



Best Buds

Labadee , Haiti

Please remember that these comments reflect the views of many different people who have visited Labadee and may not be accurate or jibe with your own special point of view!

View some maps of Labadee on the last page!

<http://labadee.liquidsun.org/index.php>

	<p>Labadee is on a peninsula on the north coast of Hispaniola, otherwise known as Haiti. Hispaniola was the name Christopher Columbus gave to the entire island shared by the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Recent political unrest made Haiti an undesirable destination, but Royal Caribbean has cordoned off a remote peninsula on this island for a private getaway for its passengers. This totally safe and private compound provides guests an opportunity to experience the magnificent beauty of this region while participating in a variety of water activities, to meet local craftsmen and to learn about local history.</p>
	<p>Most cruise ship private getaways are reached by tender which means that they are occasionally skipped due to bad weather or choppy seas. These private islands all have wonderful beaches where passengers are welcomed ashore with rum punch and the rhythms of a steel band and can spend their time swimming, sailing, water-skiing, sun-tanning and enjoying a sizzling barbeque.</p>
	<p>Make Labadee your total beach day! Labadee is 260 acres of beaches and woodlands with activities that include water sports, beach volleyball, exploring 200 year old ruins and local trades people selling crafts. Snorkeling expeditions to nearby Amiga Island reveal anchors, cannonballs, pottery and other 16th century artifacts on the sea bed.. www.caribbeanportreviews.com/Labadee.htm</p>
	<p>From the first sight of the island, I was in awe! It looked like the old King Kong movies! I couldn't believe the beauty that I was seeing. We spent the day on one of the most beautiful beaches that looked out at our ship anchored in the cove. I will say that you need to watch your cameras though. Ours was stolen right there on that perfect beach and all our Bon Voyage pictures were gone.</p>
	<p>There are 4-5 restrooms and 4-5 bars spaced throughout the Labadee peninsula all within walking distance of the tender docks. Beverages can be paid with SeaPass card. Restroom water is not intended for drinking—drinking water is available at all bar locations and cafes. Lounge chairs and hammocks on Labadee are complimentary and cannot be reserved. Beach floating mats are rented all day for \$10 and available at Sea Trek Water Sports area. You can pick up a simple map of Labadee onboard.</p>

