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Paradise awaits at Magical Mahekal Beach Resort



'If the sea were any closer, this room would have a waterbed,' I say to myself.

I'm looking out the bedroom window of my beach bungalow towards glistening diamond sands which kiss calm waters stretching outwards to meet the sky at the horizon. This paints a tapestry that's at least three shades of beautiful turquoise. Birds share songs in the palm trees above and the Caribbean sun beams down a coat of warmth to cover this soothing scene.

Breathing it all in I think: *'Yes, if paradise had a heaven it has to be Mahekal Beach Resort.'*

Refreshingswims,beachfronthammock snoozes, chic dining, Spanish guitar melodies, 5th Avenue shopping sprees, lush gardens and pampering spas are just a few of the things awaiting you here at Playa del Carmen's authentic Mexican resort hotel.

With 920 feet of beach on one side and the Riviera Maya jungle on the other, stepping into your thatched roof

bungalow may give you a bit of a Swiss Family Robinson feel if there weren't so many sun-kissed bodies tanning inches away from the sandy shoes resting by your door.

Of course, the Robinson's never had accommodations *this* luxurious.

Taking a moment to tear my eyes off the beach, I look over a room that includes lavish sleeping and sitting areas, an indoor and outdoor shower with organic Mayan-inspired soaps and shampoos, various samplings of wine and coffee atop a mini-fridge and – *'¡Dios Mio!'*, an outdoor terrace with a personal plunge pool overlooking that dream canvass outside.

Before I could fathom what else there might be to discover, one of the friendly staff delivers my hammock. *Heaven is a place that has to have hammocks*, I quickly decided after sliding in to sway in the sea breeze.

Of course, what heaven be without a few angels? Mahekal has its own brigade in white ready to greet you with a smile that makes it appear they have known you for years. There to ensure your entire stay is a perfect one, they seemingly swoop down from the trees to answer any questions you may have, point you in the direction of a tasty meal or tell you all about the activities going on that day. All the while that friendly grin never leaves their faces.

"We have employees here that have over 20 years of service. We are very proud of our staff. We know that they make a great difference. They know you by name; they know what you will like. It's very personal," said Attila Gombos, general manager of the property which opened in 1982. Back then, they only had a few bungalows you could get to via a single dirt road or the sea. Now it's 4,500 square feet, 196 rooms, four pools and multiple dining and entertainment options. That requires a lot of angels to keep it so heavenly.

Though the nearing shopping district of 5th Avenue provides a plethora of dining options, even the most finicky foodie will agree that everything your heart's (and stomach's) desire can be found on the resort. Pop on your flip-flops and make the rounds starting with a scrumptious Mayan benedict for a breakfast found by the Infinity Pool at Los Olas. Sorry fellow Canucks, but once you've topped some waffles with papaya compote you may never

go back to maple syrup. Later in the day swing by Fuego's for some 'Tulum-style' wood-burning oven potatoes and tuna salad for lunch, then return for a fish dinner.

Seafood lovers will also want to make an appearance at the Catch of the Day where local fishermen pull up to the beach to meet Executive Chef Nerey. He chooses his menu right off the boat and it's prepped there as you take in an optional ceviche class. You don't get any fresher than that! There's also the fisherman's buffet dinner back at Las Olas with views of the ocean that are a feast for the eyes!

Poolside drinks at Itzi's are a must for socializing with other guests. Sip a Coco Loco or one of the resorts own wines while you take a dip and watch the sunset.

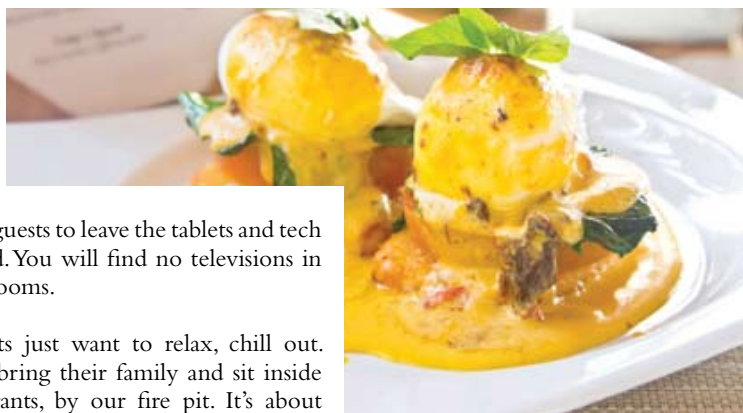
Shoot a round of pool while awaiting your tasting session inside Boli's Bar where staff will also teach you how to make the perfect margarita.

Outside of the food and beverages, Mahekal offers up a variety of other ways to treat yourself over your stay. If you want to explore more of the sea life and stunning reefs, visit the Vida Aquática Dive Center for the area's best scuba diving. It also offers kayaks and stand-up paddle board rentals along with guided snorkel tours and fishing trips.

The artistic and visitors with wee ones will enjoy a hand-painted pottery lesson from resident artisan Julianna. You paint it; they bake it and your unique keepsake is ready for you in the morning to hang on your wall back home.

For many, one of Mahekal's brightest jewels gleams out from the resort's jungle garden in the Revive Spa. Built in a round configuration in tune with the philosophies of the ancient Mayans, the spa is the bliss your body has been waiting for. After a soak in the soothing hot tub, you can select from a menu of revitalizing treatments like the Massage Angel Viel with Crystal Quartz or a nourishing facial.

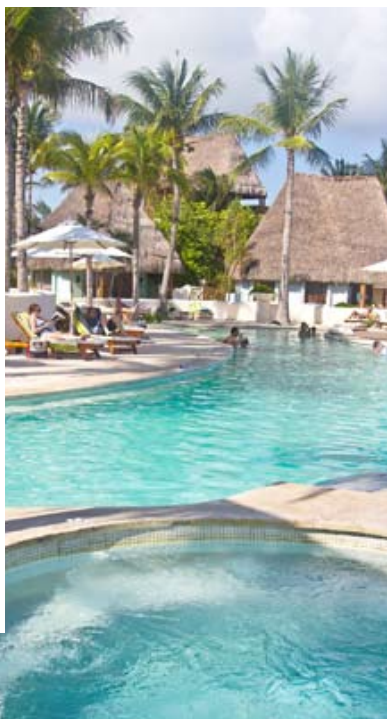
With so many ways to escape, Gombos



urges guests to leave the tablets and tech behind. You will find no televisions in your rooms.

"Guests just want to relax, chill out. They bring their family and sit inside restaurants, by our fire pit. It's about having a good time together. It's not about being entertained by technology," Gombos explained, and added that he hopes most guests will also get out and venture into some of the areas more natural wonders.

A short drive away will bring you to Tulum, one of the last cities built by the Maya. Here the ruins of the Temple of the God of Wind remain as one of



the best-preserved coastal remains of this culture. Nearby is one of Mexico's most famous cenotes, The Gran. This natural reservoir of pits and caverns weaves around the jungle floor with crystal clear water spots to dip into while observing your fish and turtle companions.

"Go and explore this very warm, traditional Yucatan hospitality and the cultural experiences," said Gombos, while noting that Mahekal will be there at the end of your day with a freshly made bed and maybe a few treats inside your room.

Now, watching the stars appear as I sway again in a hammock I feel I may never get up from, I swig the last bit of my glass of wine while the beach empties. I am now left with only the sound of the waves to carry me to sleep. As my eyelids flutter an angel's voice says from beside me:

"Is there anything else we can help you with today, Señor Andre?"

Whatever could I possibly dream of when Mahekal is my current reality? ■

mahekalbeachresort.com