

# MARQUEE

REDEFINING MODERN LUXURY

FALL 2019

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Brent Bishop

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A WORLD-CLASS WINERY EXPERIENCE

**PHOTOGRAPHER FEATURE**  
MATT BARNES - BEHIND THE LENS





  
**GRANDVELAS**  
All Suites & SPA Resort

*Travel Guide: Mexico*

## *It's About The Unique & The Unforgettable*

By: Cristina Carpio

**L**ife is nothing short of magical and the same goes with traveling. Once in a while, we all want to hit the pause button and enjoy what we've worked so hard for, to just live in the moment. There are many places in the world to discover, places to eat, drinks to enjoy, and adventures to be had as we try to seek new and unique experiences as much as possible. I decided to embark on a journey to Mexico. I have been to this beautiful country before but had not yet had the absolute pleasure of experiencing The Grand Velas Mayas. When I hear the word "all-inclusive", I immediately think of "all you can eat" buffets, pizza stations, and other commonplace standards emblematic of resort culture. Not there. The property completely redefines what modern ultra-luxury is all about.

The resort's grand entrance is nothing short of breathtaking. With the tall gates surrounded by crystal waters, you cannot see the interior of the property right away. This leaves everything to the imagination, creating so much anticipation and excitement of what's to come. You have to enter through secured gates and only guests and employees have access inside the resort. Once you are checked in at the gate as a registered guest, you can enter the property. Guests would have a short drive through the beautifully landscaped pathways to get to the resort lobby. My destination: "The Grand Class", the resort's adults-only, premium property boasting all designer oceanfront facing suites. As I checked in, I was greeted with champagne and introduced to my personal concierge. He also presented me with gifts which included an artisanal mezcal (a popular Mexican distilled alcohol) created exclusively for the resort by Master Mezcalero, Olvidame Si Puedes. The bottle is a white crystalline mezcal made with 100% espadin agave, matured for more than 6 years in the central valleys of Oaxaca. There are other options at the Grand Velas Riviera Maya to suit the needs of their diverse patronage. One is called "The Ambassador", a family-friendly resort also featuring rooms with beautiful ocean views. Guests can also choose a more Zen-like tropical setting, located in the Yucatan Peninsula jungle. All designer suites are incredibly spacious, with fully stocked minibars, and even some with private plunge pools built into the balconies. The trendy, open concept bathrooms deserve special mention with their stunning all marble interior design. The Grand Velas Riviera Maya has the finest white sand beach in the region and has been designated as a AAA Five Diamond-rated ultra-luxury resort. The "Beyond All-Inclusive, Beyond All Compare" resort has also won numerous awards from Travel + Leisure, Conde Naste Traveler, USA Today, as well as other prestigious distinctions from the travel industry's top critics.





| PRESIDENTIAL SUITE

The ultra luxury resort is also home to the region's largest spa sanctuary, "Se Spa". The spa took home the prize at the World Luxury Spa Awards and is among Trip Advisor's Hall of Fame. The over 90,000 sq. ft. "Se Spa" is known for its authentic, Mexican treatments, as well as treatments from around the world. I have never laid eyes on a spa of this grandeur and beauty before. Guided by the personal spa valet from beginning to end, the Seven Step journey is an hour-long relaxation included with all treatments based around the use of seven special water-based facilities. These facilities include a clay room, an ice room, and hot and cold experience showers. A central infinity pool has relaxing massaging faucets throughout the carved-stone chaises with powerful jets. An experience that is meant to complement any type of treatment you choose from the impressive spa menu.

The honey produced at the hotel is harvested daily and produced by Western honey bees found in the Yucatan Peninsula. It is incorporated just about everywhere in the resort from food, drinks, and even spa treatments. The 80-minute Organic Kaab experience is one popular treatment which starts with a face and body massage featuring the all-natural honey from the nectar of the Xiabentunn flower, which grows only in this jungle. I decided to try the Uumbal Shawl massage which is the newest addition to the traditional Mexican treatments offered at the spa. It is a full body treatment featuring a creative choreography dating back to prehistoric times, an experience I will never forget. Mexican

shaws are used to stretch the body in order to align posture and clean energy channels from head to toe. There are other new treatments guests should note such as the new Indigenous inspired treatments, as well as the sleep therapy massage created for those who have sleep issues. The CBD Therapeutic massage is another popular selection. Cannabidiol (CBD) is a naturally occurring therapeutic compound found in cannabis with no psychoactive side effects. It helps de-stress and melt away joint and muscle pain and acts as a natural pain reliever.

