

Talk about vacationing anywhere on the sparkling Mexico coastline and you'll likely conjure images of sun, surf, sand and plenty of frozen beverages. While those amenities are always ready and waiting for visitors, there's another luxuriant draw to the tip of the Baja peninsula: art.

ART THERAPY

BY LAURA JENKINS



Los Cabos has gained an international reputation as a haven for artists, collectors and those who simply enjoy indulging in the region's rich artistic beauty and culture. Whether your forte is fine art, music, theater, film, dance or simply an eclectic mix of media, Los Cabos is a must for art lovers of all kinds.

SAN JOSÉ DEL CABO

The pillar of the copious art scene in Los Cabos is the San José Art District, located in charming, historic downtown San José del Cabo. The area is punctuated by old adobe buildings painted in vibrant, tropical fruit-like colors, and is densely populated by galleries and fine restaurants. The Art District covers roughly two blocks, and while visitors could easily walk the area in 15 to 20 minutes, those who duck in and out of galleries can (and do) spend hours enjoying the wealth of art that has been amassed from all over the globe. Each Thursday night between November and June, hundreds of enthusiasts enjoy the Art Walk in San José.

"San José del Cabo is the second biggest arts district in all of Mexico," says Frank Arnold, a celebrated American artist who lives part-time in Los Cabos and displays his work at a stunning gallery on Calle Comonfort. Arnold explains that the difference between an artist community and an arts district is that the former is where people convene to make art, and the latter

is where serious collectors acquire fine art. San José del Cabo is both; moreover, it has evolved into a major fine art hub. Arnold, who spends hurricane season painting and sculpting in his central California studio, has pieces in collections all over the world. "The last month I was in San José, we sold major paintings to Finland, Moscow, Dubai, Portugal and New Zealand," he says, "though our biggest sales are probably to Chicago and New York."

Another exceptionally popular gallery is Galería de Ida Victoria, which houses such an eclectic collection of fine art that a reporter dubbed it "our little Guggenheim in Mexico." Housed in a tri-level building that was designed and built to showcase art, this high-end gallery exhibits original work in a variety of styles and media, including original paintings, photography, sculpture and limited edition prints.

Apart from the physical historic art district, San José del Cabo offers a variety of other artistic opportunities. Stroll through the walking paths at the edge of the Marina at Puerto Los Cabos and enjoy the bronze

sculptures by Leonora Carrington, a famed Mexican artist who was a major part of the 1930s' surrealist movement. Other sculptures in the area include works by three of Mexico's most respected living artists: José Luis Cuevas, Manuel Felguérez and Gabriel Macotella.

The Festival Sal & Música — held in late October — celebrates art, regional cuisine and local festivities through live music, giving residents and visitors a chance to truly savor the area's cultural heritage in the casual ambience of a street fair.

The Baja International Film Festival held in mid-November is a four-day event that draws thousands of actors, filmmakers, critics and film aficionados from around the world. Screenings, panels, parties, celebrity appearances and performances by musical guests are just a few of the highlights at this annual convention.

San José del Cabo is continually budding with new artistic expression and will undoubtedly continue to develop new platforms and celebrations as the community

grows. One of the most recent additions to the landscape is the Hotel El Ganzo, which boasts an impressive arts calendar that includes acoustic, jazz and flamenco music; film screenings; visiting culinary artists; and other creative events. The facility houses a 1,700-square-foot underground recording studio, which is open to artists from around the world. In that vein, Hotel El Ganzo hosts an assortment of artists-in-residence (usually for four to five days) who create, record or perform during their stay at the luxurious hotel.

THE CORRIDOR

Mosey on down The Corridor and you'll find several hotels that showcase remarkable art. Las Ventanas al Paraíso houses an impressive collection of paintings, sculptures, murals and pottery created by celebrated artists from all over the world, and the resort itself has been lovingly crafted by the handiwork of several local artisans. Esperanza, an Auberge Resort, has a Zen-like "open-air oceanfront sculpture garden" that displays 36 works of important Mexican and Latin American sculptors. Paintings from well-known contemporary Mexican artists are displayed throughout the resort, including works by Heriberto Juárez, Javier Marín, Juan Carlos Breceda, Lupina Flores, Elisa Pasquel and Gabriela Villarreal. For those who are hungry for more personal creative encounters, the hotel concierge can arrange for local tours and art classes.

