

2016 BASELWORLD FAIR REPORT – SWITZERLAND

JAMAQUE

PAN-CARIBBEAN LUXURY LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE PARADIS

THE PAN-CARIBBEAN LUXURY LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE
JAMAQUEPARADIS.COM

Exclusive:

*A CONVERSATION
WITH DESIGNER
GIUSEPPE
ZANOTTI*

“

*We should all start to live before we get
too old. Fear is stupid. So are regrets.*

— Marilyn Monroe

”

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NEW
LOOKS
FOR MEN
AND WOMEN

Special Feature:

JAZZ
*WHOSE IS IT
ANYWAY?*

Heritage:

**CARIBBEAN
FAMILIES**
*THE MADURO FAMILY'S
CONTRIBUTION TO THE
DEVELOPMENT OF THE
DUTCH WEST INDIES*

A MAGICAL ESCAPE INTO THE MAYAN HEARTLAND

LANDING IN CANCUN ON THE CARIBBEAN COAST OF MEXICO, MY PLAN FOR THE NEXT FEW DAYS WAS TO DISCOVER THE TREASURES OF THE RIVIERA MAYA, THAT WOULD TAKE ME ALONG THE COASTLINE DISCOVERING THE MAGICAL LANDSCAPE OF A ONCE GREAT MAYAN CIVILIZATION, NOW A PLAYGROUND FOR ADVENTURESOME VISITORS.

— *By* PETER WILLIAMS

The Cancun airport serves 50 cities and is an ideal point of entry for your vacation to Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula with its powder white sand beaches set against the backdrop of lush jungle foliage filled with Mayan archeological ruins. My 'casita' (home) for the next few days would be the recently 'reimagined' MAHEKAL Beach Resort in Playa del Carmen which started years ago as a backpacker's outpost with huts just steps from its 1,000 foot beachfront, and over the years has been transformed into a luxury boutique hotel. Exuding a bohemian ambiance, MAHEKAL's palapa style bungalows offer Mayan inspired décor outfitted with luxurious modern amenities. A hand laid stone pathway led me towards my ocean front casita with its open-air terrace fitted with hammocks and a plunge pool steps away from the lapping waves of the Caribbean Sea. The doors to my casita opened to separate living and sleeping areas with artisanal stenciled floors decked with high quality furnishings in earthy pastel colours. With indoor and outdoor moon showers, my casita was the perfect place to relax and unwind while enjoying the hotel's indulgent Mexican cuisine.



MAHEKAL LOBBY

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the / **zimmerman** / agency
(continued)



Paradis Editor-in-Chief, Peter Williams
was a guest of MAHEKAL Beach Resort

MAHEKAL CASITAS





FROM TOP: DECK CHAIRS LAS OLAS POOL, PHOTO BY CHRIS WIMPEY OPPOSITE PAGE TOP LEFT: MAYAN INSPIRED REVIVE SPA TOP RIGHT: DELUXE OCEAN FRONT KING CENTRE LEFT: PLUNGE POOL CENTRE RIGHT: EL CASTILLO IN TULUM BELOW LEFT: GOD OF THE WIND TEMPLE IN TULUM BELOW RIGHT: GRAN CENOTE DIVING

THE MAYAN INSPIRED SPA
TREATMENTS FEATURE KINICH
ORGANIC HOME GROWN
PRODUCTS, WHILE THE
DÉCOR IS BOHEMIAN
GYPSY IN DESIGN,
INFUSED WITH COLOURFUL
MEXICAN ACCENTS

That evening for dinner I headed to the Cocina Restaurant with its bohemian flair serving up fresh ceviches, succulent steak with jalapeno chimichurri and crisp yucca fries. After dining, I headed to Boli's Bar named after the hotel's concierge. There I tried his hit house specialties of spiced chili rum and a tamarind infused margarita and met with guests visiting from Europe and North America. There I learnt many were repeat guests who are experience seekers and had been coming to MAHEKAL for many years, and are attracted to the unique features and proximity of this low density 17 acre property to the many nearby local attractions.

The following day I had a lazy morning in and ordered room service with a breakfast of hand-made quesadillas and a fresh fruit smoothie, while reading through the hotel's daily newsletter to learn of activities in Playa del Carmen and its environs, taking note of the eco-archeological adventure theme parks of Xel-Ha and Xcaret. I then took a stroll to the nearby Quinta Avenida (5th Avenue) a few minutes' walk from the hotel which attracts visitors from around the world with its hosting of countless music, food and art festivals. This 3 mile stretch of street is filled with lively bars, cafés and discos, along with the best international and local shopping. From European luxury clothing and perfumes, to local



CABERNET SAUVIGNON VALLE DE SANTO TOMAS B.C. IS ONE OF MEXICO'S PREMIUM WINES THAT MAHEKAL STOCKS IN ITS CELLARS

artisanal silverware and Mayan leather goods, it is a shopping mecca one could spend a few days exploring and purchasing gifts for loved ones back home. For lunch I popped into the ever popular Frida Kahlo Restaurant named after one of Mexico's greatest self-portrait female painters and enjoyed a delicious meal of salmon with fresh tarragon, fragranced with white truffle oil.

