

GENTRY DESTINATIONS

RESORTS | HOMES | TRAVEL | ADVENTURE



JUNE-JULY 2017

TIME TO GET AWAY!!!

Whether you're up for an around-the-globe tour or a quick road trip, we have you covered in this issue of *Gentry Destinations*. Writer Heide Betz finds a delightful weekend on California's Riviera—sunny Newport Beach (*Destination O.C.*, page 84), while LAFACE Beauty Founder and CEO Lisa Alexander shares her insider tips for exploring the original Riviera on the Cote d'Azur (*My Favorite . . . French Riviera*, page 90).

Photographer and author Russell Abraham hits the open road and discovers the majesty and wonder of Southern Utah (*Ultimate Road Trip*, Page 70). Travel expert Fredric Hamber heads to Mexico's Yucatán in search of rest, relaxation, and rejuvenation and finds all three at Chablé Resort (*Immersing in the Waters of the Yucatán*, page 78). And Diane Dorrans Saeaks jets off to northern India for a Bengal tiger safari (*Adventures in Tiger Territory*, page 36).

We hope you have as much fun reading about these destinations as we did putting this issue together.



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CORRY COOK
Senior Editor

This month I had the epic privilege of visiting two sensational Idaho destinations. McCall's Whitetail Club is for those 3rd and 4th home gurus who love luxury perfectly paired with boots on the ground adventure. Lakefront and state of the art, the new clubhouse is worth the entire price of admission to this exclusive members-only affair. Next, I stopped in to try out Sun Valley's sensational new Duchin Lounge. It's a whole new take on a sophisticated celebrity-filled classic. Idaho is hot, hot, hot!



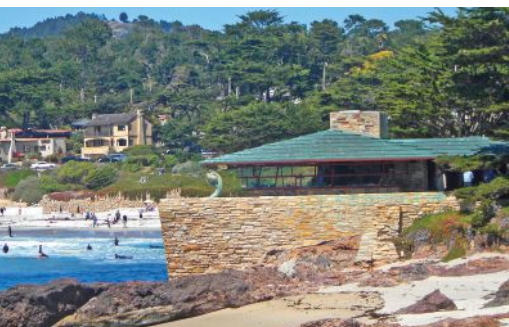
FREDRIC HAMBER
Contributing Writer

The combination of the brand new and the always-been-there at Chablé Resort meant fresh discoveries at every turn. I loved finding—by happenstance rather than intention—a tiny Spanish Colonial chapel. When visiting, don't miss a day trip to the flamingo mangroves on the coast.



DIANE DORRANS SAEKS
Contributing Writer

I always love the opportunity to go to India. This month I highlight Aman-i-Khas. It is "safari light," with luxury tents, very elegant, and morning and evening game drives. The goal there is to protect Bengal tigers, which were nearing extinction until about 12 years ago. Happily, there are 60 within this large, wild reserve now.