Cuisine is a large part of the resort's reputation, employing some of the best chefs and boasting the most popular restaurants in the region. Some of the highlights of my visit included dining at Frida's, the resort's destination Mexican restaurant by Chef Ricardo De la Vega, in an elegant indoor/outdoor setting with a bougainvillea-covered terrace overlooking the beach. Cocina de Ator was another unforgettable culinary experience. The restaurant was created by world-renowned celebrity chefs Bruno Otiza and Mikel Alonso and holds the AAA Five Diamond Award, the first all-inclusive restaurant to obtain this prestigious distinction. The Michelin level service was incredibly impressive and the culinary offerings will surely leave diners wanting more. It has also been named to Food and Wine magazine's Top 100 Best New Food and Beverage Experiences, as well as BBVA Bancomer's Gourmand List of the top 50 restaurants in Mexico.



| Se Spa



| FRESH HONEY FROM YUCUTAN PENINSULA



| RELAXATION ROOM



The resort also offers other types of dining experiences such as the "Picnic in Paradise". This option is available for all guests consisting of prepared gourmet cuisine-to-go. A basket full of carefully selected delectable fare can be packed to take with you while you explore the utterly breathtaking region. The basket includes a bottle of red or white wine, a variety of salads, French cheeses, charcuterie, and other indulgent menu items. Cutlery, plates, and glassware are all packed in the basket, with linen napkins, blankets, and cushions for lolling away in comfort. Extraordinary, unique dining experiences are also available such as arranging a dinner 60ft. underground in one of the region's most breathtaking cenotes. Maitre Cuisinier de France and Culinary Director of the resort, Michel Mustiere, will present a three-course lunch around the cenotes crystal clear waters. The lunch is accompanied by ancestral drinks, as well as a fascinating oral history of the ancestral recipes you are consuming.



| SALMON CRUSTED WITH ADOBO POWDER AND VIRGIN AVOCADO SAUCE



| BEAN CAPPUCCINO



| MEXICAN RESTAURANT, FRIDA'S



| AUTHOR'S KITCHEN



Eco-tourism is also an important part of the values of Grand Velas Riviera Maya. The resort now offers a unique opportunity to visit Isla Contoy, a private Mexican island about 5 miles long off the northeast coast of Quintana Roo. This island is a nesting place for sea birds from all over Mexico and the Caribbean. Visitors can also take part in a museum tour to learn more about the uninhabited island. The experience is exclusive to the resort and by invitation only. The island can only accommodate a maximum of 120 guests per day. I visited this island via a 50 ft. private yacht and enjoyed a seafood lunch with champagne and other drinks flowing all day. Once you get to the island, guests can also snorkel and explore the crystal waters with marine life, including stingrays and starfish.

Busy families can find a haven at the Grand Velas Riviera Maya. While there are typical family services such as kids programs and babysitting available, this is a resort that allows families to



| TEENS LOUNGE

partake in unique experiences together. Families can even go on a wellness getaway together where they can take part in a private yoga class and meditation session on the beach, indulge in spa treatments, and enjoy cooking classes for the entire family. The Digital Detox Concierge is an offering that allows electronics to be stored safely and securely, allowing families to spend quality time together without digital distractions. Even babies are treated like VIPs with baby massage, baby's first haircut, organic food offerings and more.

The uniquely designed Teen Lounge is a dream come true for many adolescents seeking their own space. The room is filled with a variety of games, private listening areas in individual cubicles equipped with televisions. When evening sets, the fun continues with special live performances, a disco dance floor, and karaoke to keep the teens entertained from day to night.





The Grand Riviera Maya also designs some of the most lavish events, hosting the world's most elite teenagers. The \$2 Million "Billionaire's Package" is for coming of age wealthy adolescents and their cohorts. Pulling out all the stops, the party includes roundtrip private jet transportation from anywhere in the US, Mexico, or Canada, private check-in with edible gold popsicles and welcome bags featuring an Apple Watch and more. The guest of honor is, of course, treated like royalty with a 3-night stay at the resort's lavish two-bedroom Presidential suite. The party itself can have up to 300 invites on the beach. The event also includes exclusive access to the spa, a designer dress for the celebrated guest with a special appearance by top performers from Maroon 5 to Pitbull. The Queen or King of the night can also take part in the "Rent Your Rock Program" of the Grand Velas Riviera Maya where the celebrant can choose to wear high-end jewelry for the special occasion including a stunning yellow canary diamond, radiant cut with a center stone of nearly four carats all in white gold. The lavish bash also includes a skydive flyboard experience, renowned DJ, fireworks, and more.

Though the Grand Velas Riviera Maya clearly knows how to cater the rich and famous, their event repertoire is inclusive and diverse. The resort is also the perfect spot for group activities and corporate events. The property boasts 91,547 square feet of indoor and outdoor meetings and events space, the largest luxury meeting facility in the region. Not surprisingly, the resort has become a popular destination for weddings. They even offer Certified South Asian Wedding Specialists well versed in South Asian religion, rituals, and other traditional ceremonies. With extensive attention to detail, the resort offers the perfect Elopement package that couples will never forget.

From couples to families to corporate events, this unbelievable destination will suit everyone and exemplary service is guaranteed from their warm, highly trained staff. My favorite part of the experience was learning about ancestral history and the Mayan culture which is the resort's backbone and a pride they share with all their guests. It's a getaway I will never forget and cannot wait to return to explore even more.