

YOUR JOURNEY BEGINS WITH US

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VIRTUOSO LIFE

the
H₂O
issue

YACHTING
IN INDONESIA



LOS CABOS'
RESORT BOOM



ALASKA
CRUISING WITH
THE FAMILY

island-hopping, beach breaks, and the deep blue sea

Dive in: Raja Ampat,
Indonesia

VAMOS

A LA PLAYA

LOS CABOS TRADES TEQUILA SHOTS FOR AGED MEZCAL, AND THE HIGH-END-RESORT RACE IS ON.

BY **KIMBERLEY LOVATO** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **LUIS GARCÍA**





DECADES AGO,

when I heard “Cabo,” all-night discos, buckets of Corona, and a tequila incident sprung to mind. As a twentysomething, Cabo felt like one continuous sombrero-wearing rave. But I’m older and presumably wiser now. Cabo has grown up too.

The sun-drenched region at the Baja Peninsula’s tip has two towns, collectively known as Los Cabos: the don’t-stop, can’t-stop party hub of Cabo San Lucas at Land’s End and the more *tranquilo* art-gallery-speckled enclave of San José del Cabo. A 20-mile coastal road that’s home to some of Mexico’s glitziest resorts links the two settings, bringing a sophisticated sizzle to this spring-break capital.

While Los Cabos is no stranger to posh addresses (Esperanza, One&Only, and Las Ventanas staked their claims early on), it took off after Hurricane Odile ravaged the area in 2014, which gave hoteliers a chance to reinvent the destination. In 2018, Montage picked Cabo for its first international resort. Last year alone saw ten properties debut, including Zadún, the latest Ritz-Carlton Reserve, which opened in November. And in the next two years, Aman, St. Regis, and Park Hyatt will join the fiesta.

To discover what Cabo’s buzz is all about, I recently packed my swimsuit and sunscreen for Zadún. Designed to balance desert minimalism with carefree beach comfort, the resort is so calm and quiet that I could relax to the tune of sea breezes rushing through the cardón cacti. With no bar-hopping on the agenda and nary a sombrero in sight, I ordered a glass of mezcal and slid into my room’s private plunge pool just in time to watch the sky turn pink.

It’s the happy hour I now picture playing out daily across much of Los Cabos. Die-hard partiers can still hang upside down for well shots at the Giggling Marlin. But trust me, the goings-on at these eight resorts are the real draw now.

Zadún’s El Barrio restaurant.



FRESH ON THE SCENE

ZADÚN, A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE

Just 15 minutes from San José del Cabo, the 115 spacious rooms at Zadún spread across 20 acres of cactus-clad hills on the Sea of Cortés. Ring the on-call butler to arrange pool- or beachside lunches, off-property adventures such as scuba diving and desert Jeep tours, or dinner at Humo, which specializes in grilled meats and seafood, and has one of the coast's top wine cellars. A favorite hideout: Spa Alkemia's lushly landscaped **adults-only pool** and couples' cabana (as well as a private casita with its own steam room, Jacuzzi, lounge area, and massage cabin). *Doubles from \$959, including breakfast daily, a \$150 resort credit, and round-trip airport transfers.*

DON'T MISS Check out the spa's Savasana sound-treatment room (one of only two in the world), a darkened room with quartz floors for sound-bathing.



Zadún pizzazz (from top left): Ceviche at X (pronounced "EH-kees") restaurant, a villa interior, and Candil bar.

From top: Palmilla's surf central, Vista Pool, and custom Clase Azul tequila.



ESTATE GROWN

ONE&ONLY PALMILLA

Built in the 1950s as a hacienda and accessible only by yacht or plane at the time, this 174-room resort sits on a promontory jutting into the Pacific that has retained its remote feel as the area boomed around it. The geography seals off dangerous currents for family-friendly dips and paddleboarding at **Pelican Beach**, while adjacent Playa Palmilla offers a fun and consistent surf break. Tip for two: Reserve the resort's private yacht for a sunset outing with a bottle of Champagne before sampling seafood specialties such as grilled spiny lobster at Jean-Georges Vongerichten's Seared. *Doubles from \$1,080, including breakfast daily and a \$150 resort credit.*

DON'T MISS Palmilla is home to Mexico's only outpost of Tropic-surf, the preeminent surf school and guide service for everyone from beginners to pros.





A day at Montage, clockwise from top left: Pool views, a Mexican breakfast of champions, a sunrise kayak tour, and the bar at Mezcal.



PRISTINE PLAYGROUND

MONTAGE LOS CABOS

This contemporary 122-room hotel – winner of Virtuoso’s 2019 Best of the Best New-comer award – hugs serene Santa Maria Bay, one of Los Cabos’ rare safely **swimmable beaches**. Take in views from the two pools and swim-up bar at all-day restaurant Marea, or retreat to Cabo’s largest spa for lunch and a massage. Mezcal has made a name for itself with modern Mexican dishes such as octopus-tempura tacos and local sea bass with hazelnut green mole; also check out its tequila and mezcal tastings and cooking classes. *Doubles from \$825, including breakfast daily and a \$100 resort credit.*

DON'T MISS Stargaze each night on the beach with the resort’s shaman. Up late? The complimentary sunrise kayak tour starts around 6 AM.

