

Ep #203: Hotels on Our Radar (Beyond the Usual Favorites)



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Hosts

Alex Payne, Jess Field, and Pam Lorg

Ep #203: Hotels on Our Radar (Beyond the Usual Favorites)

Alex: In the points and miles world, we hear about the same hotels again and again and again. And for good reason: Andaz Papagayo, Grand Hyatt Kauai, Kimpton Seafire- they are all incredible. But today we're talking about some other hotels on our radar that maybe we don't hear about as often.

Welcome to *Points Talk*®. We are three moms who've discovered how to leverage credit card welcome offers to get hundreds of thousands of dollars of travel expenses for nearly free. We've used credit card points and miles to take vacations to places like Hawaii, Paris, Greece, Maldives, Japan, and so much more. And the best part? We each still have 800 plus credit scores. Imagine being able to take the vacation of your dreams for nearly free. It's totally possible, and we're here to show you how.

Alex: Hey, I'm Alex.

Pam: And I'm Pam, Alex's mom.

Jess: And I'm Jess. Let's talk points. One of the most requested topics we've gotten lately is to talk about some other hotel options outside of the ones that you hear us talk about all the time.

Today we're each sharing a few hotels that we have on our radar that aren't ones that you hear about quite as often. We talk about the Kimpton Seafire a lot. We talk about the Park Hyatt Kyoto, or as Alex said in the intro, the Andaz Papagayo, Grand Hyatt Kauai, Hyatt Regency Maui. Those are all ones that you will hear us talk about over and over again. We do love them. We do recommend them. But in this episode, our goal is to try and talk a little bit about some hotels on our radar that you haven't, you maybe haven't heard of yet.

And so, I'm going to go first. So my number one is RiverView Ranch Retreat and Western Adventures. This is in Missoula, Montana. It is an SLH property, so it is bookable through Hilton either with Hilton points or Hilton free night certificates. When I told Alex and Pam I wanted to go here, they were like, "You're freaking nuts. That sounds terrible."

Alex: No! No, we did not.

Ep #203: Hotels on Our Radar (Beyond the Usual Favorites)

Pam: I did.

Alex: I don't think it sounds terrible.

Pam: I said, "Missoula, Montana?"

Jess: All right, so these two, you will notice in their things, they want to be at the beach or at the pool, and I want to not be at the beach or the pool as much as they do. And so, I think it sounds really cool. It's like a western ranch. It's all-inclusive. I'm planning to use Hilton free night certificates there because it's 220,000 Hilton points a night, which I refuse to pay. And so this is a great option for those free night certificates. As I said, it's all-inclusive, and that includes transportation to and from the airport.

And so, I don't know. I'm excited to check it out. The only thing that's holding me back is the cancellation policy is super strict. And so it's like if you cancel more than 60 days in advance, they charge you a 20% fee and then closer in than that, it's 100% cancellation charges. I don't know how that works with points and free night certificates. I don't know. Hopefully I don't have to find out. I need to book it when I'm locked in and know that I can for sure go.

But these rooms, I think there's only there's less than 10 rooms total on the entire property. And so it's super boutique and apparently everyone knows your name. And so I asked Ted, I was like, "Would you ever want to go to Montana?" And he was like, "Yeah, that sounds cool." And I was like, "Okay, I have the perfect place for us to stay." So, I'm going to do it. My goal is to do it in 2027 at some point. I just got to find availability.

Alex: All right, I got to say, I think this place looks amazing. I think I think it would be really fun. I don't think you're crazy for going there. I just am like, I live in the mountains. If I want to go up do mountain-y stuff, but you are in Houston and it's not the thing...

Jess: But that's like saying, well, I could just go to the beach in California, so why would I go to Hawaii? Mountains are different and landscapes are different.

Alex: Yeah, I'm sure it is, but I don't know how different.

Ep #203: Hotels on Our Radar (Beyond the Usual Favorites)

Pam: Still probably not going to see Alex and I on a horse there in Missoula.

