

# ventura

FINE LIVING IN VENTURA COUNTY

monthly



## HEART OF STONE

THE HARD ROCK ART OF STONE  
CARVER MICHELE CHAPIN

OCTOBER 2019

SANTA PAULA THEATER CENTER'S  
JESSI MAY STEVENSON

VENTURA POET MARSHA DE LA O

GRAND VELAS LOS CABOS

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700 E. MAIN ST., VENTURA, CA 93001

# GRAND TIME

## AT GRAND VELAS

Cabo's artfully chic resort offers exceptional service and experiences.

BY LESLIE A. WESTBROOK

Cabo San Lucas has seen a recent infusion of upscale, all-inclusive resorts vying for tourist dollars. While it can be hard to choose from among the many excellent options, one in particular has distinguished itself as a unique destination for art lovers: Grand Velas Los Cabos.

### EDIBLE ART

Grand Velas Los Cabos certainly boasts many of the amenities vacationers seek out: large suites with sumptuous baths, huge decks with plunge pools, a stunning spa, romantic dining venues and great programs for kids. In addition, it offers a terrific art collection on permanent display, made up of 25 pieces from the owner's private collection, which can be enjoyed as you stroll throughout the property. Original art is also featured in the resort suites.

Opened just a few months ago, a new on-site art gallery, curated by Patricia Mendoza (who also owns a gallery in San Jose del Cabo), features contemporary works by Latino artists. Taking it a step further, the hotel has launched intimate, inspired Art to Table dinners. This idea is one I hope spreads to galleries and museums in our local area.

The lovely, intimate art gallery showcases works by talented Mexican artists, including Eduardo Mejorada (from Guadalajara), Carlos Larracilla, Jorge Moedano, Max Sanz, Reynaldo Zesati and J.A. Platas, in different mediums, including acrylic, oil, mixed media, watercolor and sculpture.

If you are interested in contemporary art and can time your visit to coincide with one of the weekly gallery dinners, the creative and delicious edible creations inspired by paintings in the gallery will wow you.

Small groups of up to 12 art aficionados can enjoy a five-course meal with fine wine pairings guided by the sommelier and insight into the works on display, thanks to the charming gallery owner and visiting artists.

I was joined by artists, writers and other guests for one delicious and conversation-filled dinner, where we dined on black shrimp aguachile with blue Curacao, olive and citrus dust, presented on the plate to mimic Mexican artist Yandi Monardo's abstract blue-and-yellow canvas. We also enjoyed Tikin Xic-style sea bass with onion and tortilla ash, styled to look as if the food was dancing, just like the figures in Alejandrina Calderoni's artwork. An accompanying wine pairing enhanced the meal. ▶▶



**BAJA BEAUTY:** Grand Velas' many charms start with a spectacular location right on the coast, where soft sand and sparkling ocean views beckon. All photos courtesy of Grand Velas Los Cabos

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Reservations are required to participate in the Art to Table dinner, which costs \$150 per person.

## FOOD FOR STOMACH AND SPIRIT

Then there's all the amazing food and drink in the hotel's seven restaurants, ranging from fine dining to poolside tacos and margaritas. A dizzying array of delicious items at the breakfast buffet included Mexican hot chocolate, baked pastries, chilaquiles and more. During the lunch buffet, one option was to choose a piece of fresh local sea bass that was smeared with chimichurri sauce and grilled right there. Ready for dinner? There's Frida (Mexican), Lucca (Italian), Piaf (French), Velas 10 (steak and seafood) and the amazing Cocina de Autor, led by two-Michelin-star chef Sidney Schutte. Casual Cabrillo serves seafood specialties poolside.

Despite all that and more, the hotel's amazing Se Spa is enough reason to book a short 2.5-hour flight from LAX. The spa offers a hydrotherapy water journey with any 50-minute service. I languished for two hours on the "Water Ceremony" that began with a series of jet massages and a soak in a warm indoor pool. In the sensation pool, the push of a button will allow you to cycle through powerful jets for your head, neck, shoulders, legs and feet at different "stations." Afterwards, a spa concierge leads each guest to a resting room ringed with steam, sauna and sensory light experiences.

