



Above:Ixi'im restaurant boasts a collection of over 3000 bottles of tequila while the playful ceiling design seen here pays homage to the building's history as a rope factory; Left: The ruins of the site's colonial stone buildings blend beautifully with the award-winning contemporary design..



# Temple of Health

**A Contemporary Spa Retreat in the Mayan Jungle**  
by Fredric Hamber



Manager Leonardo Morado explains. By this he means not just the balché or the ritual of burning fragrant copal resin to begin a spa treatment, but also the moments spent observing the cosmos at night, or time in the adobe hot room known as the temazcal. Guests can participate in something called the Cocoa Experience to learn the process whereby a cocoa bean becomes chocolate, or a similar experience turning corn into tortillas.



Top: Family accommodations include multi-room villas with spacious outdoor areas; Above left to right: twilight at the poolside Ki'ol restaurant bar; each of Chablé's standalone one-bedroom casitas is ensconced in native greenery outside glass walls; Mayan-inspired spa treatments are provided in cabins overlooking the property's natural water cenote.

Three principles guide Chablé's hospitality: a genuine devotion to the special land the property sits on and the culture of those who have lived there, a blending of history with the contemporary, and commitment to a superb culinary program highlighting Mexican ingredients. The property has been awarded the Prix Versailles for Best Hotel in the World for Architecture and Design. Accommodations are standalone private structures surrounded by trees and greenery, a minimum of 2152 sq. feet, each with private pool and both indoor and outdoor rain shower. The 10,800 sq. foot Royal Villa features three bedrooms in addition to a private gym and massage cabin.

The modern design blends gorgeously with the stone ruins leftover from the site's

previous life as a farm and manufactory for growing the agave plant known as henequen and turning it into rope, a hugely profitable industry in the 18th and 19th centuries. Bits of the original old machinery have been cleverly repurposed as elements in the design of Ixi'im, the resort's fine dining restaurant.

Ixi'im's menus are overseen by chef Jorge Vallejo (whose Mexico City restaurant Quintonil has been recognized as one of the 50 best restaurants in the world by San Pellegrino). Venison risotto cooked underground is among the dinner options, as is lobster tartare with lime, quinoa and coconut. A standout snack on the room service menu is the avocado toast, a simple dish but perfectly executed here with a sprinkle of local salt harvested from nearby Celestun. Much of the

produce is harvested even closer. Exploring the grounds you'll notice raised garden planters, about the size of a dining room table. Called ka'anches, they're an old Mayan horticultural technique designed to deter ground pests and to keep the bounty a little closer to the heavens.

But the heart of the resort is the stunning spa surrounding the large natural water sink-hole known as a cenote, part of the underground water system that is part of Yucatán topography. The array of massages, facials, aquatherapy, scrubs and wraps are organized into three journeys: Tree of Life, Fountain of Youth, and Heaven on Earth. While they incorporate millennia of native wisdom, as the lengthy treatment menu puts it, "At Chablé Spa, the only time that exists is here and now." ☼