Jess: Okay, well, I will say one of my goals is to eventually visit all 50 states. And so I want to go to Montana at some point.

Alex: No, I 100%. We are the odd ones here, not you. People, the people that have been there, rave about this place. It seems incredible and I'm sure I would go and have an amazing time. It's just not at the top of my list. Would I go if it was like, "Hey, there, I got some." If Ted had to back out and you're like, "I need someone to go with me." I would volunteer as tribute for sure. I'm just not looking to be like, oh, that's a place I need to book. But it looks awesome.

Jess: Yeah.

Pam: Okay, so as all of you know, I have two places that I could go to every year, would love to go to every year. That is Greece and that is Italy. So, I'm already planning my next Greece vacation for next year and trying to figure out what islands I want to go to. One of the islands that I would like to go to is Corfu, Greece. A long time ago, I watched a show called *The Durrells in Corfu*, and I loved that show. It was so cute and it just made me want to go there. And so now that I've been to several islands in Greece, I think Corfu is on the high, must go to this next year.

Now, it's interesting, this is also bookable with Hilton points. You know, I mean, we say that we're Hyatt girlies, but here we are. You know, I'm looking at this one it's bookable with Hilton points, Jess's, and I can see what Alex's one is going to be coming up. And it's all bookable with Hilton points. I'm not sure how many points that is. I'm sure it's probably quite a lot because this hotel isn't even open yet. But it's a Conrad. Need I say more?

I love the Conrad Bora Bora. I love the Conrad Koh Samui. I'm sure this is going to be every bit as wonderful. Will I be spending points on it? Probably not. But am I saving my Hilton free night certificates for when this opens? Oh, yeah, that's what I'm doing. Taking along my sister, who also has some, so we can each book them there. I'll tell you what, the images on the hotel website look gorgeous. Can't tell you a whole lot about it, but it's on my list. I'm going to be there next year. I'll tell you about it when I get back.

Ep #203: Hotels on Our Radar (Beyond the Usual Favorites)

Alex: It doesn't even say when it opens yet, right? I don't think it even has a date yet.

Pam: Yeah. No.

Jess: Well, to me, it's like Conrad and Greece, those two go together with Pam. You know, so.

Alex: Yeah.

Alex: All right. So mine, like my mom kind of hinted at, is also bookable with Hilton points. It's part of the Small Luxury Hotels collection, which we love. I think that's probably the best boutique collection that's bookable with points would be the SLH program. So this is Hermitage Bay. It's in it's in Antigua and it is 200, around 230,000 points a night. So that is a lot, but once again, this is one of those stays where I'd be like, okay, got to get some Hilton free nights certificates and book it with those.

Now, this place looks, it's kind of similar to what you were saying, Jess, with the one in Montana where it seems like the staff knows your name. It is known for having incredible service, the attention to detail, they all know your name, all of that. I was reading about it online and different reviews of people and on Reddit, and people are just they just absolutely love it.

It is an all-inclusive, but everyone just says the food is not your typical all-inclusive food. It is very good food. There's only about 30 villas, so it's really small. It just looks like paradise and it's just very kind of secluded type feel. So I feel like you get that kind of remote-ish type stay without having to go all the way to the Maldives or something like that. And I just feel like it would be like a perfect couple's getaway.

Now, it is hard to book and find availability. So this is one where I would say you probably want to set an alert to find nights here. So this is one that's definitely on my radar and I think Mitch and I would love it.

Stay ahead in the Points and Miles game with Points Talk® Premium. We share the latest updates and insider info you need to know. Join now at pointstalk.supercast.com or through the show notes.

Ep #203: Hotels on Our Radar (Beyond the Usual Favorites)

Jess: All right, my next one, the name of the hotel is Kennedy 89. That tells you nothing about where this hotel is located or...

Alex: No, I was. I'm like, "What is this?" I had no clue when I first saw it listed. Never had heard of this.

Jess: Okay, so this hotel is located in Frankfurt, which, again, a little bit random because most people aren't going to Frankfurt as their final destination. It is a Hyatt. It is part of the Unbound Collection and it has been open less than a year.