Shopping	
	Haiti is noted for metal sculptures and primitive paintings.
	<u>Straight ahead:</u> The Haitian and Artisan's Markets are pretty much straight ahead mid island. The Artisan's Market offers specialty stores: <i>Harry's</i> fine carved statues and tableware, <i>Les Ateliers Taggart</i> tapestries, exotic fabrics and wall hangings, <i>Connie's</i> handmade pottery, jewelry and <i>Gallerie Trois Visages</i> distinctive art by some of Haiti's best. The Native Market moderately prices hand-produced crafts/ The merchants on Labadee only accept CASH (not SeaPass or Traveler's Checks.) Change your larger bills to smaller ones at the Guest Relations Desk on Deck 5 before going ashore. Nearly all items are duty-free. The first aid station and Adventure Beach are straight ahead and mid island facing Dragon Tail Beach (no swimming or snorkeling due to undertow currents, hazardous coral formations and sea urchins.)
Locations and Activities	
	<u>To the right of tender dock:</u> The Sea Trek Aqua Park (two giant trampolines, water slide, etc \$15) , day spa, wave runners (\$99 per Yamaha 700 wave runner, maximum weight 375lbs, must show license and must be 16 to drive, 10 passenger; leaves Columbus Beach for 50 minute trip) and kayak tours are to the right as you leave the dock. Two-person kayaks leave from Columbus Beach while learning about Haitian history. \$38 adults and \$32 children under 12 for 1 ½ hours. Parasail 400 feet above shore in a dry-flight system for \$79 per person—age 12-15 must fly with parent in tandem parasail. It's a great photo opportunity. Parasailing and wave runners sell out quickly, please sign up early to avoid disappointment.
	<u>To the left or tender dock:</u> Nellie's Bar, banana boats (\$10), Barefoot Beach (swimming & snorkeling--\$6 required life vest available at Dive Shop; \$16 package includes mask, fins and vest; \$10 under age 12) and Hideaway Beaches (swimming at eastern point) Lookout Point, Sea Trek Dive shop, Dragon's Rock and DR Café are all to the left. Beach towels have been provided in your stateroom and have a \$20 charge for each missing towel.
	Here's the usual schedule: 9:30 Musical greeting 10:00 Walkathon Explore the Beaches 10:15 Yoga on the Beach 11:00 Walkathon Woodland Trail 11:45 Balloon Toss 12-2pm Lunch at Columbus Cove Cafe and Café Labadee 1:30 Folkloric Show at Café Labadee 1:30 Jungle Volleyball 2:00 Olympic Games
	Take the tram or walk around the Labadee peninsula.
	When you land, head for the far side of the island where the beach is white and clean and the waves perfect. Souvenir vendors can be annoying—barter vendors in the first market down 1/3 to ½ the asking price or pay sticker price in the second market area which is more like little shops.
	My wife and I have been on many cruises, and have visited too many islands and places in the Caribbean to count. We have probably seen some of the best beaches in the world. Labadee really surprised us--it is one of the most beautiful, and relaxing places I have ever been. Beaches that face the Atlantic and those in the sheltered bay are filled with shade from lush almond trees to all different kinds of palms. The crafts market is plentiful and awesome. They were practically giving away Haitian art, paintings, clothing, scarves and carved items including very inexpensive elaborate chess sets. What bargains! Too many things to mention here. The scenery, with the beautiful, rugged, very high mountains as a backdrop was gorgeous. Can't wait to go again. Very, very nice.
	Walk to <i>Dragon's Point</i> where the ocean sounds like a dragon's hiss. Venture up to Dragon's Rock on the tip of the island. It is very cool and it really does sound like a dragon breathing when the waves come in. There are a few different beaches to walk to. The main beach was very nice, white sand and somewhat

	crowded. Walk down a ways to <i>Rock Beach</i> and sit and enjoy the scenery--it is beautiful. Rock Beach is tough to swim in if you don't have water socks, very rough. The opposite side of Labadie faces the Atlantic and as others have written in past reviews you really do need to beware of jelly fish and all those little spiny creatures.
	This is private RCCL area—chairs and hammocks are free. The locals will offer to set up beach chairs for you; you can tip them \$1 or \$2 but there is no charge for this “service” that any passenger can do. I saw a lady complaining she was told to pay \$15 and she did, not knowing this. If you want to move your chair some distance, it is well worth the tipping
	A barbecue lunch is served at three different dining venues, which are permanent open-air buildings. Bars are conveniently positioned throughout Labadee and bartenders wander the beach offering sodas and specialty drinks. Chicken, hamburgers and ribs for the BBQ is brought from the ship and the onboard restaurants are usually closed this day.
	Restrooms have attendants with tip jars.
	RCCL requires that all snorkelers (even if you bring your own gear, as we did) wear an inflatable vest (it doesn't have to be inflated) for a \$6 rental fee. Additional benefit of being away from the masses—this wasn't enforced where we were. The BBQ provided was okay, and we also had to try a “Labadoosie” beverage. Didn't even attempt the local market, as others on beach shared their experiences and confirmed what I had read—VERY high pressure sales. On the way back to ship, passed the first beach and Aqua-park—looked like everyone on the ship was there...don't know how people could swim with it that congested!
	Be careful, a little boy did get nailed by a jellyfish. He recovered quickly after a quick trip back to the ship. They washed him down with vinegar. His mother said they charged her \$288. For what I was looking, nice clean beach, it was great.
	The beach area was pretty good. You can work up a really good tan there or burn. After we grew tired of wading in the water, we rode the banana boat (costs \$10 per person). There is usually a long waiting list, and you need six people to ride a banana boat. As you are waiting to get on the real banana boat, the instructor teaches you some techniques and hand signals. We of course brushed him off and ignored him. As fate would have it, all of us fell off of the banana boat and into the ocean. I was exceptionally frightened because I did not know how to swim, but I did have my life vest on so I was fine; a little shaken up but fine. We then had a BBQ and relaxed for the entire day. For those of you who plan to go jet skiing on Labadee, like my family did, be careful where you step because my sister stepped on a sea urchin. It is very common but painful.
	The beach is fenced and guarded to keep Haitians out. Haiti (on the island of Hispaniola) is a poor country and natives beg at the fence lines. Vendors are allowed in to show their wares and can be quite aggressive when trying to sell you something. Cameras and other valuable items have been lost here.
	RCCL billed it as a "private island" and that is not true. There are natives and armed Haitian police roaming the peninsula/island, but that really does not detract from the beauty and relaxation that you can soak-up there. I've read descriptions from other travelers complaining about feeling intimidated by natives who cleaned sand off their chairs or handed them a paper towel in some rest room expecting a tip. Give me a break. Either tip or don't tip, but that should in no way prevent anyone from spending a glorious day there. The water was delightful, the beaches clean and generally the service was top shelf. You can snorkel, jet-ski, ride a banana boat, or simply relax and we did plenty of each.
	Labadee was a beautiful place. The beaches were great. The first beach was too crowded, so we walked over to the second one on the left. We snorkeled next to the rocks, and saw plenty of fish, starfish, shells etc. The water was very clear, even in depths of 20 or more feet. I was the only one in our group who has snorkeled before, so I taught the others. It is very easy and everyone learned rather fast. We planned to do some major snorkeling in Grand Cayman, so this was the prefect place for everyone to hone their skills. My wife doesn't swim, but she did fine. Here they require you to wear a snorkel vest (you inflate as much as you want by blowing into a tube). I left mine deflated so I could dive down and check out the sites. They even have instructors there to show you how if necessary. The ship brings lunch to the shore as a

