



GLOBAL HOPE

Diary of a Jetsetter

Beach Polo Goes From Sunny South Beach
To The Windy City Of Chicago

HOPE GAINER

Miami, New York, Los Angeles, London, St. Tropez,
Buenos Aires, Punta del Este, Phuket, Abu Dhabi &
the Full Moon.

Not only did beach polo hit the Windy City of Chicago this Fall, but so did I. For me it was a trip down memory lane to my hometown which I had not been back to in decades!

I arrived into Midway Airport and had a friendly taxi ride into the city with the driver playing tour guide pointing out the sites along the way. I had forgotten what a world class city Chicago is. My destination was **Trump International Hotel & Tower** located in the heart of Chicago, connected to the pulse of the city and overlooking the famous Chicago River.

His new gem in Chicago is all it's made out to be. I am a hard to impress, jaded jetsetter; but this building took my breath away. Not only was the place incredible, but the service was top notch, the food phenomenal, the amenities amazing, the views stunning and the location absolutely perfect. Everything was housed in this 92 story glistening glass stainless steel tower that has left its indelible mark on the Chicago skyline. It includes 486 residences and 339 hotel rooms and suites.



This was my first Trump experience and I was blown away. I will gladly return and recommend the residences as well. Living the 'Trump Lifestyle' agreed with me!

I quickly unpacked and slipped on a slinky black cocktail dress and rushed off to the press conference and welcome cocktail party for the inaugural **Chicago Beach Polo** weekend. My first stop was **Hotel Sax**, just a stone's throw away from where I was staying. This is a stylish, sexy, hip hotel with a cool lounge called Crimson where they served us complimentary Argentine Malbec wine and Grey Goose cocktails to kick off the



polo festivities. Here, I ran into Alex Webbe, Chairman of the International Beach Polo Association followed by polo babe, Melissa Hornung and her teammate and MVP, Tara Lordi.



My escort for the weekend was an old Cornell college beau who coincidentally was a Chicago native like me. Another Chicagoan, David Wigdahl, a former six-goal world class player was excited about playing on the shores of Lake Michigan and his family supplied the horses for the matches. The origins of polo in Chicago date back to the World's Fair in 1893 or even earlier roots in 1876 just before General Custer confronted the Sioux Indians at Little Big Horn. Thus, this long polo history is adding a new chapter with the inaugural beach polo tournament of Fall 2011, **Chicago Beach Polo**.

My beau and I left the party to go to **Le Colonial**, one of Chicago's most romantic French Vietnamese dining experiences that transports you to colonial times in Southeast Asia housed in a vintage rowhouse on Rush Street in the Gold Coast area. After sharing champagne and savory dishes, we headed back to Crimson for a final cocktail before retiring to our weekend retreat. Along the way we checked out **Rebar**, our Trump lounge overlooking the twinkling lights of the city.

Saturday morning my 'partner in crime' went to the gym and I hit the pavement, running along River Walk to the lakefront paths for a nice long jog along the beaches passing Navy Pier and Oak Street Beach en route. Since we both worked up an appetite, we went for lunch at restaurant **Sixteen** where we enjoyed a scrumptious 4 course tasting menu. It started with the most refreshing nonalcoholic 'cocktail' I have ever had, called a **Pomegranate Plum Cooler** made with pomegranate juice, plum tea, a shot of ginger ale and a mint leaf sprig. I think I will take this divine cocktail recipe as a souvenir back home to Miami. All of our

courses were equally delicious topped off with the double white chocolate raspberry tart dessert accompanied with a picture perfect cappuccino.

It was time to end our leisurely lunch and mosey on over to North Avenue Beach to watch the polo match "Grey Goose Chicago Beach Polo World Cup 2011". As we exited the taxi and entered the beach, I quickly remembered why they call Chicago the "Windy City". The winds off the lakefront tend to rip thru you rather harshly. Luckily, upon entering the VIP tent, you could instantly order a Grey Goose vodka cocktail, an Amstel Light beer or meander over to the Gascon tent and sip a Malbec or Prosecco to warm yourself up. Guests were feasting on Fogo de Chao and Union Sushi bites. Sponsors included Lufthansa Private Jet, Trump Hotel & Towers and Michigan Avenue Magazine among others.

