

TRAVEL+ LEISURE

This Cabo Resort Has Local Mexican Art, Incredible Beachfront Infinity Pools, and the Region's First Speakeasy

Las Ventanas Al Paraíso, a Rosewood Resort, in San José del Cabo, Mexico, just celebrated its 25th anniversary.

By **Samantha Falewée** | Published on August 22, 2022



I've never been a hat person. My fluffy hair adds volume to my already size-L head, giving me a lifelong skepticism of anything I can't pull a ponytail through. I'm convinced that any cutesy, broad-brimmed beach accessory will slip off after 30 seconds.

So when I heard about hat embroidery workshops at Las Ventanas Al Paraíso, a Rosewood Resort, a stunning oceanfront resort with 84 rooms (including 12 villas and the Ty Warner Mansion, available for rent) in San José del Cabo, Mexico, I didn't give it much thought. I had arrived for a quick getaway weekend in July intent on other activities on offer, like scuba diving and deep-sea fishing in the Sea of Cortez. I was in for a surprise.

Corazon Playero is a female-owned small business founded in Cabo that employs 14 artisans to embroider handmade hats. The idea began as "a way for founder Isabel Andrade to spend more time with her daughters, and still bring in income," showroom manager Christina Padilla told me. "Our goal is to empower women."

In an outdoor white-stone walkway, Padilla stood next to a long table covered with hats — white, beige, honey-toned — all threaded with varied designs. She explained some of the patterns to me, like the pink choya flowers atop green cacti. "We, people from Baja California Sur, call ourselves 'choyeros,'" she said (or, in this case, choyeras), "like these cactus flowers."

With artisan Blanca Mora's help (a lot of it), I began threading a flowering cactus plant surrounded by blue fan-shaped symbols, which represent the agave plants ubiquitous to Mexico. Working on my hat with Padilla and Mora, and learning about the story behind Corazon Playero, was a pleasant surprise. But really, it's just one example of the Mexican craftsmanship on full display at Las Ventanas, from woven bed runners depicting colorful "alebrijes" (mythical creatures popular in Mexican folklore) to outdoor statues by artist Rodo Padilla, a celebrated sculptor from Jalisco who specializes in ceramics.



"Mexico is a big country, and region-to-region, village-to-village, families maintain art specialties and traditions that don't exist anywhere else," the resort's general manager Frederic Vidal told me. He works with Las Ventanas owner Ty Warner (yes, that Ty, the billionaire behind the Beanie Babies empire), to source artisan pieces straight from local craftspeople. Much of the outdoor art in the resort's public areas are available for sale. "We work directly with families who make certain pieces, buy them at a fair price, and invite them to come to the resort, when they can, to give them direct access to our clients," Vidal told me. As we spoke, a larger-than-life clay statue of a jaguar watched us silently.

Inside my oceanfront junior suite, the nightly turndown service included thoughtful touches: a corn doll "mona de maiz" (woman made of straw); and candles of bergamot, verbena, and geranium in hand-painted holders from Guadalajara-based Cerámica Suro studio. (In an [interview with *Cultured* magazine](#) last year, the ceramics studio founder, José Noé Suro, described the impact of the hotel's outreach: "When Las Ventanas opened in Los Cabos, they came to us, and that changed everything.")



These pieces are available for purchase at the on-site Café del Art shop, which sells work from artisans based around the country. I sipped a café con leche and lingered for what felt like hours over a collection of wooden animal figures, decorated in tiny beads of brilliant colors and fantastical designs, made by the Indigenous Huichol nation from central Mexico. Don Victor Florentino Huerta, a member of the Huichol nation, told me he comes to the resort three times a week to sell pieces and explain their significance. The beaded "shakira" figures represent communication with tribal deities, decorated with symbols like scorpions, zigzagging lines, and hallucinogenic peyote flowers.

It's this celebration of Mexican art and the incredibly warm and attentive staff – and, if I'm being honest, those poolside taco-and-cocktail orders with views of the sea – that have built Las Ventanas' reputation as a beloved Cabo resort. Led by Rosewood Hotels and Resorts president Radha Arora, Mexico's creative identity continues to be a major focus for the hotel, which celebrated its 25th anniversary the weekend I arrived.



The festivities began with an outdoor reception, where I saw everything from a prancing Lusitano horse from Cuadra San Francisco stables to live models preening in handwoven straw dresses from artisans Bertha Villagomez and Antonio Cornelio Rendon, who were in attendance from their home in Michoacán. I ran into artist David Luna, the creative genius behind some of the permanent outdoor art, tree statues made of pinguica wood. "I've been working with this hotel for 25 years, and [they] let me do whatever I want – artistically, at least" Luna told me with an impish grin. "It's a big pleasure. I feel so proud that they continue to work with me, and like the pieces I make."

A six-course menu followed with performances from a 14-piece mariachi band, Sol de America. Regional dances filled with clomping boots and twirling skirts came in the form of a Michoacán-inspired "danza de los viejitos" and "la bruja," a performance from Veracruz in which women balance a candle on their heads. Around me, Mexicans and international visitors alike were caught up in the sights and sounds. Cries of "Viva Mexico" flew up into the air as flags waved and fireworks exploded overhead.



The celebration continued into La Botica, the first speakeasy in Los Cabos, which opened in February 2020 – mere weeks before the pandemic hit. The brainchild of Vidal, the careful details here impressed my high standards (unlike hats, I *love* speakeasies). Guests access La Botica through a curtained door, after entering a secret code. Most nights, artist-in-residence Rosalía de Cuba is waiting for them, ready to belt out anything from Camila Cabello to Ella Fitzgerald. (I won't say more, that would spoil it.)

"I've always dreamed of having a place, a bar or club, where I can be myself, that feels like my house," de Cuba, originally from Havana, told me. "Before people even come to Las Ventanas, they'll message me on Instagram letting me know when they'll be there. They say, 'I'll be there for my birthday,' or 'I'm bringing my mother or my son, I want to introduce you.' It's beautiful."

While a trio of bodysuit-clad dancers spun through salsa routines and bartenders whipped through drink orders, I poured over the "menu," a heavy book full of questionnaires. Guests can fill out questions like "Favorite moment of the day?" and "What is your go-to perfume?" to receive a custom-tailored cocktail – and then re-order it again on their next visit.

We danced until the speakeasy closed. I, along with a group of newfound friends, stepped outside into the warm Caribbean night air, a jumble of different ages and accents. I thought about de Cuba, and the skilled tradespeople I had met during my stay, and the La Botica cocktails that packed a perfectly crafted punch. Very soon, I would plunge into the resort's infinity pools for a late-night swim, serenaded by nothing but the waves. And tomorrow, I thought, I would wear my embroidered hat.