CABO SAN LUCAS

Cabo San Lucas is home to the new \$40 million Cultural Pavilion of the Republic, which aspires to cultivate the artistic and cultural expressions of this particular region of Mexico. There are currently both an indoor and an open-air theater, where concerts, ballets, film screenings and other artistic gatherings take place. There's also a conference space that can be booked

for various purposes, including conventions and art exhibits. A museum is currently under construction, and a library has been planned. Both institutions will undoubtedly add to Cabo San Lucas' burgeoning artistic presence.

TODOS SANTOS

Located about an hour north of Cabo San Lucas, Todos Santos is another vibrant artist enclave. The annual Todos Santos Art Festival, held each February, celebrates Mexican culture through both the visual and performing arts. Folk dancing, theater performances, open studio tours and musical presentations always draw a good crowd. The Guaycura Boutique Hotel & Spa is passionate about promoting the work of local artists, and shows that commitment by regularly displaying their work. The hotel can also contact artists upon request for guests who are interested in private instruction.



The soaring Galeria de Ida Victoria displays an impressive collection of original paintings. - Wall Street Journal

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When a bride reflects back on her wedding day, she wants to remember every cherished moment and bask in the warm afterglow of such a meaningful day. All too often, however, there are tales of tension, exorbitant expenses and time crunches that rob couples of the joy they've worked so hard to capture for their nuptials. It's no wonder destination weddings have become so popular — with Mexico as the top wedding destination for American couples looking to minimize stress and expense while maximizing pleasure.

BY LAURA JENKINS

BRIDAL BLISS



BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Texas couple Kristal and Raun Bryant can attest to the ease of taking their wedding south of the border. "I would do it all over again every day if I could," Kristal says. "It was so easy. Everything was done for us — every detail was provided, and it was exactly as they said it would be." The "they" she's referring to is the staff at the Hotel Riu Palace Cabo San Lucas, where the couple recently married in a spectacular beach ceremony. Both Kristal and Raun agree that they couldn't have had nearly as nice of a wedding in the United States for the all-inclusive price they paid in Los Cabos. And it was stress-free. "Everyone from our young son to Raun's 86-year-old grandmother just raved about it," she says. "It was a wedding, a vacation and a honeymoon; and we got to hang out with all of our favorite people. It just doesn't get any better than that."

RESORT LUXURY

Los Cabos resort weddings are indeed wildly popular, and offer a wide variety of approaches. The Cabo Surf Hotel is a boutique beach resort located on one of the most privileged beaches in Los Cabos. The location makes it a very popular venue, and the facility's wedding coordinators are known for taking care of every last detail, from the flowers to the photographer. Let Executive Chef Alejandro Ponce create a custom, innovative Mediterranean menu, or select cuisine from the highly rated 7 Seas Seafood Grille. Peruse the special spa packages that the Sea Spa & Salon has created for wedding groups, and enjoy the beach, garden, terrace and infinity pools that are available for ceremonies and receptions.

The Sandos Finisterra Los Cabos is a luxurious wedding spot that offers a variety of stunning nuptial settings. "This property was built on a cliff," says Ramon Ascensio, director of sales, "so we have very dramatic views of the marina and the ocean. We have three lavish pools and seven acres of private beach — which means we have areas where there are no beach vendors." Couples can get married on the beach, on the side of the mountain, or under a *palapa* (a thatched roof structure), as Rolling Stone Keith Richards did. Sandos Finisterra is one of the few resorts that has an open vendor policy, meaning couples can bring in their own vendors without incurring any additional fees.

ME Cabo is located on Médano Beach, which means that it's about five minutes' walking distance from many of the best restaurants and nightspots in Cabo San Lucas. For that reason, it's a popular choice for those who



Along Los Cabos brilliant coastline, celebrated for its bright blue seas and unspoiled desert sands, couples and wedding parties find a beautiful, family friendly escape in Meliá Cabo Real All Inclusive Beach & Golf Resort. Wherever the bride and groom choose to say and celebrate their vows, the resort's staff is dedicated to making their dream wedding come true.

