

An Inexpensive Night at the Beach

by *Atenas Today* staff reporter

Note that I said “inexpensive”, not cheap. My twenty-one year old son can go to the beach cheap. Ten bucks for a cot in a tent. Not me. My minimum is a clean room, private bath, hot water, and nothing between me and the ocean except for a few bikinis. One more thing, I don’t want to have to drive very far from Atenas –two hours maximum—and the road has to be good. Oh, and I almost forgot, I need a decent bar/restaurant within easy walking distance (no driving after dark).

There are probably dozens of places that would meet these requirements, but the one that I know about, because my wife and I just returned from there, is the Pelican Hotel in Esterillos (778-8105). The beautiful, brown sand beach at Esterillos is twenty minutes south of Jaco. Along the beach road are a handful of small hotels of varying degrees of luxury, and many interesting private residences. The beach itself is uncrowded, clean, and wide, with a border of palms shielding the occasional house or hotel. It is perfect for long walks, if you can stand the heat.

So what is the “inexpensive” price? The best rooms at the Pelican are \$70 in the high season, including a continental breakfast (fruit, toast, and coffee). It is a small hotel, only 12 rooms, but it has an open-air bar and restaurant. An excellent dinner for two with filet mignon, desert, and a bottle of wine cost us \$60, but without the wine, you could eat well for half of that. Incidentally, you can pay for the room with a credit card, but for the restaurant you need cash.

Our room (number 8) was small, with a bare minimum of furniture, but it was clean and the queen bed comfortable. The small air conditioner struggled to keep the temperature below 75 degrees. We did not spend much time there when not in bed.

My wife likes to eat late, and I like to eat early. After much negotiation, we agreed on “dinner on the table” at 7:00 pm. At exactly 6:40 pm I ordered my grilled steak, and then, being an aggressive reporter for Atenas Today, I grilled the waiter to find out which was the best room in the hotel. When he recognized that I was an American, and therefore must be familiar with water board torture techniques, he succumbed and said there was indeed one especially nice room. At the same time he pointed straight up at the ceiling. I knew he was trying to tell me something without appearing to give away hotel secrets, so I went into the yard, and looking up, saw the balcony of room number 5 on top of the restaurant. Clearly this room had the best view of the ocean, as well as a spacious balcony. Further grilling revealed that the price for room 5 was the same \$70. Next time we are going to reserve room 5.

Between the hotel and the beach is a small swimming pool (with very warm water), and a very pleasant grass and palm covered lawn. Right now I am rocking in one of the four hammocks while writing this piece. Soon we will leave and go back to the cooler mountains.

Here is one more piece of information. If you drive to the Pacific before next Tuesday, April 3, you can stop at the annual Orotina Fruit Fair, which is indeed a huge affair. In addition to the many vendors offering mountains of fruits of every variety, there are well over 100 other vendors selling art, clothing, jewelry, shoes, plants, furniture, kitchenware, toys, etc. There must be concerts, as we saw several stages with sound equipment. Also, of course, there were numerous places to buy drinks and food. At the edge of the fair grounds there was a carnival with rides and games. The Orotina Fair might be a good place to stop in the late afternoon on your way home.