

## Press Coverage 2019: Chablé Resort & Spa and Chablé Maroma

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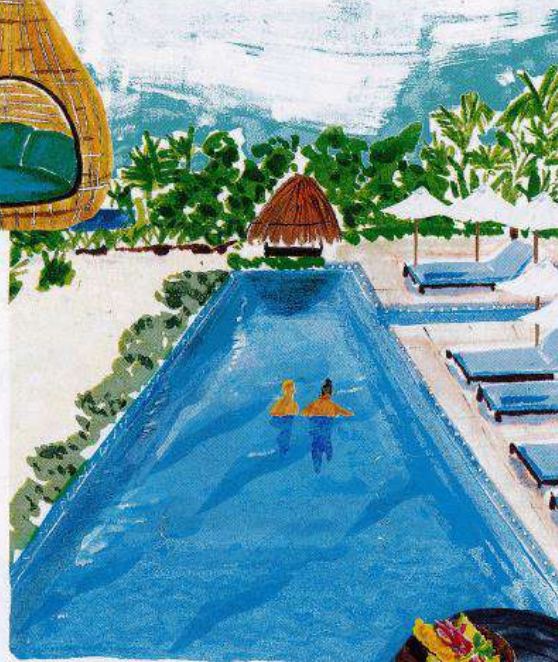
# MÉRIDA

Frankie McCoy finds a temple (or two) to wellness on Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula

Visiting the Yucatán Peninsula, the hump that bulges from Mexico's southeastern side, typically means one of two things. Either you're soaking up booze and sun at one of the all-inclusive tower blocks in Cancún's Zona Hotelera. Or you're here for the devastatingly cool hipster-Instabait of Tulum. But that leaves an awful lot of the Yucatán still to explore, which is why Chablé Resort has opened not one but two wellness retreats here: Chablé Maroma, newly opened last November on the Riviera Maya, and its two-year-old sister, Chablé Yucatán, just outside Mérida in the jungle-strewn north.

Maroma is the beach lovers' idyll: the world's second largest coral reef lies a short snorkel beyond the sunloungers, and the white sand is no less silken here than in Tulum. Leaving your room is tricky, however. There are 70 individual villas, each with a plunge pool and outside 'jungle' shower. His 'n' hers bathrooms are vast, as are the beds; the Mayan crockery and Aztec rugs covetable. A basket arrives outside your door each dawn, containing fabulous Mexican coffee and muffins to tide you over until breakfast proper. Privacy is hugely important at Chablé, and our villa was so secluded within the winding tree-lined paths that we felt ownership.

That breakfast proper was the best I've had at a hotel: fresh quesadillas, glowing huevos



rancheros and traditional chilaquiles (fried corn tortilla, cheese, salsa verde). Beats claggy buffet scrambled eggs any day. At both resorts, we were more taken by the casual restaurants than their fancier tasting-menu counterparts Bu'ul (Maroma) and Ixi'im (Yucatán). Chablé's chilled vibe seems more suited to sharing guacamole than fiddly amuse-bouches.

Post-breakfast... well, wellness. The outdoor spa, all dried grass roof and cool stone floors, has hot and cold Jacuzzis as well as treatment rooms for massages that nudge you past relaxed, into nirvana.

But as general manager Rocco of Chablé Yucatán puts it, Chablé is about 'inner wellness.'

You can get a massage anywhere.' And I found the older retreat, a four-hour

drive west, even more conducive to deep-seated wellbeing. Thirty-three villas sit around a gorgeous old hacienda in 700-acre grounds. So there is lots of space, and you can float from hi-tech gym to wellness restaurant to spa-fuelling cenote (one of the high-definition freshwater pools dotted around the area in which you can swim and where morning yoga takes place) without encountering another soul besides the wildlife. Chablé means 'anteater' in Mayan and while we didn't see any long-snouted sloths, racoons and pelicans swirl around Maroma while iguanas laze at Yucatán.

You know the drill: while you could while away a week in a state of hypernatural poolside bliss, exploring is expected. You must visit a cenote. The beautifully unspoilt Kantun Chi cenote (actually four pools within a park) is a 40-minute drive south of Maroma, with seafood shack La Floresta perfectly placed mid-way for marlin tostadas.

At Yucatán, there is the colourful chaos of Mérida, the capital of the state of Yucatán, for strolling through beautiful colonial-era squares and mescal-sipping at Apoala bar. Mayan ruins are, obviously, de rigueur: we paused on the four-hour drive from Yucatán to Cancún at Chichén Itzá, although had we another day we'd have opted for the less tourist-thronged Uxmal an hour south.

A week in the Yucatán and we barely scratched the surface. Cancún and Tulum, eat your heart out.

Frankie was a guest of Chablé Resort. Villas at Chablé Maroma start at £522 per night; casitas at Chablé Yucatán start at £770 per night (chableresort.com)

