

# Magical MAHEKAL

## GET LOST IN PARADISE

If you desire relaxation with the option for adventure, Mexico's Mahekal Beach Resort is a "must add" for your travel list this year.

After an early morning flight out of New York City, I was greeted at the airport by a private car and one of the resort's signature margaritas, a refreshing start to my trip. Instantly, you will experience its namesake, "Mahekal," which in Mayan means "magical."

Situated on Playa del Carmen's largest stretch of beach and spanning 920 pristine feet of shoreline beauty, Mahekal Beach Resort was the very first property in Playa del Carmen, and it is still known today for its unique ability to combine Mexico's sandy shores and tropical verdure. Though large, the resort's many sections—from its seaside infinity pool to its tucked-away jungle—add a small, intimate feel, creating a *Swiss Family Robinson*-style setting with lush vegetation, colorful bougainvillea and hidden stone pathways winding throughout.

Every employee under General Manager Julian Smaldoni's direction, from the maids to dining

staff, is there to ensure that from the start of your stay to the very last minute, you will receive a superb, relaxing and adventurous stay.

After a short 40-minute car ride from the airport, you will arrive at a quaint resort located on the beautiful Playa Del Carmen beach. A former fishing town, set on a flawless stretch of beach with turquoise waters, the resort in the Riviera Maya jungle has four pools. My favorite was the infinity pool, set a few feet back from the ocean.

The resort offers 196 palapa-styled one- or two-story bungalows, with hammocks on your terrace, just a few feet from the beach itself.

Inspired by the book *GypSet Style* by Julia Chaplin, Mahekal Beach Resort's interior design scheme is the meeting point of playful Mexican hues and bohemian-gypsy chic. Eclectic, brilliant accents like Missoni-esque fabrics adorn the hotel lobby, including fireplace seating areas. Boli's bright-orange ping-pong tables and cobalt

blue billiards offer guests just a taste of the fanciful things yet to come. Wind your way to your bungalow and watch as this subtle eccentricity takes on a whole new level. From its thatched, Tiki hut-style roof—found nowhere else in the area—to its artisan-stenciled floors, the inside of each bungalow boasts chic white walls and neutral furniture, which come to life with brightly colored throw pillows, striped fabrics, whimsical ceramics and local, Mayan art dotted throughout. Boasting a tranquil ambiance reflective of the Ancient Mayans' simple appreciation for nature and the fibers it produces, these vibrant textiles, often handmade by generations of Mayans still living in the area, add subtle style in a way that's truly Mahekal.

Plan a day of snorkeling at Mahakal's Vida Aquatica Dive Center. On one of my many favorite day trips, we swam through and around the world's second-largest coral reef while taking in the sites of the many beautiful colored fish—







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and one very special rather large turtle who seemed to love the attention.

Be sure to book a day trip to the Mayan Ruins to walk through and around the original natural architecture from the Mayans. Take the time to visit the private beach down the cliff from the ruins. The views are spectacular. Standing at the top of the cliff and looking down into the crystal clear ocean, you almost feel how the Mayans must have felt in this breathtaking paradise.

For a taste of true culture, take a ceramic painting class on-site with Juliana, a master of her craft, or walk to the famed Fifth Avenue or Quinta Avenida, a bustling pedestrian walkway located just one block from the property, lined with hundreds of well-known shops, bars/lounges and multinational cuisine.

On an early evening stroll to Fifth Avenue, you will find a version of “New York’s Fifth Avenue meets South Beach” with trendy shopping and

nightlife options. Shop, dance with the locals and sip your way through Fifth Avenue into the wee hours of the morning.

Take time from your adventure and sightseeing to indulge in a treatment or two at the resort’s new Mayan-inspired Revive Spa, featuring a line of organic, locally-made Kinich products. You will be hooked on the massage oils and the massage with aromatherapy, helping you relax mind, body and soul with Mayan-inspired treatments.

Dine on-site in one of its three restaurants. My favorite was Fuego, which serves authentic Tulum-style cuisine, made in a brick oven by Executive Chef Crescenciano Nerey.

While deep in Mayan culture, book a private cooking class and dinner with an authentic Mayan chef. Experience the ancient cooking and how the Mayans cooked each meal by going into the cooking hut as the chef from the Mayan Culinary Casita buries the prepared dish to cook

in the earth.

Feel like staying in for a romantic dinner and evening without leaving your bungalow? Dine on your open-air terrace with the pristine ocean practically at your feet. Swim in your personal plunge pool and shower afterward in your own private rain shower.

Leave your sound machine at home. Let the ocean lull you to sleep each night. Other than wi-fi, there are no electronic devices, insuring you’ll have a relaxing getaway—exactly as the Mayans would do it!

If you are looking for nature at its best, plus bohemian ambiance with a good bit of luxury, Mahekal Beach Resort has it all!