

Renter's Guide
For
Isla de Oro Beach Club
Penthouse Apartment 1132
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After I purchased Apartment 1132 in 2003, I intended to use it for a 2nd residence for up to 6 months a year. So I added improvements and amenities to make it as much as possible like my home in California, and to add other features that I wanted. This guide is to describe the idiosyncrasies of those gained from my own experience.

Master Bedroom:

Entertainment Center:

This consists of a sound system, TV set, Combo Videocassette/DVD player, and receiver for Dish Network.

Please do not alter the connections unless you know what you're doing. As it's set up, all sound has to come through the sound system, so it has to be turned on and set to Aux to hear the TV. There is an A/B switch in the upper right compartment above the VHS/DVD player. It is to switch the TV between the Dish Network receiver and the VHS/DVD player. There is a separate remote for the sound system, and it controls the volume. The sound system also includes a CD changer.

The Dish Network receiver is a model 501 PVR. That means it will record shows you select in advance to its internal hard disk, and you play them back whenever you want to see them. You can also pause playback, and skip ahead over commercials, etc.

The TV set remote doesn't work, but you can turn the TV on with the Dish remote.

As I write, the large satellite dish for receiving Dish Network isn't working and requires some minor repairs. Chris Abbey knows a repair person, and I think he will share in the cost of repairs, since he also gets a feed from the same antenna. Also, there has been a smart card exchange since the antenna was last working. Chris has the new smart cards and instructions for installing them, once the antenna repairs have been made.

Even though the antenna hasn't been working, Chris has been paying \$30/month, through me, to share my Dish Network subscription. That pays for "Top 60." I have been paying the additional for "Top 120," and two added receiver fees. After I sold the apartment, I

stopped paying the added receiver fee for 1132, and I understand the new owner hasn't been paying it either. So it probably will not be practical to get reception of Dish Network from the USA working for a short term rental.

Master Bathroom:

The toilet has been fitted with a **bidet attachment**. It is plumbed into the hot and cold water supply. It is designed to work with the water supply to it always on and then controlled with the volume and temperature dials on the bidet unit itself. But when I tried this initially, the unit sprung a bad leak and had to be replaced. I suspect this was caused, if not by a defective unit, then by the at times unusually high water pressure found at Isla de Oro, especially during the week when not many apartments are occupied. So I added external controls for both hot and cold water. The cold water control is near the toilet, and the hot water control is just outside the basin enclosure. I recommend that you start with the bidet controls at half-way, and control the volume and temperature by using the external controls. Note the pull-out handle at the base of the bidet controls. That is to allow free flow of hot water directed down into the bowl away from the user. This is to flush cold water from the pipes from the hot water heater and the supply hoses. With bidet flow set to off, pull up handle, and turn on hot water supply near basin until hot water is flowing. Then turn hot water supply off and push handle down. You can feel the hot water from below, or you can touch the plastic supply hose and feel if it is hot. Then turn bidet flow and temperature controls about half way and gradually turn on the cold water supply until you can feel the water stream. Then gradually turn on the hot water supply until desired temperature is achieved.. Note that **careless use can result in burns from hot water**. When you are finished, you can shut off the water either using the supply valves (turn off hot water first) or using the bidet flow valve. But if you use the bidet flow valve, I recommend you than turn off both supply valves and then relieve the internal pressure by turning the bidet flow valve back on at least briefly.

The master bath shower has been fitted with a deluxe shower massage attachment. You can vary the type of stream by turning the head to any of several positions.

Kitchen:

There is a power strip with a circuit breaker on the wall next to the refrigerator. It can run all the nearby appliances at once **except the meat grill**. So do not plug the meat grill into that power strip. There is another outlet near the sink.

In general, only the "lomito" cut of beef, and ground beef/sausage, are available locally and are tender enough to grill. Chris knows where to buy some Sirloin steaks in Caracas which can also be grilled or BBQed on the terrace which are very good.

Utility Room:

This contains the waster/dryer, the three hot water heaters for inside the apartment, and main water shutoff, and the reserve tank and pump for water outages. It also contains the

electrical circuit breakers, and the switches for changing from mains power to the emergency generator on the terrace. These switches are designed so that it's not possible to connect both the generator and the mains power to the same circuit at the same time. This is to prevent power from feeding back up the mains lines and possibly endangering electrical workers.

The emergency generator is currently configured for long term storage. I don't think it makes sense to get it working for a short term rental. I hear electrical outages are now less of a problem than they used to be when I ordered the generator.

The large reserve tank contains a generous supply for household use. When there is an outage, you can hear the pump running when water is turned on, and notice that water pressure is a little reduced. The pump can be turned off manually with the right circuit breaker. **Do not let the pump run after the water supply is exhausted.** However, do not attempt to fill the Jacuzzi except from mains water, as that will very quickly exhaust the reserve tank. At one time, the pump had a separate on/off switch, but for some unknown reason, the electrician removed that when installing the generator.

