

THE PALM BEACHER

Dive Into Mexico's Ancient Culture At Grand Fiesta Americana Coral Beach

by Melissa Puppo © Jul 2018



Sometimes the unexpected is the most fun. I was reminded of this while in Cancún, Mexico, when a day trip to Isla Mujeres was filled with adventure—and adversity.

After a 30-minute boat ride through the crystal Caribbean Sea, the place that translates to “Women Island” with powder-white sand beaches, turned out to be the perfect spot to explore. The island spans fewer than 5 miles, and by renting a moped or golf cart, it’s possible to tour its entirety in less than a day.

My travel pal, Gina, and I decided to rent a golf cart and navigate curvy roads along which we found hidden beaches where locals sold “helado de vainilla” on the side of the street. We parked to snap a photo and treat ourselves to a tasty snack, putting our small knowledge of Spanish to use while browsing hand-painted pottery and handbags at shops throughout the colorful town.

But, our gorgeous day took a turn when looming thunderstorms drew close. We hopped into our golf cart and drove in the direction of a port where we intended to catch a ferry. But a pitter-patter of rain ruptured into a full-blown monsoon with swirling winds. Gina and I glanced at one another in disbelief when we realized our cart was without a windshield. Between clearing our sunglasses of violent water droplets, flash flooding and bouts of hysterical laughter (and maybe some real tears), we finally arrived—soaked from head to toe. We patiently waited for a ferry to come to our rescue, envious of those onboard who’d managed to stay dry.

When in Cancún, though, we learned not to let a little rain ruin the party, especially when your mainland refuge is Grand Fiesta Americana Coral Beach.

The resort’s alluring peach exterior sets the scene for a property boasting several cascading pools with swim-up bars and a concierge service that’s ready to satisfy a strawberry daiquiri craving. Each guest room guarantees beachfront views. With Grand Club access, I lay on our strip of private beach where refreshing cold towels and afternoon snacks were plentiful.

Speaking of sustenance, there are four main restaurant options on property. For brunch, we opted for Viña del Mar, which overlooks the beach. (Grand Club members have a private food showcase on the 11th floor available throughout the day.) I enjoyed Mexican flavors represented in airy corn tortillas made tableside to pair nicely with eggs, tamales and chilaquiles with verdes or rojos (green or red sauce), plus delicate pastries and fresh fruits.

Come dinner time, a lively mariachi band played while we tasted tequilas and dug into enchiladas in a mole (pronounced mo-lay) sauce at La Joya.

A promotional banner for Rackspace Office 365. The banner features a dark background with a red and white text box. The text reads: "FOCUS ON BUSINESS. WE'VE GOT OFFICE 365 COVERED." Below this, there is a white button that says "CHAT WITH AN EXPERT". At the bottom left, there is a small award logo that says "Microsoft Partner of the Year 2015 Winner". The Rackspace logo is in the bottom right corner.

More than a hub for spring breakers, Cancún offers the opportunity to dig into Mexican culture. Travel into the past during a short taxi ride to Museo Maya de Cancún where ancient artifacts are on display. Even better, guests can get up close to Maya ruins with the San Miguelito archaeological site walking tour next door.

Also high on the to-do list is checking out the resort's 40,000-square-foot Gem Spa that utilizes chakra-balancing gems and Maya-inspired elements. Book the 10-step hydrotherapy ritual and enjoy the mixing of hot and cold sensations throughout the experience. Think an aromatic steam room intertwined with a multi-jet cold shower followed by a clay room, a frosty ice room, a sauna and pools with a pebble walk.

Before leaving, I caught a glimpse of a beautiful Aztec-inspired collar necklace featuring sunset gold beading and tassels. The spa's selection of luxury jewelry for purchase comes in the realm of vibrant, classic Mexican styles to refined pearls and shells. I plucked it off the display as a keepsake before saying "adios" and heading back to the airport, knowing I would have a small piece of Mexico to remember during days to come.

Grand Fiesta Americana Coral Beach, Boulevard Kukulcan Km 9.5, Zona Hotelera, 77500 Cancún, Q.R., Mexico; 998.881.3200; coralbeachcancunresort.com



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Viña del Mar