

VACATION

IN STYLE



Your ideal All Inclusive holiday destination in Southern Sinai. Enviously located between Sharm El-Sheikh International Airport and the City Center, the resort boasts 220 meters of private sandy beaches, a breadth of beautiful coral formations, and an unrivaled view of the mysterious Tiran Island.

The Sultan Gardens lives up to its name by offering our guests 520 spacious rooms and suites nestled amongst thriving exotic gardens. The resort's wealth of unrivaled natural beauty combined with a blend of modern comfort and oriental charm guarantees our guests an unforgettable holiday experience.



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Sharm El Sheikh

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

THE climate in Egypt means that, like the UAE, building golf courses brings its own special challenge as far as irrigation and turfing goes but as I was to find out, the country has met this challenge head on with some wonderful developments and now has much to offer the intrepid fairway explorer.

By Richard Bevan



Above: The pool at the Maritim Royal Peninsula.

Right: One of the spacious and luxurious superior rooms at the Royal Peninsula.

Below right: The Jolie Ville Championship Golf Course.
Below: The Siam Thai restaurant at the Royal Peninsula.



WE visited the Sinai Peninsula and found it to be an ideal place to combine a general holiday with a golf break due to the fact that there's plenty to keep the non-golfers occupied while you're on the course.

For the first week stayed at the Maritim Royal Peninsula in Sharm El Sheikh, which backs onto an 18-hole Championship golf course.

The Royal Peninsula actually has a sister hotel, the Maritim Jolie Ville Golf & Resort, which as the name suggests, has traditionally targeted the golf tourist, but the Royal Peninsula is newer, plusher, quieter and just as convenient for the golf course as the two hotels are situated at opposite ends of the beachside layout.

Traditionally built primarily as a business hotel, with the International Conference Centre right next door, the Royal Peninsula, headed up by progressive thinking German Manager Michael Fuhrmann, is now attempting to lure some of the lucrative golf trade. The combination of five-star facilities, quiet setting and convenient location makes the Royal Peninsula the perfect choice for the executive travelling golfer.

The golf course itself is an impressive track, which was brought to international attention in 2005 when it hosted the European Seniors Tour's Jolie Ville Sharm El Sheikh Seniors Open. Situated a stone's throw from the Red Sea with the majestic Sinai Mountains in the backdrop the Jolie Ville Championship Golf Course is in a wonderful setting. Considering the aforementioned

Sharm El Sheikh SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE



Pictured left: One of the five pools at the Sultan Gardens Resort. Bottom left: Il Pomodoro Italian restaurant in Naama Bay. Right (from top to bottom): A night view of the pool bar at Sultan Gardens Resort; The kids pool complete with waterslide; The Taj Mahal Indian restaurant at The Baron Resort; The Sinai Golf Heights.



and most impressive I've seen and it's hard to imagine ever struggling to get a sun lounger.

There's a restaurant/bar on an island in the middle of the pool serving a wide choice of cuisine and the staff are attentive to your every need. For evening meals you can choose from a buffet stocked with a wonderful selection of main meals, salad and dessert or alternatively there are two fantastic à la carte restaurants – an Italian called Al Forno or our favourite, Siam, serving delicious Thai food cooked by a multi-award-winning chef.

Facilities

The multitude of facilities at the Royal Peninsula include tennis courts, a basketball court, five-a-side football pitch and a full range of watersports, which take place from the hotel's own private jetty a short courtesy bus ride away. There is also a relaxing Spa, complete with sauna and steam room where fully trained masseurs await to work away all the aches and pains resulting from your efforts on the golf course.

Marginally further down the budget scale but no less impressive is the all-inclusive Sultan Gardens Resort, where we stayed for our second week. If the Royal Peninsula is most suited to the travelling executive golfer then the Sultan Gardens Resort is definitely the best choice for those travelling with the family – something illustrated by the fact that the resort picked up a Trip Advisor 'Travellers Choice: Best for Families' award for 2009.

Like the Royal Peninsula, the Sultan Gardens enjoys a convenient location right beside the Jolie Ville Golf Course and is also situated on its own beautiful private 220-metre sandy beach, where intriguing coral formations and a multitude of exotic fish species can be explored. As the name reveals the Sultan Gardens' 520 rooms, suites and beachfront villas nestle among a vast array of exotic

trees, flowers and plants and you can spend hours simply wandering through the many twists and turns of the plentiful gardens. But if wandering isn't your thing there's much more to keep you occupied.

