

These Los Cabos Resorts Are Combining Luxury Spa Treatments With the Practices of Traditional Mexican Folk Healers

By Alex Tembaler - March 11, 2019

Curanderismo is a healing practice that arose in Mexico involving the use of herbs, massages, and a mix of religious and Indigenous rituals to cure physical and spiritual ailments. For hundreds of years, curanderismo was only found in Mexican and Mexican-American homes or in the work spaces of practitioners called curanderos, shamans, yerberos (herbal healers), and parteras (midwives).

And until recently, it had no place in luxurious resorts.

I know this because I'm half Mexican-American and studied the history and practice of curanderismo in the U.S. and Mexico for 10 years for my first novel, "[Secrets of the Casa Rosada](#)" Imagine my surprise when I discovered that curanderismo had left its cultural bubble and is now being used on tourists in the spas of Los Cabos, Mexico.



My first experience with curanderismo in the Los Cabos spas was at the [Luna Y Mar Spa at The Resort at Pedregal](#). With a curandera named Patricia on staff, The Resort at Pedregal has integrated Mexican folk healing into a selection of their treatments, such as with a ritual foot cleansing which includes a tea created with the current moon phase in mind and a foot scrub with herbs.

During my visit, I experienced the Indigenous Herbal Detox, designed by the curandera and spa staff. Meant to dissolve body fat and release toxins, my Indigenous Herbal Detox began with an herbal energy cleanse, where my skin was lightly slapped with a handful of basil and sage, meant to increase blood flow and bathe me in a calming euphoria of scents. From there, I had an herbal mud wrap and a detoxifying massage with rosemary oil to decongest my body. While I didn't receive the Indigenous Herbal Detox from the curandera, I found it as spiritually detoxing as it was physically purifying.

If I'd had more time, I would have tried the Intention treatment with the resort's curandera, an energy cleansing ritual that mixes craniosacral therapy (or gentle touches to palpate the synarthrodial joints of the face and head) and a healing massage with hand-harvested herbs and organic blends.



My second experience with curanderismo in Los Cabos occurred at [Montage Los Cabosthis](#), one of the newest luxury properties in the area. Montage Los Cabos has an on-site shaman named Leonardo, and I had the honor of experiencing a spa treatment with this honey-eyed man who radiates positive energy. Leonardo's gifts of healing were passed onto him from his mother, and now he passes those practices to clients at [Spa Montage](#).

For my treatment, Leonardo chose the Mezcal Renewal Massage, a design of his own inspired by an Oaxacan proverb about the Mexican mezcal drink: "For everything bad, mezcal; and for everything good, too." Who can argue with that?

My experience began with a dry body brushing which involved herbs placed in a small burlap bag and brushed across my skin. Next, Leonardo rubbed mezcal essential oils onto my body and used fast rubbing motions on my skin to create heat and increase blood flow. From there, he conducted a massage different than any I'd experienced before.

His massage was a mix of very light touches, fast friction rubs, firm kneading, and pressure point touches on my face and bottom of my feet, all of which lulled my body into full submission and relaxation. During a scalp massage, his hands moved over my forehead repeatedly, and each time, I heard the word "clear," as if it had been dropped from his hands into my mind.



Following the massage, Leonardo commented on how stressed and tight I was, but it was what he said next that showed me the true treasure of having a treatment by someone who practices curanderismo, for they are healers who offer advice on patients' physical ailments and how it may relate to their mental, spiritual, and emotional lives.

“I think you always feel the need to be in control of everything,” Leonardo said.

I nodded yes, to which he replied, “And I think you are always thinking all the time. Your mind never stops with thoughts.”

I agreed again, my thoughts racing with what he just said, how he said it, what it meant, how he realized this.

As if he could see my thoughts zipping across my forehead, he added, “Find a way to stop thinking and it will help your stress. You may have to take up meditation.”