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THE DAILY ESCAPE

A Vacation for Your Brain

ESENCIA

Playa del Carmen, Mexico

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PLAYA DEL CARMEN, MEXICO

Once the beach retreat of a savvy Italian duchess, Esencia still exudes a certain Euro chic. Nevertheless, it revels in all things Mayan -- and manages to fuse posh lifestyle necessities with an authentic sense of place. Find local touches in the food, the spa treatments and the decor. Cottages, beachfront villas and garden-facing rooms dot 150 acres, ensuring privacy and quietude. The usual ocean resort activities are offered (yoga, diving and such), but most guests can't resist lounging on the beach in an individual palapa. An hour south of Cancun's airport, Esencia occupies the best stretch of beach along the Riviera Maya.

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