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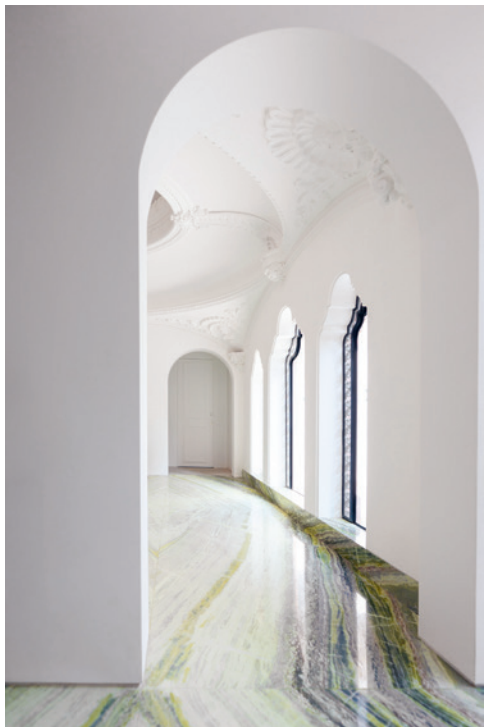
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Salone del Mobile's
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The Ozarks plays host
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MEXICO NOW



Soulful, sunny and sophisticated, the country's hospitality scene has never been better, with coastal enclaves and cities alike turning into world-class destinations // By Bruce Wallin



MEXICAN SCENES

From left: whitewashed alcoves in Casa Polanco; Monte Uzulu, San Agustínillo; Habitas Bacalar on its eponymous lake; Enrique Olvera's Carao at One&Only Mandarin, Riviera Nayarit



by superyacht from Costa Palmas, the historic port town of La Paz is the jumping-off point for epic excursions ranging from whale-shark diving in the Sea of Cortez to sandboarding in the coastal dunes. The 1950s-era *Perla* (hamakhotels.com) – John Steinbeck's novella *The Pearl* is set in the city – is reopening in October after a top-to-bottom refit. The landmark property sits on the *malecón* (esplanade) at the base of the Queen's Pier, named in tribute to Queen Elizabeth II's 1983 visit to La Paz.

THE CITIES

While their beach-resort brethren have long been the favorite ones – especially in the era of social distancing – Mexico's myriad metropolises are primed for a popularity boost, anchored by a new wave of eye-catching hotels from Monterrey to San Miguel de Allende.

The capital kicked things off last October with the debut of **The Ritz-Carlton, Mexico City** (ritzcarlton.com). Perched high in a tower above Paseo de Reforma and Chapultepec Park, the financial-district newcomer affords inspiring views from every room, most of all the sprawling terrace of the nearly 2,000-square-foot Ritz-Carlton Suite. Opening this spring, **Casa Polanco** (casapolanco.com) provides an alternative view of the capital, occupying a 1940s mansion in the city's luxury-retail-and-restaurant epicenter. The neocolonial villa underwent an exhaustive restoration and conversion led by architect Claudio Gantous and mother-daughter interior designers Monica Romo and Monica Novelo. The result is an exclusive 19-room retreat filled with period antiques and intimate amenities like a private restaurant and honour bar.

The perennially – and deservedly – popular city of San Miguel de Allende is also witnessing a compelling conversion with the

OAXACAN BY DESIGN

Indigenous textiles, black pottery, colourful wooden alebrijes – Oaxaca's inimitable arts and crafts have long lured professional decorators to this culturally rich southern state. The region's revered artistic traditions are on display at a trio of new boutique hotels, from the cobblestoned colonial heart of the capital city to the rugged tropical shores of the Pacific coast. Set in a 17th-century mansion near Oaxaca City's central plaza, **HOTEL SIN NOMBRE** (hotelsinnombre.com) opened as a 22-room retreat in 2020 after a meticulous restoration led by Portuguese architect João Boto Caeiro. A central courtyard connects to a grand staircase lined with Teotitlán del Valle textiles by Oaxacan master Rey David. Elsewhere, discover a contemporary (read: neon) interpretation of a traditional Mixtec goldsmith design by local artist Sabino Guisu and black-and-white nudes by photographer Alberto "El Negrito" Ibáñez.

Marketers have rendered the phrase small Mexican fishing village meaningless over the years, but San Agustínillo is the real deal. The languid Oaxacan coastal town unfolds over a series of three bays backed by the jungles of the Sierra Madre del Sur mountains. **MONTE UZULU** (monteuzulu.com), which debuted in 2020, offers views of both jungle and sea from its 11 bohemian suites. Mexico City studio Taller LU'UM sourced works from throughout the country for the wood-and-stone spaces, which include macuili furniture by local carpenters and hand-woven bedspreads from Teotitlán del Valle.

Opened last year in the surf city of Puerto Escondido, **CASONA SFORZA** (casonasforza.com) features rugs from Teotitlán del Valle, textiles from Oaxaca Valley, and glassware, pottery and cabinetry from the local workshops of Pueblo del Sol, a sustainable community project that the hotel helps support. Eleven suites are set within an elegantly asymmetrical amalgam of arches and vaults by the Mexican architect Alberto Kalach. Head out from your suite for surfing, whale watching and other Pacific-based pursuits, as well as immersive full-day art tours of Pueblo del Sol.