

## The Gem of Cancun: Grand Fiesta Americana Coral Beach Cancun

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Not all resorts are built alike and in Cancun, they're not just monstrous all-inclusive retreats with mediocre food and crowded beaches. In fact, for those seeking a more upscale experience without having to sacrifice that five-star feel and prime downtown location, *Grand Fiesta Americana Coral Beach Cancun* fits the bill.

Located in what feels like the tip of Cancun's Hotel Zone, every room here faces the bright blue and green ocean, so there's not a bad seat in the house. During my visit I was housed in the Grand Club accommodations which treats travelers to top-floor rooms and next-level services like VIP check-in, a penthouse lounge, three culinary spreads each day and more. There's also an exclusive area at the pool, beach and sundeck reserved for Grand Club guests only so you can sunbathe in solitude.



If great food is as important to you as a great view, then don't miss *Viña Del Mar* which is famous for its Champagne breakfast buffet. The casual two-story restaurant serves up a ridiculous spread of eats each morning, and it's much more than just eggs and bacon. Wander around and discover treats like build-your-own smoothies, a carving station, custom omelette station, a spread of Japanese choices and Mexican specialties like chilaquiles, tamales and more.

For dinner, the resort's fine dining La Joya restaurant has just introduced a one-of-a-kind experience. The Latin restaurant features high ceilings, a 10-piece Mariachi band and glowing tree-like structures that create a mystical setting. But more than the decor and even the food, is their newest high-tech experience that uses videomapping. Confused? So was I. Until it began.



The eight-course meal (or experience) takes diners through the history of the Yucatan region and the Mayan people with each course representing a different stage in the country's history. But the real highlight is the custom-built 16-person communal table that it's served on, which depicts the history with narration and music. So while you're sipping your Blue Crab Chilpachole with guajillo chile and burnt tortilla in a crater-like bowl (representing the volcanic period of the region), the table will light up with fire as lava rocks roll by under your soup. While you're not actually dining amidst burning flames, the narration guides you through time so you can follow along from the dawn of Maya civilization to the birth of the Mexican Colonial Era after the Spanish conquistadors arrived. The whole experience costs only \$115 per person and is well worth it.



If kids are a part of your vacation equation, Coral Beach has a recently completed \$2 million, 50,000-square-foot space for youngsters to play all day. I was slightly jealous if we're being honest; there's some pretty cool things tucked back in it like a private water park, Mayan-themed ruins, a giant dinosaur, gaming systems, cooking classes, a wall that lights up when you touch it and lots more.

And speaking of large spaces, the Gem Spa is 40,000 square feet (yes, the kid's club is bigger) of soothing relaxation. Find a 10-step hydrotherapy experience and signature treatments to chill you out quick.



Overall if you're looking for a well-rounded Cancun resort that isn't so...Cancun, then book a stay here. It's varied enough for families, large enough for couples looking to be alone and calm enough for those wanting to skip the clubs...but they are only a step away should you choose to give in.