

# recommend

## ROMANCE, WEDDINGS & HONEYMOONS ISSUE

**ONSITE REVIEWS:**  
**Provence, France**

**La Mirage Garden  
Hotel & Spa,  
Ecuador**

**SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT:**  
**Riviera Nayarit  
Travel Agent  
Education Program**

### Mexican Love Potions



Occidental Hotels & Resorts offers wedding programs fit for a princess.

nighttime entertainment and dancing, and great activity programs ranging from dance classes to guided walks.

Sandos' *Wedding-Your-Way* package, priced at \$1,100 (to be added to an all-inclusive stay), comes with all the essentials for a simple but beautiful ceremony: the judge, paperwork arrangements, decor, wedding cake, a romantic dinner for the bride and groom, and breakfast in bed the morning after. The couple is presented with a special basket of "Just Married" shirts, aromatherapy products and a framed picture of their happy day. They also get special discounts on both spa treatments and motorized sports, including parasailing—and what better way to celebrate new beginnings than by treating themselves to a bird's-eye view of the Riviera Maya?

#### Xcaret

They might not be able to stay the night here, but many of your clients will want to say their "I dos" at Xcaret Park, which offers a number of locations in which to perform wedding ceremonies as well as a commission program for agents. Among these is a clear patch in the midst of the verdant jungle lit up by tiki torches, a rustic chapel named after St. Francis of Assisi with outstanding views, or by a natural pond. A wedding at Xcaret can be intimate or a full-out bash unlike any other, with everything from live musicians to professional dancers adding to the ambiance. Xcaret is a world unto itself, with underground rivers and an archaeological zone, so there's a good chance many of the wedding guests will spend time here before and after the wedding. In addition, Xcaret's commitment to protecting its ecosystems ensures a ceremony that is both beautiful and eco-conscious.

#### Honeymoons

*Honeymooners should not miss:*

##### #1 Esencia

Bigger is not always better in the Riviera Maya, as **Esencia Hotel** confirms. The elegant 29-suite resort is set in a cove away from the region's bustle, with exquisite accommodations made for couples in love. Private gardens, Champagne brunches and solariums add to the magic of a romantic stay. This member of **The Leading Hotels of the World** was once the home of a duchess, and the details make this obvious. Guests can enjoy a nap under a couples' palapa by the beach or a superb dining experience at its Mesoamerican-inspired restaurant, *Sal y Fuego*, while its spa makes its own salves and potions with plants from Esencia's gardens.

Clients have their choice of pampered stays here. The *Essence of Joyous Beginnings* package, starting at \$2,559 through Oct. 31, comes with three nights in a deluxe oceanview suite, a couples' massage at the organic *Aroma Spa*, a candlelit dinner for two, a bottle of Champagne, daily breakfast, and roundtrip airport transfers.

Another package here is the *Essence of Love*, which expands upon the *Joyous Beginnings* offer with a 5-night stay, an en-suite candlelit set-up on the day of arrival, and a gourmet picnic lunch prepared by Esencia's chef. This package

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### Gourmet Inclusive Reason #8: Beachfront Wedding Chapel

EL DORADO ROYALE is one of the first Gourmet Inclusive AAA Four Diamond Resorts in Mexico and was recently named one of the top 100 Hotels in the world by readers of *Condé Nast Traveler*.

EL DORADO SEASIDE SUITES is a luxuriously laid-back hotel which was recently named by *Forbes.com* one of the most romantic resorts in the world.

EL DORADO MAROMA is located on famed Maroma Beach, which was named one of the top ten beaches in the world.

