

# LA TRAVEL

*Inspiring Angelenos to Travel Near and Far*

**CELEBRITY HONEYMOON  
FEATURE WITH**

*David Henrie*

**THE EDITOR'S  
GUIDE  
TO**

*Punta Mita*

*One on One with*

*Candace Cameron Bure*

*Actress, Producer, Author and Inspirational Speaker*

This Season's Hottest Getaways: Ann Arbor, Nusa Penida, Playa del Carmen, Tri-Valley & San Juan

# CHABLÉ RESORT

## YUCATAN, MEXICO

By: Annie Biziou

Photography by: Oli Anderson

I'm floating in a freshwater cenote flanked by vine-cloaked limestone banks, with lily pads brushing against my toes. Tropical birds sing overhead from the jungle canopy, and in this canvas of vivid green and pale blue, sunlight glimmers gold through flowering mimosas and banana palms. Exploring one of some 300 sinkholes pitted in the rainforest in Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula calls for a moment of contemplation. Sacred to the Maya people, whose legacy can still be found in stone ruins and artefacts across the region, the cenotes were believed to be portals for the underworld, with mineral-rich waters said to reverse the process of ageing.

Above me lies a collection of contemporary timber and glass spa treatment suites: the beating heart of the much anticipated Chablé Resort, Mexico's newest, perhaps most opulent retreat - and the only hotel in the world that can lay claim to a spa that overlooks a cenote. Morning yoga is held on platforms at the edge of the cenote, and the floor to ceiling glass gym runs a medley of classes, including HIIT and spinning, with views through the trees. Swapping the cenote for one of the spa suites, I drift in and out of consciousness as my talented therapist performs a massage inspired by Mayan rituals, and a tropical thunderstorm brews overhead.

Owned by a Mexican family who spent years putting the finishing touches on this sprawling boutique property, Chablé Resort blends contemporary style with sensitivity to ancient Mayan custom. The grounds of Chablé were once a 19th century sisal estate, and the original hacienda now comprises the hotel's reception hub. Painstakingly restored to its former glory with sympathetic interior design by Paulina Moran, the hacienda pays homage to its past with cracked stone archways, colourful tiled floors and mirror pools created from former horse troughs. Wellness at Chablé is key, but wellness here isn't just about exercise, healthy eating and lingering on the massage table. It's about happiness in whatever form that may take; be it fine dining at Ixi'im restaurant under the direction of Mexico's most celebrated chef, Jorge Vallejo; tasting tequila from the world's largest collection; settling in at the cigar room housed in a restored outbuilding clad in fig roots, or taking a cooking class with Doña Eneida, a local cook from the nearby village of Chocholá.

Each morning, the sound of birdsong coaxes me from my gigantic bed onto the terrace of my casita. Casita is perhaps a modest word for Chablé's 40 contemporary jungle palaces, each of which overlooks a private plunge pool strung with a woven hammock and edged with a border of rough white quartz pebbles. The sky is peach-pink against a frame of tropical greenery, alive with jewel-toned birds, lizards and iguanas, and there's a jug of steaming coffee set alongside a basket of freshly baked pastisseries on the table. This is just one of many meticulous details that elevate the guest experience here; a prelude to the sublime meals served at Ki'ol, the casual restaurant edging of the resort's elegant main swimming pool.

While you won't find endless beaches in Chablé's 750 acres of manicured grounds, guests are encouraged to leave the hotel and discover this region's many inland treasures. The famous Chichen Itza and Uxmal Mayan ruins are well within reach; and the cultural capital of the Yucatan, Mérida, is just a 25-minute drive away from the hotel. A heady blend of colonial architecture, European vibes and the colourful essence of Mayan heritage, Mérida makes a business of pastel plazas, narrow streets, fascinating museums and textile shops. It's a gastronomes delight too, yielding some of the finest Yucatecan cuisine where staples include lime soup, marinated pork and grilled grouper to name a few.

Dusk laps up the blazing sun, taking with it my final evening in Mexico. As the jungle begins to cool, I wander the leafy paths back to my casita, and notice that the darkness is pinpricked with hundreds of bioluminescent glow bugs floating lazily among the trees. It's just another sprinkle of Chablé's Mayan magic, immersed in the wild jungles and crumbling walls that characterize this slice of enigmatic paradise. ■

