

MEXICO

Fit for a Queen

There are plenty of boutique hotels in Mexico, but how many can claim to be the escape of royalty? The 29-room **Hotel Esencia**, with prime placement in the Riviera Maya, was originally built as a retreat for an Italian duchess before it debuted as a hotel in 2005. Today the duchess visits only occasionally, leaving guests with all the royal treatment.

WHY SLUMBER HERE Appreciate intimate touches like a pot of essential oils at turndown and a sexy outdoor plunge pool placed discreetly in each of the 14 garden suites. Spoil yourself and book the Rosa ocean-view master suite, where you can pad

around under the domed brick Catalan ceiling, the one-time home of the duchess herself.

WHAT TO DO There's no lack of adventure options: Explore Tulum's Maya ruins (pictured), or sign up for a birding excursion or jungle hike. The spa pampers with the ritual *de limón* massage, which uses fruit from the spa's garden. New on the menu: the customized three-treatment Esencia of Natural Healing package.

WHEN TO GO October through December is hatching season for local sea turtles; you might catch a glimpse as they make their way to the Caribbean Sea. *From \$545.*

—Liz Ozaist