The thing that really stuck out to me about this hotel, it is a Category 4 and the premium suite, it's the Ambassador King Suite, it sleeps five people. And so finding a hotel in Europe that sleeps five in one room is really rare. Okay, so we are incorporating this hotel into our Christmas market trip.

We're flying into and out of Frankfurt. And so we're going to stay in Frankfurt a few nights and do some day trips to other places. But I saw this hotel and I was like, I can't pass this up because this is too good of a deal, and it has amazing reviews.

The premium suite for us for our dates was 24,000 Hyatt points a night. King bed, sleeper sofa, rollaway bed, full kitchen, washer and dryer for 24,000 Hyatt points a night.

Alex: For five, and it sleeps five people.

Jess: It sleeps five people.

Alex: That's insane.

Jess: And I have, I even have four adults and one child because my stepkids are adults. So I have four adults and one child on the reservation, and it let me book it as that.

Pam: You know, this has nothing to do with what you're talking about, except for that you happen to say you're going to make some side trips. You got to go to Heidelberg.

Jess: No, that's one of our day trips, Heidelberg.

Ep #203: Hotels on Our Radar (Beyond the Usual Favorites)

Pam: It's one of my favorite, favorite towns. It's so cute. Okay. Sorry, I just had to make sure you didn't pass that up.

Jess: Yeah. So when I saw this, I was like, wait, we can sleep in one room, have a washer and dryer to wash our clothes, because this is towards the end of our trip that we're staying here. Full kitchen, incredible. So I don't know how, Category 4 seems so, too much of a steal for this hotel. So I think I could, as I said, it's been open less than a year. I could see Hyatt doing their thing where they say they realize, like, oh, we way underpriced that, at their next, you know, next spring when they do their adjustments. So book this while you can at a Category 4 where even a premium suite is just 24,000 points a night.

Pam: Well, you know who has to write a hotel review on this because you're going to be probably the only one that's gone. I love it when you're going somewhere new, Jess.

Jess: You got it. Hotel review coming up.

Pam: Okay. Okay. So my next place, I've had my, I have been scouring to see when this is going to open. I can't wait. Once this opens, I'm booking it. This is the Andaz Turks and Caicos. Let me just say, Turks and Caicos. I'm obsessed. We went there years ago. I thought, is it Grace Point Beach or Grace Beach? Anyway, Grace Bay.

Anyway, it was the most beautiful water I have ever seen. And you know, I'm kind of interested to go back to after having been to other places to see, is it really? Because you, sometimes something just, you know, you go to it and it becomes, oh, nothing's better than this. And then you go to other places, but you still, that was the first place you went, and you still wonder, do I, will I still feel that way?

But I love Turks and Caicos. I love the vibe there. I loved everything about it. We paid quite a bit of money to stay there last time and so I am really excited to go there using points and miles. This is a Hyatt hotel, obviously, the Andaz. I love Andaz hotels.

Ep #203: Hotels on Our Radar (Beyond the Usual Favorites)

It's opening June of 2027, fingers crossed because you know how those openings seem to always get delayed. So we don't know for sure. It is going to be a Category 8, which is pretty presumptuous to start out as a Category 8, you know, I think. So it's going to be at the top of the World of Hyatt usage of points, but you know, I'm there for it. As soon as I can book it, I will be booking it. Probably going to go there maybe next fall.

This is probably the hotel that I've been the most excited about because I have wanted to return to Turks and Caicos for years, and I want to see if I feel the same way about it. And I could have gone there. I thought about going there and using Marriott points to stay at the Ritz-Carlton, but this is going to be so many fewer points that this is what I'm waiting for. Can't wait to go and let you guys know what I think about it.

Alex: Let you know what you think. I might just show up there with you.

Pam: You know what? You could. I don't have anybody planned to go. And then we can split the points.

