

# S BLS

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REFRESH AND REFUEL

# back on Baja

MONTAGE LOS CABOS MESMERIZES  
IN EVERY WAY POSSIBLE

by DELANEY WILLET



**I**n distressing times, it calms me to dissociate, to daydream. I transport myself to another time and place, what seems like another dimension, where whales tread the water over which I glide and the embrace of the sun never releases me, not even, it seems, in the balmy, breezy nightfall. My current escape is Montage Los Cabos, which inhabits the former site of the world-famous Twin Dolphin on the carved coast of Baja.

I first stepped foot on property in its infancy, during their soft opening almost three years ago. Not even fully formed, the space and its staff offered a flawless experience. When revisiting I worry that, if anything, I have set my expectations too high by judging the property on its first performance, when only I and four other families called upon the staff. The Montage of today pales my initial (still flawless!) experience in comparison. The gem of a property, now alive with families, honeymooners, and residents alike, refracts twelve hours of brilliant, dancing sun, setting this slice of the world aflame in celebration of natural beauty and community.

Days begin at 5:30 by my choosing. I cannot imagine losing even an hour participating in all that the Montage has to offer. Sunrise kayaks depart at 6 a.m., leaving more than enough time to paddle out at my leisure, be rocked (nearly back to sleep) by the gentle lapping of early tides, and marvel at the sun cresting the horizon.

Vacation may not be the place for existential epiphanies, but the middle of the ocean in early morning certainly is. Encloded in the first golden embers of the day—and a life jacket, of course—I am dwarfed and humbled, awed by the surreality of an everyday event. The day's progression brushes the landscape, punctuated by neon cacti and infinity edges, which swallow surfaces in reflections of the sky.

Montage is one of the first resorts in Cabo to adopt modern, minimalist architecture. Defined by clean lines and muted tones, the buildings capitalize upon texture and material—like the behemoth sand-colored marble staircase cascading from the lobby—to communicate quality and deference to the divine land on which they rest. Intentionally blank spaces allow Baja to speak for itself. The unwallled stretch of the lobby that faces the ocean, or the uninhibited views of the bay and its twin mountains unfurl as a tapestry, painted and repainted each day with the visual tales of this cove.

A bountiful breakfast unfolds at Mezcal, the resort's upscale eatery, which serves inventive local cuisine come dinner. Each morning, Mezcal's French pastry chef concocts a cornucopia of confections, making up their signature pastry box. Warning: no bread basket will suffice again. Depending on the day's

specials, I choose from about eight different delights, consisting of cinnamon rolls, kouign amann, conchas, or the world's best blueberry muffins (if you don't believe me, try for yourself). Flourishes of fruit follow, with the juice of the day close behind. If there was ever a time to indulge, this is the place to do so. Yet, when such indulgences include fresh pineapple, green smoothies, and a touch of lemon curd filling, they fall strictly under the category of self-care, and thus consumption is compulsory.

It seems my days are ruled by my eating schedule, which, to be clear, is around the clock. Breakfast is obviously followed by my first Casa Dragonos Ginger Margarita, which precedes lunch, which I wash down with a popsicle. The on-property coffee shop, Paletas, crafts artisan ice cream bars (think Orange Mezcal and Coconut Cream with Mango Jelly) that fuel an affinity for sweet treats I did not know I possessed. At 4 p.m. each day, Paletas moves poolside with a popsicle cart that dethrones the neighborhood ice cream man. An excuse to remain poolside until at least 4 p.m. plus free dessert? I guarantee you I will be there every day.

A playground of pools characterizes the hotel's bayside. Cabanas are furnished with their own plunge pools, and the flat screens tucked behind the swim-up bar flip between international sporting events. The adult pool takes the shape of two infinity lagoons and two jacuzzis that cuddle up against the expanse of the bay, allowing me to take in whale tails and spouts with a cocktail in hand. Each time a majestic mammal is spotted, children rush down from the kids' pool—perched above and equipped with a view just as spectacular, as well as sunken couches fit for a doze—toring the 'whale bell.' Whales migrate through the area from fall until early spring each year and take a particular liking to the welcoming shores of Montage's bay.

What I find to be the most attractive facet of this dynamic property is its ability to appeal to all ages, to convey both sophistication and playfulness that bolster each other instead of subtracting from the overall ambiance. Montage properties worldwide have pioneered a merit badge program for the kiddos (or very enthusiastic, very competitive, adult significant others) that keeps young travelers active and engaged during their stay. For each challenge completed (kayaking, hiking the Twin Dolphin Trail, catching a fish), a badge is rewarded and proudly worn on lanyards provided by the resort. If someone completes every badge before departure, they are said to have "conquered" Baja and receive an extra-large merit badge proving their triumph. Kids are relieved of the boredom that adults yearn for while on vacation, parents earn a few hours of quiet time on their lounge chairs, and I get to finish reading my book while my boyfriend tries to catch a fish with his bare hands and a cup full of tortilla chips.