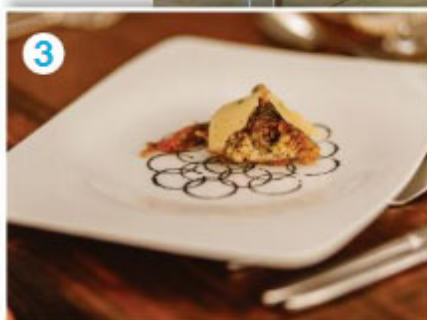
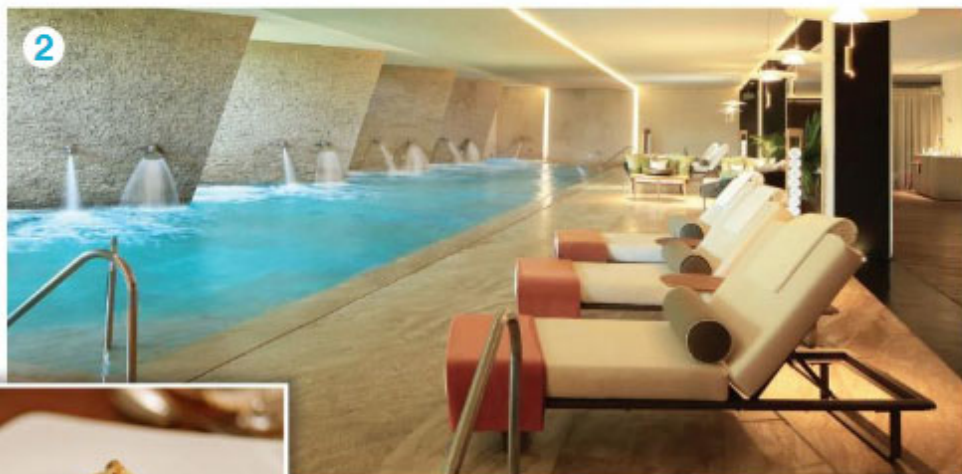
Happy yet? It's not over — each treatment (I tried the amazing Blue Candle Agave massage) includes a blessing, sage cleansing and special gift. I received a small dragonfly made from bougainvillea flower, meant to combine the outer world with the inner soul.

Why else stay at this wonderful resort? Tequila and wine tasting is offered every evening. In the suite, Mexican wine from Valle de Guadalupe and mezcal is replenished daily. Your butler/concierge can even wrap it in bubble wrap to take home with you. The great kids' program has lots of fun activities (such as making and flying kites) and even a Teen Lounge.

## SUPERLATIVE STAFF

The service is wonderful across the board. Although tips are apparently included in the daily rate of approximately \$600 per person, I say, feel free to tip more for the outstanding service by the amazing staff.

**SEA, SPA, SUSTENANCE:** 1. Large, comfortable lounges on the beach provide unparalleled views of the Sea of Cortez. 2. At Se Spa, guests enjoy a "Water Journey," where a series of jet massages in the warm indoor pool target every muscle group for a comprehensive hydrotherapy experience. 3. At the gallery's Art to Table dinners, fine cuisine is plated to resemble the works of art on display.



My suite had a huge corner patio with an ocean view and a large Jacuzzi tub (L'Occitane bath bomb provided!) in a bathroom almost as big as the bedroom. Even better, the hotel provides each guest with a personal concierge. Adrian, my very sweet concierge, is also a classical music fan, so we had enjoyable conversations in English — when he wasn't helping me practice my Spanish. He found a beauty salon in town where I could get my hair cut, and even wrapped a couple of bottles of the complimentary mezcal in my room to pack home as gifts.

Should I ever return, I hope to have Adrian help me wrap a piece of art to take home for my own collection. I especially resonated to works by Eduardo Mejorada in the gallery, as well as the large installation by Luis Rodrigo in Grand Velas' public space. It wasn't for sale, but no worries — it's way too huge for my humble abode anyway! 🍷

### Grand Velas Los Cabos

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