

INTERLUDES

Whether you are planning a vacation at a wonderful hotel or resort or a few nights in a great destination before or after your cruise vacation, these hot spots will give you a taste of the good life.

ONE AND ONLY

ON PAST VISITS to Los Cabos, we've driven by the lush grounds of the One & Only Palmilla, lusting to know why the fabled resort is so special that Hollywood royalty flock to it in droves. Now we know. And it really is, well, the "one and only." Service, for one, is beyond expectation. Chill by the adult-only pool and you get free 10-minute foot massages, sunglass cleaning and mini sorbets. The family-friendly resort also offers complimentary laundry for kids under two. And all 172 rooms (and one villa) have a private butler who unpacks and packs your clothes – meaning more of that pampered pool time.

The rooms (more like open suites) reflect a colonial Mexican flavor and are pretty dreamy too. Nestled in a setting of fountains, palms and tropical flowers, they have red-tiled roofs, travertine floors, iron-studded doors, colorfully painted sinks and outdoor terraces. Most rooms



LOS CABOS, MEXICO

(50) are beachfront terrace junior suites, with an indulgent 750 square feet of space. You're welcomed with a tequila platter; fruit and complimentary snacks (from spicy peanuts to cheese, crostinis and olives) are delivered daily. At turndown, scented candles await.

Dining is a gourmet treat at One & Only Palmilla's Market restaurant by Michelin-starred chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten (try the black truffle pizza appetizer). And if you snag a "moonlight" ocean-side table at Agua, the resort's al fresco palapa-style restaurant, you'll listen to the waves while noshing on "Mediterranean" cuisine.

Complimentary yoga is offered daily in the yoga garden; the gym has free spinning classes and there is a chapel on site for destination weddings. And the beach is one of the few in Los Cabos that's swimmable (strong waves and currents make most unsafe). For golfers, a 27-hole course designed by Jack Nicklaus offers ocean views from every hole, and new clay courts lure tennis fans to play a game.

Just bring your credit card. And down a stiff nip before checking out and settling your bill.

— GEORGE AND JANICE MUCALOV



PUNTA MITA, MEXICO

FOUR SEASONS PUNTA MITA

WITH 26 ACRES of tropical grounds and two sweeping curves of beach, the Four Seasons Resort Punta Mita has more than enough space to find a quiet place to relax – which, given its secluded setting in the Riviera Nayarit (45 minute drive from the Puerto Vallarta airport), is what most people come here to do. You can lounge in a double curtained daybed on the beach, with a cooler of iced water at your fingertips. Or catch up on emails in a private cabana, complete with TV, by two giant adult pools (no excuse not to do laps!), where an attendant cleans your sunglasses, spritzes you with Evian water and offers hourly treats like seared tuna on a spoon and chilled fruit kebabs. Or perhaps read on the terrace of your recently-refurbished, soothingly-decorated room, one of only 173 rooms and suites housed in simply-designed, tile-roofed, one- to three-storey casitas scattered about the property.

But activities, many of which are free, are what this Four Seasons excels at. So be sure to also sign up for the one-hour, morning nature walk, where you hear the squawk of chachalaca birds, as your guide explains the medicinal and other uses of native fruits and plants you see. Or try Spanish lessons or learn about the Huichol Indian people at the in-house Cultural Center. Kids love drifting on inner tubes around the Lazy River pool. And don't forget the Jack Nicklaus golf course with its eight ocean-front holes. Or the spa – how about the signature Punta Mita massage using tequila and sage oil? At night, the candlelit Bahia beach grill beckons with its fresh seafood (sit at a table in the sand). Word of caution: returning to reality is depressingly difficult after checking out. — JANICE AND GEORGE MUCALOV