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Hotel Esencia, Tulum - review

You'll find you never want to leave this this boutique hideaway on the Caribbean coast of Mexico, says Kate Lough

KATE LOUGH | Wednesday 30 March 2016 |  4 comments



Is it cocktail time?

In short, this place is heaven. Caribbean coastline, super chic

design, the most attentive staff and top grub make it a holiday you'll never want to leave.

Where is it? On the Riviera Maya, stretching languorously across Xpu-Ha beach, a 25 minutes from chic Tulum. It's an easy drive from Cancun airport - just over an hour in a straight line.

Style: The hotel was originally built as the private home of an Italian duchess - a pretty white-washed hideaway set back from the beach. Suites and villas are dotted around the perfectly manicured grounds, sticking to the same white aesthetic. The luxury boutique hotel has recently emerged from an 18 month revamp and now boasts two private villas to rent, too.

The guest rooms are characterised by chic and minimal all-white interiors with drops of colour afforded by sofas, chairs and stationery. Carefully curated contemporary art and design books are joined by custom handwoven rugs from Mexico which you'll want to take home and luxurious Italian bed linen.



Chic all-white interiors with midcentury details

Facilities: There's an impressive, Mayan-inspired spa (more on this below), a treehouse on the beach for juice and cocktails, a stylish boutique selling high end swimwear brands like Lisa Marie Fernandez and proper Panama hats, two swimming pools (one adults only) and a health club with private trainers, Reformer Pilates and even a yoga deck, which puts on sunrise classes.

Which room? We stayed in a garden suite which was a secluded oasis of bliss. A short few minutes from the beach and pool, our top floor suite had a big terrace with a sofa for two and a table for pre-dinner cocktails and late night card games, a spacious bedroom and a bathroom with a separate double shower, dressing room and the piece de la resistance: a vast glass door which slid back to reveal our private plunge pool. A square of pale turquoise surrounded by whitewashed walls and planters which can be heated up on request - it just takes a dial of the retro telephone to your concierge.



Private plunge pool in a garden suite

There are copies of Vogue and TIME magazine to leaf though after

you've rinsed the day's sand off and a minibar with complimentary water and juices. Your room will also come with Havaianas (ours both fit perfectly despite not having given our sizes) and a stripy beach bag. There are lots of extra lovely touches like the turn down service, where staff leave little presents on your bed like illustrated postcards and little chocolate turtles.



Private terrace attached to a garden suite

They also have beach view rooms and a pool villa for families as well as hotel-managed private villas for those that want the best of both worlds: Bel-Ha and Xpu-Ha. The latter is the jewel in the Esencia crown with space for 21 people, a huge pool, BBQ area, hammocks and its own stretch of Caribbean coastline.

Food and drink: This was one of our favourite aspects of the hotel - not least because it was served by the most charming, friendly staff. Each day would be started with fresh coffee and miniature homebaked pastries, delivered to our room at a time of our choosing - and eaten beside our private plunge pool, toes dipped in the cool water. Then, after bagging our cabana at the beach, we'd

saunter a few yards back to the poolside restaurant for breakfast, part two: fresh juices, Greek yoghurt with stewed fruit and homemade granola - or eggs and bacon if we were feeling hungrier.



Juice against a backdrop of pretty tiles at breakfast

Then it was back to the beach, waiting until it was acceptable to order our first margarita on the rocks. For lunch we'd order plates of fish ceviche, grilled prawns, fish tacos and bowls of fresh guac to our sun loungers. The ultimate in luxury.



An avocado dish from the Esencia restaurant

Spa: Built in the style of a Mayan circular hut, the Aroma Spa is very special. There are separate treatment areas for men and women, cool and hot Jacuzzis and it takes its inspiration from ancient Mayan culture. You start in the lab where therapists tailor make restorative programmes for you, using ingredients taken from the nearby Caribbean waters and the surrounding jungle. Treatments include the Lime Ritual, Hot Stone massage and Chocolate baths for kids.

Extra-curricular: You'll be tempted just to hole up in Esencia but there is plenty to do and see around the area. Highlights include swimming and canoeing in crystal clear cenotes - natural sinkholes unique to the area, exploring the boutiques and restaurants in chi-

chi Tulum - Posada Margerita and Gitano were our favourites - and of course a historical visit to the Mayan ruins overlooking Tulum beach are a must.

Best for: Couples and families.

