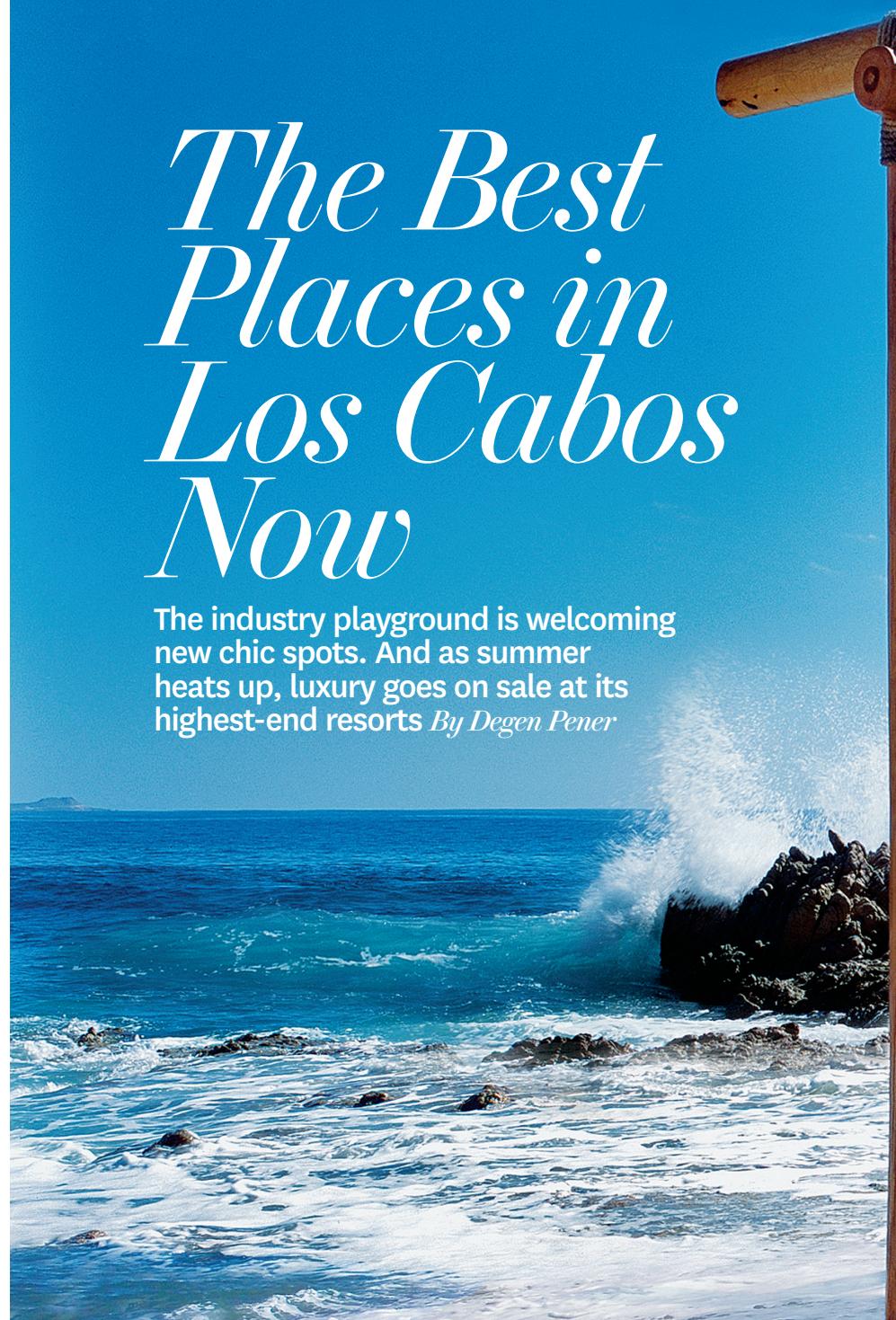


The Best Places in Los Cabos Now

The industry playground is welcoming new chic spots. And as summer heats up, luxury goes on sale at its highest-end resorts *By Degen Pener*



LOS CABOS, WHERE, the Pacific rolls into Sea of Cortez in Mexico, is awash in luxury development, but most of the action in recent years has been in the beachfront Corridor between San Jose del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas. This stretch of world-class resorts — about a 135-minute flight from Los Angeles — now ranks with Hawaii as an industry sand-and-sun destination, with regular visits by **George Clooney**, **Jennifer Aniston**, manager **Geyer Kosinski**, producer **Scott Stuber** and **Leonardo DiCaprio**. There's also a marked sense of safety in contrast to some other parts of Mexico.



