

MODERN LUXURY

NS

*SARAH
WOOD*

ON GIVING BACK,
GLAMOUR & HER NEW
WINNETKA HOME

*FUNNY
MEN*

TIM KAZURINSKY
& GEORGE WENDT
SHARE A LAUGH

*STYLE
FILES*

NORTH SHORE'S
FASHION POWER
PLAYERS

*POLISHED
PREP*

PROJECT RUNWAY ALUM
PEACH CARR'S NEW LINE

UNDER THE MEXICAN SUN

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

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

The two-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 opened onto the sand where a hammock waited in my line of sight. My home for the week even came with a custom ceramic plate reading Casa de Flynn that hung outside my door. It was another thoughtful welcome.

Everything about this place is easy-breezy. Days seem to slip by with pool lounging, beach strolls **CONTINUED...**



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

« 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, both apartment-style and individual casitas. »



SAND AND SUN The expansive beachfront lets you do a lot of something or not much of anything.

GENTLE BREEZE Reading or snoozing in a hammock is a must-do activity.



CHIC DIGS The property's 194 palapas feature apartments and rooms with modern furniture, bright accents and an abundance of comfortable space to make yourself at home.

...CONTINUED 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, pingpong and flowing cocktails; and Itzi, the trendy pool bar named for a Mayan princess.

However, it's just a hop and a skip to 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 lantern lights and down-tempo beats transform CONTINUED...



MEXICAN MARVELS
Clockwise from above: Private terraces make the perfect place for morning *café con leche*; relax in a spa pool; palm trees and tropical plants landscape the resort.



...CONTINUED 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, 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 (gypsy + jet set). 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* ■

DAY TRIP!

The Yucatan's hottest hot spot is Tulum, the sandy little town with serious flair. It's worth the hourlong drive; use one of the transportation options offered by the hotel.

EAT

Become a scholar of ceviche and local produce at Hartwood (hartwoodtulum.com), where chef Eric Werner has fostered relationships with farmers and fishmongers 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 on the coast. It 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. Take a dip to reflect on the ruins above. Selfie stick not included.

SHOP

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



WORTH THE DRIVE
The breathtaking ruins at Tulum are of the only Mayan city built on the coast.