Any downsides? A lot of seaweed is currently blowing in from Sargasso and piling up on the otherwise pristine beach, but Esencia has a team of guys working round the clock to clear it up and keep you view Instagram-perfect.



A beach cabana

When should you go? Weather wise, it stays pretty constant on the Riviera Maya, although you'll probably want to avoid hurricane season which runs from July to September. Peak season for crowds is between January and March.

Price: Garden suites from \$620 plus taxes per night on a B&B basis

Details: hotelesencia.com. Virgin Atlantic flies to Cancun from London Gatwick from around £460.

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DianaOrizaga

12 days ago

Sounds its a one of the nice place to stay for a while. Some of my friends are planning for a Mexico tour and I will share this review with them maybe they like to stay here. Already they booked the flight and a transport company as "Nasttransfers" for a vehicle. Hope they will have the best tour ever.

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kwendle1

19 days ago

We love this wonderful review of Hotel Esencia! On behalf of all of us at here thanks so much for the nice words of support. We are a small family operation and as you kindly noted we aim for perfection here on this spectacular stretch of near private coastline. Regarding the seaweed, I'm happy to report that it's now gone and our pristine white beach is back to beautiful!

Please come back and see us anytime -- it's normally really lovely through the end of summer though late afternoon tropical thundershowers are not uncommon at the end of August and into September. Thanks again for your kind words!

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**noelurbain**

20 days ago

Beautiful Hotel, we have been here working (with <http://www.cancunairporttransportations.com>) and for pleasure, the place is quite amazing and has everything you need. And yes, it is actually called Escencia :)

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0 likes  **Eve**

20 days ago

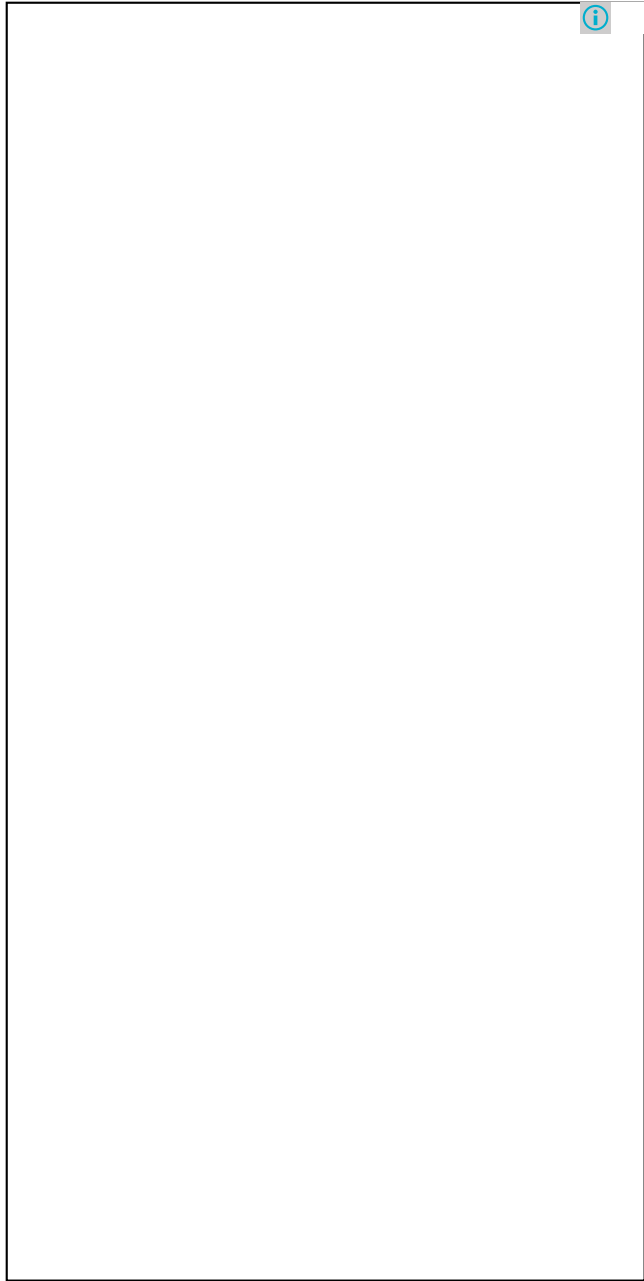
Hi Kate, the correct name is Hotel Esencia, is not Hotel Escenia.

Great article about Riviera Maya!!

Kind regards,

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