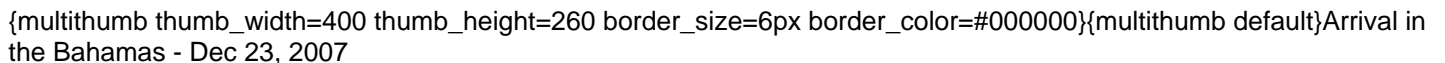


Bahamas Trip, Winter 2007

Tuesday, 01 January 2008

The Mandal Family took off to the Bahamas right before Christmas 2007. See how this abnormally unadventurous trip still turned out to be one the family's most relaxing vacations ever. Krish is not one to sit on the beach drinking Mai Tai's, but this vacation's visits to Nassau and Grand Bahama Island still reaped a few good images and a neat set of stories.

We got on our way to Long Island's McArthur Airport by 4:30am, and changed planes in Philadelphia. Reshmi had gotten up at 3am and already put the luggage into the car, so we were out in record time. Unfortunately, there was some delay for luggage transfer at Philly, another delay for malfunctioning runway signals, which of course dominoed into plane traffic being backed up for takeoff.

Arrival in the Bahamas - Dec 23, 2007

2:30pm

The Mandal Family landed in the Bahamas on New Providence Island (Nassau) at 2:30 on a wonderfully warm, and mildly humid, 75-degree afternoon. I collected our luggage, got a porter, gave him 6 bucks to bring our luggage to the curb, and began to get the paperwork done with Thrifty. He was so nice that he waited with me while I did the paperwork, but I told him that it might be better for him to drop my luggage where the car would be coming, and seek out another customer in the meantime. After that we had to wait about 30 minutes for another Thrifty rep to bring the car to us, since apparently there was a lot of traffic at the airport, and the going was very slow.

In the Bahamas, being an ex-colony of the Brits, they drive on the left side, opposite that of the U.S. However, I didn't find driving on left side of the road too uncomfortable at all, since I had already done it once on our trip to Malta. On one occasion, I did end up on the wrong side of a divider when there was no oncoming traffic, but I never made that mistake again. On one occasion, I did end up on the wrong side of a divider when there was no oncoming traffic, but I never made that mistake again.

Our hotel was on Paradise Island. It was not hard to get to Paradise Island, but once on the island the hotel was a little hard to find. By the way, you have to pay a \$1 toll to get onto Paradise Island, which is also the site of the ginormous Atlantis Hotel and Resort. In the Bahamas, \$1 US is evenly exchanged for \$1 Bahamian currency. Bahamian businesses take both currencies interchangeably, and may even give you change in Bahamian dollars when you've given them American dollars.

4:30pm

We checked in to our hotel, dropped the luggage off in our room, and then got some appetizers from the hotel's restaurant called Columbus Tavern. Discovery number one: food is expensive in the Bahamas! Three appetizers and 2 sodas, and I was out \$75.

About 6:30pm

Later, we drove to Anthony's Grill, and had dinner which, though more reasonable than the Columbus Tavern, was still on the pricey side.

After dinner we went back to hotel and watched a little TV. I read a little, and then went to sleep about 9:30pm. That night, Joyitha had issues sleeping, being kept uncomfortable and awake with a stuffed nose and earache. After many unsuccessful attempts to put her back to sleep, Reshmi finally gave her some ear medicine and then followed it up with Tylenol, and she finally went to sleep for a length of time. I enjoyed some peace after 3am and finally could fall asleep without having to tend to the baby.

What a very long day!

Ardastra Gardens, Pirate Museum, Straw Market -
Dec 24, 2007, Christmas Eve

10:00am

By the time I got up, Reshmi had already taken Ronhitha to the pool and sat in the hot tub a while. I got showered,

dressed, and we headed out.

