

Storm-blown Plaza is back and better

By LINDA HAASE
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

INDIALANTIC — After nearly being toppled from its throne, the oceanfront Holiday Inn has re-emerged — as an upscale Crowne Plaza.

The gleaming doors opened two months ago after a 16-month, \$20 million renovation, sparked by devastating damage from infamous guests Frances and Jeanne.

The 272-room hotel was one of several on the Space Coast extensively damaged by the storms of 2004. Two nearby hotels, The Hilton Melbourne Beach Oceanfront and Melbourne Suites Beach Hotel, are still being revamped.

“You could see right through the hotel, it was just a shell after the hurricanes,” one staff member recalls. “But in a way, it was a blessing. It’s much nicer now.” Every room in the hotel was refurbished — and a fresher, more trendy facility has emerged.

The prime oceanfront Space Coast property is squeaky clean — and service is impeccable.

Management seems to have found the silver lining and passed it along to its guests: rooms have balconies, microwaves and mini-fridges. And a drawstring bag with a ticket to dreamland awaits: ear-plugs, sleep mask, lavender aromatherapy spray, a clip to make sure the light filtering drapes stay shut and a CD with soothing music and relaxation tips from Michael Breus, the “Sleep Expert” for WebMD.

Our plush sixth-floor accommodations (\$179 with AAA discount) were roomy. The maroon and gold stucco walls gave it a serene, Tuscan feeling.

Several of the hotel’s staff have worked here for decades and are powerhouses of information about local restaurants, attractions and driving directions. That’s refreshing in this transient state where so many staff say: “I don’t know, I’ve only lived here a few months” or “I just moved here.”

The expansive beach and peanut-shaped pool lure families, but there’s also an outdoor deck overlooking the ocean. There’s plenty of seating on the 6,000-square-foot Brazilian redwood



Photos by LINDA HAASE

The Crowne Plaza has been completely refurbished since hurricanes Frances and Jeanne virtually destroyed it two years ago.

deck and with the flick of a flag, servers will take orders for drinks.

The hotel’s restaurant serves breakfast, lunch and dinner but there are also several nearby family-friendly eateries including Sonic, Friendly’s and Blueberry Muffin.

If you tire of the pool and the beach, there’s plenty to do nearby: The Brevard Zoo, the Brevard Museum of Art and Science and Andretti Thrill Park (bumper cars,

batting cages and other adventure thrills). Melbourne’s historic area will bring a smile to shoppers’ faces. And Kennedy Space Center is about a half hour away.

It doesn’t matter what time you return — from the balcony the sound of the waves on the beach is soothing 24/7.

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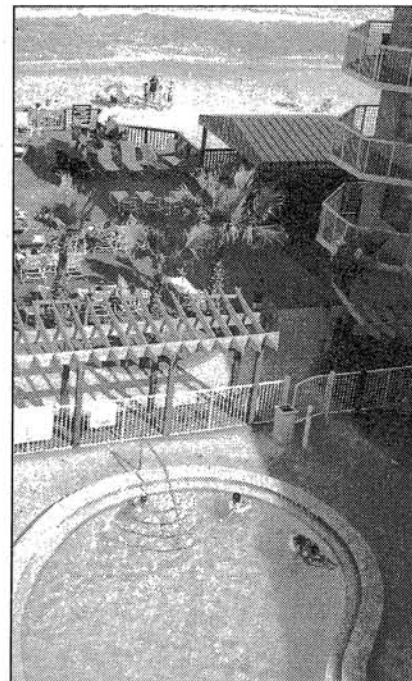
TIM BRITTON/Staff Artist

If you go

Crowne Plaza, 2605 N. SR A1A, Indialantic

Rates: Begin at \$239, with discounts on the Web and for AAA members. For information and reservations, call (321) 777-4100; www.cpmelbourne.com.

Cody’s candid comments: I liked the beds, the breakfast buffet and the lobby. The beds were soft and comfortable, the buffet food was scrumptious and the lobby looked like a place where a famous person would live.



The peanut-shaped pool and a 6,000-square-foot Brazilian redwood deck along the beach draw visitors outside.

Weekend family getaways are reviewed anonymously by Palm Beach Post staff, and all costs are paid for by The Post.