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Both images (top to bottom): Accommodations at UNICO 20°87° Hotel Riviera Maya; La Table par Maitres Cuisiniers de France is a new-to-brand dining venue on board Oceania Sonata, which will debut in 2027. **On the cover:** Explora Journeys is offering 'A Mediterranean Winter' sailings, with select itineraries calling in Lisbon, a gateway to nearby Sintra. (Photo: Explora Journeys)

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LUXURY LEVELS UP



Luxury travel continues to refine itself. What was once considered rare, one-off experiences are now expected, as experience-led travel, cultural connections and hanging with the locals take center stage across the globe. That shift is showing up in everything from private, behind-the-scenes access—like early entry into landmark sites—to deeply personal cultural exchanges that prioritize authenticity over staged experiences.

In Mexico and the Caribbean, beachside stays are sharpening their focus with locally inspired design, elevated gastronomy and experiences rooted in place—vacations that connect travelers to local traditions. In North America, demand is leaning into experiences that balance accessibility with impact, from Alaska’s raw wilderness to Hawaii’s cultural programming, while Las Vegas continues to evolve its luxury appeal with high-design hotels, chef-driven dining and exclusive offerings.

Across Asia, destinations like South Korea and Thailand are gaining even more momentum, with Japan continuing to see high demand. Here, luxury is increasingly defined by customization, access and depth, whether through one-on-one cultural interactions, private guided journeys or itineraries that tap into less-visited regions. And the vast landscapes of Australia and New Zealand continue to be top of mind for luxury travelers, with experiences found nowhere else in the world.

Turn the page for a closer look at what tour operators, hotels and destinations have on offer—and how to translate it into luxury vacations so compelling your clients will be planning the next trip with you on the flight home.

Top to bottom: Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Australia (photo: Tourism Australia); Butler Villa Suite with Private Pool at Sandals Saint Vincent; Executive King Suite at MGM Grand.



Left to right: Beachside at Grand Palladium Select White Sand Resort & Spa in Riviera Maya; soon-to-open Grand Hyatt Cayman Resort & Spa (rendering).

Beachside Glam

By Lydia Gregory

The latest generation of beachside glam in Mexico and the Caribbean includes cultural connections, high-end gastronomy and immersive, locally inspired design served with a side of impeccable ocean views.

The definition of luxury has evolved into something that depends on the “eye of the beholder,” but for many, an immersive wellness program is the height of posh.

“The *Aura Wellness* retreats have added a new layer of depth to the **UNICO** experience, giving the overall stay a more upscale feel,” says David Mendez, GM at **UNICO 20°87° Riviera Maya**. “The ‘substance’ of the stay offers high-level access to experts that our guests can’t find anywhere else, making these retreats a staple of our brand of high-end hospitality. Because these retreats are so intimate and intentional, they complement the ethos and energy of the resort perfectly, becoming a popular weekend for guests to reset and recharge. We are already opening the door for 2027 planning with specialist-driven experiences that align with what our guests are increasingly seeking and are excited to continue evolving the series with new talent and immersive programming designed to inspire and restore long after guests return home.”

AIC Hotel Group has several upscale properties in the pipeline, including the 451-room **UNICO 18°77° Hotel Montego Bay** (2027) on Jamaica’s north coast.

Grupo Posadas is ready to place another feather in its cap with the anticipated opening of **Devossion by Live Aqua Isla Mujeres**. According to George Hunter, VP of Leisure Sales for the hotel group, the property will be operating as **Izla Beachfront Hotel by Fiesta Americana Travelty** for about a year, after which it will debut as Devossion. In the intervening months, the resort will receive extensive guestroom renovations to bring it up to the company’s exacting standards. Hunter also shared details about newbuild **Grand Fiesta Americana Riviera Maya** opening in November.

“It’s been a long time coming for us to get something [that’s] truly in Riviera Maya. So, we’re very excited about that,” he says. The property will launch in two phases, with a soft opening in November and the second phase opening in March. In addition, a neighboring **Live Aqua Riviera Maya** will follow within 12 months.