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enjoy nightlife, parties and loads of fun. The resort's philosophy is, "Everything is possible," according to Pamela Llonín, special events manager at the hotel. "If a bride wants purple flowers and fire dancers and fireworks, we can do that. We can even commission custom fireworks that form into the shape of a heart containing the couple's initials!" In addition to coordinating the details of weddings, Llonín also arranges fun wedding-themed excursions, including golf and fishing tournaments for the guys, and spa days and horseback or camel riding for the girls.

ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

For those who prefer something a little more daring and unique, Sunrider Tours offers a 250-person catamaran for "floating" weddings. (It also has a smaller boat for more intimate gatherings.) Couples can opt for a scrumptious Mexican buffet or select other cuisine to enjoy while sailing the Pacific Ocean; the fee includes an open bar for all guests. Everything is customizable, from the flowers to the decorations to the music (the latter of which can be anything from a live band to karaoke.)

Another sensational new wedding venue is located 20 feet below the surface of the breathtakingly beautiful Pacific Ocean. Bahía Hotel & Beach Club has partnered with Nautilus Dive Tech to create underwater wedding packages that are certain to thrill. Couples can tie the knot with a well-known local minister officiating while exotic fish and brilliant aquatic hues surround them. Guests are welcome to participate by diving, snorkeling or enjoying the scene from the comfort of a glass-bottomed boat.

For those who want to broaden their celebratory options, Terramar — a tourism service company that has been in operation in Los Cabos for more than 19 years — is a phenomenal resource. Over the years, Terramar has developed an intricate

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understanding of Los Cabos wedding venues and vendors, giving them the ability to help a bride hone in on exactly what she's looking for. "We work with most of the resorts," says Gaby Ruiz, chief wedding and event planner, "but we also coordinate weddings at a wide variety of private villas, hacienda-style homes, restaurants and even unusual venues such as an organic farm." Ruiz says that their wedding services focus on constructing the most unique and

meaningful celebration possible. "Sometimes we recommend things that people didn't know were possible," she says. "Lanterns can be released into the night sky, creating a beautiful illuminated glow above the ceremony. Releasing butterflies is also an option." Whether it's arranging exquisite pre-wedding activities, finding the perfect venue or helping a couple decide what type of ceremony to have, Terramar is there every single step of the way.

HOW TO GET MARRIED IN MEXICO

In the end, getting married is a legal affair. For that reason, it's necessary to think through the three wedding options available in Mexico:

- A civil ceremony is performed by a judge, who conducts the vows in Spanish. It is recognized as a legal union around the world but requires blood tests, a fair amount of paperwork and four adult witnesses over the age of 18.
- To get married in a religious ceremony in the Catholic Church, either the bride or groom must be Catholic, and the proceedings must begin with their home church in the States. Once all marital requirements have been satisfied at the couple's home parish,

all paperwork must be sent to Mexico at least 90 days prior to the ceremony. A religious ceremony is performed by a Catholic priest and can take place only in a Catholic church.

- The most prevalent way to get married in Mexico is called a symbolic, blessing or commitment ceremony. This type of service will not change your legal marital status; most people who take this route get married in a civil ceremony (by a Justice of the Peace, for example) either before or after the actual Mexican ceremony. Because there are no legal or religious requirements, the symbolic ceremony is more customizable to the couple's preferences and needs.



Unique & breathtakingly beautiful, Hacienda Encantada Resort & Spa, a contemporary Mexican hacienda-style resort, offers relaxation, romance and luxury; holding a variety of ceremonies and wedding reception venues with amazing panoramic vistas to the Sea of Cortes.

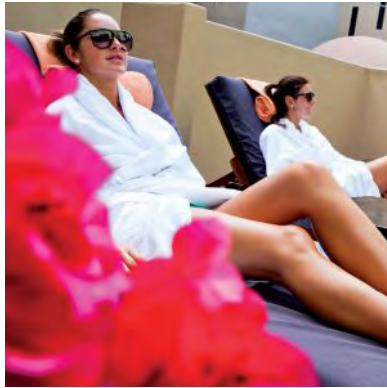
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SCINTILLATING SANCTUARIES

Los Cabos has long been perfecting the art of renewal, but over the past several years it has risen as one of the top spa havens in the world — and for good reason. Scores of wellness-seekers have weighed in on their most exquisite spa experiences, and Los Cabos resorts have consistently garnered top awards for their lavishly rejuvenating treatments and customized services. Whether you're looking for a tranquil space to unwind or a complete transformation and healing, Los Cabos is the ideal place to find tranquility and regeneration.