	buffet style meal. It is served under a permanent open-air type building. It was OK for what they had to go through to get it there.
	The Haitians have a market place behind the beach areas. They have some beautiful wood carved statues, paintings, stone ware, etc. I love to fish, so I bought a large wooden carving of a fish. You have to barter with these people on the price. He started at \$60, and I got him down to \$20. They take American currency of course, so don't forget to bring some cash. Always cut the price to at least half of what they want. It may take several tries, but they will come down to your price. If you are not interested in their wares, just say no thank you and keep walking. They tend to be pushy and do all they can do to get you to look at their wares and may even put some things in your hands. I really had no problems at all and bought some beautiful items at a good price. There is plenty on the island to keep you busy: Parasailing, wave runners, kayaks, banana boat rides, and floating mats (all for a price of course).
	On Labadee, we chose the Castaway to Malfini excursion. I was interested in this because it seemed like a great chance to test my first time snorkeling skills. We enjoyed the boat ride while being treated to an alternative history lesson which shed new light on an old story, along with interesting information about our surroundings. We landed on a private beach tucked in a cove. We were among only 15-20 people and really felt we had the island to ourselves. I was right in my choice for snorkeling. In the warm, clear, calm waters within the cove, there was plenty to look at from the safety of a beach mat. It was a wonderful and necessary prelude to tackling the barrier reef with waves and deeper waters.
	Labadee was a beautiful place. The second I set foot in there, I was truly amazed. If somehow, you can block out the locals, and try to ignore the guards at the gate with a 5 foot machine gun, then you will definitely have a good time. However, I STRONGLY DO NOT RECOMMEND THE WAVERUNNER TOUR . The locals beg you for money on their boats, and you spend more time sitting there than riding the actual wave runner. You might want to stay on the boat for this one.
	Do NOT do the wave runner experience. You pay almost \$100 U.S. per wave runner. Most of the people in the party will RACE to each destination (causing the experience to be much shorter). Locals in small boats will beg you to buy stuff from them while you're floating on the wave runner. It is not a tour. You speed away from the pier for 2-3 minutes and pause, then speed from there to another destination for 2-3 minutes and then from there for another 3-4 minutes and then from there back to the pier. You spend more time listening to the instructor than anything else and next thing you know you're headed back and it's over. It does take about 45 minutes.
	What a wasteland of a place to go to. First off, it's in HAITI but RCCL likes to say it's Hispaniola, which is technically correct because that is the island on which Haiti is located. It has always been an unstable and dangerous place to be. The area is fenced off by 10-12 foot fences patrolled by machinegun-toting security. The beach is nice, but this beach can be found anywhere in the Caribbean.
	First port of call was Labadee, a little strip of fenced off beach on "Hispaniola". The area is pretty but very sad. As I walked along the 10 foot tall chain link fence separating the private beach from the rest of Hispaniola/Haiti, I met several locals who had come to the other side of the fence to receive food that workers on the Royal Caribbean side tossed over to them.
	I understand that many disagree with the privatization and commercialization of a place that is inhabited by such poverty, but it is Haiti in its entirety that is so beautiful, not just the small section that is owned by RCCL. While not wealthy in money, its inhabitants are truly rich in environment. It was by far the best highlight of our trip.
	I went to Labadee, Haiti and while it is owned by RCCL and run by the cruise line to appear "authentic" including Haitian dancers, craft markets, they even have hammocks hanging between the palm trees; I've never seen any place more beautiful. Everyone always talks about Aruba (which is nothing but a flat island and was unimpressive to me), Jamaica and all these other tourist places, but let me say that Haiti is the most breathtakingly beautiful island I've ever seen and it is truly the Caribbean's best kept secret.





