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Villa del Palmar: Dream time on the Sea of Cortez, Loreto, Mexico.

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Villa Del Palmar: Dream time on the Sea of Cortez, Loreto, Mexico

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A week at the Villa del Palmar – or a weekend getaway, if your time is short – at this sunny beach resort south of Loreto, in Mexico, can be almost anything that you want to make of it. Why? Because the Villa Del Palmar, on one of the Gulf of California’s most spectacular blue bays, is the only resort on this isolated curve of sand, a blank slate waiting to be written on. There are no next-door resorts to compare to; no restaurants, street stalls or souvenir shops to define it. Delivery trucks, blaring music and noisy traffic are the rule elsewhere in Mexico. But not here, at the foot of the rugged Sierra de la Giganta range. The Villa Del Palmar stands alone, the first, the only – and one hopes the last – resort to ever occupy what is surely one of Baja California’s last virgin coastlines.



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If you’re an adventurer at heart, bored when you sit too long, start the day with a sunrise hike in the hills behind the resort. Work out in the gym, take a yoga class, or join a “mindfulness” clinic. Jog along the Villa Del Palmar’s private quarter-mile of shoreline or work up a sweat digging for edible “chocolate” clams. Paddle board off the beach, following the shoreline if you’re a novice, or if you’re an expert, crossing the bay itself. Make kayaking part of your daily routine: the kayaks wait on the beach, ready to be launched.

If you're a snorkeler or diver, expect an outstanding experience. Local outfitters lead guided excursions into the adjacent Loreto Bay National Marine Park, famed for its pristine waters, numerous dive sites and spectacular marine life. Years ago, when marine conservationist and scuba diver Jacques Cousteau first explored the region, discovering vast numbers of fish, whales, porpoises, sea birds and other marine species, he told the world that he'd found an unknown treasure, "the world's aquarium," as he described it.

Instrumental in the effort to save the Sea of Cortez, the "North American Galapagos," Cousteau led the effort to ensure national and global environmental protection for the area. Most dive trips anchor near Isla Coronado first, moving on to one or two of the other nearby islets – Carmen, Danzante, Montserrat or Santa Catalina – each famous for rocky coves, powdery white sand beaches and clear water with visibility between 25 and 50 feet. There's sport fishing here, too, for legally caught species, including dorado, sailfish, marlin, rooster fish and yellow-fin tuna.

But the Villa del Palmar isn't just for Type A travelers. Guests who prefer solitude and open skies can catch up on their reading, write poetry, float in one of the resort's three pools, walk on the beach or lounge under a palm tree. The natural surroundings, rugged mountains, semi-desert landscapes and long views are ideal for sketching, water color painting, bird watching, photography and on-the-beach spa treatments.

The evening's festivities, with music and a choice of restaurants, is when the resort employees go all out to entertain guests. Three restaurant choices offer both casual family-style fare and fine dining, with an extensive menus listing a wide variety of Mexican and continental dishes. Or you can take advantage of your unit's fully equipped kitchens and eat some of your meals "at home."

Though the resort buildings look large and the gardens and pools cover acres, having just 181 units means that it never feels crowded. The units, air conditioned and furnished, range in size from studios to three-bedroom villas and luxury suites. Some ocean view units have balconies. All are in the timeshare program, and either in the rental pool or available for purchase.

When should you come? It's pleasant year around on the Gulf, with mild winters (and chilly nights), to hot summers. The water temperatures also vary, often depending on changes in local currents. All-inclusive rates include meals and most bar and pool drinks; for many visitors, this is the carefree way to go. Or you can pay for your room and dining individually. Other restaurants, shopping and sightseeing are in the historic town of Loreto, 30-40 minutes away by bus or taxi. For more mobility or to explore further, rent a car. For more, go to www.villadelpalmarloreto.com.

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