12:30pm

It was our first real day in the Bahamas, and we were eating lunch at KFC. (How ironic.) I went out and shot some pictures of a strange structure across the water. It looked like something out of Disney World's Tomorrowland, half lighthouse, half hotel, very angled and futuristic (60s futuristic, that is. I never found out what it was, so if you know, please use the comment form at the bottom to tell us all about it.)

1:30pm

We then headed off to Ardastra Gardens and Zoo. It began to drizzle just as we pulled into the parking lot, and we worried that it would rain hard, but luck held, and the rain stopped completely. Ardastra Gardens was a very unique experience. We saw parrots and flamingos roaming free, uncaged. We even fed some lorikeets by hand, and watched the show of marching flamingos. Ronhitha got to stand among the flamingos, and Reshmi shouted in surprise as one brushed up against her as it walked by.

3:45pm

As we neared the end of the zoo's exhibits and were leaving the park, we got to meet Toby the Molluccan cockatoo, whose handler was having him give zoo patrons a kiss. Parrots are beautiful and loving creatures. We have two Umbrella cockatoos ourselves. But they are also very unpredictable, especially strange birds you don't know, and the horrors they can inflict on human flesh—and themselves—is only to be seen to be believed. So, I had reason for concern that this bird's beak was so close to my family's faces. But his handler assured us he was safe, so Reshmi, Ronhitha and even Joyitha all received gentle kisses from Toby. For this his handler asked for a donation to be put into Toby's box, and we agreed. We like to make sure that animals are kept well, and we hoped our donation would go toward that.

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4:30pm

After we left the zoo, we made our way back to the downtown area. We parked the car for \$5 at the Market Street parking lot to visit the Pirate museum. Tickets were acquired from the gift shop, and each of us got wrist bands to mark us as paid customers. At the entrance to the museum right next door, a woman led us to a doorway that opened into the first exhibit: that of a life-sized pirate's galley ship. Once again, I was reminded strongly of a Disney exhibit—the Pirates of the Caribbean, and other similar water rides, where the atmosphere was cool and the air smelled somewhat old. The museum was quite a learning experience, and I wish I had more time to read all the little plaques they posted with information about piracy and famous moments in pirate history, but with the kids, it seemed as though we went through it much too quickly. In part it was because Joyitha was afraid of some of the dark exhibits, but the reality was that had I tried to read everything, the girls would have gotten bored out of their skulls and put an end to my education anyway.

5:15pm

We finished up at the museum and bought some souvenirs for the girls at the museum shop. Then Reshmi suggested we head to the Straw market, where it seemed they recreated the stall-like malls of Calcutta's marketplaces. Ronhitha got her hair braided there, though I dare say that I had my doubts as to how hygienic it was to have a stranger's comb running through my daughter's hair, which also ran through countless other heads before hers. Reshmi and I took turns exploring the Straw Market while the other watched the girls.

5:40pm

When our family left the Straw market, we walked along the harbor toward the cruise ship docks, past the government buildings, and proceeded up some streets to see the Queen's Staircase. Not knowing exactly where it was, we arrived at a staircase that led up toward the water tower, and then made a sharp left to start down a hill. After a few steps we saw that we were already at the Queen's Staircase, but had arrived at the top. So we all climbed down the steep 65 steps to see the waterfall from below. The site isn't spectacular, but because the staircase is steep it should be climbed just as a thing to do. We climbed back up the stairs and toward the water tower again, in search of an overlook that was supposed to have a great view of the downtown Nassau area. In doing so we came upon the old fort that sat next to the water tower. However, we could not find the overlook, so we circled around the fort once and walked around the grounds of the water tower, the entrance for which was gated shut. We surmised that the overview was in fact from the top of the water

tower, and we would not get a chance to see that view on this trip. The area was surrounded by vendors' stalls, and I suspect that most of them have their homes very nearby, or even sleep in their stalls on a regular basis.