ACTIVITIES

IMPORTANT REMINDER

Swimming is not recommended at Dragon's Tail Beach due to the presence of sea urchins.

The following is a list of just some of the exciting activities taking place in Labadee.
Check your Daily Planner for the times of these events

Please wait for announcements as to when the first guest tender departs. For guests on morning tours, please consult your 'tour tickets for meeting time and location.

All Teens – Meet the Youth Staff at the Volleyball Courts. (Refer to Teen Compass for times)

8:30 am **The Volleyball Courts** – Open for informal play. (Sign-out the balls at the Dive Shop).

9:30 am **Musical Greeting at Labadee Landing.**

10:00 am **Aquanauts, Explorers, Voyagers** – Meet the Youth Staff at Adventure Island, adjacent to the First Aid Station. (#7)

10:00 am **Walkathon &** – Explore the Beaches with your Cruise Staff - Meet at the Tender Pier (#8)

10:00 am-1:00 pm **Roaming Photographers** - Flash a Smile

10:15 am **Yoga On The Beach &** – (\$10 fee) - Meet on Labadee Pier

11:00 am **Walkathon &** – Do the Woodland Trail with your Cruise Staff - Meet at the Tender Pier (#8)

11:45 am **Family Water Balloon Toss** – Adventure Beaches. (#17)

noon-2:00 pm **Beachcombers Lunch** – Columbus Cove Cafe and Cafe Labadee.

1:00 pm **Aquanauts, Explorers, Voyagers** – Meet the Youth Staff at Adventure Beaches, adjacent to the First Aid Station. (#17)

1:30 pm **Folkloric Show** – Adjacent to Cafe Labadee.

1:30 pm **Jungle Volleyball** - Meet your Sports Staff at the Volleyball Court for fun in the sun. (#17)

2:00 pm **Olympic Games** - Meet Bryn and Luigi for fun sports - next to First Aid Center (#7 on the Map)

* Indicates 1 ShipShape Dollar is earned for participation.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dragon's Rock 2. Dragon's Rock Cafe 3. Lookout Point 4. Snorkeling/Swimming Area 5. SeaTrek Dive Shop 6. Nellie's Place/Nellie's Beach 7. First Aid 8. Tender Pier 9. Cafe Labadee 10. Haitian Market 11. Artisan's Market 12. Kava Bar 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Waverunner Tours 14. Banana Boat Ride 15. Aquapark 16. Columbus Cove 17. Adventure Beach 18. Parasailing 19. Hideaway Beach 20. Columbus Cove Beach 21. Dragon's Tail Beach (no swimming or snorkeling) 22. Barefoot Beach 23. Day Spa Massage on the Beach
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SHOPPING