



Isla Mujeres' Retreat: Villa La Bella

by Tom Cotroneo

If your favorite vacation dream starts with the letters B&B, then Villa La Bella, on the island of Isla Mujeres, is certain to make your heart go bada bing.

Is there a room with a sweeping view of the Caribbean Sea on your Bed and Breakfast checklist? Villa La Bella delivers in waves of turquoise. Can you visualize yourself sipping a pina colada splashed with ultra-smooth Cuban rum? At Villa La Bella, enjoy all-natural ingredient cocktails served in a freshly cut coconut shell. Now imagine a bathroom where a palm tree cozily threads its way through the roof. This island escape is an overachiever when it comes to exceeding guests' expectations.

Villa La Bella is the real-life hotelier vision of Curtis and Ashley Blogin. In 2000, these Virginia transplants turned a week-long Isla Mujeres getaway into a "this is where we belong" adventure that continues to this day. The seeds of the Blogins' entrepreneurial story sprung from their "love at first sight" vacation.

How the Villa La Bella Story Began

Ashley Blogin remembers the emotion that took hold when she and Curtis first rode the 20-minute ferry from Cancun to Isla Mujeres. "While on the ferry, I remember feeling like I was going home," Ashley said. During the course of the Blogins' stay on Isla this sensation grew more intense. "Several days into our vacation we made an offer on the plot of land where our Villa La Bella now stands," Curtis said.

The year-long Villa La Bella building process is something the Blogins can laugh about now. Not only did the construction start out on the wrong plot of land, there was also the instance of their architect's case of mistaken identity, and Ashley's need to brush up on her Spanish.

"We discovered that our first architect wasn't actually an architect. He was just a wannabe architect," Curtis said with a smile. Ashley's "lost in translation" incident can best be told by Ashley herself. "I received a very quizzical expression from one of our staff concerning what I wanted done with our flooring. I found out later from a Spanish-

speaking friend that what I was asking for translated to doing something sexual on the floor,” a still red-faced Ashley recalled.

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What’s in a Name?

The Blogins’ original name for their hotel was actually Villa Las Brisas. This name captured the feeling of the subtle tradewinds that guests find so refreshing amidst Isla Mujeres’ trademark sunshine. The trouble with this name began when the Blogins’ popular Bed and Breakfast started generating a higher Internet search engine listing than an international hotel chain of the same name.



Villa La Bella owners
Curtis & Ashley Blogin
(above)

“The international company didn’t like competing with our little B&B, and they started legal proceedings regarding our name. We decided a new hotel name should honor someone we love,” Curtis said.

Part of the charm of Villa La Bella is the four-legged friend that is the hotel’s

namesake. “Our rescue dog Bella is our pride and joy. She gets such a warm reception from our guests that we named our business after her,” Ashley said.



ABSOLUTELY-
NO KIDS 18+
NO GROUP DRAB 6
NO YAHOO'S /
EXCHANGE=10 to 1
NO TO GO DRINKS
NO PUBLIC TOILET

BEER SO COLD IT'LL
MAKE YOUR TEETH HURT

Colorful Island

The Villa La Bella environment is awash in color. The B&B is painted with lively oranges, blues, reds, yellows, and greens that not only brighten your stay, but are mindful of the Mayan culture that is deeply rooted throughout the Yucatan area. Many of the Villa La Bella walls are adorned with Mayan artifacts, masks, and even relics from the Caribbean Sea that add history, flavor, and memories to a guest's stay.

Ashley's new home is also her personal picking paradise. She loves searching the ocean coastline along the Villa La Bella perimeter for seashells, coral, and beach glass. She



Villa La Bella colors



puts these treasures to use by making artistic creations with her findings. Ashley's island gems are showcased in select nooks and crannies throughout the hotel property. The Villa La Bella is so tastefully appointed that guests could spend a whole day just admiring their relaxing surroundings.

Come a Long Way

The Blogins can fondly reflect how much their little piece of paradise has grown. "Our first guests in 2001 were honeymooners from Virginia. When they arrived, we hadn't yet built the steps leading to their lofted bedroom. Not only did they have to walk up a ladder to their room, we had to carry drinks up. Fortunately they found this little inconvenience to be charming," Curtis recalled.

Today's Villa La Bella is a finely tuned machine. Ashley begins each day by checking reservations



on their website while Curtis whips up a fresh breakfast for guests. The dynamic duo then go about their day arranging massages, renting golf carts, attending to housekeeping, replenishing supplies, and buying the freshest food and drink ingredients.

There is something especially tranquil about sunset at Villa La Bella. As the day winds down, guests congregate at the bar, around the pool, near the waterfall, and along the patio area stretching out toward the sea. It's at this time you begin to understand what Ashley and Curtis felt the first time they rode the ferry to this eight-mile long island just beyond Cancun. As you

There is something special about sunset at Villa La Bella.

witness the orange gumdrop of a sun plunging into the shimmering Caribbean horizon, a feeling takes hold that says, "Villa La Bella is like coming home."

www.villalabella.com



Pina Colada