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We ended our sightseeing that day after taking some pictures at the water tower, and headed down West Bay Street toward the parking lot at Market Street where we had left the car. Reshmi stopped in to an Aerosoles store to peruse and eventually buy a pair of shoes, which is very unlike her. But as I waited, I found some photo ops, and snapped a few images of the girls, and of the overlapping array of store signs that I saw as I looked down the street.

7:10pm

We ate at an Italian restaurant called Zio Gigi's, near the Atlantis resort and then went back to the hotel for the day. The sleeping arrangement was that the girls were on one bed together, and Reshmi and I were on the other. That night I slept fairly well throughout the evening, except for a few times that I was afraid that Joyitha might fall off the abnormally high bed and get hurt, since she liked to roll around a lot in her sleep (like dad). At one time when I opened my eyes she had been hanging off the bed onto the night table I set up right next to her with a pillow on it. Thank goodness I did, otherwise she would have fell off the bed head first and cracked her skull. Two or three other times, in a similar situation, I rolled her back onto her pillow or had to reposition her. I began to worry each time that she was going to fall off the bed, but finally deep sleep took hold of me and I did not wake again that night. The West and South of the Island - Dec 25, 2007, Christmas

9:00am

I woke up in the morning and took some pictures of the veranda and the view we got from it before I washed up and chaperoned the girls down to the (cold) pool and hot tub. We spent some time there, and then came back up to the room to change. After I showered, we got on our way.

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First stop: breakfast at the News Café right next to Zio Gigi's, where the waitresses were overwhelmed and couldn't tend to everyone properly. They were friendly, but service was really lacking here. Reshmi tells me the locals come here for breakfast after their night shift at the nearby Atlantis and the other resorts ends. This day, however, the place was packed with tourists, out for Christmas day breakfast.

Afterwards, we headed off to collect our Junkanoo tickets at the Sports complex near the College of the Bahamas. It was a fairly painless chore, but we noticed the farther away we got from the main tourist area, the bleaker things looked.

1:00pm

With the tickets in hand, we drove for quite some time exploring the west and south side of the island, where we ran across the Bacardi rum distillery, an oil refinery or holding station (I don't know exactly), and other strange, out of the way sites. We turned into a car-accessible cement pier or platform near the Bacardi distillery between Clifton Pier and Adelaide Village on SW Road where we met a nice elderly gentleman, whose name I didn't quite catch. I'll refer to him as Mr. B, since Reshmi says it started with B.

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Mr. B was fishing with another local, and I greeted him to ask what the rigs out in the water were for. They seemed like oil

rigs, but I couldn't tell for sure. He told us that they were possibly where the oil tankers dumped off the oil, but he wasn't sure. Directly behind him, he said, the oil was leaking into the sea from the pipes within the rocks! There were some floating barriers that kept the spill contained and once in a while small ships would come to suck up the spill before the barrier overflowed. I find it saddening to see such a beautiful place spoiled by such a terrible environmental blunder, and very little being done about it. When you think Bahamas, you don't think oil spills. I took a few images here to record the scene, and then we were off to see the rest of the south side of the island.

2:15pm

I stopped the car at the Compass Point Restaurant for a couple of quick snaps of the colorful rooftops and lattices surrounding the restaurant. I had first noticed these going toward the west end of the island, so when we circled around a different way, I came back to take these images which to me epitomized a tropical island's natural environs.

3:30pm

Sometime later we stopped at the courtyard leading to the Atlantis hotel to eat lunch at Johnny Rockets; incidentally the service there was the worst I'd seen in a while, it seemed we were almost being put through an assembly line to get pushed out as soon as we had finished. Afterwards, we got some ice cream for the girls at the nearby creamery in the same courtyard, and then headed off to find the Versailles Gardens and Cloisters, just up Paradise Beach Drive toward our hotel. The Versailles Garden was remarkable, as if someone had shrunk the real gardens at Versailles and brought them over here. There wasn't much in the way of adornment and beauty, but a feeling hits you as being very calming and familiar.

