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DEPARTURES



The **Hotels** *Issue*



A Cortez Oceanfront suite at Zadún. Below: The resort's Candil restaurant and bar.

Baja Fresh

Amid a wave of Los Cabos hotel openings, Zadún raises the bar without making a fuss.

by Karon Cullen



A HOTEL LOBBY that wows has become something of a requirement in Los Cabos: The dramatic point of entry, with its welcome cocktail and made-for-Instagram sea views, is a ubiquitous sight in the Mexican resort town. But there is no such lobby at Zadún, the new Ritz-Carlton Reserve overlooking the Gulf of California in San José del Cabo. Instead, I was met at the resort's entrance by a gentleman who escorted me down a curving path to meet my *tosoani* (or butler), who promptly delivered me to my room, a beachfront suite decorated with Mexican art and pocket doors that framed the views.

After a long day of travel, I couldn't have been more grateful for the lack of fanfare. Content to stay in for the evening, I called room service with a single request: a Mexican beer. Oscar arrived at my door soon after with a *Pacífico*—the cerveza from his hometown, Mazatlán, he told me—along with a comforting soup and bowl of hummus.

Zadún is the rare Los Cabos hotel that delivers a quiet kind of luxury. Situated within the coastal sanctuary of Puerto Los Cabos, the property distances itself from

the crowds, yet it is no hermetically sealed retreat. Its 20 acres were once wild sand dunes, and much of the resort retains its natural setting with winding desert paths that connect the 115 low-slung adobe rooms and villas (most with private plunge pools).

There's a real Mexican flavor here. At the Candil bar, I sipped my way through a historically themed agave tasting with the mixologist. At the Spa Alkemia, the menu spanned traditional energy-cleansing ceremonies and massages using healing botanicals from the Baja desert. While more active endeavors were available—bird-watching, the 27-hole Puerto Los Cabos Golf Course, and a marine conservation program created by Jean-Michel Cousteau—I preferred the laid-back company of Frida Kahlo at El Barrio. The poolside bar's bright-pink mural depicts the Mexican artist, and on most afternoons, I joined her, sipping a simple frozen cocktail of coconut milk, lime juice, and a little syrup over crushed ice. It wasn't the standard Cabo margarita—far from it—and that was the point. *From \$660; ritzcarlton.com.*



From top: The Spa Alkemia; a mural depicting Frida Kahlo at the bar El Barrio.



Waldorf Astoria Los Cabos Pedregal.

Elsewhere in Los Cabos

Three more new and noteworthy resorts that get it right.

NOBU HOTEL LOS CABOS
The brand's Japanese style meets Mexican flair at this 200-room resort where *onsen* tubs and minimalist furnishings are accented by local materials and finishes. In addition to a Nobu restaurant, the resort has an outpost of California's cult organic hot spot, Malibu Farm. *From \$350; nobuhotels.com.*

WALDORF ASTORIA LOS CABOS PEDREGAL
The legendary Resort at Pedregal got an upgrade when it was relaunched last fall as Waldorf Astoria's first Mexican property. The retreat, known for its dramatic tunnel entrance, now has a Waldorf Astoria Spa, a beach bar, and four restaurants. *From \$750; waldorfastoria.com.*

FOUR SEASONS RESORT LOS CABOS AT COSTA PALMAS
The first hotel to open in the East Cape's 1,000-acre Costa Palmas development, the Four Seasons is for a laid-back crowd; mellow and pristine, it's set amid fishing villages on a white-sand beach. The 141-room hotel includes a spa, six pools, and five restaurants, plus access to Costa Palmas's 18-hole golf course and 250-slip marina. *From \$400; fourseasons.com.*