air conditioning that was a genuine lifesaver in the Dominican heat, and plenty of storage for actually settling in.

Nice touches included a well-stocked refrigerator, a fully stocked mini-bar and a steamer for outfits that arrive looking like they've been through international wrestling. Categories range from Junior Suites up to Master and Presidential Suites, many with private balconies or terraces and views from garden to oceanfront — and swim-out suites for guests who believe every vacation should start with a short walk from bed to water.

This is a room I could happily call home for a week.

The Signature Check

The Shower Test

A+

Yes, I judged the shower - because a true resort review answers all the important questions.

Water pressure	Check
Hot water supply	Check
Soaking tub	Check
Dual sinks	Check

One thing to know before you book: the layout is very open — the shower and water closet are see-through, and the tub sits in the open bathroom area. For couples, probably no big deal. For two friends sharing a room, you'd better be really comfortable with each other.

The Bar Program

The Drinks

B-

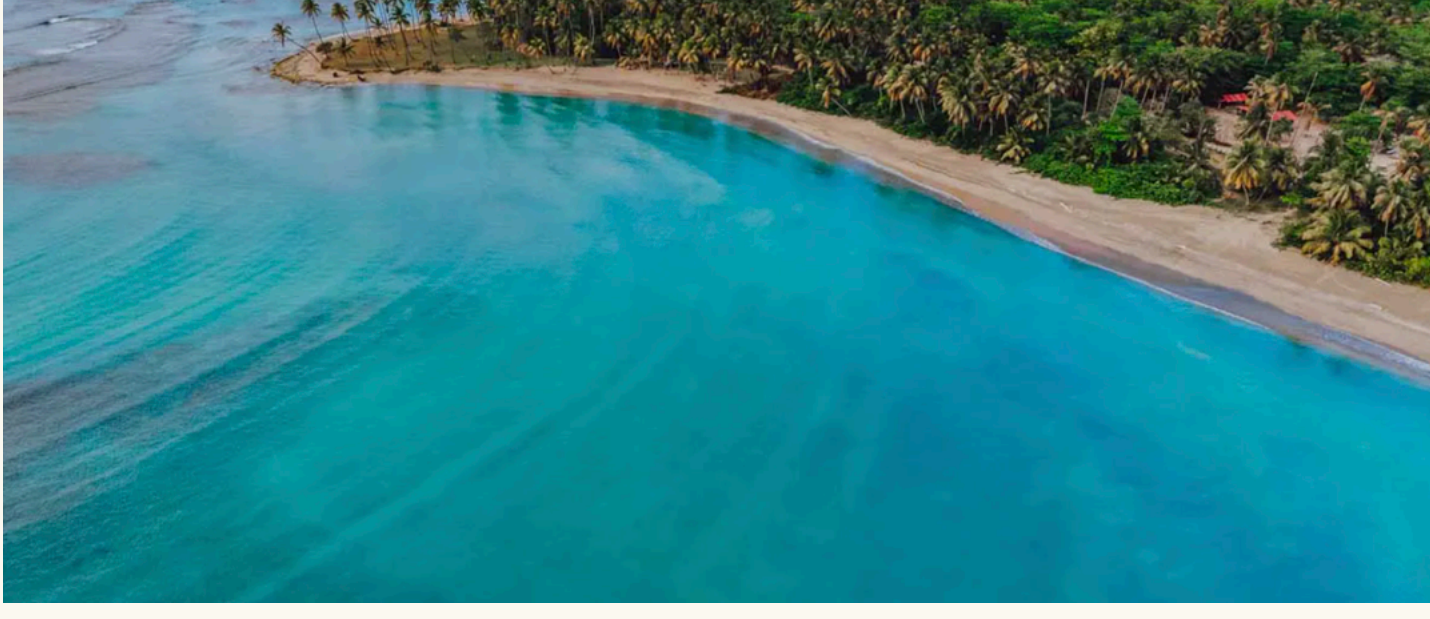
If you're booking all-inclusive, the drinks matter. Bar service was good — bartenders were friendly, quick and actually mixing cocktails rather than reaching for premixed mix. But I have to call it like I tasted it: the drinks were slightly watered down, particularly at the larger resort events. My husband would also call the "top shelf" bourbon selection more mid-shelf.