6:30pm

At this point Reshmi and the girls were getting excited to see the Junkanoo. Throughout the last couple of days we noticed men putting together the metal bleachers that would seat the thousands of people who had purchased tickets for the Junkanoo. One of them would be ours. Those who didn't purchase tickets ... well, I didn't know what they would do ... perhaps they'd have to stand? We returned to the hotel to catch a snooze before we have to go back out to see the parade early after midnight. The girls went to bed without much fuss, but I stayed up a little to review my pictures for the day.

9:30pm

I realized I spent way too much time on the pictures. I was really beat now. It was time for that nap! Junkanoo, Potter's Cay, East-end of the Island - Dec 26, 2007, Boxing Day

2:00am

We woke from our nap sometime after midnight, and drove over to the downtown area. I certainly could have used another couple of hours sleep, but I had no one to blame but myself. Parking was relatively painless: a government office lot seemed to be fair play by the number of locals that was driving in, so we followed suit and found on a spot on the grass to park our car. We got our jackets in case it got cool, I donned my camera bag and grabbed my tripod, Joyitha hopped into her stroller, and we all wound our way toward Bay Street. It was a little disconcerting at first to walk down dimly lit streets with policemen holding rifles and submachine guns. A mix of people, mostly local Bahamians, with a few tourists, steadily marched in mob-like groups toward one direction. And so far, no one was making trouble, everyone just seemed excited to get to the Junkanoo.

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After some minutes of walking we finally made it to Bay Street. What a ruckus! The parade had already begun. There were fences and barriers everywhere, trumpets blaring and drums thumping. We had to thread our way through incredibly thick crowds, across blockaded streets, past the ticket-checker and the usher, and finally to our front corner seats at the Frederick and Bay bleachers. The girls were tired but they were real troopers; we waited for the festivities of the parade and watched the other side of the street as people with painted faces managed giant, elaborate, feathered costumes that must have weighed at least a hundred pounds, and some possibly more. There were many starts and stops and long intervals of waiting for the next set, but as more of the crowd began to find seats in the bleachers, the energy kept us awake. I didn't take out my tripod the whole time opting to use my 80-400 tele handheld, since people were constantly moving past us trying to find their seats, or getting out of the bleachers to buy food and snacks. I later

switched to my normal 18-55 zoom lens, as it turned out to be not only more manageable but also the proper lens for the job. Many of my tele shots, even with the optical stabilization turned on, turned out blurry and were tossed out after my initial edits, but in the end there were enough for me to record the flavor of Junkanoo that night. But looking back, video would have been the right medium for recording this craziness.

At about 4am, we decided that we'd seen enough, and headed back to the car, more so because we were losing steam, not that it got any less interesting. On the way we passed some policemen searching a man. Unfortunately the man resisted the officer when he patted down the man's shirt pocket, and a tussle and some yelling ensued thereafter. The officer pushed the man down to the ground, and kicked him once. The officer's buddies backed him up quickly and pinned the man to the ground, picked him back up and held him; the man continued to resist and struggled to get at the original officer. What happened after that, I don't know. I suppose that there must have been some ganga (i.e., marijuana) involved. But we decided that we'd had enough excitement for the night, so we found our car and headed back to the hotel to sleep.

1:00pm

The family got a very late start after Junkanoo night, and after take-in breakfast from the hotel's restaurant, we started out at about 1pm. It would be our last day on New Providence (Nassau), and there was nothing formally planned. We spent the time aimlessly exploring the island, stopping at Potter's Cay under the bridge from Paradise Island. At about 4pm we walked by the restaurant stands and then walked up onto the bridge. I took some pictures of the boats moored at Nassau Yacht Club, and the colorfully painted backs of the Potter's Cay restaurants, and then we moved off to explore the eastern side of the island, where I stopped at a small rocky beach to take pictures of the eastern lighthouse. Afterwards, at about 6:30pm we went back to beach club near our hotel and took in the sunset. Later that night, we ate a buffet dinner at the Water's Edge restaurant in the Atlantis resort, where we were allotted a voucher for one lobster tail each. While there was plenty of good food, I will say that if the lobster tail were hot and boiled instead of warm and baked, I might have enjoyed myself just a little more. But as with most buffets, while there was plenty of food and drink that night, there was also plenty of it wasted from taking too much and not finishing it all.