Carmel Heritage Society's House & Garden Tour | June 24, 2017

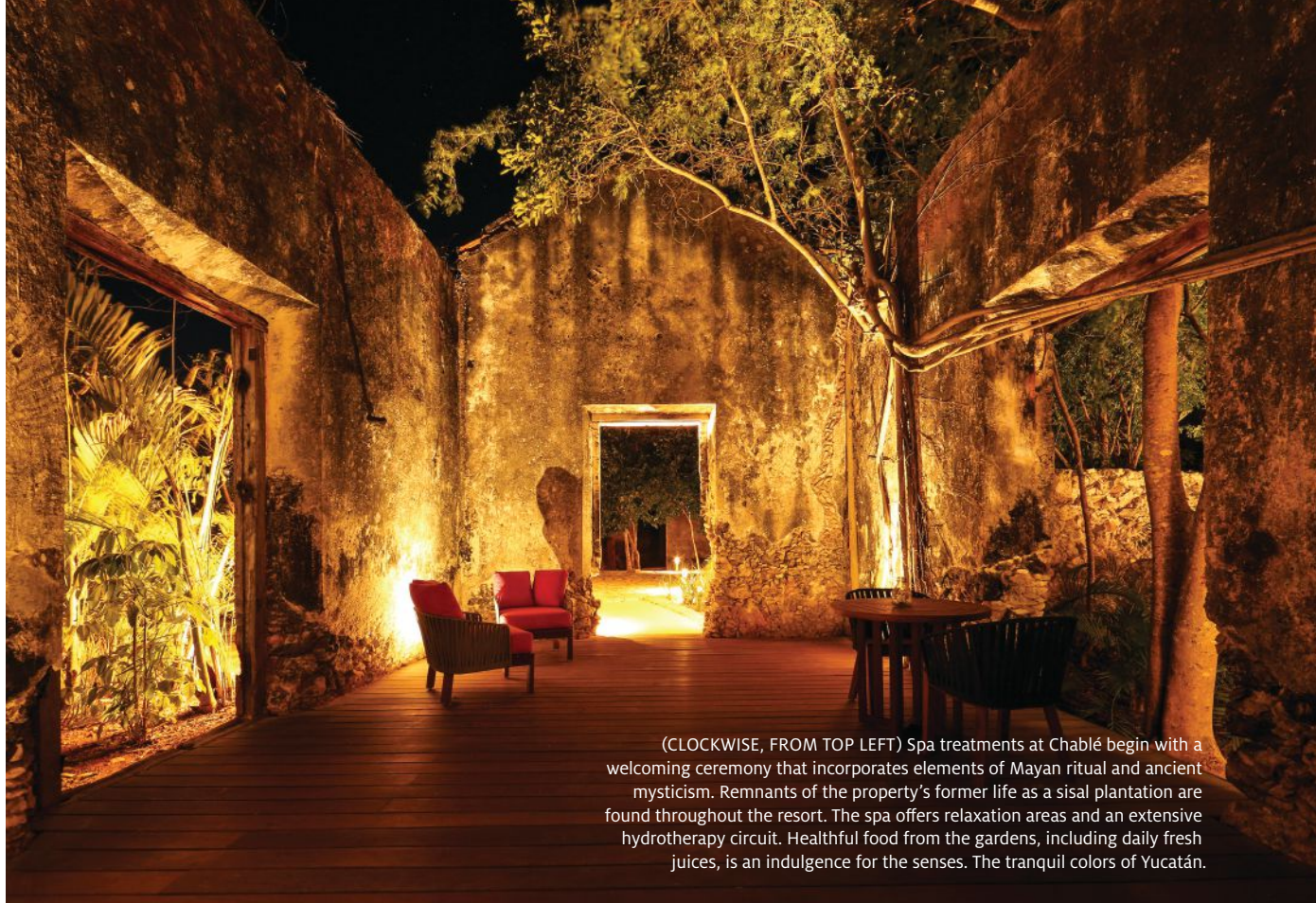
Mark your calendars for this highly anticipated fundraiser in the always charming Carmel-by-the-Sea. Frank Lloyd Wright's iconic coastal masterpiece will be just one of the homes on view. The legendary architect built the home in 1948 for Mrs. Clinton Walker. Walker's specifications were that the house be made of Carmel chalk rock facing the bay, to be as durable as the rocks along the coast, and as transparent as the waves. This tour offers an insider's glimpse of how Wright did exactly that. Other featured houses this year include the Harrell House (built in 1931 for World War II General Ben Harrell and his wife), architect Henry Hill's contemporary "C'est La Vie" estate, and the first Murphy House in Carmel. In 1902, Michael Murphy constructed the first of many cottages in Carmel. Over the years, he had a significant influence on the character and architecture of the village. Saturday, June 24, 2017. 1PM – 5PM. For tickets and more information, visit www.carmelheritage.org.

IMMERSING IN THE WATERS OF YUCATÁN

Gentry Destinations reports on an 18th-century hacienda that has been transformed into a luxury spa.

STORY BY
FREDRIC HAMBER





(CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT) Spa treatments at Chablé begin with a welcoming ceremony that incorporates elements of Mayan ritual and ancient mysticism. Remnants of the property's former life as a sisal plantation are found throughout the resort. The spa offers relaxation areas and an extensive hydrotherapy circuit. Healthful food from the gardens, including daily fresh juices, is an indulgence for the senses. The tranquil colors of Yucatán.





(CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT)
Ixi'im restaurant, with its collection of 3,000 bottles of tequila, overlooks the resort's gardens. Each of the 38 spacious casitas and two villas includes a private pool. Mexican lime turkey soup is among the regional culinary specialties on offer. Interior of one of the newly built casitas. Morning yoga class is held next to the natural waters of the cenote. Glass walls surrounded by native greenery add to the sense of privacy in guest rooms.





“**T**his little plant made Yucatán the richest state in the country.” Yamuna, a healer and massage therapist, is guiding me on a hike through the historic grounds of Chablé Resort in the state of Yucatán, Mexico. We’ve paused near a sisal plant, the spiky-leaved species of agave used to make rope, twine, and rugs. The 19th-century sisal boom ended with the invention of new methods for manufacturing rope. But the riches of the place remain in its ground waters that nurture the sisal plants, as well as its layers of history on the resort property, an 18th-century hacienda that has recently undergone a makeover as a destination spa resort.

The longer I stayed, the deeper the layers drew me in—quite literally in the case of the waters, which we’ll get to in a moment. Roaming the property, my eyes began to notice, at the base of some limestone rock or boulder, an occasional crevice near which a few coins or cocoa beans (the Mayan equivalent of coins) had been left, in keeping with the local custom of appeasing the gnomes who are believed to inhabit those small spaces. One evening at cocktail hour as a violin duo played on the veranda of the main house, I sat sipping one of bartender Rudy’s martinis and gazing at a decorative water-and-plant-filled trough before realizing that it was originally not decorative but functional, designed to water cattle who once were kept in the enclosed square, which is now just the lushest expanse of lawn imaginable.

