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THE FOOD ISSUE

GIADA DE LAURENTIIS



## WHERE THE JETSET GO

Since it opened, Cabo Azul Resort & Spa has turned out to be the boutique traveler's hotspot on the Baja Peninsula. Added bonus: The luxe hotel happens to be at the center of Mexico's newest culinary hub.

Think of Cabo San Lucas and San Jose del Cabo as two brothers. The younger one, Lucas, is the one who joined a frat in college and now, a decade later, he's still large, in charge and up for a party. The other, Jose, is more refined, preferring wine tastings and Michelin-starred dining, although he's known to still drop it on the dance floor once in a while.

For those who want a vacay that's relaxing and scenic and quiet, head north from the bustling town of Cabo San Lucas to San Jose del Cabo. There, Cabo Azul Resort & Spa straddles the clear blue Sea of Cortez. The hotel highlights the best

aspects of the area: it's sun-drenched, sandy and sleepy. And, thankfully, the area is devoid of those beach shack bars that blast anthems until the wee hours. But that doesn't mean it's staid to the point of boring. There's plenty of eye candy sunning around the pool during the day and the bar-restaurant comes to life nightly.

Cabo Azul's villas channel a Mediterranean seaside resort in Morocco, Spain or Greece, with plenty of white-washed walls, inlaid stonework and carved wood. Dodd Mitchell, the LA-based interior designer, created the resort's distinctive look throughout the restaurant, rooms and

spa. The Flor De Noche bar-restaurant is its centerpiece, undulating alongside the concave infinity pools and shaded by a giant Mexican palapa. Underneath the palapa's leafy roof, a massive tassel made from nautical rope unfurls over the bar.

Mitchell also channeled Tangier via Mexico City with Cabo Azul's main eatery, Javier's, which features giant wrought-iron details and Moroccan lamps. Javier's is the most southerly extension of the Laguna Beach-area restaurant dishing authentic Mexican plates with a twist, such as lobster enchiladas. Guests can also dine outside on the terrace, watching the waves and



Flor de Noche at Cabo Azul

dolphins. And if the weather turns chilly, the restaurant will even loan guests ponchos.

For those in need of pampering, Cabo Azul's Paz spa is a real treat, with pebbled hot and cold pools, a Turkish hamman and, of course, body treatments, such as the usual Swedish rubdown or an exotic massage with a "draining onyx" stone, which channels healing energy.

But the real treat is a day excursion to the interior for adventure sports such as hiking and exploring. And gourmands can take a short taxi ride into the colonial town of San Jose del Cabo. Take some time to peruse the handmade jewelry and other charming trinkets before feasting on the locally caught seafood cuisine.

Life-of-the-party types will want to head to Cabo San Lucas, where the fun never stops. But vacationers seeing some peaceful R&R should head to San Jose del Cabo instead. It's the perfect spot, any time of year, for a much-needed timeout.

This year, Cabo Azul is offering a \$799 four-night package with a \$100 resort credit. (The regular rate is \$430 per night.)

Paseo Malecon S/N, Lote 21 Fonatur, San Jose del Cabo, BCS, Mexico 23400 | 877.216.CABO (8226) or +52.624.163.5100



### ZIPPER'S

Named after the popular surf break it sits adjacent to, Zipper's features mouth-watering Mexican fare, fresh shrimp (their specialty) and seafood as well as some of the juiciest burgers this side of the peninsula.

Km 28.5 Tourist Corridor, San Jose del Cabo  
624.172.6162

### EL CHILAR

Fresh ingredients, casual yet chic décor, an amazing signature dish called Tlayuda Oaxaqueña and a chef who truly knows what it means to embrace the essence of local flavor are all components that make El Chilar such a hit for both tourists and local residents alike.

Benito Juárez 1497, San Jose Del Cabo  
624.142.3544

### BAAN THAI

Exotic scents like coconut milk, curry and Thai basil waft through the air at Baan Thai — a restaurant that pulls inspiration from not only traditional Thai cuisine but also the countries that surround it. The interior is comprised of antique wood furnishings while the patio is enveloped in lush greenery, transporting diners to an exotic Pan-Asian jungle.

Morenos s/n Comanfort, El Centro,  
San Jose Del Cabo | 624.142.3344

### MI COCINA

Located inside the Casa Natalia Hotel, Mi Cocina brings classy cuisine to the shores of Los Cabos. Roasted Chicken and Chocolate with sour apples and poached onions, Baby Rack of Lamb with agave honey and tomatillo marmalade and Creamy Crab Risotto with saffron manchego cheese are

## LOCAL FLAVOR

### Great Bites in San Jose Del Cabo

by KIM ROSE

just a few of the gourmet specialties offered at this romantic seaside eatery.

Bvd. Miraflores 4 (Casa Natalia Hotel),  
San Jose Del Cabo | 624.142.5100

### TROPICANA BAR AND GRILL

This popular second-story bar is a great stop for some morning coffee, some afternoon fajitas or a delicious dinner of steak or lobster (with, of course, some late-night cocktails to top it all off). Live Latin music, great food and a festive back garden patio keep this place rocking into the wee hours.

Bvd. Miraflores 30, San Jose Del Cabo  
624.142.1580

### LOCAL EIGHT

Now in its eighth year, Local Eight features a blend of international flavors in each of its dishes, mixing exotic ingredients with fresh local produce, meats and seafood. A lush garden terrace and tropical dining atmosphere set the tone for this globally-influenced culinary establishment that incorporates influences ranging from Spain to the Pacific Rim in all its unique dishes.

Bvd. Miraflores Plaza Mirson, San Jose Del Cabo  
624.142.6685

### LA PANGA ANTIGUA

Headed by award-winning chef/co-owner Jacobo Turque, this five-star regional seafood restaurant boasts some of the most delicately delectable cuisine in all of Los Cabos. With a menu based on the daily choices of fresh seafood, both local and abroad, La Panga Antigua is nothing short of divine when it comes to simple yet exquisite international dining.

Zaragoza No. 20, Centro, San Jose Del Cabo  
624.142.4042