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{/xtypo_rounded1} Freeport, Lucayan National Park, Gold Rock Beach - Dec 27, 2007

We woke early-ish to leave the hotel, drop off the car, and board our propeller plane to Freeport, Grand Bahama Island. This island is much less touristy, and there are far fewer things to see and do here. Mostly, this was our beach time, but I can't really complain since we spent lots of time resting and driving while exploring the landscape. We took some time picking up our rental car and getting to our hotel, the Best Western, by the International Bazaar to drop off the luggage, and then headed out to the Port Lucaya Marketplace. In the Marketplace we sat down for a very reasonable lunch of gyros and souvlakis at Zorba's Greek eatery. The most reasonably priced food we had eaten since coming to the Bahamas.

4:00pm

In the afternoon we drove eastward to the Lucayan National Park, on the south central part of the island. In the parking lot we ran into a small, dark man, with a sunny disposition named Ivan, who told us he was the Park's caretaker and ranger of sorts, and gave us a quick 30-second orientation. He asked if we'd gotten permits, and since we hadn't we said we'd be glad to pay him the entrance fee of \$3 per adult right away.

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Though the site had some small caves to see, we opted to first walk the path toward Gold Rock Beach. Initially, we tried to go via the shorter trail, but we found the bridge had collapsed and was impassable, and had to turn back and take the way of the marsh trail – a short, painless hike of 7-10 minutes, though with the girls in tow it was perhaps a bit longer.

When we climbed the last few steps up onto the beach, I was amazed to see such calm and pristine waters. There were no real “waves” to speak of. Any waves there were, were actually little gentle ones, as if from a small passing boat; and the beach was walk-able for hundreds of yards in either direction, with very few people to disturb the view or be accosted by. It was like one giant sandbar. The water was fairly warm, as the depth of it was quite shallow almost everywhere, from just a couple of inches rising to about a foot or so. The shore itself extended for hundreds of feet toward the ocean, getting only as high as my knees at first, and then up to my hips, but completely safe for the girls to frolic in waist-deep, with the water turning darker far out into the ocean to mark the point at which it began to get much deeper.

The sand here was like mud, not in color, but consistency; it was the finest I’d ever felt and it did wonders for my rough feet; I should have brought some back and kept it for exfoliating purposes, but there was nothing to put it in. We did not come prepared with bathing suits so the girls stripped down to their underwear and diaper, and played in the water while Reshmi plopped herself down with careless abandon, fully clothed. I walked the beach photographing its curious bits and pieces of dead tree roots, starfish, and bird footprints in the sand.

Generally, the Family Mandal eschews sitting around on a beach when on vacation. We’re more “do-ers,” getting away from it all in the fashion of adventurous hikers and sightseers; we don’t like frittering away our time sitting on the sand, staring into nothingness. But this was a little different, a bit like meditation, and we all thoroughly enjoyed being beach bums for the afternoon.

That night we ate some Papa John’s pizza in our hotel room and then took the kids across the street to watch Alvin and the Chipmunks at the local theater. It was a great way to end a day filled with restfulness. Fortune Beach, Port Lucaya Marketplace, Lucaya Beach - Dec 28, 2007

The day started with our trying to find a beach to sit on—something where the sand was soft and the water warm like Gold Rock Beach. We found a publicly accessible area near a restaurant off of Fortune Bay Drive, a part of Fortune Beach, and decided to pull into the lot. This beach seemed to be a little more populated than Gold Rock Beach, but we found an area to call our own. When I first tried to go into the water, it was made impossible because the baseball sized rocks that ran along the water’s edge were not easy to pass. So my older daughter and I went beachcombing for a while along the shoreline, picking up shells and sponges. On the way back I noticed that there was an area of water that was much lighter than the rest near where we had put our things down. There were even a few kids who were standing on the sand way out in the water. A sandbar! This made everything much better. Even more good luck, I found a small part of the beach that didn’t have as many rocks, and we were able to get onto the sandbar without hurting our feet. We spent the rest of our time on Fortune Beach sitting around and playing in the foot-high water of this sandbar, until the next activity.