Alex: Well, this is one that I've had on my list too. The only problem is my 14-year-old has always said, ever since you guys went, Mom. So my mom went with my sister and her family. He's been like, "I want to go there. I want to go there." So we'll see.

Pam: He also wants to go to Tokyo. That boy has more plans where he wants to go. He is your frequent traveler,

Alex: He's not living in the real world. He's yes, he's been having a points and miles has gotten to him.

Jess: Hey, all I'm going to say is if we if we make it for the Points Talk Squad retreat, we can split it three ways.

Pam: Ooh.

Alex: Yeah, that's not a bad idea.

Pam: That's not a bad idea.

Ep #203: Hotels on Our Radar (Beyond the Usual Favorites)

Jess: Because you know, we usually go somewhere and kind of hole up and just relax and work at the beach or work at the pool, or you know, so it could be a good option.

Alex: We might be booking this. We might be booking this when we get off this recording.

Pam: Well, it's not open yet, but.

Alex: No, it's... is it open to book yet? Or no, it's not even open to book yet.

Pam: I don't think it's open to book yet.

Alex: All right. So my choice is the Grand Hyatt Indian Wells. And some of you probably heard of this one or maybe some of you have stayed there, but it's not one we hear about like we do, you know, Hyatt Hill Country, we hear about much more often, or, you know, the Andaz or not the Andaz- the Grand Hyatt Scottsdale; we hear about more often. And from what I've gathered, this seems like right up there with those properties. Like a Grand Hyatt Scottsdale.

So it used to be a Hyatt Regency and then they did a total revamp and poured in tons of money into it to spruce it up and rebrand it as a Grand Hyatt. It's in like the greater Palm Springs area. Most nights are around 25,000 points a night.

I have never been to Palm Springs. I actually think we had this booked one year, maybe for spring break, and then we ended up changing our plans and doing something else. So, yeah, never been there. It's been on the radar. You know, it'd be nice to like take the kids to Joshua Tree National Park. My older two boys like golfing, they can go golf. The hotel has two water slides, a lazy river, multiple pools, tennis, pickleball courts, frisbee golf. They have, like, a game lawn with ping pong tables and cornhole. There's bikes that are available to use throughout the property. They have daily kids' activities. So it just feels like there's so much to do. It's a real resort property.

They have next door, I was reading, they have this a golf course next door, and they, it sounds like it's kind of like a Topgolf, like a regular golf course and then like a Topgolf-type thing, but they call it Glow Golf. So they have like, it like glows up at night and then like a laser putting course. I don't know what all that

Ep #203: Hotels on Our Radar (Beyond the Usual Favorites)

entails, but I was looking it up. I was like, oh my gosh, my kids would love this and think this was so fun to do all of this stuff. And then there's good restaurants, there's good shopping nearby. And so, and it's a really short flight for us. It's like we can get there on a direct Delta flight under two hours, I think. It's pretty short. So really easy to get there.

So what's funny about this is I was making this, I was like, oh my gosh, this looks so fun. And this looks so fun. Oh, my kids would love this. So do you know what I did? I went and I booked a trip. As I was planning this, and I invited my parents to come too, so they're going to come. And we're going to be going to the Grand Hyatt Indian Wells. So this is the dangers that can occur when you're making a podcast outline. You could end up with a trip planned. So we're going for.

Pam: What, Mom? Oh, sorry. You know what's really funny is I realized now that years ago, I mean, when we lived in California, and I used to get my eyelashes done, the girl that did it, and you know who she is, her family would go to this resort every year and take their kids. It was a staple of their life. They she always talked about it. I put it in the back burner that I wanted to go there sometime, never did, but now I'm going and it's refreshed. So it sounds like it's going to be even better.

Alex: Yeah, and then the fact that it's just went through this rebrand, the rooms are all updated. It'll be really nice. And I actually booked, so I booked two rooms because there's six of us and there was no standard. Sometimes if there's a standard suite, I'll try to get us all in one room. My parents are now coming.

