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TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE OBVIOUS



The Water Issue

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BUENOS DIAS!

Story By Robin Subar







At this moment, my ageless mind is struggling to balance my aging body atop a standup paddleboard (SUP) on my maiden voyage. Roberto, my sculpted Latin instructor is trailing behind me, shouting instructions in a thick accent. He might be just the incentive I need to prevent me from taking an awkward tumble into the sea. But I remind myself that falling into the sapphire feathered welcoming water isn't such a travesty.

Have you guessed where I might be? I'm in the Caribbean, of course, and enjoying every pinch-yourself moment at the Mahekal Beach Resort in Playa del Carmen. I'm staying in oceanfront Room 130 just steps from the pristine 920 feet of palm tree lined Fuego

Beach and the Vida Aquatica Dive Center, home of my SUP as well as kayaks, snorkeling and scuba gear.

The 5-star friendly staff describe the Mahekal as an oasis because it is tucked into the tropical jungle of the Riviera Maya, far away from the din of Cancun and adjacent to Playa Del Carmen's bustling 5th Avenue/Quinta Avenida - a quaint pedestrian mall of restaurants and shops. If you decide to forgo taxi rides this trip you can stroll or peddle your way through town using any of the free bicycles, compliments of Mahekal. Boy I wish I had discovered this place when my kids were even younger but they would love it just as much today.





The bohemian enclave vibe here is right up my alley! Apparently, Grupo Diarq's architect, Hilda Espino, received her inspiration from Julia Chaplin's 'GypSet Style'. Thanks to her, I think I could live happily on my terrace, captivated by the gentle roar of the swells from my comfy rattan lounge chairs or reading the latest New York Times bestseller peacefully in my Mayan hammock while taking an occasional dip in my private plunge pool. When hunger strikes, I can call room service for a steaming organic chicken molcahete with grilled spring onions, chiles, cactus, cheese, guacamole, refried beans, and an arctic bottle of Mahekal's own signature beer straight from microbrewery Allende in Monterrey.

If watching the Caribbean becomes too exhausting, I can slip into my cozy den adjacent to my bedroom, awash in bright Mexican orange and fuschia tones on warm textures and draw my oversized wooden louvers for a nap. I'm finding it hard to envision check-out day and saying adios to my sensual outdoor moon shower with room for ten. I'm sure you have an idea why this is a great wedding and honeymoon destination!

Speaking of hedonism, let me share my experience of the Revive Spa. As the staff ushers me in like little fairies, the intoxicating scent of copal (tree resin thought

to provide purification by the Mayans) permeates the air. (If you fall in love with copal too, I found the incense on Quinta Avenida.) The first stop after I slip into my bathing suit is the Mayan inspired circular spa. While soaking in its soothing water, I nestle my head on the edge and glance upward, lavished by dozens of glowing stars (fiber optic lights) descending from the dramatic thatched roof. It's inconceivable that this is only the beginning of my spa experience. Mahekal's signature crystal massage is next and I can only tell you that I fell asleep on the elixir of absolute pampering.

I know I sound a bit spoiled, but it has been so difficult to decide on which body of water to spend my time! Shall I grab a chaise at the Itzi Pool to take advantage of a Mahekal handcrafted cocktail like a Jalapeno Cactus Margarita at the swim up bar? Or perhaps I want the privacy of my own white linen cabana at the Fuego Pool? I certainly don't want to miss Las Olas' oceanfront infinity pool to watch the sunset alongside other guests who return here year after year like the Monarchs to Capistrano. But at this exact moment I have chosen the sea...



Before I go, I need to share my newfound passion for cenotes...swimming holes. Did you know that there are more than 10,000 of these natural wonders in the Yucatan Peninsula? I had no idea that here is where fresh water meets seawater meets glacial water from the Ice Age! The cool waters of Gran Cenote are the perfect sequel to visiting the ruins of Tulum under the hot Mexican sun. Snorkelers might see catfish and cavern and cave divers venture into the stalagmite and stalactite filled tunnels. I am happy doing a careful backstroke to avoid disturbing the turtles.

"You will fall at least 10 times before you stand," Roberto attempts to encourage me, as I pull myself onto my board for the third time, looking like a drowned rat. 10 times? That is too much water to swallow! I won't accept these conditions and soon enough I have shirked my rat persona and stand proudly, paddling out to sea like the adventurous woman I am.

I forgot to tell you, Mahekal is a play on the Spanish word for magical. Magical things are known to happen here!

Ciao,
Robin

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