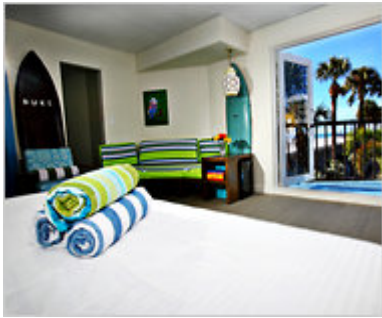


PCI POST



Check Out Our Review in this Weekend's NY Times Travel Section!



Hotel Review: Postcard Inn on the Beach in St. Pete Beach, Fla.

By **BETH GREENFIELD**

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The Postcard Inn brings a welcome dose of stylish lodging to St. Pete Beach, a skinny spit of sand where options tend toward either outdated beach motels or high-end, high-rise behemoths. This place — two-story, chic and spare, the result of renovating a 1957 motor inn — is a hip, affordable option.

LOCATION

In central St. Pete, right on the beach, in a rather developed stretch. It's an easy 15-minute drive from here into downtown St. Petersburg, and a half-hour drive from Tampa International Airport.

THE ROOM

I wasn't happy with the original first-floor room I was given because of its proximity to both the restaurant and an outdoor lounge area, so the front desk switched me (with a subtle dose of attitude) to a room on the second floor. All rooms on the property are different; those closest to the pool have private hammocks out front, and just two, Nos. 362 and 364, have small balconies looking toward the beach. While mine had neither, it did have a comfortably firm king-size bed that was flanked by small bedside tables, each with a black-metal drafting lamp for reading. The décor included a full-wall mural photograph behind the bed of a [surfer](#) riding a massive wave, three framed surfer photos on the wall and a McCrystal shortboard propped (and affixed to the wall) in one corner. A 32-inch flat-screen TV sat on half of a long, stained-wood desk. Though the sisal-like carpet was a drab gray, the space was brightened with a cornflower-blue front door that matched a molded plastic Eames-style desk chair and the patterned upholstery of a vintage armchair. A window overlooked a large carrotwood tree in the courtyard below.

THE BATHROOM

Unfortunately not renovated along with the rest of the property, this bare-bones restroom had the salmon-pink tiling, tub and toilet that are often coveted in prewar apartments; here, though, they just felt jarringly dated and cold. Products were cheap, and towels were thin.

AMENITIES

The wide, sugar-soft sandy beach on the Gulf of Mexico — with lounge chairs, a driftwood-decorated shower and a volleyball net

— is perhaps the best amenity here. But there's plenty more to keep you hanging around, including a palm-tree-edged heated pool, a funky beachside bar, two small fitness rooms and a snack shack that serves burgers and fried jalapeños. The main restaurant, an outpost of New York's [Wildwood Barbeque](#), serves slow-smoked meats in an airy, blond-wood dining room. There are hangout spaces aplenty, including the courtyard, equipped with table tennis and pool tables, and a fire pit (and, unfortunately, a sound system that pipes in classic rock until about 7 p.m.). Inside, the vast, high-ceilinged lobby is decorated with rattan furniture, glass coffee tables, low banquettes and a wall of art books. A vintage photo booth and small video-game room are off to one side, and there's a nook, where a free breakfast of cereals, muffins, juices and coffee is served. Free Wi-Fi is available.

ROOM SERVICE

There is no room service here.

BOTTOM LINE

Despite a few faults, the Postcard Inn is a fun, casual, budget-minded place to station yourself — whether you're a couple or a family wanting to enjoy the beach and explore the surrounding areas, or pals seeking a new place to enjoy spring break.

Postcard Inn on the Beach, 6300 Gulf Boulevard, St. Pete Beach, Fla.; (800) 237-8918; postcardinn.com. Rooms start at \$89 and can go up to \$269 in high season.

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