

WORKING MOTHER

Mahekal Brings The Magic—for You and Your Kids

This idyllic resort on Mexico's Riviera Maya ticks all the boxes for a memorable family adventure.



Sun, surf and sand is a pretty foolproof recipe for any vacation, especially when it comes with the Caribbean as a backdrop. But what makes Playa Del Carmen's **Mahekal Beach Resort** special is how it manages to be “just right,” with a balance of amenities that will keep your whole crew happy. Want to do nothing? There are 920 feet of beach to relax on. Into exploring nature? The onsite dive center has you covered. Is shopping your thing? Head right outside the resort to the bustling 5th Avenue (also known as Quinta) for 22 blocks of restaurants and shops—some selling hand-crafted local specialties.

With 196 rooms, Mahekal (the name is a play on the Mexican pronunciation of “magical”) is neither too big nor too small. Its palapa-style individual bungalows, some just 10 steps from the ocean, boast traditional thatched roofs but also AC and speedy Internet. What you won't find are TVs, but that's part of the resort's charm. Waking up to the sounds of gently-lapping waves and sea birds beats cartoons any day, and an occasional media fast is something we wholeheartedly approve of. So it's up to you whether or not to tell the kids about the WiFi.

The resort offers a half-board meal plan, which means your family can have breakfast, and choose whether to take lunch or dinner at one of the three on-site restaurants and four bars. The oceanfront Fuego restaurant serves creative Mexican “farm-to-fork” cuisine, with a wood-burning oven, live evening entertainment and stunning views.



Get Wet

In business since 1983, Mahekal's **Vida Acuática** dive center offers snorkeling, fishing, water sports and diving options for all levels of experience. They also offer a not-to-be missed cenote tour. Cenotes are natural subterranean swimming holes formed by the collapse of porous limestone bedrock unique to the Yucatan. Exploring their underwater caves filled with stalactites and stalagmites will make you feel like you have been transported to an ancient world—or an alien planet.



Get Crafty

The Artisan Palapa offers a pottery-painting activity for guests. You pay only for the blank ceramic piece, which is glazed and baked overnight for your convenience. A local artisan is often on hand to help guide budding artists as they make a family keepsake.



Cultural Immersion

Mahekal's newest addition, the **Mayan Culinary Casita**, is a replica of a traditional Mayan dining hut, and guests can watch a local Mayan-speaking chef prepare a delicious lunch baked in a heated pit oven. Make sure you try the handmade tortillas and the local xtabentún drink, which might remind you of a tangy green smoothie. Recipes are provided at the end of the meal, which requires a reservation.



Me Time

The 2,500 square foot Mayan-inspired **Revive Spa** offers a wide array of massage and beauty services in a serene environment that can accommodate groups and couples. For a splurge try their signature 5 Senses treatment, which blends multiple massage techniques and a few surprises.



Splendid Side Trip

The breathtaking ruins of the ancient civilization at Tulum are only about an hour away, and the Mahekal front desk can easily arrange transportation. Don't forget to bring a bathing suit since the archeological site is located on a small and amazing beach. Since the beach is located down a narrow staircase and not stroller-friendly, it's better suited to bigger kids. But this "Mayan Disneyland" has put the area the map for a reason. Post ruins, make sure to stop at one of the many eateries along Tulum's hippy-chic beach drive. Posada Margherita has fresh and tasty Italian food, and its creative blended juices hit the spot after a hot morning in the ruins, leaving you plenty of time make it back to Mahekal in time for sunset.

Info: Mahekal is a 45-minute drive from Cancun airport; rooms from \$225 per night;
mahekalbeachresort.com.