Keller

Many visitors never go off resort, but there are new spots to explore away from the gated path (You'll need to either rent a car or take taxis). The high season ends soon, but summers are getting

busier, thanks partly to low-season rates up to 40 percent off.

WHERE TO EAT

Few visitors venture east of historic San Jose del Cabo, whose mainstays include haute-Mexican restaurant Don Emiliano's and taco spot Las Guacamayas (beloved by **Mario Batali**). But the new **Flora's Field Kitchen** (Las Animas Bajas, flora-farms.com) — on an organic farm 10 minutes from town — has lured such fans as **Lauren Conrad** and **Thomas Keller** with its family-style dinners. "It has a great farm-to-table menu," Keller says. Flora's serves only what is harvested on-site. For live jazz and inventive tapas, head to **Deckman's** (Highway 1, deckmans.com) on the west side of town.

Down the coast in Cabo San Lucas, it's not just about *cerveza*-drenched spring break anymore.



Sims

Check out the extensive Mexican wine list at **Doc** (Cabo San Lucas Street, docwinebarcabo.com), an intimate Italian restaurant. Two blocks away is acclaimed Nick-San sushi, where the chef serves fish caught on his own boat;

Molly Sims loves it. In the Medano Beach area, home to the popular Mexican beach eatery the Office, a new option is **Bar Esquina** (Avenue el Pescador, bahia-cabo.com). One of the best spots to enjoy its short rib and Stilton pizza is the lively 17-seat marble bar.

WHERE TO STAY

Until two years ago, Cabo boasted just three truly luxury properties, all located along the Corridor. The five-diamond, 71-suite **Las Ventanas Al Paraiso** (rooms from \$855 high season/\$510 low, Highway 1, las-ventanas.com) — where new couple **Sean Penn** and **Scarlett Johansson** were first spotted — is a stunningly



Hollywood HIDEOUTS



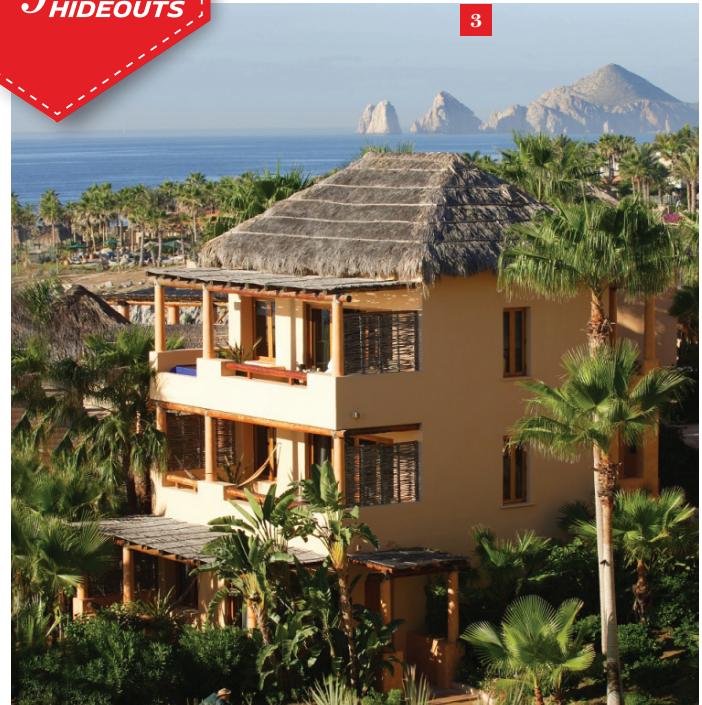
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1. A beachside cabana at the One & Only Palmilla resort near San Jose del Cabo. The property also includes a white stucco hillside chapel built in 1954 and a spa managed by ethically sourced company **ESPA**. **2.** This three-bedroom residence at the year-old Hacienda Beach Club & Residences looks out at the famous Cabo Arch. One of the resort's best features is its location right in town, with a host of restaurants within walking distance of the property. **3.** Guests at Esperanza, located along the Corridor, can spy Cabo San Lucas' iconic arch from many of the resort's rooms. **4.** Recently opened at the Bahia Hotel on Medano Beach, Bar Esquina serves up fresh-muddled-fruit cocktails at its long marble bar. **5.** The Auriga Spa at the year-and-a-half old Capella Pedregal resort on the Pacific Side of Cabo San Lucas. **6.** A hostess at Flora's Field Kitchen near San Jose del Cabo. The farm-to-table restaurant not only raises its own livestock but also the organic crops it feeds them. **7.** From the thatched palapa near Las Ventanas al Paraiso's entry it's a short walk down to the resort's pools and its two restaurants.