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Later in the afternoon we returned to Lucaya National Park, this time to take in the caves. There’s not a whole lot to tell about this, except that the caves boast the longest winding cavern structures beneath the water surface, where divers from all over come to explore with their scuba gear. When we had finished with the caves, I ran into a skittish lizard in the parking lot. Getting his portrait was an exercise in stealth and patience. Eventually he tired of me and ran under a car, but I managed to get a few snaps of him before he ran away.

Afterward we went back toward the hotel to explore other beaches. At first we found ourselves at Silver Point beach near the Xanadu resort, but it was not ideal and actually a bit smelly, and the waves were rather rough, and the beach looked polluted with foreign objects like bottles and tires. So we took off again and ended up at Lucayan Beach, next to the hotels at Our Lucaya, opposite of the Port Lucaya Marketplace. The water here was not as warm as Gold Rock beach, and the waves were rougher, but the girls enjoyed playing in the sand, and Reshmi and I took in some sun. After cleaning up back at the hotel, we ate dinner at Le Med Restaurant in Port Lucaya Marketplace dining al fresco to the tunes of the band playing in Count Basie Square, the courtyard of the marketplace. After dinner, the girls danced to the music a bit, and then we called it a night. High Rock, Bishop’s Bonefish Resort - Dec 29, 2007

After breakfast, we headed out once again toward the south central portion of the island, this time past the National Park, and stopped at the town of High Rock. There we had a late lunch at Bishop’s Bonefish Resort, and walked about the beach. Near sunset we got in the car so I could photograph the candy striped lighthouse that could be seen back toward where we entered the road to Bishop’s.

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For dinner that night, we headed back to Port Lucaya Marketplace, and tried the Pub at Port Lucaya where Reshmi had the shepherd's pie and I ate the steak and ale stew; again a relatively cheap dinner, which was fine by me, since food in the Bahamas seemed to average about \$100 a day for two adults and two small children. Afterward we took in National Treasure back at the movie theater near the hotel.

If you're thinking we didn't do a whole lot this second half of our trip, you'd be right. McLean's Town, Pirates of the Caribbean Set, Ferry House restaurant - Dec 30, 2007

This marked our last day on Grand Bahama Island. We decided to take a trip all the way to the far east end of the island to see what might be there, past High Rock, though we had read mixed reviews ranging from there being nothing to write about, to there being an interesting town for a short visit. On the way we stopped at the High Rock police station, a tiny structure, to photograph the ancient fire truck that was on display on its lawn.

Following that short stop, we passed an oil storage area. On the initial approach it looked like the highway was about to end and hit a giant rock wall, or the side of a resort's high hotel. The wall, it turned out, was one of the oil tanks, and the perspective of our view made it seem like the tanks stood much higher than the treeline. The view of giant rusting tanks was somewhat strange in a mainly green and blue world. To make it even more surreal, a giant swirling cloud was passing overhead while I was taking pictures of the area, and so it became a kind of X-files-like environment.

