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The Luxury Coastal Lifestyle Magazine
OCTOBER + NOVEMBER 2018

Our Top 50 Coastal ARCHITECTS

COVER STORY
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the Shingle Style
in the Hamptons



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DESTINATION: SOUTH FLORIDA
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THE **ZIMMERMAN** AGENCY
(continued)

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CULTURAL EXCHANGE

MEXICO'S MAHEKAL BEACH RESORT IN PLAYA EL CARMEN IS RICH IN HISTORY AND LUXURY ACCOMMODATIONS.

BY J. MICHAEL WELTON

The Mahekal Beach Resort is a luxurious destination in Playa del Carmen where Mexican and Mayan cultures merge. It's also close to 13th-century Mayan ruins and celebrates the Mayan people and culture in a special way that attracts visitors from around the world. In fact, many staff members, including Boli, the longtime concierge who's been honored with a bar in his name, are Mayan.

Walk the property and you'll hear the lilt of their language. "We have a Mayan casita for an original culinary experience, where Mayan chefs use Mayan ingredients," says Maria Elena Armenta, director of sales and marketing.

There's also a spa designed in a circular shape to mirror the sun, moon, and ancient spiritual influences. "We have a Mayan priest here," says Lamont Meek, COO of Circa

Capital, the co-owner and manager of the property. "People really appreciate it."

Visitors also appreciate the recent \$18 million renovation. Meek and his partner combined two existing resorts into one, then called in architect and interior designer Hilda Espino from Mexico City for a redesign, earning a four-star status in the process.

Espino redesigned the property to yield 195 uber-chic, bungalow-style accommodations overlooking 920 feet of coastline, with five restaurants and bars, four swimming pools, and a seaside hot tub. Its design integrates the area's native DNA.

"The owners are American and fell in love with Mexico 20 years ago because of the warmth of the people, the richness of the food and culture, and the mix of Mayan and Mexico," Armenta says.

Because her clients wanted the new resort



The architecture at Mahekal Beach Resort is modern Mexican at its finest.



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to reflect its surroundings, Espino looked closely at the environment. The result is a place that’s absolutely Mexican but still very modern. “We used splashes of color inspired by the Mayans for accent and wood from the Mayan forest,” she says. “We used natural, organic details and tried to come up with fresh, relaxed interiors.”

Where the interiors before were much brighter and more exuberant, they’re now restrained and sophisticated. “They don’t shout—instead, they’re calm and peaceful and elegant,” Meek says. “You see pieces like the wooden backlit sculpture on the wall and soap trays made out of wood.”

Espino was striving for spaces that spoke to the outdoors, to the bright blue water of the Caribbean and its white sand beaches. She created concrete floors with inlaid stone spirals, shadows, and leaves, and a base color of washed grey. “It’s balanced with other colors like turquoise,” she says. “We were inspired by Mexican flowers that are a rustic orange.”

The design and the impeccable service lure a returning clientele from Europe, the

U.S., and Latin America. “They feel at home here; they’re so overwhelmed by the warmth of the staff,” Armenta says. “We don’t sell a room—we sell an experience.”

That kind of attitude tends to keep the Mahekal Beach Resort 100 percent occupied in its prime seasons, so a wise traveler will book there early and often. ♦



The design of this resort fits perfectly with its surroundings and history.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT mahekalbeachresort.com