Also in Quintana Roo is the reopening of the iconic **Paradisus Cancun** all-inclusive luxury resort from **Melia Hotels International**, following a \$50 million renovation. Preserving its distinctive pyramid architecture inspired by Mayan culture, the resort has redesigned all 773 guestrooms with natural materials and handcrafted details. The transformation introduces nine new dining concepts, seven bars, refreshed family and adult

spaces and elevated offerings such as the Aquazone splash park and the *Kidsdom* kids’ club. Anchored by the brand’s “Designed by Destination” philosophy, Paradisus Cancun blends luxury, culture and wellness through curated local experiences, new culinary destinations, *YHI Spa*’s Mayan-inspired treatments and exclusive *Family Concierge* and adults-only *Reserve* experiences.

Meanwhile, **Hilton** has been on an expansion boost since 2025, with luxury openings in the region that include **Zemi Miches Punta Cana All-Inclusive Resort**, **Curio Collection by Hilton** and the recently completed multi-year upgrades to the **Waldorf Astoria Los Cabos Pedregal**. With just 112 guestrooms, suites and casitas, each received an upgrade that included custom furniture and artwork sourced from Mexico’s finest craftsmen. Other amenities include refreshed restaurants, an adult pool, a new salon at the spa and programming in all areas.

Of note is Hilton’s robust high-end pipeline: **Motto by Hilton Guadalajara Centro Historico** (2026), **Conrad Los Cabos** (2027), **Waldorf Astoria Turks & Caicos Dellis Cay** and **AMARIS Grace Bay, LXR Hotels & Resorts** (2028), **Waldorf Astoria San Miguel de Allende** (TBD), **Valle de Guadalupe, Curio Collection by Hilton** (TBD) and **Almare Beach Resort Las Terrenas, Curio by Hilton** (TBD) in the Dominican Republic. ▶

Bird's-eye view of the recently reopened Paradisus Cancun.

suites that merge modern design with natural inspiration, complete with exclusive access to **Xcaret Parks** and fine dining that reflects regional heritage. **The St. Regis Kanai Resort, Riviera Maya**, immerses guests in a coastal sanctuary where personalized service, expansive guestrooms and elegant architecture connect seamlessly with the surrounding landscape. In Los Cabos, guests can discover a collection of oceanfront retreats that highlight the region's distinctive character. **Nobu Hotel Los Cabos** delivers a balance of Japanese minimalism and Baja energy, while **Waldorf Astoria Los Cabos Pedregal** combines secluded luxury with panoramic Pacific views. **Zadun, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve**, complements this with a focus on sustainability and sense of place, offering handcrafted design details and butler service that anticipates every need.

Beyond Mexico, Delta Vacations provides equally notable escapes across the Caribbean. **Casa de Campo Resort & Villas** in the Dominican Republic spreads across 7,000 acres with championship golf and private beaches, while **Eden Roc at Cap Cana** pairs boutique intimacy with spacious villas and personalized concierge support. Clients booking a Delta Vacations luxury package enjoy added exclusives such as private airport transfers, VIP lounge access and custom excursions.

Hyatt's Inclusive Collection is heavily expanding its luxury all-inclusive portfolio in the region with the debut of, among others, **Hyatt Vivid Punta Cana, Secrets Macao Beach Punta Cana** and **Zoëtry Cap Cana Resort & Spa**, not to mention the addition of **Bahia Principe Hotels & Resorts** to its portfolio—over 20 resorts total. This group includes **Bahia Principe Luxury Runaway Bay**, fresh from a top-to-bottom



Minimalist decor sets the stage at Devossion Live Aqua Isla Mujeres.

redo this past April. Just reopened is the renovated **Breathless Los Cabos Resort & Spa** with 327 guestrooms and suites, and farther down the pipeline is the newbuild **Hyatt Ziva Punta Cana** (2029) with 650 guestrooms and suites.

Sandals has been working to elevate its Saint Vincent and the Grenadines property and you can currently book your clients into its new collection of 20 *Rondoval Butler Villas with Private Pools*, opening in November of

this year. With layouts ranging from about 1,000 to more than 2,000 sq. ft., each villa has a king bed and a large bath with dual vanities, a walk-in shower, and a standalone tub. Additional highlights include a private pool, outdoor soaking tub, fully stocked bar, 24-hour dining and the service of a dedicated butler.

The **Cayman Islands** are debuting new additions to its posh lineup. This summer will see the opening of **Grand Hyatt** ➤



“ We are already opening the door for 2027 planning with specialist-driven experiences that align with what our guests are increasingly seeking.... ”

— **David Mendez, General Manager, UNICO 20°87° Riviera Maya**