

MODERN LUXURY

JEZEBEL

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SIZZLING LOVE LIFE AND BODY OF WORK

BUZZING PARTY PHOTOS

Seeing Green

THE 411 ON GOING VEGAN

Play in the A!

Tailgate Go-Tos,
Topgolf Midtown
& Date-Night Destinations

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(continued)

get outta town

I Want Your Mex!

The newly re-minted Mahekal Beach Resort in Playa del Carmen oozes with authentic charm. We dive in.

get outta town

get outta town

get outta town

get outta town

get outta town



The beachfront resort is nestled between the Riviera jungle and Playa del Carmen's longest stretch of pristine beach.

The 2-foot iguana that sidled alongside my oceanfront veranda was part of the welcoming committee at **Mahekal Beach Resort**, a luxury property that boasts an exacting mix of exotic

and lavish. Nestled on Playa del Carmen's long swath of white sand, the resort recently underwent a \$15 million remodel, complete with thatched-roof bungalows decked out in Mayan-modern decor, bars and restos galore, and four inviting pools. During my

bungalow stay, a huge dreamy four-poster bed topped with a gauzy canopy beckoned, while pocket doors spilled onto the sand with a hammock waiting in my line of sight. My home for the week even came with a custom ceramic plate, Casa de Flynn, that hung outside my door. It was another thoughtful welcome.



The lobby design, much like the rest of the resort, is a study in tropical chic.



Private patios offer views of the resort.

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Beach walk goes with 100 feet of sand.

Everything about this place is easy-breezy. Days seem to slip by with pool lounging, beach strolls and, yum—those tamarind margaritas. Mahekal is certainly one of those resorts that commands you to lollygag. After all, there are three restaurants here—ranging from casual to high-end—along with the chic Boli's Bar, a late-night concept boasting pool tables, Ping-Pong and flowing cocktails; and Itzi, the trendy pool bar named for a Mayan princess.

However, it's just a hop/skip to the bustling downtown Playa del Carmen, Quinta Avenida, which is much less obnoxious than say, downtown Cancun. Sure there are oontz-oontz nightclubs, but there's also old-school Mexican eateries like La Cueva del Chango along with new options like Axiote. And don't miss artisan shops like Silvia Suárez with hand-spun textiles in contemporary styles that embody that boho-glam sensibility. My bright-pink tunic was perfect for poolside and nighttime, when



An oceanfront suite features a private plunge pool just steps from the beach.

lantern lights and down-tempo beats transform Mahekal into a romantic enclave.

The 50-year-old resort was originally built by a Mexican family who opened six palapas geared toward backpackers. It's come a long way, baby. Today, the bougainvillea trees and jungle surround 194 palapas,



Beachfront palapas feature casual, lush and high design alike.

both apartment-style and individual casitas. Rooms feature private terraces decked out with hammocks and outdoor showers (a must). Boasting colorful Mexican accents and modern sensibilities, the decor is inspired by the ballyhooed *GypSet Style* book. And ceramics are a big part of the property, with pottery dotting the tropical grounds; there's also an ambitious ceramics program on offer with classes taught by local artisans who have been painting in the traditional style for generations. The turtle I attempted to paint didn't exactly turn out like the one by my teacher, Julienne. Nevertheless, when it came time to check out of my Mahekal home—and say goodbye to Iggy—I took down my Casa de Flynn plate and wrapped it carefully for the flight home. It was the ultimate souvenir.

Overnight winter rates from \$293, mahekalbeachresort.com, [@mahekalplaya](https://www.instagram.com/mahekalplaya)



The resort features rooms and penthouses that offer both garden and ocean views.

Day Trip!

The Yucatan's hottest hot spot is Tulum, the sandy little town with an ancient Mayan ruin and serious flair. It's worth an hour drive with several transportation options via the hotel.

Eat

Become a scholar of ceviche and local produce at Hartwood (hartwoodtulum.com, [@hartwoodtulum](https://www.instagram.com/hartwoodtulum)), where chef Eric Werner has fostered relationships with farmers and fish mongers to create a fresh-daily rotating menu. The people-watching is so good that it's best to stay for the housemade ice cream.

Pray

Built late in the 13th century, Tulum is the only known Mayan city built on the coast, having operated as a seaport trading turquoise and jade. Today, it stands as a labyrinthine monument of castles and temples where sheer limestone cliffs give way to the Caribbean, teeming with sea-life. Go for a snorkel in the shadow of the ruins.

Shop

Join the ranks of models and art-world heavyweights who wear the custom potions and scents from Coqui Coqui Perfumeria (coquicoqui.com), which was dreamt up by Argentine model and hotelier Nicolas Malleville. Heaven in a bottle? It's the orange blossom.

The breathtaking ruins at Tulum are one of the only Mayan city built on the coast.

