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MEXICO

Chileno Bay Resort & Residences Four Seasons Hotel Mexico City
Rosewood San Miguel de Allende L'Ôtel Hotel Matilda
Chablé Resort & Spa

MEXICO



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF CHILENO BAY RESORT & RESIDENCES



CHILENO BAY RESORT & RESIDENCES

Developments in Cabo.

SINCE 2009, THERE have been four top resorts from which to choose in Los Cabos. Each is worthy in its way, but the entire area is always short of rooms during peak periods, particularly festive. In response to this problem, a wave of newcomers on the two-year horizon includes seemingly every major brand. With Chileno Bay, Auberge has delivered Cabo a fifth option, while also doubling its brand presence in the region. Auberge has managed nearby Esperanza since 2002.

Our flight arrived at Los Cabos International Airport on time, but after clearing immigration and collecting our bags, we could not locate our driver. Eventually, a representative from the resort approached, offering a

heartfelt apology for the delay. We followed the way to the SUV, and were asked if we'd like to stop outside the airport to get something to drink, which we declined. Surprisingly, there were no bottles of water in the vehicle, but the hop was only a half hour.

The 22-acre property known as Chileno Bay Resort & Residences is located about halfway between San José del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas. It's just past the entrance to Palmilla and just before the first international incarnation of the Montage, which is scheduled to open in 2018.

The resort entrance is marked by a stone wall, with a river-like water feature running alongside. Bougainvillea and cacti are new in their growing stages, as the resort only received its first guests in February. As we approached the outdoor reception area, two staff mem-



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bers rolled a red cart over to offer us a welcoming round of cold towels and Coronas. Also there to welcome us was General Manager John Volponi, who we met previously during his prior tenure as GM of nearby Pedregal.

Déjà vu struck again when we were introduced to our butler, Alejandro. We immediately recognized him from our last stay at One&Only, and he remembered us as well. Alejandro walked us to our villa, where he offered a full orientation to its features and amenities, preparing a welcome cocktail with mezcal as he finished the intro. He explained that certain resort staff were available for direct contact through our mobile phones via Facebook Messenger.

Chileno Bay is being completed in phases, with only the first of three in place for now. When complete, the resort's inventory will include 60 guest rooms and 32 villas with two, three, four, or six bedrooms. Villas are primarily available for purchase, but each can be available on a nightly basis at the discretion of its owner.

We stayed in a Three-Bedroom Oceanfront Villa with Pool with a square footage of 3,672. All of the bedrooms in the villa are large, but the master is particularly grand. All are conveniently fitted with electric blinds, but a little too much space between the shades may preclude your desire to sleep in. We made particu-



lar note of the spacious master bath, which is outfitted with Spanish tiles, wooden doors, and an egg-shaped tub facing the courtyard. The villa's spacious living room opens to a gourmet kitchen, fully equipped with appliances from Wolf and Subzero.

Outdoor space is the draw for the villas, and includes a generously sized swimming pool, a jacuzzi facing the ocean, a grill, and a dining table. On the downside, the outdoor space lacks privacy. We often felt as though we were on display to our neighbors, and unwantingly, our neighbors to us.

When we inquired, we were told the three-bedroom Sky Villas are much more private. Each of those two keys has a rooftop deck with a swimming pool and a panoramic view of the resort and the Sea of Cortez. Also very private is the six-bedroom premier key, the Brisa del Mar Beachfront Villa, which has a private out-

door area with a swimming pool, hidden from view by a wall, as well as direct access to the beach.

Shortly after getting settled into the villa, our first stop was beachfront restaurant TnT ("Tacos n Tequila"). Our Caesar salad was fresh and crisp, and the guacamole was delicious and plentiful. We inquired about the cocktail list, and our server brought an authentic bottle of sotol over to our lunch table, including the rattlesnake inside. No, thank you!

Comal is the resort's signature restaurant, and serves Mexican and Latin American cuisine with a contemporary twist. We sampled several dishes, and favored the locally caught sea bass over the sole. There is also a raw bar, which we tried on a separate visit. The oysters were absolutely delicious.

Our server insisted that the spiced homemade hot chocolate was a specialty, and that we must try it. We

sampled both the ginger and cardamom varieties, and couldn't taste the chocolate in either.

The dining room, designed by LA-based firm Gulla Jonsdottir Architecture + Design, is a noticeable contrast from the bedrooms with a more local feeling and a pleasing range of textures and colors. Walls fashioned from slabs of stone and intricately carved wooden panels are particularly stunning.

The resort's dark blue-tiled swimming pool is some 150 yards long, split into three tiered areas. There is a children's pool, a family pool, and a quiet pool for adults only. Comfortable loungers line both sides of the pool, and the water is semi-salty and very smooth. Service was always available, easy, and attentive.

According to the website, Chileno Bay has one of the area's only beaches that is swimmable year round. While it is swimmable, it is also quite rocky, so beware for your knees' sake.

The H2O Cave is Chileno Bay's water sports center, with options for equipment rentals and private or group classes. Included in the offering are the usual suspects like stand-up paddleboarding and kayaking, and also some head-turning options like Schiller water bikes and snorkels outfitted with underwater GoPro cameras.

For those who prefer to keep on routine, the gym is finished with a worthy selection of brand new equipment, including an impressive lineup of cardio and weight machines and free weights. Sliding doors in the gym open to a balcony to allow for a feeling as though you're exercising "outside." There is also a nice selection of fitness classes, including yoga and Pilates with six new reformers, and an 18-hole golf course designed by Tom Fazio.

Kids under 12 who need a little alone time will appreciate the Pescaditos Kids Club. The unique space welcomes younger guests for activities such as gardening, pottery, sand castle building, sea turtle tracking, and cooking classes utilizing fresh pickings from the herb garden, which is right next to the outdoor play area.

Last but not least, Chileno Bay's handsome spa is furnished with a complete range of relaxation facilities, including an aromatherapy steam room and salt chamber, as well as hot and cold plunges and a reflexology pool. We booked in for a special massage, which incorporated heat and a mix of herbs, and it was truly a highlight of our stay.

Many of Chileno Bay's service challenges will likely



be worked out in the months to come, as the resort's service procedures mature along with the seedlings that dot its landscape. Only time will tell how Chileno Bay fits in, but it will probably tell soon. There are at least four new five-star resorts slated to open in the area over the next two years. ●●●●

Chileno Bay Resort & Residences

Cabo San Lucas, Mexico
General Manager: John Volponi
chilenobay.aubergeresorts.com

DOS & DON'TS

- DO** bring an eye mask if you are light sensitive. The blinds are electric, but shades are spaced a ways apart and bedrooms do not blackout.
- DO** note the rocks along the beach, and be careful when swimming out. We wouldn't recommend swimming with children here.
- DO** inquire about the three-bedroom Sky Villa or six-bedroom Brisa Del Mar Beachfront Villa for more privacy.
- DON'T** believe the talk about the spiced hot chocolate. We found it underwhelming.