

Resort Trades

MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS

VOL 10, ISSUE 5
SEPT/OCT 2011
askMandO.com

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The Ocean Club on Smuggler's Beach: A resort of international distinction

by Brian Welch

Our resort profile this month takes us to South Yarmouth, Mass., home of The Ocean Club on Smuggler's Beach, an oceanfront resort uniquely positioned off of Route 28 in the middle of Cape Cod area. It's an hour away from the shopping and nightlife of Provincetown and the boating and fishing in the Falmouth area. The Ocean Club on Smuggler's Beach is off the beaten trail of the Cape, providing more privacy than other Cape Cod resorts, but is still within a mile of everything from kayaking to restaurants, miniature golf, supermarkets, drugstores and more, according to Linda MacDonald, the resort's general manager.

"The resort began as a motel and was converted to timeshare units in 1986. For the past 11 years, SPM Resorts has managed The Ocean Club. SPM Resorts has a 30-plus year history of successfully managing timeshare homeowners associations, handling everything for the resort from insurance to budgeting, billing, collections and more," Linda said.

We asked Linda to give us a general overview of the resort. "The Ocean Club on Smuggler's Beach is one of the finest timeshare properties that can be found on Cape Cod. The oceanfront location provides 98 percent of the rooms an ocean view of the beach. Additionally, the indoor/outdoor pool with glass surround and retractable roof is located directly on the beach. It is a perfect place to relax."

The 63-unit property – with 61 being one-bedroom units and two units being two-bedroom – recently underwent a multi-million dollar renovation that was completed in May 2011. The renovations included a complete refurbishment, right down to the wiring in the walls.

"As with any property, the resort began wearing out and looking dated," said Paul Goodrich, regional vice president of operations for SPM Resorts. "The board believed a complete makeover was now necessary to keep The Ocean Club at its best. The board began exploring

the opportunities three years ago by interviewing prospective companies that specialized in resort refurbishments and that understood the timeshare business. Once one was selected, a model unit was completed so owners could see what to expect from a finished product."

Paul said during this time period, the board and management began informing owners of the options and discussing the possibility of having a special assessment due to the sheer magnitude of the project. "Management then discussed the project and special assessment at the weekly owners' meetings and in the resort's newsletter. Response during this time from the owners was enthusiastic toward moving forward."

When the construction started, Paul said they began to find other issues that needed upgrading and repair, and this increased the scope of the project to a \$4.2 million complete makeover. "As a result of these additional needs and issues, we were able to add modern door locking systems, fire sprinklers, new electrical wiring and all new furnishings, paint and wallpaper."

They had not planned to completely shut down the resort during the process, but the massive increase in the scope of work required their team members to reschedule more than 500 reservations allowing their contractors, Artistic General Contracting, access to the entire property at one time. Many days there were 100-plus builders working at the same time to get them open for the summer season, according to Paul.

"Currently, The Ocean Club is in the best condition it has ever been in, and with proper upkeep, the renovation has extended the life of the building for years to come. We are hearing rave reviews on the "new" Ocean Club," Paul said.

"The design concept at The Ocean Club provides a warm, inviting, ocean-themed guest room that the owners can

enjoy throughout the year," says Mary Daust, interior designer with Hospitality Resources & Design from Orlando, Fla. "To create this interior feeling, we utilized navy blues, ocean blues, teals, creams and light earth-toned greens while accenting with sea-themed and nautical artwork. All large surfaces are light and cream in color to create an open, light and fresh space."

The 61 one-bedroom units include a queen-sized bed and a pull-out sofa in the sitting area. The kitchen area includes a breakfast nook with table and chairs, a small refrigerator and microwave, sink and coffee maker. Most rooms have an ocean view and a small balcony. The two-bedroom units have a master bedroom with a private bath, and these units feature a full kitchen, living room, two twin beds in the second bedroom, and a second bathroom shared with the common areas of the unit. These units have larger balconies.

All units include an alarm clock radio, two flat-panel televisions, a DVD player, gas fireplace with tile surround and wooden mantle, granite countertops in the kitchen, rain-head showerheads in the bathrooms, vessel sinks, new balcony doors and state-of-the-art door locks.

While The Ocean Club on Smuggler's Beach has a new look, some of the staff members have been with the resort for more than 20 years. "General Manager Linda MacDonald started in housekeeping 22 years ago and worked through various departments, including activities and the front desk before she became assistant general manager and then general manager," said Paul.

"The executive housekeeper, Marilyn O'Leary, hired Linda 22 years ago and is still on board with The Ocean Club. Several other maintenance and housekeeping staff members have been with The Ocean Club for 10 to 15 years. Carol Roell is the office assistant and has worked for seven years with The Ocean Club, and Anne Harris serves as the



Photos courtesy of Nugent Photography, Yarmouth, Mass.



assistant general manager and has been with the resort for two years.”

When we asked Linda about the longevity of the employees, she said, “They have good hospitality skills and a hard-work ethic. They treat people well and therefore have been loyal to the resort. There is a good working atmosphere at The Ocean Club. SPM Resorts provides good benefits and support to its employees. Additionally, the relaxed and casual atmosphere at the resort helps maintain hardworking employees.”

Linda says two things keep her staff motivated – the whip behind her desk and free chocolates! “In all seriousness, a positive and friendly attitude goes a long way in working with employees and keeping them motivated. I have found that being kind and caring to employees – while also being professional – makes The Ocean Club a good place to work. I try to be a good role model and expect quality work from every individual,” Linda told us.

We asked Linda what impact the current economy has had on the resort. “We are mainly trying to get back to normal after being closed during the refurbishment. We have always had good rental

occupancy during the warmer months, and sometimes we will place an ad in the newspapers during the offseason to gain more business. Our rates are comparable to others in the area, so we haven’t really changed our marketing strategies too much during the past few years,” she said.

“The renovation really impacted us more than the economy. The Ocean Club was closed from January to the end of May 2011. This definitely impacted our daily operations, as we lost a lot of rental money. In addition, those individuals who own weeks during that time had to either use another SPM property, take a second week the following year, exchange the week with RCI for another resort, or use the week during another part of the year. While this was a lot to ask of owners, most of them understood and have worked with us. We are thankful to have such wonderfully supportive owners.”

We asked Rebecca Tompkins, director of communications for SPM Resorts, about the resort’s use of social media. “The Ocean Club on Smuggler’s Beach did a fantastic job utilizing Facebook during the renovations. The resort posted photos almost each day during the renovation work, and this helped to keep owners

informed of progress. Communication with owners is so vitally important to ensuring they feel part of the resort, and so they know how their money is being spent. The Ocean Club did regular updates of the construction and also used more traditional media, such as resort newsletters to keep everyone informed. Outside of the renovation, the resort utilizes email to send newsletters and notices to owners for special rental discounts and rates.”

Linda says the main focus during the past few months has been opening back up and getting the processes and procedures back in place for a smooth operation. Most everything that was done as part of the renovations has been well received.

“The HOA may focus back on the reserve budget and look at some updates that had to be put on hold because of the renovation, such as repaving the parking lot and replacing some of the landscaping. Otherwise, we are ready for our owners and guests to come and enjoy the new Ocean Club!”

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