



Atlantis Paradise Island

An array of only-at-Atlantis experiences leave lasting impressions

[ON LOCATION] SARAH GREAVES-GABBADON

“This is going to be the best 10 minutes of your life!” Marcia in the water sports hut assures us. I step tentatively off the sand and into a giant deflated plastic bag as Dario, the water sports guy, attaches an electric air pump to a port in the plastic. In less than a minute, it rises into a bubble seven-foot in diameter, and I rise from my crouched position, now ready to “walk on water” across **Atlantis Paradise Island’s** sprawling lagoon.

Zorbing is just one of myriad activities groups can enjoy at this beachfront Bahamian resort, which, with its vast waterscape of lagoons, aquariums and waterfalls, dominates Paradise Island, a four-mile long oasis just offshore from Nassau. Perhaps best known for the 141-acre water park Aquaventure, the mammoth hotel has something for everyone, whether feeding a sea lion, plunging 50 feet down a waterslide, go rock-climbing, or flirt with Lady Luck at the Caribbean’s largest casino. So the more relevant question for planners is, “What can’t we do?”

“There’s really nothing we can’t do for our groups,” says John Washko, Atlantis’ VP, group marketing and sales. With 3,400 rooms across three discrete resorts (Atlantis, The Cove and The Reef), it’s entirely possible for large groups to have an entire tower to themselves, he tells us. With 19 bars and lounges and 21 restaurants, (including Todd English’s Olives, Nobu’s only Caribbean outpost) buying out a whole restaurant is doable, too. And with a conference center that can accommodate as many as 4,000 people, a 75,000 sf ballroom, and 21 outdoor venues, meetings and social events are limited only by your imagination.

ONLY-AT-ATLANTIS

Imagine your group being welcomed to an event by divers displaying customized signs while they cavort with stingrays, piranhas and

lionfish in the waters of The Dig, a recreation of the Lost City of Atlantis in a 15-chamber aquarium. The resort’s Dolphin Cay has the only sea lion interaction experience in the Caribbean, offering groups the opportunity to play in waist-deep water with the fun-loving animals. Groups can also book the Marine Trainer for a day program and go behind the scenes at Dolphin Cay, where staff feed, train and care for the resort’s 50,000 marine “guests.”

And there are uniquely Bahamian activities on the lineup, too, including chef-led classes where groups will learn how to make local favorites such as Sky Juice, the popular gin, coconut water and condensed milk-based local cocktail.

POINTS & PERKS

Although Atlantis is a privately owned independent hotel, since 2014 it’s been a member of Marriott’s upmarket **Autograph Collection**, allowing planners to “earn and burn” their Marriott points at the resort. A new all-inclusive plan is also creating some buzz. Offered to groups of 10 rooms or more that stay for at least three nights, the plan covers room costs plus meals in most restaurants and most activities. Discounts are offered for those that aren’t covered, such as the spa, dolphin encounters, and greens fees at the resort’s 18-hole course. “It’s a great new option for planners because it takes the guesswork out of the vast majority of costs,” Washko says.

Happily, however, zorbing was included. The only thing those 10 minutes of flailing around in the bubble like a hamster on a slippery wheel cost me (all while having, as Marcia so accurately predicted, the time of my life) was my pride. And it felt like a fair exchange.

atlantisbahamas.com