

Playground of the Caribbean

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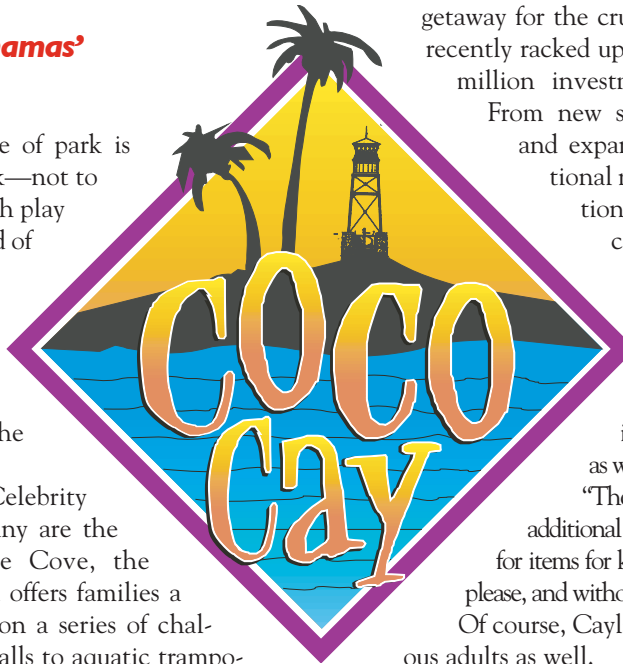
Caylana's Castle Cove CocoCay, located in the Bahamas' Berry Islands chain

It's not every day that a new type of park is born. In this case it's an Aqua Park—not to be confused with a waterpark or splash play area, but more like a water playground of sorts.

"It's a new category of recreation," says Ron Romens, president of **Commercial Recreation Specialists**, who manufactured and customized the play elements for the new Caribbean attraction.

Royal Caribbean International, Celebrity Cruises and The Coca-Cola Company are the proud parents of Caylana's Castle Cove, the 20,000-square-foot aqua park, which offers families a chance to play and test their skills on a series of challenges from floating rock-climbing walls to aquatic trampolines.

Just opened in March, the aqua park is situated just offshore in the crystal-blue waters around CocoCay, 140-acre private island owned by Royal Caribbean and Celebrity Cruises as an exclusive



getaway for the cruise lines' guests. The private paradise recently racked up even more amenities thanks to a \$20 million investment in renovations and additions.

From new snorkeling and scuba-diving facilities and expanded docks and nature trails to additional restaurants, bars and shops, the renovations reached all areas of the island. Guests can also go kayaking, parasailing, rent WaveRunners or just relax on a floating beach mat.

Whether on land or on the deep blue sea, the cruise line is continually striving to up the level of recreation services for its guests—while staying in the black as well.

"They're always looking for new ways to generate additional revenue," Romens says. "They were looking for items for kids 17 and under, which is a hard group to please, and without cannibalizing other attractions."

Of course, Caylana's Castle Cove appeals to adventurous adults as well.

"This was the perfect niche for the family," says Paul Loughrin, aquatics specialist with Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. Parents often sign up along with their kids.

For Caylana's Castle Cove, adults pay \$15 and children under



12 pay \$10 for 50 minutes, which seems to be the perfect amount of time to tackle all the elements while not stealing too much time from CocoCay's other offerings. Plus, the sub-hour time period keeps guests from overdoing it at the aqua park.

"It's challenging, not just a walk in the park, per se," Loughrin says. "It's a different workout activity. Guests wear themselves out."

A bonus, which parents love, no doubt. In addition, the park fills an important recreation void, considering that many kids aren't old enough to take in some of the island's other attractions, like parasailing or piloting WaveRunners.

"The guests feel it's an activity that has a lot of value," Romens says. Right now Caylana's Castle Cove attracts about 150 people per day.

After the cruise line's first aqua park opened in August 2001 at the private destination of Labadee, it became quite a crowd-pleaser. So planners floated an idea to create a themed aqua park at CocoCay, and Caylana's Castle Cove came to life. To help offset the more than \$100,000 price tag for the structures, The Coca-Cola Company agreed to come on board as a sponsor.

"It's a great example of how you have companies partnering together to promote each other's brand," Romens says. "The branding and customization definitely take it to another level. You get involved in the story. This enabled Coke to create an experience, something exciting—they want people to interact with their brand."

The aqua park features several giant, inflatable, floating activities, including two 14-foot castles with one side for climbing and the other for sliding, two 25-foot floating trampolines, several "slidewalks" and aqua logs, and two water teeter-totters. All the components are anchored in about 12 feet of water and can be inflated with a gas-powered leaf blower or a scuba tank fitted with a low-pressure inflator valve. A separate children's section consists of similar equipment on a smaller scale. Two lifeguards usually monitor both areas, and the entire aqua park is enclosed with a floating dock system manufactured by EZ Dock, Inc.

Instead of the solid-colored and striped play elements like those at Labadee, Caylana's Castle Cove features customized art, like sandcastles and marine life, digitally printed on the PVC vinyl of the play structures. And just because a soft-drink company is a sponsor doesn't mean the equipment is plastered with logos glaring at guests.

"They made a subtle approach to marketing; it's tasteful," Loughrin says. There are no bold and bright Coke logos emblazoned on every surface, just lurking in the artwork. "There are hidden Coke bottles in the sand, in the tortoise shells, in the scales of the mermaid's tail," he says.

"It has a real Caribbean feel," Romens agrees. Which is exactly the point.

For more information

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