

JustLuxe

Affluent Lifestyle Guide

An NYC Weekend Escape to Playa del Carmen



An easy weekend escape for New Yorkers, Playa del Carmen has been called “The Trendiest City on Mexico’s Eastern Coast.” The vibrant culture, luminous weather, strong American dollar and recent developments of luxury hotels, boutiques, restaurants and nightlife make it as easy choice for a fun weekend getaway. Whether you are seeking a quiet, rejuvenating visit, a look into the history and culture of Mexico or a foodie immersion, it can all be found in this diverse coastal resort town on the Caribbean Sea.



Flying in to Cancun, Mexico is relatively easy, with daily flights offered from JetBlue, American, United, Delta and AeroMexico. Try to leave on an early flight, to be on the beach or sipping a margarita by noon, and avoid prime time in immigration at the extremely busy Cancun airport. Once in Mexico, car service or taxi can be arranged to Playa Del Carmen, about 45 minutes away.

The beauty and charm of Mexico is found in perfecting the blend of old-world heritage with a modern yet bohemian, sophisticated atmosphere. **Mahekal Beach Resort** has been a staple in Playa since being built by a local Mexican family over 50 years ago, starting off as six thatched-roof palapas meant for backpackers. Now, the resort boasts 196 guestrooms including everything from ocean view casitas and penthouses to garden view and Treehouse thatched-roof palapa-style bungalows. Hammocks casually swing on front porches and different rooms are outfitted with private plunge pools, others with private terraces and third-floor skyline views of the azure waters.



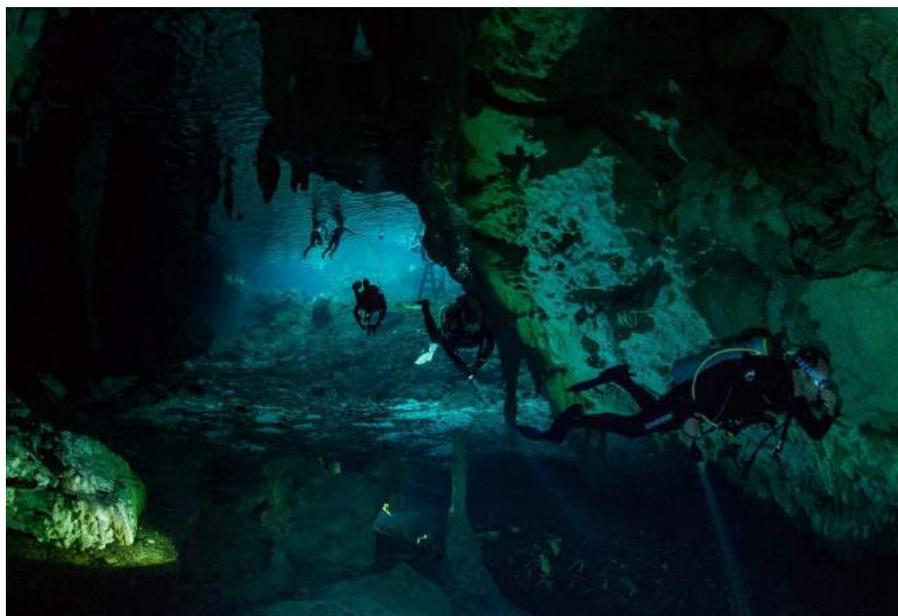
Mahekal Beach Resort is situated on the longest stretch of beach in Playa Del Carmen, totaling 920 feet. Designed with the “Gypset” style in mind by author Julia Chaplin, Mahekal’s interior designer Hilda Espino in partnership with Todd Fiscus worked on creating an atmosphere that was sophisticated and bohemian, with colorful Mexican accented pieces mixed with modern, functional pieces. From the cobalt blue of the billiard table in Boli’s bar to the curated book stacks, the unfussy contemporary luxury is comfortable yet aesthetically pleasing.



The property recently saw a three-year \$16 million renovation, adding on the Mayan-themed Revive Spa, fitness center, Tulum-style beachfront restaurant, and event space to host meetings, weddings and any larger scale affair. The grounds also include manicured lush gardens, four different pools and a plethora of activities from the spa, snorkeling, diving and paddle boarding. Among its remodels was the reimagining of three former restaurants.



After arriving at the resort, get comfortable and check out the surroundings. Grab a drink at Boli's Bar, or head straight to the beach. Grab dinner at Fuego, the newest restaurant at Mahekal specializing in farm-to-fork dining. The oceanside establishment is under the careful watch of Executive Chef Crescenciano Nerey, only local fare is used in his culinary creations. All dishes are cooked on a wood-fired oven and open grill, and accompanied by a stellar wine list and creative cocktails. After dinner, head down to the beach with a libation for Fire Pit Fridays. Chairs and lounge beds await you, along with the warm glow of a soft fire, with the beach and ocean waves as the perfect backdrop.



A trip to Playa del Carmen wouldn't be complete with spending some time in or on its stunning turquoise waters. For an adventurous morning, book a local snorkeling trip at the Vida Aquatica Dive Center, one of the oldest operating centers in Playa Del Carmen. The local dive option includes all equipment such as fittings, snorkel fins and masks. After a scenic 20-minute boat ride past the beach dotted with resorts, you'll arrive at a calm stretch of sapphire-toned waters near a coral reef. The guides are friendly and knowledgeable, and have a knack for attracting aquatic life. If scuba diving is your desire, special excursions can also be arranged at the reefs, cenotes, Cozumel or night dives.

Just steps from the property is an abundance of shops, restaurants, entertainment and nightlife. Quinta Avenida (5th Avenue) dates back to the '90s, when it was just a dusty side road with a handful of small shops and restaurants catering to backpackers. Over the past few years, it has recently expanded to hundreds of shops, with everything from high-end luxury brands to local artifacts and collectibles. The cobblestoned pedestrian walkway runs parallel to the beach, and is a people-watching hub. Grab dinner at Oh Lala, by George, consistently rated the number one restaurant in Playa out of over 800 selections. The tiny eatery has only nine tables, and can be sometimes take months to get a reservation. The International cuisine (we recommend the grilled octopus, fig salad and butter soy tuna) is perfectly plated, and ranges from fresh catches of the day to delectable meats.



For a more relaxing day, start your morning with the one-hour sunrise yoga session in the palm gardens. Afterwards, head to the brand new Mayan-inspired Revive Spa. The 2,500-square-foot facility features organic products from Kinich and embodies the natural surroundings and rich culture. The muted interiors are calming, decorated with antique wood furnishings and subtle lighting. Palapa-style treatment rooms intertwine relaxation with nature. Don't be surprised to hear the sounds of running water, or notice live plants in the rooms. The VIP room is perfect for couples or friends that want to experience a treatment together, and comes with a dedicated bath area with freestanding tub, indoor and outdoor shower and private access to the Zen Garden. All treatments are inspired by the Mayan culture, with one of the most self-indulgent spa therapies being the signature Revive 5 Senses.



Under the guidance and care of Managing Director Julian Smaldoni, the return ratio of guests is around 40 percent. Even the staff seems to love the resort as much as its guests. Resident concierge Boli has been at the property so long, the new bar and activity center has been named after him. These are the true signs of a hotel that understands what its guests are seeking and how much they value the team members making those desires possible for visitors.