stark white-stucco property with Zen-like, raked-sand succulent gardens and service that extends to leaving a towelette next to the sunscreen-smudged sunglasses you left on the nightstand.

Oprah Winfrey and **Demi Moore** are fans of the Spanish-mission-style, 174-room **One & Only Palmilla** (rooms from \$775 high season/\$575 low, Highway 1, palmilla.oneandonlyresorts.com). The most comprehensive of the resorts, it offers four restaurants, including Jean-Georges Vongerichten's Market; a shop featuring such designers as Matthew Williamson and Missoni; and both family-friendly and adults-only pools. Look out for the kid-size beach chaises.

At the romantic **Esperanza** (rooms from \$595 high season/\$495 low, Highway 1, esperanzaresort.com) most of the 57 rooms feature a private infinity plunge pool, and the restaurant has a breathtaking dining terrace that juts out into the ocean. Try the tuna sashimi, which you can sear on a hot lava rock at your table.

Meanwhile, there are now two high-end challengers located off the Corridor right in Cabo San Lucas. Just steps from the marina, **Hacienda Beach Club & Residences** (rooms from \$695 high season/\$550 low, Calle Gomez Farias, haciendacabosanlucas.com), features 109 residences, many for rent. Sixteen four-bedroom villas, selling at \$5.2 million, sit right on a swimmable beach with views of Cabo's iconic granite Arch. (Many other resorts are on stretches with risky undertows.)

To get to **Capella Pedregal** (\$650 high season/\$525 low, 1 Camino del Mar, capellahotels.com), you drive through a private 1,000-foot tunnel under Pedregal Mountain to a Pacific side cove that **Rande Gerber** calls "spectacular." The smallest of the 66 rooms is 820 square feet, and all offer fireplaces and plunge pools. Looking for a private home rental? The area's go-to booking agent is **Julie Byrd** of Earth, Sea and Sky Vacations (cabovillas.com).

WHAT TO DO

The spectacular meeting of land and sea at the tip of Baja is the setting for some of the world's best fishing, whale spotting, diving and paddle boarding. Sailors can go out with a crew aboard an America's Cup yacht via outfitters Cabo Adventures (cabo-adventures.com).

For prime golfing and a beyond-A-list scene, wrangle an invite to play at **El Dorado**, (Highway 1, eldoradogolfandbeachclub.com) developer **Michael Meldman**'s private residence/links club where **Clooney**, **Gerber** and wife **Cindy Crawford** and WME's **Patrick Whitesell** and wife **Lauren Sanchez** reportedly own second homes. A six-bedroom penthouse casita is currently on the market there for \$11.95 million.

For a change of pace, spend a leisurely evening enjoying the weekly Thursday art walk in San Jose del Cabo. Later on, ramp things up at the jammed **Nowhere Bar** (Plaza Bonita, Boulevard Marina, nowherebar.com) in Cabo San Lucas. "The tequila shots on ice are amazing," Sanchez says, "and you never know who will end up dancing on the tables."

THR



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Winfrey

LOCATIONS CLOCKWISE FROM 4: BAR ESQUINA; COURTESY OF HACIENDA BEACH CLUB; COURTESY OF ESPERANZA RESORT; CAPELLA PEDREGAL; PATRICK GREENE; COURTESY OF LAS VENTANAS AL PARADISO; COURTESY ONE&ONLY KELLER; ANDREW H. WALKER/GATTTY IMAGES; SIMONE STEPHEN LOVREN/GETTY IMAGES FOR ING; WINFRIE/FRAZER HARRISON/GATTTY IMAGES