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**Mahekal
Beach Resort**
PLAYA DEL CARMEN, MEXICO

Bridal Extravaganza Show

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AMERICA'S LARGEST
BRIDAL PLANNING EVENT

January 5-6

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THE **Z!MMERMAN** AGENCY
(continued)

Mahekal

BEACH RESORT

Fuego
Restaurante y
Cantina can be
accessed from the pool
or the beach
and quickly became
our favorite
spot



Nestled between the dense Riviera Maya jungle and Playa del Carmen's longest stretch of beach, discover a bohemian gem: Mahekal Beach Resort. The name means "magical place." Mahekal's tradition dates back 50 years when a family built six thatched-roof palapas on the beach for wandering backpackers to rent. Profits were invested in more bungalows, and over several decades, the family built more than 100 palapas

The center pool is adjacent to Itzi Pool Bar. Itzi, an ancient Mayan princess, is said to have died in a nearby Cenote

Today, this 195-room resort still feels amazingly exclusive and cozy. The lodgings feature two distinctly Mexican concepts: Pueblito, or small city and Jungle (think swanky Swiss Family Robinson). Hidden stone pathways lead to each of the individual casitas, all just steps from the white sand beach. Our ocean-front casita is literally 37 steps from the surf and our private plunge pool has an unobstructed view of the Caribbean. Inside, traditional Mexican décor by local artisans embellish the walls and intriguing pottery from Oaxaca add drama and pops of

color. Lazy hammocks swing invitingly from the private terrace overlooking the beach.

If past visits to Playa del Carmen have left you with memories of tall, sleek condos, think again. The buildings on property are not much taller than the swaying palm trees surrounding them. All ground-level rooms are casitas and the second-level accommodations have traditional Mayan straw ceilings: palapas.

You'll find yourself at Boli's Bar daily for happy hour. Named for the resort's incredible concierge, Ignacio Boli, the

STORY & PHOTOS BY
Laurette M. Veres

central bar is a fun place to mingle with guests amidst pool tables, ping-pong, televisions (the only TVs on-property), shuffleboards and more.

Across from the bar, Juliana welcomes visitors to the Artisan Palapa. Here she makes Acapulco and Guerrero-inspired handcrafts. Book a pottery lesson and explore your artistic talents while learning traditional hands-on ceramic painting techniques. Each unique finished piece is placed in an old-style kiln overnight, ready to be picked up and admired the following morning.

The Mayan-inspired interior design of Revive Spa features no visible corners, allowing a continuous flow of energy throughout the facility. A welcome state of relaxation washes over you as you are greeted with a special Mayan reception, involving incense and chanting. The spa itself encompasses 2,500 sq. ft. of utter bliss highlighted by a bubbling Jacuzzi under a huge



palapa-style roof featuring a fiber optic ceiling, reminiscent of glowing stars. Instead of doors, hanging shells sing as they herald your entrance to the dressing areas. Up your luxury quotient with the VIP garden treatment room; a perfectly private bungalow with indoor/outdoor shower,

indoor bath and private access to the artfully manicured Zen Garden. This is a genuine honeymooner's paradise and a truly restorative spa experience.

There are also three sparkling pools on property. The center pool is adjacent to Itzi Pool Bar. Itzi, an ancient Mayan princess, is said to have died in a nearby Cenote, a type of underwater cave unique to the Yucatan peninsula. Sip slowly on a frosty Jamaican Iced Tea while you stare deeply into the flames of the poolside firepit and wait to see if the princess appears.

The dining experience on property is top notch and the service is even better than the food. Fuego Restaurante y Cantina can be accessed from the pool or the beach and





quickly became our favorite spot. Most Fuego menu items are prepared in a “Tulum-style” wood-burning oven using local Zapote wood. Friday evenings, Fuego hosts

their legendary lobster bake. This toes-in-sand experience includes a savory soup, fresh salad, a whole grilled lobster and delicious dessert. Every Saturday at 12:30pm local

fishermen arrive to peddle the day’s catch. An unmatched foodie experience, hotel guests relish the chance to take part in this age-old tradition and personally select their evening

dinner. Diners have their pick of the choicest fresh grouper, tuna and blond fish, even lobster and octopus.

Just across 38th avenue, Las Olas is home to the most picturesque pool on property. At certain times of the day, you cannot decipher where the infinity pool ends and the ocean begins. The breakfast buffet is more-than-bountiful, featuring rotating breakfast stations with hand-made quesadillas and fresh fruit smoothies, as well as specialty Mexican egg dishes, salmon and freshly baked bread.

From tequila tastings and guacamole or ceviche-making lessons, to live Mexican music, salsa dancing and beach barbeques, travelers will enjoy the escape and immersion in Mayan culture.

GET WED

Say “I do”, barefoot on Ocean Front Beach, or atop the platform over looking the oceanfront infinity pool at Las Olas, or in the resort’s Palm Garden, set against the backdrop of a natural tropical jungle.

A variety of accommodations are available for wedding groups. Quiet, cool and secluded, the recently refreshed Garden View guest rooms provide relaxing



accommodations just steps from the resort’s pristine beach and private pool. Located only on the ground floor, they all face a semi-private lush, verdant garden surrounding a lovely Mexican fountain.

La Residencia is an enclave of several units surrounding a fire pit. This is perfect for wedding

families to rent because it includes a kitchenette and washing machine. The patio runs the length of the building with numerous hammocks, woven lounge chairs and outdoor seating. In the evening families can gather around the fire pit for cocktails, or host an intimate barbeque.

The Aventura section of Mahekal is available for exclusive buy-outs – providing a resort-within-a-resort concept. Perfect for wedding groups, Aventura offers bungalows clustered together, as well as Las Olas restaurant and bar and the famed infinity pool. There are 30 total units in Aventura, as well as Las Olas restaurant and bar.

www.mahekalbeachresort.com

