

XCaret – Mini Review

We went to XCaret in 2004. We were on the Rhapsody of the Seas and docked in Cozumel. I usually try and book everything directly on my own but since XCaret is on the mainland and we would have to take a ferry I opted to book the transport and park admission through the cruise line. If we had docked in Playa Del Carmen or Calica I would have done the entire trip on our own. I did book the dolphins directly through the XCaret site – www.xcaret.com – and saved 10%. There are taxis available in both Playa Del Carmen and Calica.

XCaret is an ecological theme park. There are lockers, snorkel equipment and strollers available for rental. Showers, hammocks, and beach chairs are available at no cost. Since the park is an ecological park they request that you use only environmentally friendly sunscreens. It is available within the park at a reasonable price.

When we arrived we went directly to check on the dolphin reservation I had made online and we instructed where and what time to arrive. In the mean time we grabbed up our belongings and headed to the underground river. At the start they give you a numbered bag to lock all your belongings in and then they give you the key. The bag will be waiting for you at the end of the river.

The underground river is a man made river and is QUITE COLD. We did enjoy it though. We had brought our own snorkel equipment and used it as we floated along. There are points that you can get out and either look around and get back in – or walk the remainder and pick up your items. We opted to go the entire way. There were no issues with our belongings and we were able to gather up everything and head out to check out the park.

The park has many interesting trails where we saw many iguanas and lizards. The flora was beautiful. They also have exhibitions and tours but we opted not to do them. We had very limited time with the ferry ride there and back and we wouldn't have much time on this trip. I wish I had considered that more before we stopped at a sit down restaurant to eat. The meal was OK but what made it hard was the time. They were slow and I'm afraid we wasted a lot of time that we really didn't have. I wish we had just purchased something from one of the vending stands. My fault.

We arrived for the dolphins and my oldest son (17) was very excited – while my youngest (13) was not. He has PDD-NOS (Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified) and was not keen at all about getting into the water with the dolphins. When I booked online I wasn't sure he would get to even go into the area if he didn't have a ticket and didn't want to risk him sitting alone outside so I booked him – not knowing if I was even going to get him into the water. No way – he was not getting in with “those things”. So he sat on the benches (wouldn't even stick his feet into the water). I found out that they do have a galley area where those not participating can sit and watch and take pictures. I wish I had known that – and probably should have asked – but part of me was really hoping I could get him into the water. Oh well.

The dolphin swim was the best part of the day. We had never done the dolphins before and even I was looking forward to it. They give you a safety briefing and have you

remove any jewelry. They give you a lesson about the dolphins and you begin to realize that they have a pretty good life in the park. Not saying that it's better than being wild and free – just that I've heard some of the horror stories and these dolphins looked very healthy and well taken care of. They supply life vests and after the briefing we were allowed to get into the water. There was about 10 to 12 of us. There were 2 dolphins so they split us into 2 groups. The dolphins weaved in and out and you could touch them and they really liked they underside rubbed. They did some tricks and everyone got to go for a ride – holding onto the dorsal fins. Then they did the push where you lay on your stomach and the dolphins come up behind you and lift you out of the water (a nose on each foot). You extend your arms out and you fly out of the water. This was THE BEST PART. We each got to get our picture taken kissing a dolphin. It was an hour long and worth every penny.

We didn't have much time after the swim because we had to meet up with the group. We walked along the trails and stopped in at the gift shop. I wish we had more time to spend but coming in on the cruise ship through Cozumel doesn't give you much time. The park would be wonderful if staying in Mexico or coming into Calica or Play Del Carmen where it doesn't take as long to get back and forth. They have night shows that are supposedly fantastic. Maybe someday we can return and enjoy an entire at the park.

All in all a very nice day.