BY LAURA JENKINS

For those who prefer the heart and soul of the city, The Spa at Sandos Finisterra Los Cabos offers a best-of-both-worlds retreat.


Utilizing an enchanting array of superb products, every treatment is designed to nurture, balance and revitalize. Immerse yourself in a Mayan Milk Whirlpool Bath, or let a cool, soothing layer of volcanic mud ease muscle tension and unwind spasms. Indulge yourself with the Repêchage Four Layer Facial, a premier antiaging treatment that *Cosmopolitan UK* called “the best facial of the century.” For those

who prefer more privacy, The Sea Spa & Salon provides private off-site services with just 24 hours’ notice. And be sure to check out its exclusive line of skin care products.


For those who prefer the heart and soul of the city, The Spa at Sandos Finisterra Los Cabos offers a best-of-both-worlds retreat, providing a sensual oasis that’s situated near some of the most festive hot spots in the area. This

state-of-the-art wellness facility incorporates massage techniques from around the world, giving patrons the opportunity to sample holistic practices from a variety of exotic locations. The Caribbean Breeze is a soft, relaxing massage that utilizes spiral seashells to relax the muscles and harmonize the senses. The Polynesian Dance massage incorporates techniques inspired by the Hawaiian art of lomilomi, which stimulates lymphatic circulation and promotes the elimination of toxins. There’s also plenty of pampering to be had apart from the spa’s six luxurious treatment cabins. Hydrotherapy tubs and showers, multiple pools with varying temperatures, steam baths and an invigorating solarium are only a few of the remedies that soothe, mend and revive. Add in the breathtaking views of San Lucas Bay and it all adds up to a panoramic spa experience.

YHI Spa at the ME Cabo hotel prides itself in being more of a boutique spa. It is small enough to provide unprecedented personal attention but expansive enough to offer activities and therapies that engage the whole person. Hydrotherapy lays the all-important groundwork for all of YHI’s services. “We have a spa valet that guides you through the hydrotherapy circuit,” says Ricardo Adame Carbajal, manager at YHI. “First we take you to the sauna, then to the waterfall, and finally you submerge yourself in the Jacuzzi. The hydrotherapy circuit improves your relaxation before and after the treatment, which is certain to enhance the experience. At YHI Spa we offer not only the best therapies,


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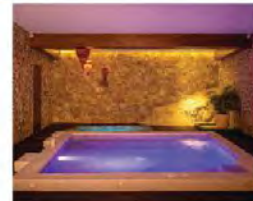
but also the finest products.”

The Playa Grande Spa is also a favorite among those who frequent Los Cabos, in large part due to the spa’s cutting-edge, multisensory approach. The aim is to soothe and regenerate spa guests with everything they hear, see, taste, smell and touch. The Pinda Sweda Herbal Massage, for example, begins with warm muslin poultices filled with steaming herbs applied directly to the skin. The Hot Stone Massage integrates powerful aromatherapy and volcanic pumice stones, while the exotic Bamboo Massage targets deeper tissue with the added benefits of lymphatic drainage and improving sensory nerve perception.

When it comes to awards and accolades, Los Cabos spas are some of the most celebrated facilities in the world. Garnering the designation as the top Spa in Latin America by *Travel + Leisure* magazine, The Spa at Esperanza has received a World Spa Award