That afternoon I headed back to MAHEKAL and checked in with the on property Vida Aquatica Dive Centre that offers ocean dives and dives in cenotes (underwater fresh water caves sacred to the Mayans) that Riviera Maya is well known for. After a refresher course in the hotel's heated pool, my dive instructor and I headed out to explore the underwater treasures of the Mesoamerican Reef otherwise known as the Great Mayan Reef, which runs from Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula southwards to Nicaragua along the Caribbean coastline. My shallow water dive took me past vibrant tropical corals, several species of sea turtles, large moray eels, colourful crustaceans, and schools of fish that swam around us. After thanking my instructors for their attentiveness in making my dive safe and memorable, I headed to my casita to relax on my porch hammock while enjoying a glass of Cabernet Sauvignon Valle de Santo Tomas B.C., one of Mexico's premium wines that MAHEKAL stocks in its cellars.

Dinner that evening was at MAHEKAL's newest oceanfront restaurant and bar, Fuego, with its delectable Mexican cuisine locally sourced from the surrounding area, in step with the seasons and tides. The "Tulum-style" wood-burning oven restaurant features "Farm-to-Fork" dining, offering a relaxed vibe in a carefree, casual ambiance. There I watched the hotel's executive chef, Crescenciano Nerey prepare my meal over the open flames of the wood-fired oven grill. He served up intensely hued dishes that included Yucatan-style spicy sausages with red bell peppers and garlic bread, Caribbean grouper slow roasted with garlic and fine herbs, and Mexican octopus drizzled with oregano oil and sprinkled with sea salt, accompanied by a tangy Mayan salsa with its distinctive cilantro and peppery flavours.

The next day I wanted to experience a bit of authentic Mayan culture and had a choice between the ruins of Tulum or the magnificent UNESCO World Heritage site Chichen Itza filled with soaring temples and immense courtyards. The drive to Tulum was just under an hour, whereas the drive to Chichen Itza just over 2 hours. I decided to stay closer to the hotel as I had booked a spa treatment for late afternoon and so headed out to Tulum.

Tulum was the site of a Mayan fortress, built on cliffs towering above an expansive white sandy shoreline, and the only great Mayan city to be built on the coast. It became a major trading port specializing in

the precious stones turquoise and jade. Today it is among the largest ancient ruins still standing, and is considered among the most picturesque archaeological sites in Riviera Maya. Its elaborate temple façades and imperious outer walls have led many archeologists to believe only priests and the nobility lived within the city walls. The area is also home to the Sian Ka'an biosphere and is a favourite eco-retreat for tourists seeking an escape from civilization, with its modest small hotels and camping grounds, surrounded by dense jungle vegetation and wetlands. It has become a paradise for nature lovers to explore.

Departing the ruins, I came upon a group of ceremonially dressed Tulum pole dancers, performing a symbolic ritual once used in times of drought to encourage their gods to send them rain. The impressive performance of 4 men and 1 musician playing a flute and drum, started with them sitting on the top of a very tall pole. Then, with ropes tied to one of their legs, they let go off their seated position and began to spin, head downwards in a clockwise position over the next few minutes until reaching the ground, as the trance inducing music intensified. All magical stuff in the Mayan world.

After a full day of activities in Tulum, I looked forward to my awaiting retreat at the signature Revive Spa at MAHEKAL set amongst lush tropical gardens and natural cenotes. The Mayan inspired spa treatments feature Kinich organic home grown products, while the décor is bohemian gypsy in design, infused with colourful Mexican accents. To aromatic scents and soothing background piped music, I relaxed and enjoyed a herbal massage in the artfully manicured Zen Garden designed to enhance one's psychological and physical well-being. A truly restorative experience.

That evening I wanted to continue to indulge my senses with a gourmet meal, and headed to the on property Los Olas Restaurant for its themed dinners, with it being the Mayan seafood night with a Mayan chef. As a special treat to our taste buds, our meals were cooked in earthen ware in the ground surrounded by hot coals that intensified the delectable flavours of our lobster, crab and grouper fish while keeping them tender and succulent with accompanying servings of roasted local vegetables and roots, ending my meal with passion fruit sorbet.

Needing to stretch my legs after this gastronomic meal, I walked over to the hotel's Itzi Pool Bar (named for a Mayan princess) and ordered a Coco Loco spiked with Tequila and settled into a seat to enjoy the crackling flames of the beach side fire pit. As I immersed my senses into the setting, I noticed the sky above was clear and lit up with stars, and the soft calming lull of the lapping waves with the balmy sea breeze, began to pull me into a trance. In the horizon, the twinkling lights of Cozumel Island seemed to dance on the water as if beckoning to me...perhaps to discover yet another Mayan story in this magical landscape, with its disarming bohemian appeal. | JP



TOP: BEACH HOUSE BELOW FROM LEFT: FLUEGO TABLE, FIRE FEATURE, SPECIAL COCKTAIL, LUXURY WASHROOM

