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Luxury Travelers Are Seeking Out This Sanctuary in Baja—a World Away From Cabo’s Tourist Crowds

Costa Palmas, a posh new enclave on the Baja California peninsula, already hosts one lavish resort with more on the way. For privacy-seeking travelers with deep pockets, could it become a go-to escape?

By *Melinda Fulmer*

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A swimming pool at the Four Seasons Resort Los Cabos at Costa Palmas, which opened in 2019.

PHOTO: FOUR SEASONS LOS CABOS AT COSTA PALMAS

I stood still in the cool emerald water of a swimming hole, tiny carp nibbling my toes, as a 40-foot waterfall thundered down from above. This roaring, soothing idyll was unfolding in the Rancho Ecológico Sol de Mayo, a park on Mexico's Baja California peninsula. Though in a part of the country often mobbed by sun-seeking North Americans, I was one of just five tourists taking in the scene.

I had found myself in Baja California Sur's East Cape, just 45 miles northeast of the comparably teeming Los Cabos tourist corridor, which saw almost four million visitors last year. It felt like an oasis of calm—a world apart from Los Cabos's megaresorts.

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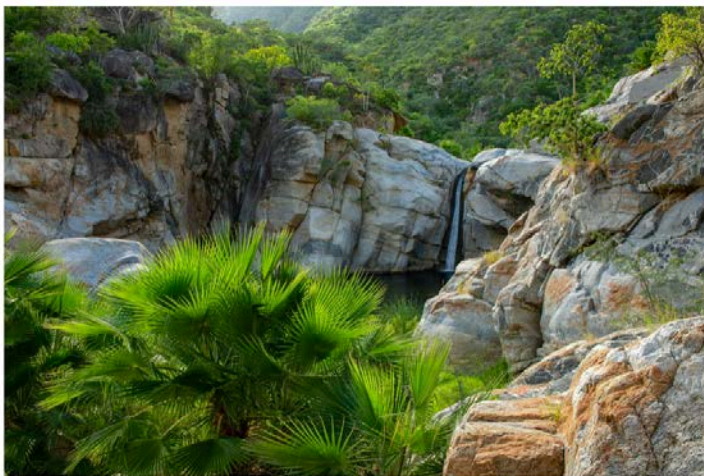
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An established destination for sport fishermen, snorkelers and divers, the East Cape offers travelers quick access to some of Baja's best fishing and least-trampled nature hubs. Take [Cabo Pulmo National Marine Park](#): Jacques Cousteau once called this Unesco World Heritage site on the Sea of Cortez "the Aquarium of the World" for its 800 species of marine life.



From left: Cañon de la Zorra, a popular hiking spot at Rancho Ecológico Sol de Mayo, a park in Baja California Sur; a diver swims along a wall of coral at Cabo Pulmo National Marine Park.

PHOTOS: ALAMY; GETTY IMAGES

But in years past, traveling to the East Cape often meant settling for bohemian, no-frills accommodations. That changed with the 2019 opening of the [Four Seasons](#), part of the 1,500-acre [Costa Palmas beachfront development](#) outside of the tiny town of La Ribera.

Costa Palmas targets those who want to take in the natural splendor of Baja without competing for beach chairs. Its winding private road leads to multiple resorts, 2 miles of swimmable beach and more fine-dining options than most small cities. Access, however, comes with a hefty price tag.

The 118-room Four Seasons Resort Los Cabos at Costa Palmas starts at just over \$1,000 a night. And the beachfront enclave will soon welcome two more ultraluxury resorts, including [Amanvari](#), the first Mexico outpost from the Aman brand, set to open next year, and [Casa Blake](#), which breaks ground in a few months and will offer residences starting at around \$750,000 for a studio apartment.



From left: Guestrooms at the Four Seasons Resort Los Cabos at Costa Palmas; a seaside plunge pool outside a suite at the Four Seasons.

PHOTOS: FOUR SEASONS LOS CABOS AT COSTA PALMAS

Costa Palmas's low-slung modern buildings with their plunge pools, reverently maintained palm trees, and uplifting contrast sharply with the surrounding communities. I felt guilty as I bypassed modest, lived-in towns on my way to this isolated pocket of luxury where guards bar entry through its imposing gates to all but guests of the hotel or restaurants.

But as a traveler looking to truly unplug, I could also see the appeal. You can walk to almost everything within those gates. Eat at [Mozza Baja](#) from star chef Nancy Silverton, housed in a marina. Play the [18-hole golf course](#) designed by Robert Trent Jones II. Imbibe and unwind at [Chiki](#), a colorfully mosaicked nightclub and speakeasy. Prefer not to exert yourself? Water taxis and branded SUVs can whisk you between resort and restaurant.



Costa Palmas's Chiki night club takes inspiration from the bold colors of Mexico City's Casa Azul. PHOTOS: IRONGATE

Even if the enclave has plopped itself into the larger community to a degree some travelers might find discomfiting, I was reassured by the fact that Costa Palmas's footprint is still dwarfed by the megaresorts of Los Cabos. "It is just a baby," said Lalo Pita, a guide with the tour outfitter Aventura.

To get a better sense of the vastness of the surrounding countryside, Pita led me on an ATV tour of the area, leaving the development's gates and weaving along dirt roads and over sand dunes. As we crested a hill by Lighthouse Point, I took in sweeping views of the East Cape's beaches vanishing into the horizon. A lone falcon soared and dipped above us.

While a mountain range protects Los Cabos, the East Cape can be windy on some winter days. This means snorkeling and sunbathing are, at times, off the agenda—not that the kiteboarders who love this stretch of coastline complain.



Baja California's East Cape region offers easy access to the Sea of Cortez, a prime fishing and scuba diving destination. PHOTO: FOUR SEASONS LOS CABOS AT COSTA PALMAS

Faced with unpredictable weather, I improvised. Rather than sitting by the pool all day as I might at a resort in Cabo, I took satisfyingly aimless walks along the beach, once stumbling on a release of baby sea turtles from a nearby hatchery. I made several excursions into the surrounding wilderness.

To sample the good life that is luring Hollywood A-listers to buy real estate in Costa Palmas, I spent one languorous lunch at the development's [Delphine day club](#), where Michelin-starred chef Ludo Lefebvre oversees the menu and a DJ spun Latin house music for couples armed with margaritas on the beach.



Delphine, a day club on the beach in Costa Palmas. PHOTO: COSTA PALMAS

How long, I wondered, would Costa Palmas's "hidden" appeal last, considering all the big names attached to it? For now, the enclave seemed just beyond the radar of most travelers—including the young husband and wife who rode with me to dinner one night. They said they booked their stay in Costa Palmas by accident, thinking they were going to a different Four Seasons resort near Cabo San Lucas, 66 miles away. "It was a nice surprise," the husband said.

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