FAMILY TIME

GRAND VELAS LOS CABOS

The keys to a great family vacation: action, action, action – plus a parental escape hatch or two. And let's not nickel-and-dime each other while we're at it. The **all-inclusive**, 307-suite Grand Velas Los Cabos dares guests to keep up with its daily planned activities – morning yoga, beach soccer, cooking and dance classes, e-bike tours, Ping-Pong and cornhole tournaments (!) – while keeping the decision makers happy with an adults-only pool, babysitting services, and a baby concierge who supplies cribs, high chairs, and strollers. Among its seven restaurants: two-Michelin-starred chef Sidney Schutte's *Cocina de Autor*, where an eight- to ten-course tasting menu wraps up without the bite of a check. *Doubles from \$651, including all meals, a \$100 dining credit, a \$50 spa credit, and one-way airport transfers.*

DON'T MISS The Teens' Club preps the region's next generation of spring-breakers with a house DJ and dance floor, karaoke, and a bar serving nonalcoholic drinks. Younger kids have their own club too, and toddlers get a playground and splash pool.

Grand Velas, clockwise from top: *Cocina de Autor*, the lobby, and the adults-only pool.



MOUNTAIN OF OPPORTUNITY

WALDORF ASTORIA LOS CABOS PEDREGAL

A torchlit tunnel through Pedregal Mountain heightens the drama of arriving at this 119-room property. Cabo bars are a short walk away, and staff will ferry guests across the property to the resort's main gate via golf cart. But with ocean-facing plunge pools on each room's terrace (complimentary beer, chips, and guacamole show up at just the right time each afternoon), the spa's treatments based on moon phases, a **Champagne bar on the beach** with swings for barstools, and cliffside El Farallon's ocean-to-table meals, the quieter side of the tunnel has its rewards. *Doubles from \$853, including breakfast daily and a \$150 resort credit.*

DON'T MISS Board the resort's 60-foot *Dos Mares* yacht for private parties or a Friday-evening cocktail cruise to watch the sun set behind Los Cabo's famous landmark arch, El Arco.

At Pedregal: A room and El Farallon restaurant and Champagne Terrace. Right: The Cape's prime position.



CABO A-GO-GO

THE CAPE, A THOMPSON HOTEL

When a getaway with BFFs calls, The Cape puts the good times in heavy rotation. All 161 of its retro-inspired rooms and villas offer unobstructed views of El Arco as they curve around the heart of the resort: an infinity pool where the swim-up bar plays dance music. Hit the open-air lobby bar for cocktails spiked with bitters and juices made from overripe fruit (part of the hotel's **sustainability effort** to mitigate food waste), then head six stories up to The Rooftop bar for Cabo's best sunset view. *Doubles from \$508, including breakfast daily and a \$100 resort credit.*

DON'T MISS Chef Enrique Olvera has some of the coast's hottest tables at Manta, where his five-course tasting menu features the likes of Veracruz-style ceviche, black-miso fish tacos, and suckling-pig steamed buns.

(THE CAPE) COURTESY THOMPSON HOTELS



STAYING POWER

LAS VENTANAS AL PARAÍSO, A ROSEWOOD RESORT

In the late 1990s, Las Ventanas showed Baja how to do the **over-the-top escape** without pretense. From its lazy river pool with an adjacent taco bar to its 84 brass-telescope-equipped suites with rooftop terraces and Arbol restaurant's seafood platters and lantern-lit trees, the property remains the epitome of beach life in Mexico for many. But it's not afraid to wink at Baja's party rep: La Botica, a new speakeasy piano bar whose entrance resembles a Coca-Cola fridge, features live jazz, Latin, and Afro-Cuban music until 2 AM every night. *Doubles from \$860, including breakfast daily, a margarita and a taco sampler, and a \$100 spa credit.*

DON'T MISS Play kingpin in the 28,000-square-foot, \$35,000-per-night Ty Warner Mansion, a two-bedroom home with multiple terraces, an infinity pool, a staff of seven, and a library of rare tequilas.



DESERT OASIS

AUBERGE RESORTS' ESPERANZA

Seventeen acres of palms and 53 thatched-roof casitas and suites with handmade Mexican furniture, wood-beamed ceilings, and outdoor hammocks facing the sea give Esperanza an only-in-Baja vibe. Guests can reserve new **beach palapas** for morning yoga and breakfast or all-day lounging. Every Wednesday, a pop-up market brings local crafts, jewelry, toys, and pottery, while the on-site gallery showcases work by Baja's best artists throughout the week. *Doubles from \$1,025, including breakfast daily and a \$100 spa credit.*

DON'T MISS Chef Guillermo Gomez leads tide-pool foraging outings for sea urchins, stone crabs, and other ingredients to prepare *chil-pachole*, a traditional Mexican seafood stew. VI.

An Esperanza sunset (top) and a cooking lesson with chef Guillermo Gomez. Left: Las Ventanas' massive Ty Warner Mansion.