



Upscale Naturist Paradise: Hidden Beach Resort

story and photos by Michael J. Cooney

Hidden Beach Resort is a superb, all-inclusive getaway for naturists, and an easy, safe drive just south of Cancun. The food at Hidden Beach is outstanding and the staff delights in anticipating your needs and preferences. With the April 2011 closure of Jamaica's Breezes Rio Bueno (formerly Grand Lido Braco), Hidden Beach will, for many, be at the top of high-end Caribbean clothing-optional resorts.

On arrival guests, most of whom are couples, find a carefully prepared room featuring chilled champagne and a double Jacuzzi filled with hot water and topped with rose petals. Hidden Beach's general manager of nine years, Paula Negrete, said that as of fall 2010, "All the rooms are brand new with new king size beds and new amenities like plasma televisions."

The rhythm of Hidden Beach unfolds in a soft, easy, and relaxed motion. The focus of excitement each day is a late-morning, spirited water volleyball game. That's about all the excitement guests seek as they escape the stress of their daily lives and enjoy being totally taken care of by the staff.

The site is also visually stunning, with ocean waves breaking, shadows of palms on the deck, as well as the flowers and plants accenting the manicured grounds. For many guests, this is the definition of paradise.

The 42 units are located on two wings that frame the central pool bar and dining area, a design that brings people together and promotes long-lasting friendships. People talk to each other here, in the two oversized hot tubs, as well as around the pool and bar. Throughout the day, the

incredibly well-trained staff engages guests in delightfully friendly ways, such as providing your favorite drink the moment you arrive at your beach chair, or greeting you by name after only one meeting.

Negrete explained the importance Hidden Beach places on its customer service. "The staff is the same year by year. We have employees who have been working for Hidden Beach for ten years before the hotel reopened in 2010. That also makes the atmosphere of the resort. The staff know the guests by name, as well as their individual needs. What we do is have a file of all the guests by their last names with a record of their requests. If you are a new guest, we open a file for you from the first day you arrive until the last day."

She continued. "For example, we know that one guest loves champagne, so

because of that we gave her a very nice bottle last night. Another loves drinking Baileys Irish Cream. That's something that we can add to our product. When the guest has a special needs request, of course we try our best to exceed their expectation".

With the remodel in 2010, the waterfront palapas have been extended down the beach to provide quiet and private space for those wishing it. The hammock area is another new addition offering quiet and a degree of solitude under a canopy of trees. The 2010 addition of the spacious Moonlight Palapa, with its bar, dance floor, and a super-sized hot tub allows guests to dance or soak the night away.

Swimming at Hidden Beach is more a case of wading in either the pool or the ocean, with guests enjoying a walk in the artificial river winding outside the rooms, or seeing what the ocean offers on the shallow, protected beach area.

While there is no need to ever leave the resort or put on your clothes, most guests visit Hidden Beach's sister textile resort, El Dorado Seaside. Located next door, Seaside offers six restaurant choices from the formal and gourmet to casual outdoor dining, all of which are included in the Hidden Beach all-inclusive package. Yucatan day tours of all kinds can be booked at the Seaside tour desk, but for most, Hidden Beach is the only destination desired.

And guests just keep coming back. One guest in particular, who everyone knows as "Bob," has been to Hidden Beach a resort-record 28 times. Many other guests report that they are frequent visitors and see no reason to go anywhere else. When asked why they keep coming back, they all have the same answer, pointing to Hidden Beach's small size, the friendly staff who know them by name, and the excellent food.

Negrete is proud of what Hidden Beach provides. "The atmosphere in this part of the Caribbean is beautiful and peaceful. The atmosphere that we offer here is like a club. Everybody meets each other and during the week they relax and



THE AMENITIES AT HIDDEN BEACH make it a vacation spot well worth the price.



make friends. When they come back here, they feel like they're home and are part of our family."

With prices ranging between \$250 to \$300 per person per night (depending on booking times and available discounts), by nudist resort standards Hidden Beach is expensive. However, given the all-inclusive food and beverages, the choice of seven restaurants between Hidden Beach and El Dorado Seaside, and impeccable happy service, it's worth it, and something that naturists should try to treat themselves to at least once. But be warned, if you come once, you'll be back!

