

Hotel Esencia: A Touch of Old World Maya in a Luxury Seaside Estate

By [Amy Sung](#) | November 27, 2012

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Take a trip to *Hotel Esencia* this holiday season, where luxury accommodations, tranquil beaches and the organic *Aroma Spa*, richly steeped in traditions of the Maya, are tucked away between *Playa del Carmen* and *Tulum* in the *Riviera Maya*.

As my traveling companions and I pulled into a long and discreet driveway off Highway 307, a man stood in front of a small Mayan hut waiting to greet us. We were welcomed and made our way through the eclectically decorated hut where we hydrated amidst the heat, and then hopped onto a golf cart that took us through some jungle before emerging onto the understatedly luxurious, 50-acre private estate of [Hotel Esencia](#) on Xpu-Ha Beach in Playa del Carmen, Mexico.



Located about 45 miles south of Cancún and approximately 20 minutes north of Tulum, Hotel Esencia, part of which was a former exclusive beachside summer villa of Rosa, Duchess of Ferrari, Italy, is a tranquil treasure among a strip of large and larger resorts. The 29-room boutique resort features accommodations for a range of discerning travelers, from spacious garden-view rooms and garden suites with private plunge pools to magnificent cottages and jaw-dropping ocean-view suites. Regardless of the room you opt for, expect to find high ceilings, crisp white walls and floors, native hardwood furnishings (including simple but extremely eye-catching artwork and amazing dream catchers strung with seashells, stones and more), mahogany sliding doors and large windows that frame tropical views. The individual white house-like structures depict a Mexican-Mediterranean feel and are surrounded by well-manicured lawns, native flora, an iguana here and there and palm trees galore. Rooms and buildings go unmarked, so as to convey the feeling of visiting a friend's house, reservations manager Maria Nataren tells me, and every morning, coffee and bread can be dropped off in a little cabinet just outside your door.



After settling into our garden suite, which featured a private outdoor plunge pool, two queen beds and a spacious bathroom featuring the shower of my dreams, I ventured out to explore the tranquil estate, enjoy the two-mile stretch of beach and of course, check out the organic [Aroma Spa](#).

Walking up to the large palapa made with the same stucco-type material Mayan pyramids are crafted from, I passed by a cauldron-like olla pot hanging over a fire and steaming with seasonal herbal tea made every morning for treatments. To my right was the spa garden where limes, aloe vera and various other herbs are grown and mixed by hand in the spa's rustic pantry kitchen for treatments. The spa cat, Alfonsia, purred by the wooden bench adorned with colorful Mexican pillows at the entrance. While four of the five treatment rooms open directly onto the garden, I received my treatment in the one that is enclosed and located in the center of the circular structure.

I was lucky enough to try the [Ritual de Limón](#) massage, an option during day one of the new ritual, spa director Ledia Camara says. The massage uses limes along with dynamic hand strokes; Mayan healers used lime, considered a natural element for purification, to energize and absorb illness and inner body heat. Whole limes were rolled over my body to create a relaxing massage and after 50 minutes (also available as an 80-minute treatment), the limes used will change in appearance and texture according to your body, Camara tells me. "If the limes become soft, this means you have a lot of body heat; if the limes are hard, you have a stiff body and stiff mind; and if they become more yellow, there is illness in the body, but not the mind," she explains. After the massage, the limes are thrown in a fire to rid of what ails you.

As well, private Jacuzzis that open out to the garden are available for use after your treatment, a perfect place to enjoy the seasonal post-treatment tea (mine was a delicious blend of apples, pears, kiwi, ginger and cinnamon).

Inspired by the [Mayan calendar](#), as an era of Mayan myth nears its cyclical completion, spa director Camara created a three-day treatment, the brand new, rejuvenating Ritual Kukulkan. Deeply rooted in Mayan tradition, the ancient ritual is an act of purification, introspection and renewal meant to transport the soul to an elevated consciousness in tune with the new era of love.

"The end of the Mayan calendar marks the end of an era of pain and fear and the start of a time of love and understanding," she says. This package was created to help people prepare their bodies, minds and spirits for that change.