So we have two rooms between us, but I booked one room with Hyatt points, and then I booked another room with The Edit credit. And then I booked another room with the Fine Hotels + Resorts® credit. So if you are sitting on, you know, either Fine Hotels + Resorts or The Edit credit, you can use it at this property, which was really, really nice. And so with the dates that we're going, you this is on the Fine Hotels + Resorts. So you can just book a one-night stay, but with the dates we were going, the hotel was kind of like playing some games, so I couldn't book a one-night stay. So I did a two-night stay with the Fine Hotels + Resorts and then another two-night stay with The Edit.

Ep #203: Hotels on Our Radar (Beyond the Usual Favorites)

But what's nice is that second room, even though it's booked in my name, they'll get all the benefits. You know, I'll get that \$100 credit, the free breakfast for two, which is great because I will be able to cover free breakfast with my Globalist status on the other room for the other four of us. So we'll get free breakfast and all of those things. So yeah, so if you've had your eye on this property, it could be a really good use of The Edit or Fine Hotels + Resorts credit.

Jess: And Pam is probably very proud of her daughter for using those credits.

Pam: Yes, I am. I am bursting with pride right now.

Jess: She's never been more proud. Get a tissue. All right. My last one is the Moxy Banff. I am actually planning a trip there for next year. And look at me, I have one Hilton, one Hyatt, one Marriott. Like, who am I, right?

Alex: Good job. Yeah.

Jess: I am planning this trip with a girlfriend, but they do have standard rooms with two queen beds that sleep four people. So this is also a great option for families in the Banff area. For a long time, there really weren't many options in Banff for points stays. There still aren't, but the Moxy is a great option. As I said, it's a Marriott property, and it's a really great use of those 50k free night certificates that you get with some Marriott welcome offers or as a cardholder every year on your anniversary.

I looked and next summer, every single night was 59,000 points a night, which for Marriott, I feel like that is super reasonable, and especially if you have a 50k free night certificate, you're just applying, you know, 9,000 of your own Marriott points to that. You're topping off with 9,000 Marriott points to be able to stay there.

So, I've never been to Banff. Really excited to check it out. Really excited to check this hotel out. Pam, I will write a review on this one also. I've always wanted to go to Banff, and so, yeah, I'm just excited that there's a good, solid points option there now.

Alex: Yeah, I'm excited for you to try that one out. I've never been to Banff either, but it's a place that's been on my radar a little bit. My husband's, well, my

Ep #203: Hotels on Our Radar (Beyond the Usual Favorites)

father-in-law, his, they're all Canadian. And so he grew up going to Canada all the, every summer, they would go to Canada, but we have not been to Canada with our kids. So like, oh, that would be pretty cool to go and see some of the sights up there. So I want to hear all about it.

Pam: Okay. My next hotel is one that I actually booked right when it opened because it's it opened, um, recently. I can't remember why I canceled the trip.

Alex: I think you had it like another trip booked.

Pam: Okay.

Alex: You might have been double-booked.

Pam: That could happen. I get a little OCD sometimes. But anyway, it's the Kimpton Tres Rios in Cancun. I love a good Kimpton hotel. This one is interesting because it is the first Kimpton all-inclusive. And so that, you know, I'm interested to see how that works out. I have a love-hate relationship with all-inclusives, but there are some that are amazing. I would expect this one to be really good. And then there are some that are not so good that I've been to too.

So this is in the Riviera Maya near Cancun. When I looked today, I saw points starting about 95k. Now that's kind of expensive for an IHG hotel, but again, it is an all-inclusive. So when everything is included, I guess they've got to raise things. I absolutely love the Kimpton Seafire. I love the Kimpton Grand Roatán. So I'm like, okay, I love these. You know, this is just high on my list. I need to go check this one out.

I like the idea of going there. One of the key things for me is it's just a really short trip. I love it when I don't have to get on a long-haul flight. And so I have an affinity towards Mexico because it's usually about three hours, you know, two to three hours. And so that makes it really exciting to me. As I said, I love Kimpton's, four pools, great kids club. It looks really, really nice. And it is definitely on my to-do list for next year. I don't know exactly when, I don't know who's going with me, but I'm going there.