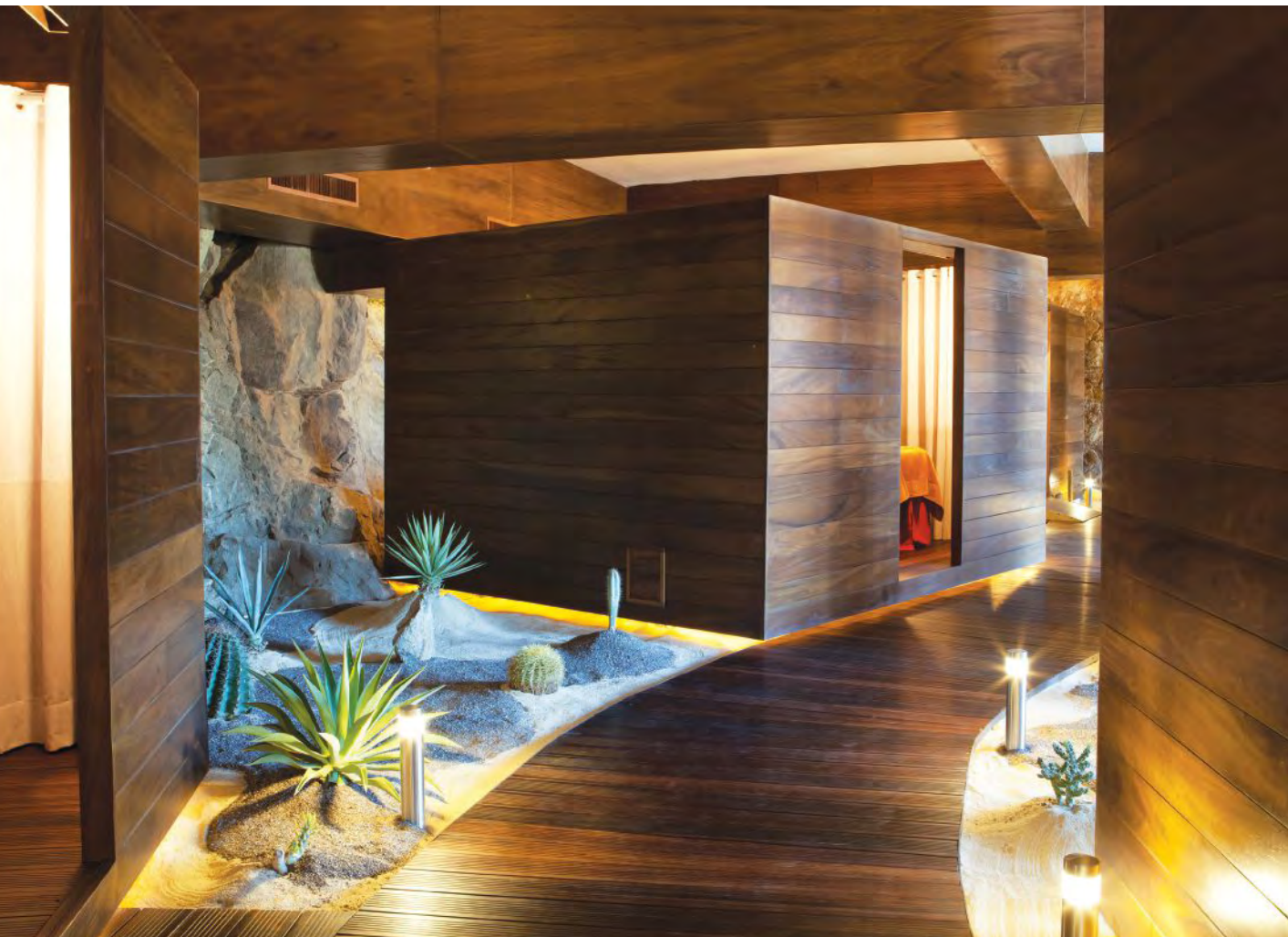


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and is also listed in *Condé Nast Traveler's* Top 25 Spas in Mexico and Central America. Rooted in a strong connection to nature and surrounding culture, as an Auberge Spa, Esperanza holds a firm belief in the healing power of pleasure. Handcrafted salves and oils, yogic techniques and fluid movement are the hallmark of the blissful Auberge treatments.

The One&Only Palmilla resort has landed on the exclusive *U.S. News & World Report's* Best Hotels in Mexico list and has also won spa awards from *Condé Nast Traveler* and *Travel + Leisure*. The spa's signature rituals and ancient healing techniques have undoubtedly contributed to its reputation as one of Mexico's premier destination spas, but it's also known for its unique programs that cater to a wide variety of individual needs.

The Wellness Center offers personal sessions on biofeedback, yoga, correcting body mechanics, fitness, flexibility training and breath work, while the Family Sanctuary gives parents and children the opportunity to enjoy abbreviated side-by-side treatments and relaxation.