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While I need no incentive to dip into the crystalline waves, Montage's menagerie of water gadgets makes the salt water positively irresistible. With one of the only swimmable bays in an area becoming increasingly populated by hotels, Montage holds a monopoly on water sports that is cemented by their construction of a beachfront diving center. An excursion outpost is also being built alongside the resort's boutique and will offer 8-hour ATV trips and snorkeling adventures.

A raft the size of a putt-putt golf course carries me out to sea, my own desert island. Here, I gaze into twenty-foot depths that I would otherwise have to tread and still be fully submerged in the rich marine life that thrives just feet from Montage's shores. I float ashore and disembark less gracefully than I would have liked other beachgoers to witness, but no matter! The Veuve Clicquot lawn games and oceanside champagne cart metaphorically cushion my fall. Montage's ongoing partnership with the iconic champagne label brings cornhole, ping-pong, giant Connect Four, and Jenga to the beaches of Cabo, all branded in Veuve's (and Montage Los Cabos') signature orange hue. I recommend you wash down losses and wins as I did—with a frosty glass of bubbles. Who knew seafoam and champagne foam paired so nicely?

Of all the incredible collaborations hatched on this property, the resort's Thai food truck may bear my favorite success story of them all. Talay began as a pop-up without a name, manned by Thai chef Marc Narongchai Muangkaew, who knew no Spanish upon his arrival in Los Cabos. Within months, the restaurant has earned a concrete placement at the Montage and Chef Marc has been named the number one new culinary talent of Cabo. The chef's dedication to authentic Thai cuisine while maintaining the integrity of traditional Mexican ingredients is the tentpole of Talay's success. He admits that in an effort to fortify Mexican roots within this fusion fare, he studied cooking practices at Mezcal, specifically the formulation of their signature mole, and realized that the preparation of this popular Mexican sauce and his own pad thai are almost identical in ingredients and process. Each cog in the wheel that is Montage Los Cabos works tirelessly to honor and reinvent the customs of the region, as well as to source as locally as possible.



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The superior service I receive in all corners of the property is beyond description. Needs are not anticipated, but created in the sense that I did not know I needed a poolside foot massage in my spa cabana, but the spa staff certainly knew. Montage Los Cabos is home to one of the largest spas in Mexico, spanning 40,000 square feet. The sanctuary encloses a boundless outdoor pool, palatial enough to be the resort's sole means of soaking. The soothing refuge is healing in its own right. My CBD Four Hands Massage is performed in synchronicity by two therapists who must have been dancers in their youth. The sheer artistry with which these women locate and unravel my most coiled muscles causes me to surrender to their movement within the first three minutes of my hour-long massage.

I have never been so actively relaxed than while at Montage Los Cabos (or any Montage property, for that matter). Whereas other holidays necessitate a mindless and nearly motionless state, it is partaking in Los Cabos' abundance of enterprises that ushers my physical and mental renewal. To carry on some semblance of laziness, I retire to the suite's soaking tub with a Mexican rosé. I bury myself beneath the bubbles and put off the real world for a few hours more. Though, I think this utopia is a more authentic world than the one I encounter day-to-day. In Mexico, my screen time plummeted by half. My eyes tired from squinting at the Sea of Cortez, rather than the miniscule text of a caption. My back is sore from rowing myself through the current each dawn, rather than poor posture advanced by hours on the couch, lamenting national news. In the rainy evening, an outdoor shower strikes the perfect balance between redundant and harmoniously therapeutic. The stars play ceiling, screen, and shower head as I close my eyes, not wanting the daydream to end, willing myself to remain within this dimension. \*

# WHAT to PACK



1

Take a dip in the sea while sporting the buttery soft yet supportive **So De Mel Montecito Top** + **Bella Bottom**.  
\$260, SODEMEL.COM



2

Explore the coast of Baja without sacrificing style in these durable **Seavees Coronado Espadrilles**.  
\$98, SEAVEES.COM



These cat eye **Harper Sunglasses** add a chic touch to a laid-back vacation look.  
\$178, BONITALIFESTYLE.COM

3

4

Just one spritz of the fruity and floral **Jo Malone Yellow Hibiscus Cologne** will leave you feeling fresh and oh-so tropical.  
\$74, JOMALONE.COM



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