Jess: Every time I hear about this property, I think it's in Jamaica because I think there's like Ocho Rios in Jamaica.

Ep #203: Hotels on Our Radar (Beyond the Usual Favorites)

Pam: Yes, yes.

Jess: And so every time I see the Rios, I'm like, "Oh, Jamaica." Oh wait, no, that's Cancun. And so. Yeah, that does sound really cool. I feel like Kimpton and Mexico also go together well for Pam.

Pam: They do.

Alex: Yes. All right. My last one is also in Mexico. It is the Conrad Punta de Mita, and it is a Hilton property. It starts at 95,000 points a night, which is pretty good actually, for a Hilton and a Conrad. So you'd fly into Puerto Vallarta, and it's about 45 minutes north. I have never actually been to Puerto Vallarta, and so I think it would be nice to go. Mom, I know you've been there a bunch, haven't you?

Pam: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I always go to the Vidanta there.

Alex: Okay. So, the resort, here's what I like about it. It looks like a really nice resort, but also family-friendly. And I like when you can kind of blend the two of like, oh, it has some luxury, but it's also family-friendly. Because sometimes you can get some of these really nice properties that you're like, oh, I don't feel like I could take my kids there. This might be too fancy or they might be, you know, frowned upon, or they might be too rowdy. And so I like when you can merge the two.

It has a swimmable beach, which sometimes in certain areas of Mexico can be harder to find if, for example, if you're going to Cabo and for my family, they really enjoy and my kids love being able to go and play in the beach. I've heard that the beach is less busy. It's not as much people walking down and trying to sell you stuff, which I would enjoy. I enjoy a quieter beach atmosphere.

A nice thing about this property too is kids 12 and under get free kids' meals at a variety of the restaurants as long as they're with an adult who's paying for a main course. So.

Pam: Well, then you, we better go with you so that you can so you have four adults and four kids.

Ep #203: Hotels on Our Radar (Beyond the Usual Favorites)

Alex: No, well, but my kids are older than 12. So it's only my younger two. But you can still come.

Pam: Okay

Jess: You're not inviting Pam.

Alex: No, we want you to come. There's multiple pools, a water slide, a small little splash pad, a complimentary kids club for kids ages 4 to 12. They have this game room that looked really nice. It's not, as you can see, it's not an all-inclusive. But it just looks like a really fun, nice property.

And as you were saying, Mom, I feel like Mexico is kind of, it's an easier destination for us to get to where we can go escape to the sun, but not give up a week of our lives to do it. Okay, we can go for four nights. I actually looked into going here for Christmas when I was doing all of this and I was like, yeah, flights are like over a thousand dollars a person. The points were insane. It was just not going to work out. But I was like, that might be a fun one to do sometime with the family. So that's another one on my radar.

Yeah, and what was interesting is when I was on the website, they have this whole section about it being family-friendly and all the things that are available for families. So I was like, okay, this actually is a very family-friendly resort. Because sometimes you can think of somewhere like a Conrad and you're like, I don't really know about this. So yeah, it's definitely on my radar.

Pam: Well, you got me at Conrad. I can't go without me now. You know what, guys? I am really excited about some of these hotels. I have written a few down. Didn't write down Missoula, I have to tell you that, Jess. But I'm really excited to go try out some new hotels.

So to all of you out there, if you have some hotels on your radar that we have not mentioned, let us know. If you've been someplace that you think we would absolutely love, please write and tell us. And if you enjoyed this episode, please leave us a rating and a review.

Thanks so much for listening to *Points Talk*®. Make sure to hit the subscribe or follow button from wherever you're listening so you never miss an episode.

Ep #203: Hotels on Our Radar (Beyond the Usual Favorites)

Wanna start jet setting even faster? Follow the links in the show notes to learn about everything we discussed in today's episode. And to stay connected and follow along, follow us on Instagram @PointsTalkSquad. We can't wait to see where in the world points and miles take you.