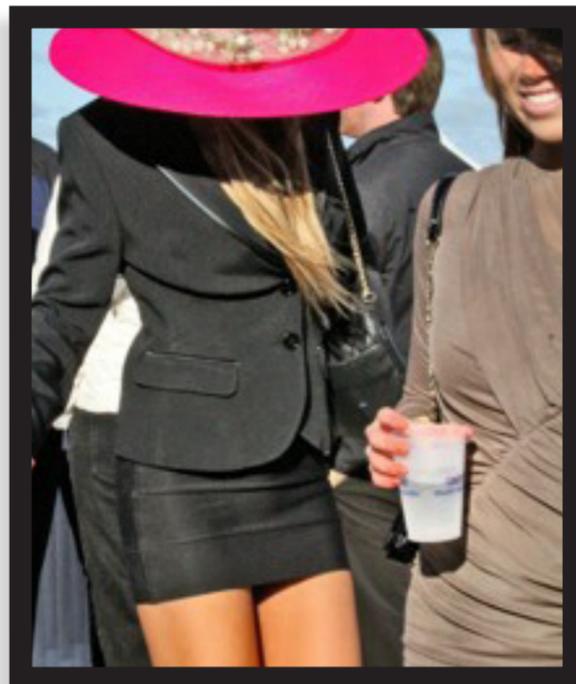
Local personalities threw out the first polo ball to begin the matches and then the horses were off and running while the players battled it out on the sands of Lake Michigan. Beach polo is played on a smaller field (about one tenth the size of a regular polo field and about the same size as an American football field) allowing the spectators to be up close and personal to all the action. Between chukkers the Dj hit the tunes and the models strutted their stuff showing off local design talent. The well heeled crowd decked themselves out in their best polo inspired looks from riding boots and hats to breeches and blazers. Seen amongst the crowd were philanthropists and politicians to newscasters and reality show stars to former footballers of Chicago Bears like Jerry Azumah.



As a tribute to the host city, a percentage of the polo proceeds benefited the **100 Club of Chicago** that supports families of fallen policemen and firefighters and **Illinois Education Foundation** that provides scholarships to low-income, high-potential students.

complimented by choice cheeses garnished with a raspberry puree. Later it was feeding time again and we arrived at **Japonais** for yet another delicious meal. The restaurant and lounge area were heavily populated with hipsters sipping and munching the night away.

As the wind took its toll, we headed off the sandy field and back to the cement city streets. We took a stroll along the river past Smith & Wolensky's and landed at **Pops**, one of the nation's most acclaimed champagne bars with over 200 selections to choose from. We had our own personal champagne tasting



Après dinner, we ventured to the Wicker Park area to **Tocco Pizza & Arte** owned by Italian restaurateur/chef Bruno Abate. I had 'met' Bruno on **ASW** prior to my trip and he graciously invited me for a drink. Bruno proved to be quite an interesting man of many talents...as he soon showed us his new golf shoe collection. From pizza to fine wines to golf attire...now that is diversity.

Sunday morning, the sunshine seeped into our suite bright and early. I once again went for my run, this time heading Southbound. I passed Buckingham Fountain and continued onto Shedd Aquarium before turning around. Room service arrived and then I spent an afternoon shopping along Michigan Avenue and Oak Street where there were pooch 'Paws' for sale for charity in all shapes and sizes. Now I call that shopping for a good cause. How could anyone pass up those adorable homeless pups on a Sunday afternoon?

We beelined to the airport just in the nick of time to beat the Bears traffic as the game was letting out at Soldiers Field. I was headed home to sunny South Beach while my beau was going to a colder climate. Two native Chicagoans came together once again and conquered the Windy City for the weekend only to leave it behind as a fond memory.

But 'I will be back'. I had truly forgotten how cool Chicago really is from the architecture to the restaurants to the shopping, sports, museums, lakefront and most importantly, the friendly Chicagoans!

Til next time...

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HOPE INTERNATIONAL

Contributing Editor, Hope Gainer, President of Hope International, is a global image-maker, marketer and branding expert with 30 years of lifestyle experience with a focus today on the luxury market. She produces unique upscale events around the world. Gainer is a founding member of the Florida Luxury Council and a contributor to several other luxury publications. She also represents spectacular "trophy" real estate properties. Visit: www.ehopeinternational.com