

DeSoto Sun

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Dan Shube column: Clubs, rubs and scrubs in **Naples**

It has been a while since I have visited Naples.

While I hear the place is jumpin' in peak season, I usually prefer the quieter times of the year. Not to mention, during the off-season you can get some great deals. I heard about the "Clubs, Rubs and Scrubs" package at the Inn on Fifth.

Cute name.

It sounded like an excellent value, so I was compelled to check it out.

The Inn on Fifth is a lovely boutique hotel right in the middle of Fifth Street, one of Naples' main upscale shopping, entertainment and dining districts. The location features simple evening activities or daytime shopping without needing your car.

This time of year the shopping is awesome. I saw plenty of sales; some items were discounted 50 percent and then 50 percent again. While it is not my style to get a head start, might I recommend shopping for the holidays now?

As for dining options, I didn't walk too far to try out McCabe's Irish Pub & Grill. It is adjacent to the Inn on Fifth. The Sheppard's Pie or Bangers and Mash are excellent choices. Wash them down with a pint of Guinness and you are good to go! Most evenings feature live Irish music.

Another fine dining choice right at the hotel is Truluck's Seafood, Steak and Crab House. They also have live music. This is a great place to have a drink and listen to the pianist.

There are almost two-dozen additional fine dining choices within a short stroll of the hotel.

Other non-golf options to keep you busy in Naples (don't worry I'll get to the golf in a minute) include the Segway tour of Naples. For those of you who have never ridden a Segway, don't be frightened. This motorized two-wheeler is simple to get the hang of, especially after you view the safety video and get your pre-tour lesson.

My tour guide Kathy provided a wealth of information about the history of Naples, places to see and things to do. The tour lasted about two hours and cost \$65, but you can find coupons at the hotel that will provide a \$5 discount.

I took the tour at the end of my visit and it was a mistake. Go as soon as you arrive. Then you will know all the best places to go back and visit. You might prefer the morning tour, as it does get hotter as the day progresses and there is less chance of a shower.

I also drove over to the beach and the Naples pier. It was only about five blocks to the beach, but it was hot. The good news is the hotel offers free valet parking, something that most hotels charge plenty for.

Parking at the beach is plentiful; just bring some quarters for the meters. The water was warm, the sand beautiful. There are some nice shells if you like to collect them.

A great place to take the kids is the Naples Zoo at Caribbean Gardens. Here you will find tigers, antelopes, wild dogs and, of course, an island of monkeys.

For evening (or matinee) performances, the Sugden Community Theatre, home to the Naples Players, is right next door to The Inn on Fifth. I saw a student's performance of "Grease." This theater is new, without a bad seat in the house.

The "rubs and scrubs" part of the package refers to the Spa on Fifth. It is very serene, offering treatments such as massage, facials and body scrubs. I also tried the steam and dry sauna.

The Inn also boasts a beautiful pool and hot tub. The second story terrace location provided a nice breeze on a hot summer day.

You know I didn't make this trip without my clubs! The Inn on Fifth has made arrangements with WCI communities to include play at two of their finest area golf courses. The Greg Norman designed "Tiburon" course -- for many years the home of the "Shark Shootout" -- is an awesome track that I have played in the past. Well manicured, no rough, but plenty of coquina -- you will be very happy playing Tiburon.

This trip I played another WCI course, Hammock Bay Golf and Country Club. The Peter Jacobsen and Jim Hardy design was also in wonderful condition. It placed to 6,912 yards from the tips, but I had all I could handle from the blue tees (6,502 yards).

The course features Sea Dwarf Paspalum, a relatively new type of grass that thrives in a salty environment. It seems to be doing well as the fairways were in perfect condition. The fairways were generous (sometimes). Miss them and the rough is playable. If you don't catch the rough you may find yourself in the drink, some natural areas, or a deep bunker.

The greens rolled true, but offered many undulations and challenging pin placements. On this day I did not have my better putting stroke and it cost me. Roll them well and you will be rewarded.

The "Clubs, Rubs and Scrubs" package at the Inn on Fifth includes two nights lodging, golf at both Tiburon and Hammock Bay, a 60-minute full-body massage, and a 60-minute facial -- all starting at \$613. In season, you might pay that much just for the room!

For more information about The Inn on Fifth call 888-403-8778 or visit www.innonfifth.com.

For more information about all the wonderful things to do in Naples call 800-688-3600 or visit www.ParadiseCoast.com.

Daniel Shube, a member of the Golfwriters Association of America, has been writing on golf and travel in Florida and abroad since 1996. Contact him directly with comments or ideas at foredan@adelphia.net or messages for him can be left through this newspaper.

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