Another celebrated jewel in Los Cabos' spa crown is Secrets Marquis Los Cabos, which was named one of the Leading Spas in Mexico by *SpaFinder Magazine*. Situated on the shores of the Sea of Cortés, Secrets Marquis boasts more than 15,000 square feet of luxury wellness facilities and a stunning list of unique treatments that even spa aficionados will find rare and refreshing. Sun worshippers can minimize skin damage with the nourishing Water Lily Sun Relief treatment, while those who are in

need of stress relief can indulge in Sabai Mineral Therapy, a remedy that heals and repairs using micronized minerals blended with rich aromatic oils.

There is perhaps no greater honor than garnering rave reviews from visitors who have actually been to resorts and highly recommend them to others. Las Ventanas al Paraíso, Cabo Azul Resort and Hilton Los Cabos Beach & Golf Resort have received plenty of love from travel devotees, as all three received TripAdvisor Traveler's Choice Awards in 2013. Spa offerings like Holistic Twilight Ceremonies (Las Ventanas), a Purifying Opal Cleanse (Cabo Azul Resort) and a Zen Circulation Wrap (Hilton Los Cabos) have undeniably contributed to Los Cabos' stellar reputation as a port of exceptional tranquility.

RICARDO ADAME CARBAJAL:

MASTERING THE ART OF WELLNESS

BY LAURA JENKINS

You might say Ricardo Adame Carbajal is the quintessential spa concierge. He is one of those rare people who have so much life experience and skill training that they're custom-made for a leisure daydream. With degrees in tourism and marketing, Carbajal has proven his attention to learning what travelers crave. Additionally, his certification and extensive training in restorative skills such as Reiki, aquatic therapy, Thai massage, and even protocol and good manners (no, really) define him as someone who is acutely tuned in to the heartbeat of the spa experience. "For me, the concept of YHI Spa is that we don't sell massages; we offer experiences," he says. "I hope that every person who visits here has the best spa experience of their life. I want them to encounter something so different that they'll remember it for the rest of their lives. We work very hard to accomplish that."

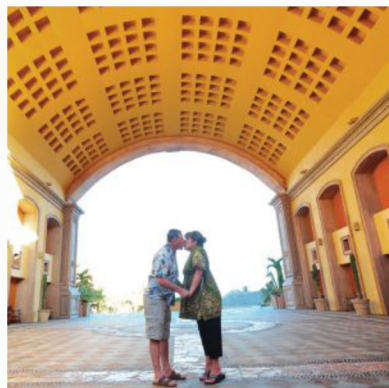
A native of Guadalajara, Carbajal studied law in college, but soon realized it wasn't his calling. After a four-year trek to Japan, he moved to Los Cabos and began studying the healing arts of the body, becoming a massage therapist. His passion for wellness led him to broaden his holistic training, and eventually he realized that, above all, he wanted to create exquisite spa experiences.

YHI's spa menu confirms this mission with the unique treatments and services that Carbajal oversees. The Vichy Suite, for example, involves lying on a bed underneath a healing rain shower — an experience he describes

as "sleeping in the rain." YHI is also one of the few spas in Los Cabos to offer a temazcal, a type of sweat lodge experience rooted in Aztec and Mayan traditions. This purifying steam ritual is designed to cleanse a person spiritually, mentally and physically.

"YHI Spa is a paradise," Carbajal says. "It's an oasis, a sanctuary of peace inside the hotel. We are a smaller spa, and that gives us the opportunity to receive people as unique customers, much like a friend. For us, you are not another customer. For us, you are you."





START YOUR ENGINES

Ladies, get ready to kick up some sand while you roar or ride up and down the road less traveled with the girls. Surrounded by stoic cacti, desert wildflowers and the occasional curious critter, you can take in the lovely dry surroundings of Los Cabos on an ATV, mountain bike or dune buggy, perhaps conquering a tricky sand dune. You'll get an eyeful of the sky melting into the ocean as your adrenaline kicks up a notch. If that's not enough, you can always zip-line across scenic desert canyons to enjoy the big picture. Want a closer encounter with nature? Go horseback or even camel riding.

