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## Esencia : Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, Mexico

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A mere forty miles south of the glitz and hustle of Cancun lies a decidedly more relaxed section of the Riviera Maya. But usually wherever there are blinding white sand beaches and water so clear you can discern the precise shade of your toenail polish, the developers are close behind. Even this far down the coast, the discriminating traveler needs to do a little legwork to escape the generic experience of the all-inclusive chain resort. Enter the Hotel Esencia, an intimate 29-room beachside escape, an antidote to the tacky high-rise hotels springing up on Mexico's [Caribbean](#) coast.

The main structure at the Esencia, a converted home of a European duchess, houses a handful of guest rooms. The majority of guest quarters, however, are situated in free-standing beach cottages with extra amenities like private pools and butlers. Whatever the extent of your splurge, though, you'd have to be a duchess yourself not to feel pampered at the Esencia. All of the rooms are swathed in pristine white Egyptian cotton and accented with trappings of the sea: chunks of coral, pieces of driftwood. Exquisite little gardens, hammocks for a lazy afternoon, airy terraces for taking in the sea view (the Riviera Maya's main attraction) — each of the guest rooms is slightly different but all of them are simple and simply lavish.

Like other resorts in the area, the Esencia organizes excursions like snorkeling, horseback riding, jungle walks, and windsurfing. One unique offering, though, is the organic spa, using principles of ancient medicine. Sign up for a massage and you'll be taking in the fresh open air and the ocean while you relax on the table. Sal y Fuego, the hotel's restaurant, serves up an international menu with a Mexican twist. Try the recommended house specialty: fish or meat slow-cooked in banana leaves, but — here's the kicker — underground, in accordance with what's apparently a Meso-American cooking tradition.

### How to get there:

Esencia is (40 miles) a 50 minute drive south of Cancun International airport. Airport transfers cost approx. \$150USD roundtrip. Please contact [customerservice@tablethotels.com](mailto:customerservice@tablethotels.com) to arrange a transfer.

More details are available here:

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