Terrace:

Jacuzzi:

The Jacuzzi should be cleaned before use. The Jacuzzi controls are:

Hot and cold water inlet valves on the top left (north). The hot water is heated by two Thermotronic "tankless" heaters which are located in a wood cabinet near the wet bar. There are two circuit breakers to control the heaters. These are normally left ON since the heaters shut themselves off when water isn't flowing. The water provided by these heaters can be **very** hot, so use the floating thermometer and caution to avoid burns. These tankless heaters can only heat to the maximum temperature at a reduced flow rate. There are also two Raypak heaters connected to the two Jacuzzi internal pumps. They turn on automatically when the pumps are on. The heater controls are behind the two aluminum doors on the other side of the privacy wall north of the Jacuzzi. The pump motor controls are on the side of the privacy wall facing the Jacuzzi, near the inlet valves. **Do not turn on the pumps until the Jacuzzi is about half full and there is water covering the pump inlets.** Note that even at maximum temperature setting, the Raypak heaters will not heat the water much above 95° F. This is a problem with the Raypak thermostats. I asked the factory about that, but they did not offer any solution.

There are the following water valves on the side of the Jacuzzi. The first and largest is the drain valve, used to empty the Jacuzzi after use. Of course, it must be closed to fill the Jacuzzi. It can be left open to clean the Jacuzzi, which should be done before each use, as algae and sand will otherwise accumulate and detract from the experience. The faucet, used with a hose, on the terrace wall, may be helpful in cleaning the Jacuzzi.

The other two valves are for overflow drains. There are two overflow drain valves because I first installed a small one, but it could not keep up with the inflow if hot and cold water were set at full on. So there is a 2nd one with a larger outlet built into the side of the Jacuzzi. Each has its own valve. These should generally always be left open, so that overflow does not occur, particularly if the Jacuzzi is left unattended while filling. They can be closed if you want to fill “brim full,” but there will probably be spillage. Initially, there were problems with Jacuzzi overflow falling onto the terrace of the penthouse below mine. To prevent that, I built a small retaining wall behind the Jacuzzi to direct any overflow onto my terrace. The terrace has floor drains, so spills will drain away after a while.

You will note that there is a drain from the back of the seat into the footwell of the Jacuzzi. Before I added this, a lot of water was retained in the seat, which made cleaning more difficult.

Before I installed the Raypak heaters, I filled the Jacuzzi using only the hot water inlet. Since the hot water flow rate has to be reduced to get the water very hot, this would take about 3-4 hours. I think a better technique now is to fill the Jacuzzi at least half full as quickly as possible (maybe ½ hour) with maximum flow both hot and cold. Then, once the pump inlet holes are covered, turn on the pumps and the Raypak heaters. Once the Jacuzzi is filled, and you want the water still hotter, then turn off the cold inlet water and reduce the flow of the hot water to achieve sufficient hot water temp. The water inlet is under water, but you can feel the incoming water with your hand to see how hot it is. You can leave it this way until the water is hot enough, as excess will flow out through the overflow drains

One of the inlet water valves seems defective, in that there is no stop at zero flow. When the Jacuzzi is full, the water inlet is covered and a small flow could occur that you wouldn't be aware of. But if there is a water outage, then even a small flow could quickly drain the reserve water tank. One way to avoid the problem might be to turn off the reserve water pump when the Jacuzzi is full.

When using all four water heaters, two Thermotronic, and two Raypak, at the same time, this would overload the electrical feed from downstairs, after an hour or two, and trip a circuit breaker in the locked main electrical shack. This would interrupt all electrical power to the entire apartment. You would have to find the condo electrician to go and turn the power back on. I have had the main electrical cables running downstairs replaced with larger ones, and the circuit breaker in the downstairs electrical shack replaced with a larger one. Hopefully the problem has been solved, but this work was completed after my last visit, so I haven't had a chance to test this myself.

Alcove (between dining area and living room):

This was intended as an occasional extra bedroom, and it has its own bathroom. But I used it as an office, and it contains a Personal Computer with Windows XP on a moveable cart. The PC includes a slot for a moveable hard drive. You can buy other slots at compgeeks.com. The idea was to take my hard drive with data with me from home, while the programs would stay on the resident hard drive both at home and at the apartment.

There is also a Lexmark X75 inkjet printer/scanner with the PC. If you want to use the printer, you should probably buy a set of ink cartridges and bring them with you. When the printer is allowed to sit idle for long periods, the ink cartridges get clogged and probably can't be rehabilitated.

The PC includes software to translate text between Spanish and English. I have found this invaluable for communicating complex issues with the Isla staff. There are also either paper or electronic English/Spanish dictionaries which you can carry around. You can also carry around a laptop PC with the software from the desktop.

Internet: Currently only practical internet available at Isla de Oro is wireless. You need a special wireless adapter, which is not supplied. You get, I'm told, better service than dialup, but not as good as wired DSL. You do get unlimited service for a monthly fee. Chris should be able to set this up for you (at cost) if you want it.

Chris tells me that hardwired **DSL** high speed internet service is expected to be available at Isla de Oro soon.

Telephone Service:

Currently, only wireless phone service is available at Isla de Oro. There is a fixed wireless pay phone in the lobby. But you will probably want your own cell phone. Ask your USA wireless provider if international roaming will work in Venezuela. Or you might have Chris buy you a cheap cell phone for use there. Generally, you can't activate phones brought in from outside Venezuela.

General:

Venetian Blinds: When I bought the apartment, the windows (except the sliding glass doors to the terrace) were all fitted with Hunter-Douglas (expensive) Venetian blinds. Most of these still are OK, but many have lost the plastic wands used to adjust the slat angle. One in the guest bedroom has a broken string which needs repair. Chris tells me that there is a Hunter-Douglas dealer and/or repair service in the nearby city of Higurote. Repair of the blinds is something that needs to be done, but that I never got around to.