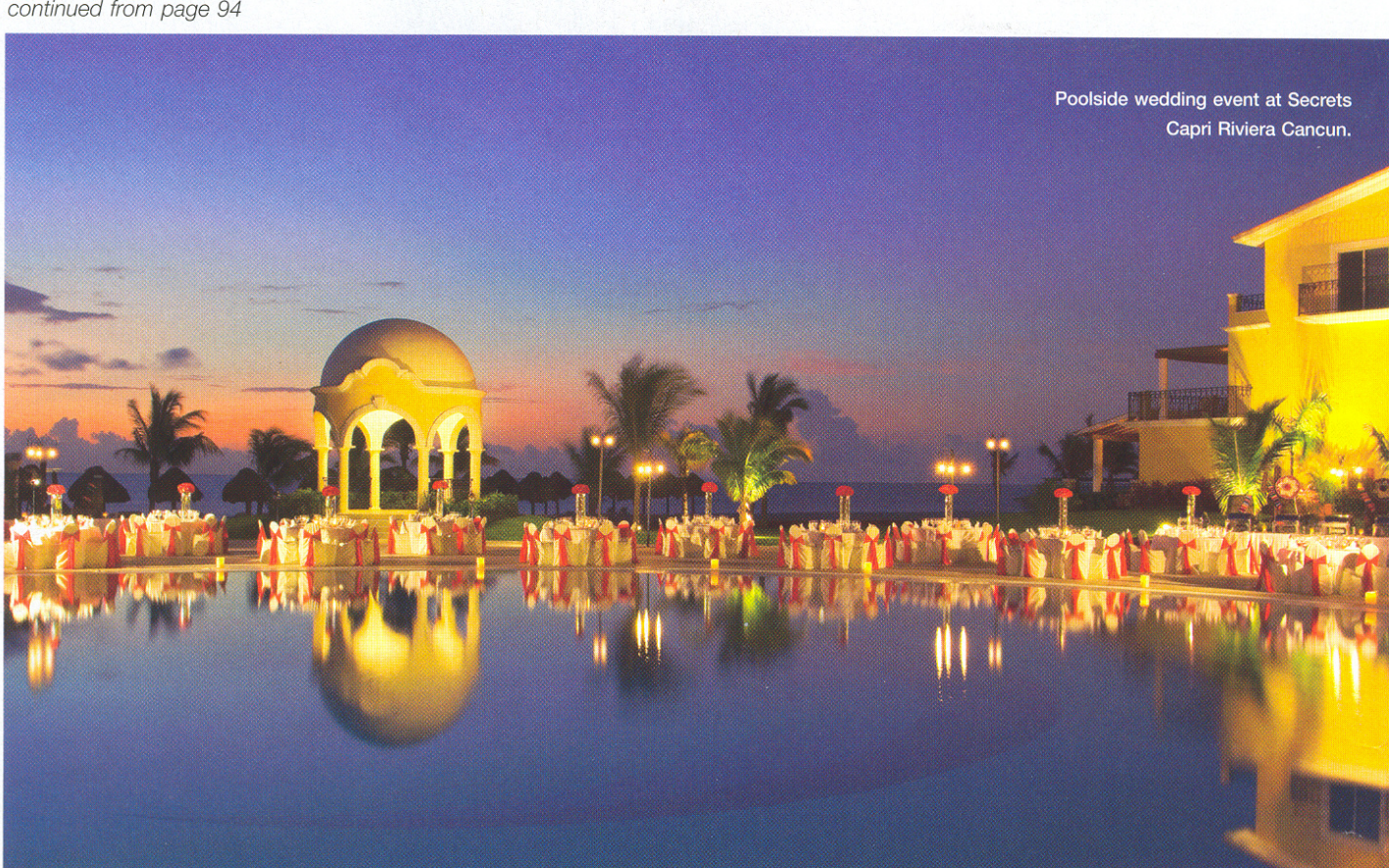
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By Karisma

### Mexican Love Potions

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Poolside wedding event at Secrets  
Capri Riviera Cancun.

starts at \$3,689 through Oct. 31. Also available here are garden suites with plunge pools.

#### #2 Cenotes

Some are out in the open, some underground. Cenotes found under the earth are especially breathtaking—collapsed sections of limestone caves that form ponds and over time fill up with crystal-clear water. Clients can easily spend a day here snorkeling and enjoying the warm waters that find their way into these sinkholes, as well as the streams of light that sneak in and the natural decor of stalactites above. Outfitters such as **Hidden Worlds** offer snorkeling tours of specially chosen cenotes in the Riviera Maya.

#### #3 Yaxche

A restaurant that calls itself a "temple of the Mayan culinary arts" needs to live up to expectations. Yaxche does not disappoint. This award-winning restaurant on 8th St. in Playa del Carmen combines Mayan and Yucatecan elements—with some touches of Old Europe—in an inspiring menu of seafood dishes (many fragrant fish wrapped in banana and chaya leaves), vegetarian entrees and honest-to-goodness Mexican flavors. This tradition extends to a decor of temple-like walls and masks, with a similar feel added to special events (including Mayan wedding celebrations, which can be arranged through Yaxche's wedding coordinator).

#### #4 Puerto Morelos

Should clients seek a slower pace after the sizzle of Playa del Carmen, have them visit the quiet town of Puerto Morelos. It's easy to explore in just a couple of hours and they'll find everything they need here, including low-key restaurants cooking up the day's catch, a hand-

ful of shops and their choice of local guides and boats that will take them to snorkel along the Palancar Reef. This unspoiled marine park is devoid of crowds but filled with fishes of practically every color, a natural aquarium that is closer to the shores of Puerto Morelos than to many other points along this coastline.

#### #5 Tulum

The best time to visit Tulum is early in the morning, before the crowds are bussed in. Tulum is the Riviera Maya's most important Mayan archaeological site and sits right by the turquoise waters of the Caribbean Sea, which allows for a quick dip on a hot day. The ruins of this walled city, as well as its prime location, suggest this was an important center within the Maya's trading route. The remains of the structures are indeed impressive—and with that great ocean as a backdrop, honeymooners will come back with a million pictures.

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

**Esencia:** (800) 561-9162; [hotelesencia.com](http://hotelesencia.com)  
**Hidden Worlds:** 52 (984) 115-4514; [hiddenworlds.com](http://hiddenworlds.com)  
**Karisma Hotels & Resorts:** (866) 527-4762; [karismahotels.com](http://karismahotels.com)  
**Occidental Hotels & Resorts:** (877) OCC-WEDS; [www.occidentalweddings.com](http://www.occidentalweddings.com)  
**Riviera Maya Tourism Promotions Board:** 52 (984) 206-3150; [rivieramaya.com](http://rivieramaya.com)  
**Sandos Hotels & Resorts:** (866) 887-5601; [sandoshotels.com](http://sandoshotels.com)  
**Secrets Capri Riviera Cancun:** (866) GOSECRETS; [secretsresorts.com](http://secretsresorts.com)  
**Yaxche:** 52 (984) 873-2502; [mayacuine.com](http://mayacuine.com)  
**Xcaret:** [xcaretweddings.com](http://xcaretweddings.com)