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TRUE 'BLUE'

Three pals, one Rover and a week of decadence in Cabo's best-kept secret

TEXT BY MATT VILLANO • PHOTOS COURTESY CABO AZUL

The view of Javier's Cantina & Grill from the pool at Cabo Azul, one of San Jose del Cabo's newest resort hotels.

The sand in Mexico doesn't taste half bad. I thought this as I lay face-down in the white sand of Mexico's Baja Peninsula, my buddies Dave and Mike chortling behind me.

We were playing volleyball on the beach outside the Cabo Azul Resort & Spa—a brand new resort in San Jose del Cabo, the quieter of the two towns on the southern tip of the Baja peninsula. In order to win the game, we needed to capture service and go on a point-scoring tear. So when one of the Mexican meatheads on the other team spiked the ball my way, I laid out for a perfect set to Jerry, a corpulent Asian who was our fourth teammate.

Of course, Jerry didn't make the shot. He didn't even try for it. We lost. And I, in the process, got a mouth full of glorious Mexican sand.

My two friends and I were on a guys-only vacation, a trip we affectionately referred to as our "mancation." In my younger days, I would take three or four of these suckers every year, recruiting quorums of high school and college buddies for weekends in Vegas, road trips to follow the New York Yankees or camping in Glacier National Park.

Dave joined me on many of those vacations—the most epic being the

week we spent in Washington's San Juan Islands and fell for the same (barely) twenty-something ballerina who ultimately shunned us both.

Since we had married our respective wives, however, neither of us had done a mancation of any kind.

Cabo was Dave's idea—he wanted someplace warm, someplace where we could spend the better part of a week soaking in the sun and zoning out. Cabo was Dave's idea—after finishing his second soon-to-be bestselling book, he wanted a quiet and private luxury resort with comfy beds, a lavish pool and close proximity to the backcountry for off-roading in a Land Rover.

The two of us had our tickets for a few months when Mike decided to join; fresh off a two-year stint teaching English with his wife in China, the kid was jonesing for some time with dudes. We couldn't blame him at all.

The three of us met up at Los Cabos International Airport, where we borrowed a silver 1998 Discovery from a local acquaintance and headed toward the beach. As we turned off busy Highway 1 onto Paseo Malecon San Jose, the beachfront road, we learned immediately how secluded Cabo Azul really is—it took us nearly 20 minutes of interrogating unsuspecting Mexicans simply to find the place.

Once inside, we saw that the accommodations were well worth the wait. Our room—the property manager called it a “villa”—was a two-bedroom, two-bathroom suite complete with a huge living room (with a couch for one unlucky dude each night), eat-in kitchen and a sprawling veranda that overlooked the Pacific.

We spent each of our four mornings on that veranda, chowing down on eggs we grilled with queso fresco from the local supermarket. After that, the daily routine was simple: mornings sipping Herradura Anejo tequila by the three-tiered infinity pool, afternoons drinking Herradura Silver margaritas on the beach until volleyball time.

Over the course of our five-day stay, when we weren't playing volleyball, Dave, Mike and I redefined the verb “to sloth,” whiling away hours while we pontificated about everything from Allen Iverson's crossover dribble to the quagmire of Presidential primary politics.

There was other action, too. One afternoon, Mike and I tossed a Frisbee on the beach until an errant throw landed the disc in the crashing surf, never to be seen again. Another morning, we sat and marveled at the steady stream of peddlers that wandered up and down the beach selling T-shirts, baskets and hand-carved wood tokens.

BELOW: The open-air pool lounge and infinity pools. ABOVE: A villa at Cabo Azul



We spent our third day in the city of San Jose del Cabo, hopping from tequila bar to tequila bar until we simply had to eat.

Mike, who grew an affinity for “street food” during his time in China, convinced Dave and me to grab dinner at Cactus Taco, a hole-in-the-wall

on a back street off the main square. Between the three of us, we wolfed down an order of fresh guacamole and 15 tacos. The price? Let's just say the whole meal was cheaper than a U.S. movie ticket.

Finally, on our last full day at Cabo Azul—before we hit the Herradura, of course—the three of us took the Disco off-road into the dry arroyo of the El Tule River, about halfway along Highway 1 toward the buzzing tourist town of Cabo San Lucas.

There, about two miles into the desert, we spun circles in the sand and jiggled like bobble heads as we roared the truck over a mile-long stretch of washboard sand. Hawks flew overhead as we careened up steep embankments and over rocks the size of garbage cans.

HIDDEN HIDEAWAYS



Like Bo and Luke Duke, Mike and Dave hooted and hollered the whole time. We celebrated our conquest of the desert at Javier's Cantina & Grill, the super-swanky restaurant back at the resort. There, from the comfort of an open-air patio, the three of us downed margaritas as we recounted highpoints of hilarity from the week. At one point, remembering Jerry and my snack of sand on the volleyball court, the three of us erupted into slapstick laughter that made it hard to breathe.

"Estan bien?" asked our attentive waiter, who ran over to make sure we were all OK.

"Estamos bien," I responded on behalf of my friends, telling the waiter we were all great after a mancation for the ages. "Estamos muy bien."

Massage tables await at Cabo Azul. The facility offers a state-of-the-art spa with full-time masseurs.

If You Go

Cabo Azul Resort & Spa is open year-round. The lodge, which is owned by Pacific Monarch Resorts, boasts 332 one- and two-bedroom villas, as well as a state-of-the-art spa. For more information, visit caboazulresort.com or call 877.216.2226.