Each day begins with a private Yokhah Maya session (or Mayan yoga), consisting of specific combinations of breathing exercises, hand positions, sacred sounds and physical postures of meditation, meant to induce greater harmony with the natural elements. From ancient medicinal cleanses to water massages and holistic chiropractic techniques, this journey to enlightenment sounds like one that could be a life-changing experience. Check out the details of this very spiritual experience below.

Day One – Purification

Yokhah Maya Session

- **"Limpia" with Copal Incense** – During this all-encompassing treatment, Mayan healers use sacred copal incense to cleanse the visitor's energy field. The white smoke purifies the soul and fills the surroundings with negative ions.
- **Temazcal** – Indulge your senses as a "temazcalera," a specially trained Mayan healer, assesses the needs of your body, mind and spirit. The therapist then selects specific herbs that are placed on hot stones in an enclosed sauna, infusing the air with healing aromatherapy.
- **Manteada** – In this ancient healing technique, a healer adjusts the body's positioning—aligning the spine and extremities through a routine of shaking and stretching using "rebozos," or Mexican shawls. End the therapeutic treatment with a relaxing Mayan mud massage that detoxifies the body's tissue, reduces inflammation and softens the skin.

Day Two – Introspection

Yokhah Maya Session

- **"Limpia" with Egg and Interpretation** – During this cleansing ritual, a healer specializing in "limpia con huevo" rubs a shelled egg over the surface of your body—absorbing disease and cleansing the physical being. The egg is then broken into a glass of water in preparation for the healer's interpretation. The egg reveals the type of disease or illness remedied during the cleanse.
- **Water Massage and Energy Therapy** – Unwind and reflect as a massage therapist takes you through the "janzu," an aquatic therapy that helps you to achieve the Alpha state where the mind is simultaneously alert and at peace. Guided by your therapist, the movement of your weightless body in the water releases tension in the joints.

After the janzu session, enjoy an energy stimulating reiki session that reaffirms peace and enables you to reach a level of deep relaxation and contemplation. These therapies together promote a clear mind—ideal for introspection.

Day Three – Renewal

Yokhah Maya Session

- **"Limpia" with Herbs** – After your final Yokhah Maya exercise, the ritual must end with a "limpia," during which a healer uses powerful Mexican herbs to sweep away all negative energy.
- **Baño de Reyes** – Reward yourself for your three days of hard work, evolution and transformation with a rejuvenating bath worthy of Mayan royalty. During the treatment, your body is cleansed and anointed with herbal bath coconut milk and spices. You will emerge from the three-day Ritual Kukulkan feeling renewed and in tune with the age of love.

The price for the three-day Ritual Kukulkan package is \$1,000 per person, excluding meals and accommodations. For more information visit www.hotelesencia.com or call 877-528-3490.

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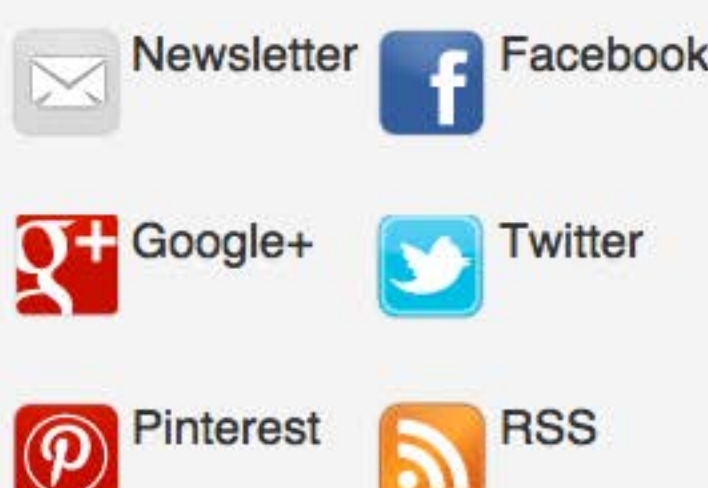
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