



**Club Med Turkoise sits along one of the world's best beaches, Grace Bay in Turks and Caicos. *Photo courtesy of Club Med***

## **Return to Club Med: All-inclusive pioneer evolves in its 75th year**

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**By Katherine Rodeghier**

The first Club Med resort in North America opened in Cancun, Mexico, in 1976. A year later, I went to review the continent's first all-inclusive resort for the Daily Herald. Like me, my fellow guests were mainly in their 20s and 30s, lighthearted and free-spirited, with a few holdovers

from the hippies of the 1960s. The “village,” as it was called in keeping with its communal vibe, felt slightly hedonistic with a French flair reflecting its European heritage.

### **Fast forward to 2025**

My husband and I took our kids to three other Club Meds after it introduced family resorts in the '80s and '90s. Then Club Med fell off our radar for two decades. Eager to rediscover it, we flew to Turks and Caicos last spring for a few days at the adults-only Club Med Turkoise.

Would it be the old Club Med I remembered? Or had it changed?

First surprise: Lots of heads of gray hair around the infinity pool, the bars and the buffet. We expected to be the old fogies at the resort, but we fit right in.

Most guests are over 50, said Maude Laganiere, an assistant manager at Turkoise, and many are repeat guests who took to the Club Med concept in their younger days.



**A new infinity pool was among the renovations at Club Med Turkoise. *Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier***

“I’ve been going to Club Meds since I was a kid,” said Brett Norris, who joined us for cocktails at Sharkies Grill & Beach Bar. It was the last night of a 10-day stay for the Calgary, Alberta,

resident. He said he appreciated the affordability of the resort's all-inclusive concept covering food and drink with free use of sports equipment: kayaks, sailboats and stand-up paddleboards. His wife, Lynne Robertson, enjoyed yoga classes and time swimming and relaxing on one of the world's best beaches, Grace Bay.

Club Med Turkoise, named for the bay's turquoise hue, opened in 1984 as the first major resort in Turks and Caicos, reflecting Club Med's fondness for seeking undiscovered places. Guests have free access to pickleball, bocce ball, table tennis, group tennis and fitness lessons. Snorkeling trips to a nearby coral reef are included. A fellow snorkeler told us she took free lessons on the flying trapeze with all its rigging and earned accolades during the weekly talent show.

Guests who want to pay extra can golf, go deep-sea fishing, take excursions, pamper themselves in the spa and scuba dive in one of the top dive locations in the Caribbean.

Turkoise was renovated in 2012 and again in 2018 after Hurricane Irma hit. Still, it strikes me as one of the old-school Club Meds I remember with simple accommodations in low-slung buildings no taller than the surrounding palm trees.



**Club Med Turkoise opened in 1984 on what was then a fairly undeveloped area on Turks and Caicos.** *Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier*

### **Shift to luxury**

Second surprise: Club Med is going upscale, building new luxury resorts and renovating older ones to attract families and the affluent.

Within its more than 70 properties worldwide, Club Med introduced an Exclusive Collection portfolio comprising five-star resorts, VIP hideaways tucked inside its four-star resorts, alpine ski chalets and luxury villas with access to activities at neighboring Club Meds. There's even a French sailing yacht, Club Med 2, that summers in the Mediterranean and winters in the Caribbean.

Depending on the resort, guests at these premium Club Meds might receive room service breakfast, private airport transfers, concierge service, priority bookings at the spa and reservations at specialty restaurants. Rooms are larger, including some luxurious suites. A few have private pools.

That's a far cry from the tent village of the first Club Med built in Mallorca, Spain, in 1950. Founded by a Belgian entrepreneur, Club Med pioneered the all-inclusive concept promoting carefree vacations focused on sports, wellness and nature. Seventy-five years later, it has properties in 40 countries on five continents. Depending on the location, guests can choose from more than 25 land and water sports.

In 2015, Club Med was acquired by a Chinese multinational conglomerate. It builds or renovates three to five resorts each year, including a new mountain resort. In the Americas region, business volume grew 5% last year, reflecting its shift to premium properties.



**Club Med Michès Playa Esmeralda in the Dominican Republic is the only fully Exclusive Collection Club Med resort in North America.** *Courtesy of Club Med*

### **In North America**

Club Med's only Exclusive Collection resort in North America opened six years ago as the first resort in the up-and-coming region of Michès in the Dominican Republic. Club Med Michès Playa Esmeralda has four separate boutique villages designed for different types of travelers, including adults-only and families. Set between beach and jungle, it offers multiple categories of spacious rooms and suites.

Of Club Med's nine properties in North America, three have Exclusive Collection spaces within the resorts. Quebec Charlevoix in Canada sits in the mountains overlooking the St. Lawrence River and offers summer and winter activities, including skiing. Club Med Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic will complete renovations including new social spaces, culinary experiences and accommodations. These renovations follow the unveiling of Club Med's largest water park.



**A kids' club and baby club were among recent renovations at Club Med Cancun.** *Courtesy of Club Med*

Club Med Cancun's exclusive space also has its own pool, bar and suites. Renovations across the resort added a Sports and Wellness Island and reimagined its Family Oasis. The kids' club was moved closer to family suites to save steps for little ones and their parents. A baby club was added for ages 4 months to 23 months. A new Mayan-themed splash park, water park, playground, mini-pool and mini-cinema play up the focus on families.

Sounds like I need to return to Club Med Cancun, this time with the grandkids.

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### **Club Med**

For details on the various resorts and prices, see [clubmed.us/](https://www.clubmed.us/).

<https://www.dailyherald.com/20250801/travel/return-to-club-med-all-inclusive-pioneer-evolves-in-its-75th-year/>