There are five pools for a start – two of them heated and one with its own waterslide! You can work on your putting skills at the 18-hole mini golf course, experience Egypt's legendary scuba diving through the resort's Dive Centre, try a variety of water sports, or relax in the Health Club (we tried the Jacuzzi and the aromatherapy massage both of which hit the spot nicely!).

If none of the above take your fancy there's always, (deep breath), tennis, volleyball, squash, table tennis, football, billiards, American pool, foosball and darts! And if you like organised activities there's an extensive animation team as well as a dedicated Kids Club.

Comfortable

The rooms are a good size with everything you need for a comfortable stay. We had a junior suite, which had its own kitchen and lounge area complete with satellite television and optional broadband Internet access. The food and drink system at the resort is much simpler than some all-inclusive establishments – you're given a wristband when you arrive and that's it, there's no endless signing procedure. You can get snacks pretty much all day from the pool and beach bars, while for evening meals there is again a choice between a well-stocked buffet or two à la carte restaurants.

Down by the beach there is the delightful Seafood Market, serving a wide variety of fresh fish or you can get a lovely Italian meal at Casa Mia. We were treated to some outstanding meals in both of the à la carte restaurants that wouldn't have looked out of place in the finest eateries around the world.

With service to match, it really was a pleasure dining in the Sultan Gardens Resort. After dinner you can relax in the Shisha bar or enjoy the nightly entertainment before going for a boogie in the resort's own nightclub.

The second local golf course we checked out was the Sinai Golf Heights. The 18-hole development was designed by Ronald Frame and was halfway through being built before it ran into funding problems.

Challenge

But it has now been taken on by a new developer, who has grand plans for a 1.3 million square metre golf, hotel, retail and residential complex. There are currently only nine holes of the course completed – due to open this summer – but they've been finished to a decent standard and will offer a good challenge to even the most seasoned player.

Again, the Sinai Golf Heights is in a privileged setting along the Red Sea coastline with abundant grass and plentiful shimmering lakes throughout the course.

The current nine-hole layout has a wide variety of holes with the water hazards and a reasonable smattering of well-placed bunkers providing more than enough to get your teeth into.

The fairways and greens are in good condition while, as with the Jolie Ville Course, the surrounding desert scrub places accuracy at a premium.

There are a multitude of activities to keep you entertained when not playing golf in the Sinai region. For nightlife, Naama Bay is a vibrant and bustling concoction of sights, sounds and smells.

There are many modern nightclubs as well as relaxing bars kitted out with cushions where a traditional Shisha pipe can be enjoyed along with

a drink. Just about every type of food imaginable can be enjoyed in Naama Bay from traditional Egyptian fare to more Western delights.

As far as restaurants go Il Pomodoro is in a delightful outdoor setting overlooking the main promenade and does a decent standard of Italian cuisine that won't break the bank. The attached award-winning Tandoori is also well worth a visit while both restaurants are conveniently located for the best bar in Naama Bay – the Roof Bar, which is, not surprisingly, on the roof of the Camel Hotel and offers stunning vistas of the whole area.

The more adventurous of spirit and palate should take a trip slightly out of town to the beachside Indian restaurant, the Taj Mahal. This place is part of the Baron Resort and not only is the experience of enjoying a meal whilst looking directly out over the Red Sea an unforgettable one, the food is as good as any Indian meal I've tasted.

Delights

There are plenty of excursions to keep you busy away from the golf course on the Sinai Peninsula, from boat trips and scuba diving in the Red Sea to an overnight trip to Cairo to see the Pyramids. We opted for some highly uncultured but seriously enjoyable fun in the shape of a quad bike safari in the desert and a day out at the local karting track!

All in all, Sharm El Sheikh is the perfect place to visit for those travelling with friends or family who may not want to spend every day on the golf course. There is enough golf in the immediate vicinity to keep golf-lovers occupied while the rest sample the many other delights on offer. With more Championship courses like Taba Heights and Soma Bay within easy reach, you can always arrange a day trip to escape for some peace and quiet! ■



USEFUL LINKS

Flights and accommodation can be booked through On The Beach Holidays: www.otbeach.com
Maritim Royal Peninsula / Jolie Ville Golf Course: www.maritim.ee
Sultan Gardens Resort: www.sultangardensresort.com
Taj Mahal Indian Restaurant: www.baronhotelsegypt.com
Excursions / Sinai Golf Heights: www.uncoveregypt.com
Il Pomodoro / Tandoori / Camel Roof Bar: www.cameldive.com