

Member Review

Chique Boutique in Paraty

Is Paraty on your list of "must see" places while you're living in São Paulo? Well, if you're looking for somewhere to stay that is luxurious but comfortable, with a touch of rock'n'roll, try the Paraty Bungalows Hotel & Bar.

We stayed there for a weekend recently, and, despite the disappointing weather, we had such an enjoyable and relaxing time I thought other Newcomers might appreciate the dicas (it's not often I say that about weekends away with our 3 year old and 9 month old). It's worth mentioning here that I had already tried several pousadas who quoted sky-high pacote prices for two single rooms. I was on the point of writing it off and staying at home when a friend called with details of a new boutique hotel she'd found, where we could easily stay in the same room and which wouldn't cost the earth. Impulsively I agreed on the spot that we'd join her and her family there.

Matthias Prill, the owner and mastermind behind the design of this hotel which opened less than a year ago, is a band manager who organizes the Brazilian tours of various famous rock bands. Band members will often stay at Paraty Bungalows in between gigs in São Paulo and Rio. The bungalows have accommodated members of the Smiths, the Ramones and the Mission for example, and Swedish band the Deathstars had stayed earlier in the week. The hotel offers privacy, luxury and high quality service but maintains a relaxed atmosphere which seems to appeal to celebrity musicians. However, the hotel's other previous guests and followers on Facebook are from a wider background: some had hired the hotel exclusively for a private party, some for a corporate event, and others were couples using it as a base for boat trips and R&R.

We arrived in the dark after a 6 hour drive. SatNav had optimistically estimated under 4 hours (and to be fair that was accurate for our return journey on Sunday morning) but it hadn't reckoned on bank holiday traffic leaving São Paulo. In any case, the children had slept (eventually) and we'd arrived at last. The hotel was striking at night: we could see the eight individual bungalows painted a tranquil shade of green, built around a 102m² swimming pool and hot tub with green mosaic tiles and underwater lighting. The site was landscaped with palm trees and mosquito-repelling plants, the whole scene tastefully lit up at night, yet blending into the shadow of the hills behind. Our friends had arrived before us and were already enjoying the heated jacuzzi, relaxing in the water with a G&T nearby, chatting and staring up at the stars (when did you last see stars in SP?), while their young baby slept in the pushchair beside them.

We carried the sleeping girls to our bungalow. At nearly 50m² there was plenty of space for all four of us to stay in the same room. We were provided with an additional single bed for our 3 year old and we brought our own travel cot for the baby. Having settled them, we saw we had an LCD TV (with satellite channels), DVD player, stereo, WiFi internet access, safe and minibar - and then discovered the high-end en suite bathroom had a huge jacuzzi. The design was contemporary and very comfortable. We could have stayed there

for weeks.

Leaving the girls asleep in our room (within our sight and earshot) we ordered a caipirinha and joined our friends in the hot tub under the stars. Who says parents can't relax during the weekend?



The bungalows and 1960s style cocktail bar showcase an impressive collection of autographed memorabilia featuring signed posters and photos of the likes of Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Brigitte Bardot and Doris Day. There are also signed items and personal messages from Hollywood greats such as Robert de Niro, Al Pacino, Audrey Hepburn and Marilyn Monroe, and many more lembranças from musical icons. The bar is excellent and if Matthias is around you will find yourself accepting refills.

If, like us, you wake early you can stroll into Paraty (about 15 minutes' walk/5 minutes' drive) or walk along the beach (5 minutes away) to clear your head before tucking into fresh orange juice, coffee, cereal, breads, pastries, cheese, ham, eggs and bacon. Flexible to the needs of all its guests, the hotel serves breakfast from 8am until midday. We found the staff very helpful, letting us use the kitchen to sterilize bottles, and squeezing extra juice for the children.

We were also served coffee and cake at about 4 o'clock on the terrace where we could relax and enjoy a little music from Louis Armstrong, Doris Day and Frank Sinatra.

Matthias is native German but speaks fluent English, Portuguese and Spanish. Always happy to join you for a drink, he can answer any questions you might have about where to go for dinner, which boat tour guide to use, which day trips to take from Paraty and the best upcoming gigs in Rio or São Paulo.

As for price, the hotel rates are competitive. Certainly we paid a great deal less for our two night stay than we would have done for two single room pacotes at some of the other pousadas in Paraty - and we intend to go back again soon!

If you would like more information visit www.Paratybungalows.com. Or to receive daily updates you can subscribe to Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Paraty-Bungalows-Hotel-Bar/222584896683/>

Finally, Paraty Bungalows is included in the Circuito Elegante (www.circuitoelegante.com.br) - a collection of the most "modern, elegant and enchanting" boutique hotels in Brazil. Save this link for next time you're looking for somewhere to stay!

*By Anna Hampson
Anna and her husband, both British, are living in São Paulo with their family on their first expat assignment with GRSA.*