Guests with Premier status get access to higher-end liquor, and restaurants pour a solid selection of white, rosé and red wine, with upgrades available. Perfectly enjoyable.

The Main Event

The Beach

A



If you're looking at Miches and thinking, I want a beautiful Caribbean beach without the crowds (or smelly seaweed), this is where Secrets Playa Esmeralda really delivers. The beach is expansive, gorgeous and wonderfully uncrowded, with plenty of loungers and cabanas. You can walk for roughly an hour and a half without passing another resort — unusual, and a big part of Miches's appeal. The beach isn't a backdrop for photos. It is a stand-alone vacation.

The Standout

The Pools

A+

Crystal-clear water, comfortable loungers, complimentary cabanas and swim-up bars make it very easy to lose an entire afternoon here — and I did. Some suite categories go one step further with swim-out access, stepping directly from your terrace into a pool, plus oversized hot tubs and plenty of no-agenda space. Pool staff were attentive without being intrusive. It's the kind of setup where you check your watch at 10am and it's somehow 4pm.

Worth The Upgrade?

Butler Service

NOT RATED

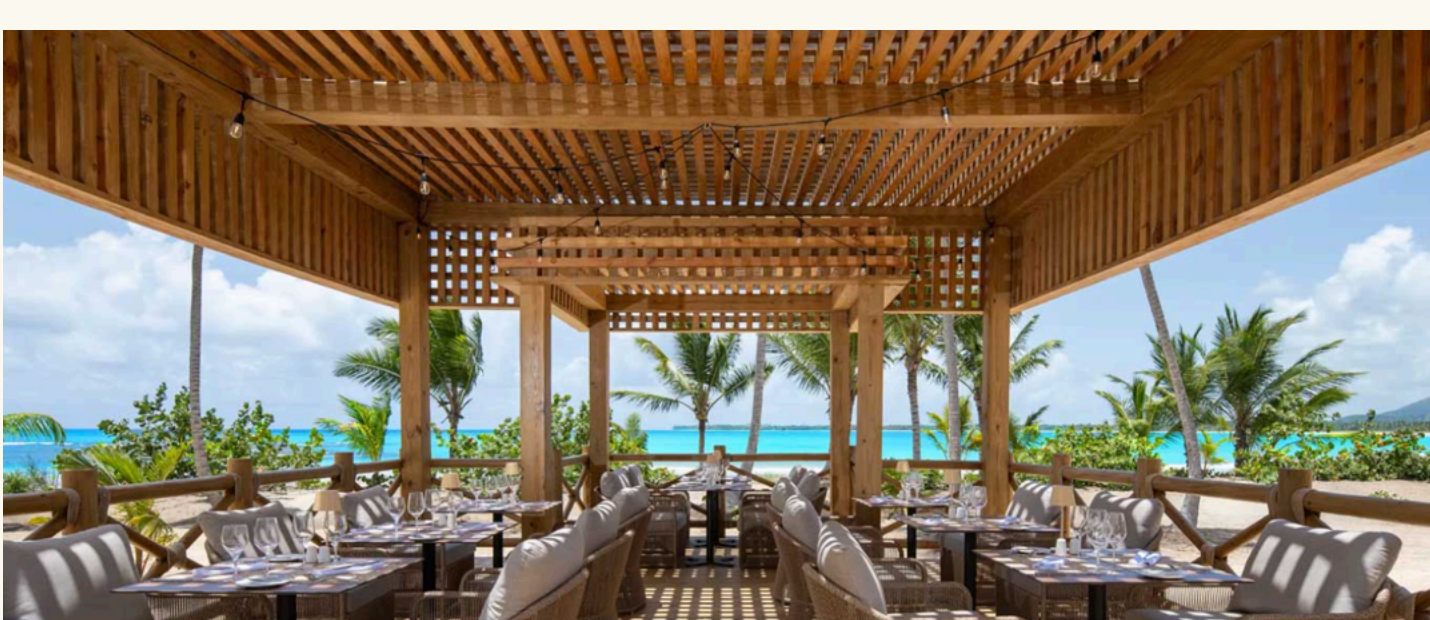
I was in training for much of this trip, so I didn't use the butler service enough to give it a fair, full review. What I did see: our butler handled dining reservations, took special drink requests and arranged complimentary in-room snacks for Hyatt Premier members, with service running roughly 9am–5pm.