Lushness is a thing at Chablé. It comes from the waters under the rocky ground that every few millennia open to create *cenotes* (pronounced “say-note-ays”), the natural sinkhole pools that are a feature of the Yucatán topography. Chablé’s spa is built around the resort’s cenote—picture a large pond with individual treatment cabins looking down upon it. There’s an herbal steam room and a water therapy course of hot-, medium-, and cold-plunges, as well as a pool that is lined not with white gunite but with marble of a soft green hue chosen to approximate that of the cenote.

The 18th-century stone buildings with hand-painted tile floors have been repurposed as the resort’s public areas. Guest accommodations are 40 new casitas, including a three-bedroom Presidential Villa complete with screening room. Each has its own private pool with a hammock hanging jauntily above, beckoning an hour-long afternoon nap. There is a delicious aroma from the walnut woodwork, and the glass walls are surrounded by a scrim of trees that provide privacy and the sense of being cocooned deep in the Mayan jungle. For the benefit of insect-ophobes, I feel compelled to report that I saw no creepy crawlers in my room or anywhere else during my stay.

Each evening the next day’s agenda was left by housekeeping at my bedside during turndown service, printed on thin paper with the weather forecast (“65°F – 86°F / a beautiful mix of clouds and sun”), a one-paragraph tidbit of local history or folklore, and a description of the juice of the day.

Since my name was also printed at the top I had a jolt of fear the first time I read it: “8:30AM, Mayan Ceremony of the Ka’anches; 9AM, Running Club; 10AM, Yoga by the Cenote; 11AM, Cross Training with Carlos; 12PM, Pilates with Ursula; 3PM, Mind & Body Cycling at the Gym; 4PM Walk starting from Casita Roja . . .” It promised to be a challenging day. I relaxed when I realized these were simply the offerings from which I could choose the one or two—or none—that appealed. Lazing in and around the various pools before and after a spa treatment (that menu was also on my desk, promising herbal compress massages and a wild lime scalp treatment) is always an option.

After outdoor yoga, I had my first dip in the cenote, with Yamuna standing nearby like a swim coach advising me where to avoid getting tangled by vines. Then I stepped out and walked several yards to the entrance to a smaller, “newer” (I’m guessing thousands rather than millions of years old) underground cenote. Imagine a manhole cover in rocky ground—that’s what Yamuna removed to reveal a ladder leading a few meters beneath my feet. Another layer to discover. I lowered myself into the dark cave and again immersed myself in water, warmer this time. When I emerged, it was time for the fresh-blended juice of the day.

Like much of the food on the property, the juices are made from the bounty of the resort’s Mayan garden, which features raised planters known as ka’anches, designed to keep rabbits and the like from nibbling. A highlight of my visit was a morning ceremony when the day was greeted with a tune from a single woodwind pipe, after which a member of the kitchen staff, knife in hand, led a few of us around, slicing bulbs and leaves and flowers to taste: radish leaf, pumpkin flower, cucumber flower, Mexican oregano.

But there’s more than leafy greens on offer from the kitchens, including pancakes for breakfast, a Kobe beef burger from the room service menu for your cheat day, and a traditional Yucatán lime soup with turkey and bell pepper at the poolside restaurant.

If cucumber juice isn’t your idea of a cocktail, you can stroll your massaged and detoxified body across the lawn to Ixi’im, the resort’s destination restaurant, which boasts a tequila collection of over 3,000 bottles housed in the former factory once used to turn the fibrous raw sisal plants into rope.

Menus are overseen by Chef Jorge Vallejo, whose restaurant, Quintonil, in Mexico City has been racking up awards of late. One benefit of travel is how it nudges us outside of our comfort zones, and for me, that happened at dinner the moment I was served something called deer tartare. The Ixi’im soundtrack was a deep dive into the Frank Sinatra and Perry Como playlists. I couldn’t help imagining the reactions of those two old boys if they were presented with “trout with apple puree, Manzano chili pepper pico de gallo, and chamomile foam.”

The hacienda building itself is a masculine haven, with bits of the old machinery incorporated as design elements and row after row of tequila bottles on perfectly lit glass shelves that seem to reach ever higher. More layers, more richness. ♦





(CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT)
Daybreak at Chablé, a member of
Small Luxury Hotels of the World.
Chocolate and tequila tastings are held
in the resort's destination restaurant.
Guests are encouraged to participate in
Chablé's programs in the gardens, which
provision the daily cuisine. The wine cellar
private dining room underneath the main
hacienda house. A peaceful afternoon
on the property, which is spread out over
750 acres. Mexican vanilla ice cream
completes a meal at Ki'ol, the resort's
poolside restaurant.

