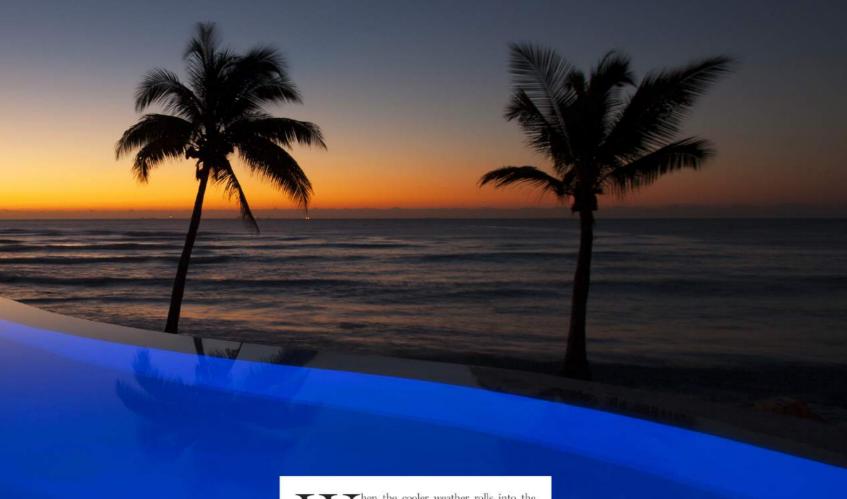
WINTER BLUES

WORDS BY LAUREN ZEIEN



hen the cooler weather rolls into the South, we quickly realize it's time to switch from swimsuits to sweaters! But don't be so quick to put those swimsuits away; there are many options to escape to a nearby island for a week or even a quick weekend to help prolong the summer feel. To make it easier for you, we've compiled a list of our favorite oases throughout the Caribbean Sea. So start dreaming of those crystal clear blue waters, luminous beaches, and relaxing in a hammock among tropical greens... Are you ready to book your trip yet?



MAHEKAL BEACH RESORT - PLAYA DEL CARMEN, MEXICO

This gem is less than 3 hours from almost any southern destination thanks to direct flights to Cancun available from most major Southern cities. Centrally located to everything, Playa Del Carmen has everything to offer, including the region's best shopping and dining. Hand-laid, hidden stone pathways lead families to their private, palapa-style bungalows. Families can stay in a fully-furnished 2-bedroom "Residencia" featuring a full kitchen, laundry room, and a separate seating area with two daybeds, or opt for the luxurious Beach House, touting personal plunge pools, hammocks swaying from the terrace, a private beach complete with "beach butler," and an outdoor moon shower. With four resort pools and two hot tubs, guests can always find a place to lounge. The Itzi Pool is a family favorite where kids can sway on hand-made wooden rope swings and adults can relax at the swim-up pool bar. The heated Fuego Pool features cabana-style daybeds, perfect for a nap no matter your age. The Mahekal Beach Resort is an unplugged vacation experience, which means guests won't find TVs in-room, so there is little to distract you from enjoying the outdoors and each other.