Travel South to Tulum

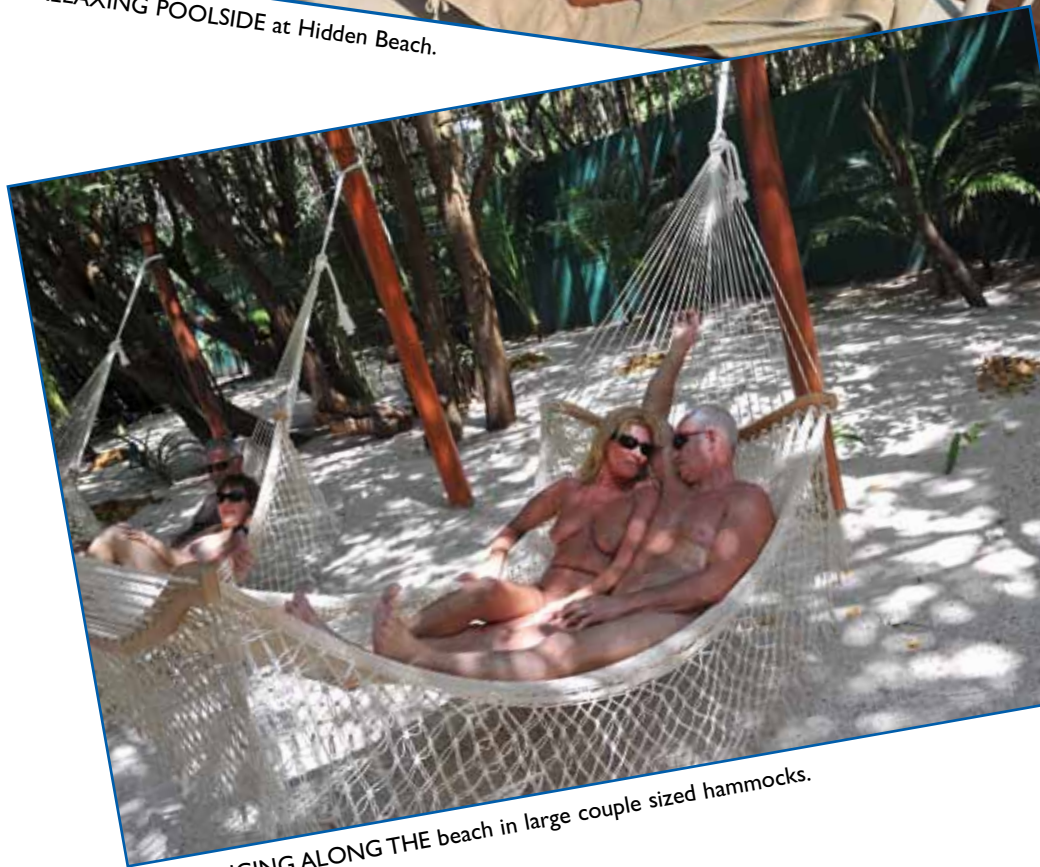
When you tell people that you're going to Mexico, they most often react with concern for your safety. The Yucatan Peninsula is more than safe; it's downright friendly, service-oriented, and designed for the gringo tourist to navigate with ease. On this trip, everyone I encountered was happy to be of service and did so in a very personal way. While drug-related violence in other parts of Mexico creates headlines, tourists not looking for trouble most likely won't find it here in the state of Quintana Roo.

The days of Tulum being a hippie haven at the end of the road, and where good clothes-free beach living could be had for little or nothing are gone. The village of Tulum is approximately an hour's drive south of Hidden Beach, and is rapidly becoming a city. Large sections of jungle have given way to development, and the famed Tulum Maya Castle ruin now has a visitor center and paid access. A regional hospital and airport are in the planning stages.

Cabanas Copal—the long-standing low-cost place to stay and the home of Tulum's nude beach—has lost their lease and the buildings have been evacuated. The upscale and pricy Azulik located immediately to the south remains open. Nude use of the beach continues with users accessing the beach via Club de Playa located to the north of Copal, and walking



RELAXING POOLSIDE at Hidden Beach.



LOUNGING ALONG THE beach in large couple sized hammocks.



MIKE HOBSON EXPLAINS THE MAK NUK VILLAGE PROJECT to some visitors.

south to the area in front of Copal. This traditional nude use area has been free of police interference, and the only known arrest involved a man whose nude walk greatly exceeded the nude beach area.

Proceeding south beyond the beach resorts the intrepid and self-sufficient traveler with a backpack and tent can still find beach freedom for a few pesos a night. But it is several miles to the store or most anywhere else, so this option isn't one we would recommend for most naturists.

Mak Nuk Village, the planned, moderate-cost, clothes-free development in Tulum, is making rapid progress towards completion. The first condo unit is finished and ready for showing,

and development of all three buildings is showing rapid progress. Project manager Mike Hopson says there will be naked people swimming happily in the pool by early fall of 2011. Mak Nuk is located a short distance from downtown Tulum with its wide variety of shops and restaurants.

A great new development to the Mak Nuk Village project is the addition of the Mak Nuk Village Beach Club. On completion, Mak Nuk guests will have access to the village's private beach club, located 15 minutes down the coast. The expansive, fine sand beach is made and intended for nude use, and will be a great addition to the village's offerings. It will go a long way towards keeping Tulum's nude beach culture alive. Mak Nuk has leased 40 meters of beach with an option to purchase. The little-used beach north and south of the Mak Nuk beach should permit beach users to freely expand their beach use. **N**

For more information on Hidden Beach Resort, Azulik, and Mak Nuk Village, see hiddenbeachresort.com, azulik.com, and maknuk.com.

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