

CALIFORNIA

STYLE &
CULTURE

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PLUS SPRING FASHION / DRIES VAN NOTEN / ANGELA LINDVALL / NAOMI WATTS

CAREFREE CAREYES

Mexico's answer to Portofino is a secluded, pandemic-conscious haven for those in the know



The view toward Mi Ojo, GIAN FRANCO BRIGNONE's oceanfront private home in COSTA CAREYES, Jalisco, Mexico.



If one holiday destination feels like the truest pandemic antidote, it's Careyes in Jalisco, Mexico. A three-hour flight from Los Angeles to Manzanillo plus an hour's drive up the coast brings you to the Edenic private resort, a wonderfully accessible getaway for Californians (the Jenner sisters vacationed there in January). The pristine stretch of Pacific Ocean encompasses 8 miles of beaches offering meditative solitude, as well as lush jungles dotted with whimsical, polychromatic villas, casitas and tropical castles — plus visiting sea turtles.

Italian visionary and banker Gian Franco Brignone purchased this land in Costalegre (Spanish for “coast of joy”) in the late '60s and conjured up Latin America's answer to Portofino, Capri, Positano and San Gimignano all in one. The original boldly hued architecture, idyllic atmosphere and uninhibited spirit proved an instant siren call to an international flock of aristocratic playboys and bohemians, plus models and creatives — think Cindy Crawford and Herb Ritts. Today, visitors run the gamut, from Talita von Furstenberg and director Lee Daniels to Naomi Campbell and the descendants of Colombian painter Fernando Botero.



The fantasy is fueled by an extra level of privacy: forget bustling hotels; accommodations take the form of shapely *palapa*-topped villas with extravagant infinity pools. Imaginative attractions such as the Copa del Sol (or “cup of the sun”), a hemisphere more than 88 feet wide perched atop a jutting cliff, offer memorable locations for watching a sunset or joining a meditation and sound-healing session. Indeed, dinner parties where twentysomethings happily mingle with chic octogenarians are as prolific as temescal sweat-lodge ceremonies. At the condo-style accommodations of the El Careyes Club & Residences (with five infinity pools), daily yoga is taught by visiting practitioners including Californians Andrew Sealy and Shayna Hiller, while the secluded five-bedroom Casa Torre villa has a 24-foot captained Boston Whaler available for excursions.

The Brignone family still shapes the scene, with 94-year-old Gian Franco even now occasionally indulging in leisurely lunches at the fuchsia open-air Playa Rosa Beach Club. This de facto social hub is





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PLAYA ROSA BEACH CLUB is open day and night.

WHERE TO EAT

See and be seen – beside an idyllic sandy cove – over mounds of guacamole and ceviche at **Playa Rosa Beach Club**. For Argentine beef and impossibly thin pizzas there’s **Punto Como** in the village square. And **Pueblo25** offers intimate tasting meals devised by visiting chefs who draw inspiration from local produce and seafood.

WHERE TO DRINK

The spicy-smoky mezcal jalapeño cocktail at **Casa de Nada** – the name means “house of nothing,” apropos of Careyes’ pervasive sense of whimsy – stands on its own, but it’s even more intoxicating when sipped barefoot on the beach above. The passion fruit margarita at **Playa Rosa** also can’t be missed.

WHERE TO SHOP

The chicly bohemian **Temple Mexico** boutique, at El Careyes, is the place to stock up on floaty caftans and cover-ups from the eponymous label, as well as gauzy beach dresses from Kasia Kulenty, fringed Daniela Bustos Maya frocks and traditional Huichol beaded accessories that complete every Careyes ensemble.

Clockwise from above: The beach at PLAYA ROSA. CASA TORRE’s fuchsia tower, designed by renowned architect DIEGO VILLASENOR. The pathway at Casa Torre leads to a secluded beach. Casa Torre’s pool and gardens, which were designed by Montecito-based ERIC NAGELMANN. OCEAN CASTLE SOL DE ORIENTE, where the Jenner sisters recently stayed.



where, in the '70s, fresh seafood was purchased from local fishermen using pages torn from *Playboy* as currency. Gian Franco’s sons have also made their marks. Filippo founded the Careyes Foundation, which supports local communities as well as protects the four types of sea turtles that lay their eggs on Careyes’ Playa Teopa (guests can help collect the nests and release the hatchlings during golden hour). Giorgio’s passion for polo is evidenced in the two regulation Bermuda grass fields, the slew of ponies and horses (guests can book beach rides) and the spate of matches throughout the year.

At Careyes, virtually every moment is spent in fresh air: paddleboarding, snorkeling with sea creatures and exploring secret beaches or dining, drinking and dancing with new friends. As devotees know, it’s not called the coast of joy for nothing. careyes.com. ●

