

RIVIERA MAYA

BY KIM-MARIE EVANS

Tourist-friendly luxury awaits at a collection of special members-only resorts.



The Call of the Sea

The Riviera Maya is the new hot spot for Greenwich families looking for that mythical combination of perfect weather, authentic culture and travel ease

Not long ago, the Riviera Maya didn't even have a name; it was just a long stretch of pristine seashore dotted with fishing villages. With the white sands and turquoise waters of the Caribbean and the warm embrace of the Mexican culture, this sliver of paradise from Tulum to the border of Belize is your next getaway.

The latest trend in luxury travel is the resort within a resort, exclusive access and service tucked behind a velvet rope. Vidanta, a company owning a collection of seven members-only luxury resorts along the Mexican coastline, operates a five-hotel resort just outside the buzzing town of Playa del Carmen. Every inch of the 1,000 acres of jungle and beachfront is perfectly manicured with flawless attention to detail. But the crème de la crème of rooms and amenities are reserved for members of the ultra-exclusive Grand Luxxe Residence Club.

A stay at Grand Luxxe can easily be compared to, and even exceed, a Four Seasons stay. The property is large enough that you never need to leave, yet is perfectly situated for day trips to the many nearby ruins. And make no mistake: Vidanta is not one of those massive all-inclusive resorts lacking any true sense of luxury. Nothing could be further from the truth.

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Vidanta Riviera Maya

WHAT'S TO LOVE? A LOT

THE SERVICE

There's good service and then there's the kind of service that anticipates your needs before you do. **Grand Luxxe** guests are assigned a private concierge tasked with making every minute of their vacation stress-free.

THE RECREATION

Every one of the fifteen pools on property is fabulous, but only Grand Luxxe guests are welcome at the Grand Luxxe Pool and the brand-new Beach Club, (think South Beach meets private island). **The grounds are also home to flamingo, crocodile and sea turtle sanctuaries as well as a Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course.**

THE FOOD

The cuisine at Vidanta goes far beyond fish tacos. **The Asian-fusion restaurant Gong serves dishes that can hold their own against the world famous La Chine in New York City.** Even the morning breakfast bar at Havana Moon features freshly made fare that would impress any gourmand. With seventeen

bars and restaurants, gourmet indulgences are always close by.

THE SPAS

Vidanta is not technically a destination spa. **However, its two spas, Brio and Spatium, offer everything one has come to expect—jacuzzis, thermal beds and private massage cabins. There's even a salt-therapy cabin** (the hottest trend in healing therapy for overall wellness as well as treatment for a variety of illnesses).

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

Vidanta is home to Joyà, the only permanent Cirque du Soleil show outside of Las Vegas. **Joyà is more than just a show, it's also dinner theater where 250 guests a night are seated for a magical meal** (the menus are actually edible) followed by the family-friendly Cirque show in the jungle-set theater.

MEMBERSHIPS

WHILE THE EASIEST WAY TO EXPERIENCE THE LUXURY OF VIDANTA IS TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE COLLECTIVE, **NON-MEMBERS CAN REQUEST BOOKINGS WITHIN TWENTY DAYS OF ARRIVAL DURING JUNE, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER.** VIDAVACATIONS.COM

NEARBY NATURAL ATTRACTIONS



Grand Cenote

THE GRAND CENOTE

Nearby Tulum is full of cenotes—natural swimming pools. **The Grand Cenote is one of the most well-known, and is great for families and well-equipped to handle visitors.** You'll find it off the side of the road near downtown Tulum (the entrance fee is 150 pesos or \$10 U.S.). For an additional fee, you can rent snorkel gear, life vests and lockers. The cenote itself is a series of caves connected by waterways, so you can swim from one end to the other. And there are buoys to hold onto for little ones or nervous swimmers. The water is crystal clear, giving you a stunning view of the fish below.

THE GREAT MAYA REEF

The Riviera Maya has just as much to discover under the water as it does above.

The Great Maya Reef is the largest barrier reef in the Western Hemisphere and the second-largest coral reef in the world. It extends more than 600 miles from the top of the Yucatan Peninsula all the way down to Honduras. There is easy snorkeling up and down the coast and when you're through exploring, plenty of amazing spots for dining—all just minutes from the resort.

TULUM RUINS

These aren't the most spectacular of the Mayan ruins, but they are nearby on the coastline. And think of it this way: **A day spent wandering the ruins allows you to say that you didn't work on your tan the entire vacation.** The concierge will book a private transfer.



Tulum ruins



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