

Defying Odds, Exceeding Expectations

Wyndham Bonnet Creek Resort Wins ACE Project of Excellence Award

Some ideas are scrawled onto cocktail napkins over happy hour. Others are scribbled in notepads lying on bedside tables in the middle of the night. But this particular idea—timeshare in Orlando—had already been realized. Then duplicated and imitated, several times over.

So, when Wyndham Vacation Ownership (WVO) broke ground on Wyndham Bonnet Creek Resort in 2002, the project certainly didn't lack its fair share of critics. Viewed as yet another resort in the heavily saturated timeshare capital of the world, this new undertaking was dismissed by some as being just another needle in a stack of needles and therefore likely to achieve only mediocre results.

"We knew we were taking a calculated risk when we decided to move forward with this project," said Franz Hanning, WVO president and chief executive officer. "But we also knew that the prime location, combined with the allure of our points product, would make this project successful. We took a gamble and it paid off beyond anything we ever thought possible."

Breaking Ground

As the renderings began to take shape and the blueprints started to materialize, it quickly became apparent, however, that the project would not come without its challenges.

Even connecting water and power became a project unto itself. In order to connect to the Orange County, Florida, utility systems, multiple 24-inch diameter steel casings had to be installed over a distance of approximately 600 feet to carry the necessary utility pipes and conduits. The catch? These casings had to be installed under Interstate 4, the primary highway connecting Orlando and Tampa, without disrupting traffic flow. And while piping was being laid underneath a major highway, a series of substantially sized manmade lakes were also being created. In fact, the main lake that now serves as the epicenter for the property boasts a surface area of 10 acres.

"This project undoubtedly presented a series of unusual challenges from a development standpoint," said Rob Landry, WVO vice president of product





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● development. “However, that is part of what ultimately makes this resort so remarkably distinctive. We never sacrificed our strategy and always remained true to the original vision to create a world-class vacation destination through exceptional design and construction.”

Situated immediately adjacent to the Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, construction surged ahead in 2002 on what was intended to become another premier Wyndham Vacation Resorts property within the company’s CLUB WYNDHAMSM Plus points-based exchange program. Soon after sales began in an unassuming off-site storefront location in Kissimmee, it quickly became apparent that demand for Wyndham Bonnet Creek Resort would quickly eclipse the original project scope. In fact, by the time the resort opened its doors in June 2004, the resort already boasted more than 4,000 owner families.

“Build, Baby, Build!”

Seeking to capitalize on the immediate popularity, WVO quickly returned to the drawing board to craft a plan for a significant expansion of the property.

Originally, the resort was intended to feature 744 units on 46 acres. Today, the resort has nearly 850 completed units in five Mediterranean-style towers. And even as the vacation ownership industry faces unprecedented challenges in 2009—including marked slowdowns in resort development pipelines—a sixth 19-story tower is currently under construction. Featuring an additional 300 units, this latest addition is anticipated to open in the spring of 2010. In partnership with Welbro Building Corporation, HHCP Architects, and Design Poole Interior Design, WVO has managed continuous construction at the property and, upon completion, Wyndham Bonnet Creek Resort will feature approximately 1,150 condominium-style units spread across 58 acres. Over the last seven years, the property has steadily grown into the company’s largest and most highly sought after resort properties in the country.

Wyndham Bonnet Creek Resort offers owners and guests a variety of world-class amenities including two outdoor swimming pools and a lazy river, a miniature golf course, an outdoor playground, and a state-of-the-art fitness center, as well as an expansive game room. And whether it’s the RCI Gold Crown status or the fact that owners must drive through the world-famous Walt Disney World Resort arches to access the property, this resort remains a staple on the list of most popular Wyndham Vacation Resorts properties among the more than 360,000 CLUB WYNDHAM Plus owners. In fact, in terms of occupancy, the property has consistently ranked within the top 10 Wyndham Vacation Resorts properties every year since 2005.

“It was the most fabulous vacation that my husband ever created for me and my granddaughter,” said a Wyndham Vacation Resorts owner, after a recent stay. “The activities for her were the most memorable, and I cannot explain how wonderful the units are—they enable you to experience luxury at its finest.”

“Our staff focuses on providing outstanding customer service every single day,” said Richard Scinta, resort manager. “We know that our level of service must mirror the extraordinary expectations this property sets for our owners and guests as soon as they drive through our gates.”

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● Selling a New Standard

● Aside from being a popular resort property among current owners, Wyndham Bonnet Creek Resort has been a focal point for countless marketing programs, new product launches, recruiting events, and sales records for WVO. During the first quarter of 2008, the Orlando-based sales team, which includes Wyndham Bonnet Creek Resort, set a new single-day sales record with more than \$1 million in revenue.

Given the unparalleled popularity of the resort and its renowned penthouse-style Presidential Suites, WVO chose Wyndham Bonnet Creek Resort to be among a select number of resort properties to feature the new CLUB WYNDHAM Plus product, CLUB WYNDHAM Presidential Reserve. This upscale product offers members exclusive access to the most desirable Presidential units and features upgraded in-room amenities, ranging from lavish bath products and robes to a fee-based grocery-stocking service or personal chef. Sales of CLUB WYNDHAM Presidential Reserve at Wyndham Bonnet Creek Resort are anticipated to begin later this year.

The project has also proven to be a remarkable sales success outside of Orlando. Leveraging its highly developed, multi-site distribution channels, WVO sells Bonnet Creek at more than 30 sales centers across the country, including high volume locations such as Las Vegas, Nevada; Washington, D.C.; Branson, Missouri, and Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

“Our owners absolutely love this location, as evidenced by our phenomenal occupancy rates and owner testimonials,” said Carl Gatti, vice president of sales and marketing, Wyndham Bonnet Creek Resort. “They recognize that there is really no other vacation ownership property quite like this one anywhere else in the world. And when non-owners visit or learn about Bonnet Creek, they want to become a part of it too.”

Now entering its fifth year of operation, this flagship resort continues to build upon its impressive list of credentials. In 2006, Wyndham Worldwide, WVO’s parent company, announced that it would begin construction on the 400-room Wyndham Bonnet Creek Hotel & Spa adjacent to the timeshare property, to further capitalize on the paramount success of the location. A year later, the resort served as the primary backdrop to Wyndham Worldwide’s first-ever television advertising campaign, which featured golf legend Arnold Palmer. And in November 2008, the resort was showcased to more than one million television viewers on The Martha Stewart show, as the grand prize for the winner of Martha Stewart’s “Dreamers into Doers” contest.

From its spectacular sales record and monumental impact on WVO sales and marketing programs to its continued popularity among owners, Wyndham Bonnet Creek Resort has redefined the standards and set the stage for world-class vacation ownership properties. In spite of the fact that it emerged among the shadows of countless other resorts, this ACE Project of Excellence effectively defied the odds and truly exceeded both the company’s and the industry’s expectations.

Timeshare in Orlando will never be the same. ■