CATCH, RELEASE, REPEAT

Experienced or not, there is so much fun to be had while on a fishing day at sea. With approximately 80 species of game fish — from striped marlin to corvina, yellowtail snapper to yellowfin tuna, swordfish to roosterfish — chances are you'll catch something. The waters around Los Cabos are as plentiful as they are enticing, while two marinas with more than 500 fishing vessels are ready to take you on the thrill of a lifetime. Best of all, catch-and-release is widely practiced here.

GO MULTIGENERATIONAL

Nothing says "Los Cabos" like a day at sea. All members of the family will want to take in the area's rock formations, especially the iconic Arch. From sunset to sundown, the lure of Baja seems to sparkle against the deep blue waters of the Sea of Cortés. Strong winds make this area ideal for sailing with the likes of Tropicat, or for lounging in a catamaran with Sunrider Tours while you find the perfect spot to jump in to cool off.

Head north to explore La Paz, the capital of Baja California Sur, a charming town of quiet streets, great oysters and a beautiful boardwalk lined with *palapas* and inspiring sculptures. Yet another jewel in the Baja landscape is Todos Santos, a lovely oasis designated a Magical Town by the Mexico Tourism Secretariat that is replete with art galleries and historic buildings. Both are within easy driving distance of Los Cabos, with day tours also available.

BOND WITH THE BOYS

The East Cape offers plenty of "manly" outdoor fun, whether windsurfing, trekking or diving in Cabo Pulmo National Marine Park. This federally protected marine

reserve is home to a hard coral reef that provides refuge to quite a few of the hundreds of species that call these waters home, including multicolored beauties and several types of dolphin. On land, you might even spot the rare Baja blue rock lizard.

You can also step onto the many gorgeous championship golf courses in Los Cabos and get ready for a swinging good time. As one of the world's top golfing destinations, this is the place to try your luck on greens designed by Jack Nicklaus, Greg Norman, Pete Dye, Phil Mickelson, Robert Trent Jones II and Fred Couples. But even if they hadn't been created by such luminaries, they'd still be some of the most beautiful in which to play, as their views of the shimmering sea are remarkable.

COUPLE UP

Swim with giants. Whale sharks, the largest fish in the world, are also among the most gentle. During the winter season, you and your significant other have the chance to swim with them in Bahía de La Paz as they glide along placidly, with spotter planes letting your captain and guides know where to



At Hilton Los Cabos Beach & Golf Resort, you'll find some younger guests hanging out at the Cabo Kids Vacation Station decorating cookies, putting together a piñata or taking a tour of the resort. Others will be taking an hour-long Spanish class with a private tutor through Cabo Kids Escuela, while their more food-minded peers will be taking part of a Family Cooking Class, preparing a flavorful dish and taking a tour of the kitchen and the resort's herb garden. The most indulgent of the crowd, however, will be at the spa with their parents. The Cabo Kids Oasis spa program offers choices such as mother/daughter retreats or BFF packages, plus the chance to book a private spa party. Kids have their own spa treatments to choose from and can go the ice cream,

smoothie or virgin cocktail route during their pampering experience.

The older children can also participate with their parents in Hilton Los Cabos' fully accredited Turtle Protection program. From late July through November, hundreds of Olive Ridley sea turtles crawl onto shore to lay their eggs. Certified resort volunteers move the eggs to a safe corral to protect them from predators. Once they've hatched, guests can watch the staff release the babies out to sea. Not only is this a beautiful experience that families remember forever, but it also provides a valuable educational component about the importance of protecting animal life and our environment.

Options for kid-size excitement are also plentiful at One&Only Palmilla, where each youngster gets

a child-size backpack. The Teens Only Space has foosball, air hockey, billiards and other options for downtime after a day paddle boarding or kayaking along the shoreline of Pelican Beach. Want more exercise? Basketball facilities and tennis courts are also available. Younger children, meanwhile, can have their own fun at the supervised KidsOnly Club, stretching with a yoga class, learning origami, taking a cooking lesson and even swinging away at a golf clinic. And if all else fails, there's always the Agua Pool, with its own waterfall and meandering river.

And that's only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Hotels and resorts in Baja are well versed in the fine art of family fun — at sea or on land, there's no shortage of thrills in Los Cabos.