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We continued on to McLeans Town where the road we were on all this time, Queens Highway, finally ended. But not satisfied that we indeed had come to the end, we drove right off the end of the paved road, and began bouncing down a dirt road. That road turned right and got even rougher and full of giant potholes. It was like Baja all over again! Having decided that we really had hit the end, and there was no secret road ahead, we finally turned around at an abandoned farm by the water, and headed back to the paved highway. On the way, we looked for a turn we might have missed to get to the fishing boats that we were supposed to come upon. And finally, we discovered the road that turned toward the ocean, and had found the small fishing boats we sought. Parking on the roadside, we got out and walked back down the road from where we came. Along the way we saw little inlets littered with old conch shells that the fishermen had caught and shelled. Some were newer and brighter, while it was obvious that others had seen many months in the sun. In general, the area was no haven. The whole place stank of rotting fish, and though the locals were friendly, it was obvious that tourists were not usually seen there. So I'll put in my agreement that there is really not much to see here in McLean's Town.

We sat at the boat launch for only a little while, just watching the waves, before deciding that it would be better to find another spot to hang out, so we headed back toward Freeport. But upon Reshmi's suggestion, we found a sign for an alternative new entrance to Gold Rock Beach, just east of the Lucayan National Park entrance, and turned into that dirt road. Driving past a fenced in area, we parked in front of another car right before the road ended at a sandy patch, beyond which we could see sunbathers at a small river. There was a family with kayaks enjoying the beach, and we found a spot next to them on the beach. The water here was coming in via a small delta, and had formed the river we were sitting near. The incline from the beach to the water was much steeper here than anywhere else we'd seen, but the water would have only gone up to the waist or perhaps a little higher. I can't really tell you, since I felt the coolness of the water with my feet and didn't venture in. But just to the left, toward the open ocean, I saw some photo ops. I went back to the car and grabbed my camera with the 10-22 wide angle lens on it, and proceeded to make some images for my rust collection. Beyond some rusting pipes, and past overturned trees with roots exposed, there was a sign: "Private Property. No Trespassing." Naturally, I had to see what was there.

{xtypo_quote_right}... to capture anything worthwhile, you sometimes default to the old saying that it's easier to ask forgiveness than to seek permission.{/xtypo_quote_right}

Two boys from the family were already in, past the sign, so I proceeded as well, because not doing so would have cost me a very cool picture. (You see, I'm not saying I neglect warning signs and disrespect people's property, but to capture

anything worthwhile, you sometimes default to the old saying that it's easier to ask forgiveness than to seek permission.) Because just beyond the sign, there was docked a part of an old galley ship, what seemed like something from the glory days of piracy. But as it happens, one of the other people who had gone into the area told me that this was a ship from the set of the Disney movie, Pirates of the Caribbean. Of course, that meant I had to get some shots.

After taking some photographs of the galley and the dock, I waded into the water near the delta, to see if I could actually cross to the other side and explore. But it turned out that every step I took put some foreign object or mangrove root under my feet, and the water level rose up my body. Fearing that I might step into a deeper part of the water and lose my footing, or that my camera might suffer my clumsiness, and furthermore, not being able to see clearly below the surface, I chickened out and headed back to the beach where the girls were playing. The sun was dropping and the temperature was cooling, so we decided to call it a day.

That night Reshmi suggested we eat at the Stoned Crab, a seafood restaurant off Taino Beach. But when we got there we learned from a local that it was closed for renovations and would not reopen till February of 2008; he suggested we try the Ferry House. Disappointed, we headed off to find another worthy eating establishment that wouldn't cost an arm and a leg, but try as we might we were hindered by closings and reservations of a number of restaurants at Port Lucaya Marketplace. Finally, we decided to take the advice of the local man who told us about the Ferry House, before that too closed for the night. We found it right next to the marketplace, but the prices were a bit steep; the food however, was delicious and prepared with some artistic flair in an Asian fusion style. The bill that night came to over \$150, but for our last night on a very relaxing vacation, I was not really upset, especially since we enjoyed eating it, and the service was excellent.

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To top it off, we headed back to the marketplace square to listen to the band playing, and the girls did their usual dancing about as I grabbed the last images of this trip: the festively list courtyard at the Port Lucaya Marketplace.

Thus ended the Winter 2007 vacation of the Mandal Family. The next day, we boarded the 3 flights back home.