For a traveler who likes having someone dedicated to handling details, it's a real value-add. And one feature I love without reservation: **the Butler Box** — a discreet cabinet for deliveries, snacks, drinks and messages, so you can stay gloriously undisturbed in your vacation pajamas.

The Picky Part

The Food

B-



As a well-traveled foodie, I'm grading variety, quality, presentation, service and atmosphere — and asking: would I actually be excited to eat here for a week? Here, my answer is... Not bad, but it didn't blow me away.

Bordeaux (French): Chateaubriand was nicely prepared, but the Pavlova was undercooked and grainy and the crème brûlée was more soup than custard. The chocolate cake was a solid recovery. Yes, I tried all three desserts - no judgement!

Asian/hibachi: Enjoyable dinner-theater fun — not my favorite sushi spot back home, but a good resort option.

Castaway Steakhouse: Thinner cuts than a typical U.S. steakhouse, but excellent sauces — both the red wine reduction and blue cheese were repeat-worthy.

Mexican: Pleasant but unremarkable — a Tex-Mex fan will want bigger flavors and more variety in their salsas.

Seaside Café: The casual-lunch winner — shaded, breezy, good burgers.

If food is the main event of your vacation, there are higher end resorts in the DR that may be better suited for you. If you're happy with perfectly serviceable dining because you're really there for the beach, pools and relaxation, you'll be totally fine.

Beyond The Lounger

Activities

NOT RATED

I didn't experience everything — more than half my stay was in training sessions. But there's Spanish classes, painting and jewelry-making, music and dance parties, and a piano bar to keep the evening going, plus excursions like snorkeling and horseback riding. My husband snuck away for four dives with a private PADI-certified dive master for a fee. Plenty to keep you busy if poolside all day isn't your idea of fun.

Good To Know

The Practical Scoop

Timing

Not included in the all-inclusive rate, though small tips are appreciated, not expected. Suggested butler gratuity: \$20/day. A little generosity — even \$1 on a drink — seemed to go a long way.

Arrival

Skipped VIP arrival — standard customs wasn't painful (need to experience for myself). VIP departure (\$30) was absolutely worth every penny: zero line for security or immigration, through both in under two minutes.

Airport Transfer

Amstar handled ground transport for about \$130/person — clean vehicles, friendly drivers, on schedule. Complete the DR's e-ticket, before arrival. For both your entry and departure - required before boarding your flight.

Excursions

Private PADI dive master arranged for 4 dives. Snorkeling and horseback riding also available.

Tracy's Final Tea & Tally

The Tea

Secrets Playa Esmeralda is a resort I'd absolutely consider for the right traveler. The food didn't blow me away and the drinks were a little watered down — but the beach is stunning, the pools are excellent, the accommodations are very comfortable, and the overall atmosphere is relaxed, adults-only and beautifully secluded.

For someone whose priorities are beach + pool + cocktails + relaxation, this resort delivers. For a serious foodie, I'd steer the conversation elsewhere — because that's what a good travel advisor does - I'm not here to just sell you a pretty picture - I'm here to find the best fit for you.

The Tally

7
OUT OF 10

Secrets Playa Esmeralda isn't trying to be everything to everyone. And honestly? It doesn't need to be.



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