

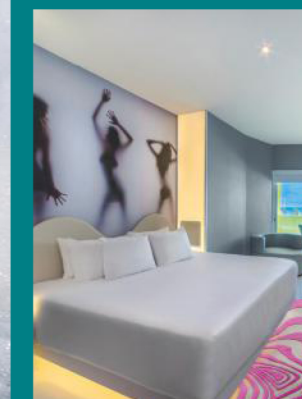
CANCUN

3 ways

Eleanor Kirk tests out three very different all-inclusive resorts along the Mexican coast

**T**here's nothing as relaxing as knowing all your needs are being taken care of – from poolside cocktails to unlimited food, all-inclusive holidays are the pinnacle of relaxation, and nowhere does it quite like Mexico. It's budget-friendly, Instagram-ready, and the service is out of this world.

I quickly become accustomed to the ice-cold margaritas handed to me by roving waiters as I float lazily in a swimming pool, cooling off from the humid weather. But all-inclusive resorts here aren't just about endless tacos and tequila. I find myself taking to the water on a jetski, a kayak and a Hobie Cat, and even try my hand at creating my own spa products. Fly and flop, this is not.



3 OF THE BEST EXCURSIONS

Known for wild pool parties and an open-minded attitude, Temptation Resort Cancun calls itself a 'playground for adults', and to that I can attest. I arrive and head straight to the Sexy Pool where the afternoon entertainment – a twerking contest – is in full swing, with guests shaking everything they've got.

It's followed by a beer-drinking contest, beer-pong tournament and water volleyball, all led by scantily clad staff known as Playmakers. It may not be your standard resort entertainment, but it's brilliant fun and gets guests talking and laughing together. Those who need a break from the party atmosphere can head to the Quiet Pool for rest and relaxation, or get out on the water with kayaks, catamarans and paddleboards all free of charge. I even spot a bright orange starfish in the clear waters.

Temptation is 'topless optional', and while there's no pressure, most guests do embrace the free-spirited nature

“ On stage, a pole-dancer sets the playful mood with gravity-defying spins, making the night every bit as fun and flirty as you'd expect of Temptation

of the resort around the pool and on the beach. It's liberating that so many women feel comfortable to bare all; no matter their shape, size or age, the vibe is body positive. There are rules at the resort to keep everyone safe and comfortable, including no sexual activity in public areas and a strict 'no means no' policy.

Suites are modern and sexy, with pops of bright colour and some decidedly adult-only features. As well as an array of raunchy entertainment on the TV, there's no door on the shower, which is in full view of the bed. Located in

The Tower, suites have a king-sized bed, private balcony and access to an exclusive rooftop pool with a bar serving premium drinks and food. Standard rooms have a slightly smaller bathroom, but also boast a private balcony.

Fine dining may not be the first thing that springs to mind when someone mentions Temptation, but it should be. Couples-only restaurant She is the most impressive, serving a tasting menu of aphrodisiac dishes while a sultry dancer performs. Elsewhere, there's Asian show-cooking, as well as seafood, Mexican and Italian restaurants to choose from.

Temptation's famous late-night parties take place at Bash, an open-air club with a different theme each evening. I join the 'all white' party, where everyone is dressed head-to-toe in white, including several clad only in lingerie. On stage, a pole-dancer sets the playful mood with gravity-defying spins, making the night every bit as fun and flirty as you'd expect of Temptation. ➤

**Fifth Avenue, Playa del Carmen:** Try delicious street food, hunt for handmade, traditional souvenirs or indulge in some high-end shopping along the resort's pedestrianised strip.

**Isla Mujeres:** Take the ferry to this tiny island and rent a golf buggy to explore, or join a snorkelling tour to visit an underwater museum and swim with tropical fish. There's also a whale shark excursion for the intrepid.

**Mangrove safari:** Hop in a speedboat and cruise through the mangroves on a guided tour. Along the way, you'll have the chance to jump into the water and enjoy a spot of snorkelling.

PICTURE: David Carranza



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Panama Jack Resorts  
Playa del Carmen

On the sun-drenched shores of the Caribbean sits family-focused Panama Jack Resorts Playa del Carmen. The huge lobby is friendly and inviting, with plush sofas and armchairs in the bar, Jack's Landing. It's a welcome respite from the blazing sunshine outside, and the perfect place to indulge in a signature cocktail or recharge with a fresh coffee and pastry.

The suites are large and airy, with muted decor that feels cool and calming. Standard rooms come with two double beds and a semi-private terrace, while junior suites boast a king-size bed, private balcony and

spacious bathroom. Family suites feature bunk beds for the kids and a king-sized bed or two doubles for the adults, while the biggest master suites house a separate sitting room with direct beach access and use of a private cabana.

There's no shortage of dining options, with six restaurants to choose from: international and Brazilian buffets; Mexican; Italian (with some seriously cheesy pasta dishes); a rooftop sushi and seafood restaurant; and a 24-hour diner with self-service drinks and snacks.

In the evenings, a band in Jack's Landing plays old-school favourites and current chart-toppers, while by

“There's water polo and water aerobics, but my favourite was the daily 'name that song' quiz, which had everyone taking part

the main pool, there are spectacular shows with outlandish costumes and live singing and dancing.

Entertainment isn't just limited to the evening, with plenty of poolside activities throughout the day. For those wanting to burn off last night's cocktails, there's water polo and

water aerobics – but my favourite was the daily 'name that song' quiz, which had everyone taking part.

There's also plenty to keep kids occupied. Camp Jack is an all-day hangout for children aged four to 12, with arts and crafts and a sizeable soft-play area indoors, plus a mini-golf course (where parents can play too) and climbing frames outside.

Camp Jack also hosts sleepovers, with kids coming in their pyjamas to watch movies and play games.

For older kids, meanwhile, there's #Hashtag, an area packed with air hockey, table football, ping pong, arcade games and even Xbox consoles hooked up to TVs.

### BOOK IT

**Temptation Resort Cancun:** Funway Holidays offers seven nights' all-inclusive from £1,289 per person, with BA flights from Gatwick, free upgrade to a Trendy Ocean View room and an Isla Mujeres island tour. [funway4agents.co.uk](http://funway4agents.co.uk)

**Panama Jack Resorts Playa del Carmen:** Travel 2 has seven nights' all-inclusive from £1,199 per person, based on two adults sharing a standard room, with direct BA flights from Gatwick. [travel2.com](http://travel2.com)

**Hyatt Zilara Cancun:** Gold Medal offers a week's all-inclusive from £1,659 per person, based on two adults sharing a Junior Suite. The package includes \$200 in-resort credit and direct flights from Gatwick with BA. [goldmedal.co.uk](http://goldmedal.co.uk)

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ASK THE  
expert

Kevin Froemming,  
executive vice-president  
and chief commercial  
officer, Playa Hotels

“We have an exciting line-up of new resorts. In the Dominican Republic, the Hyatt Ziva, Hyatt Zilara and Hilton La Romana opened in December, and guest feedback has been outstanding. In Mexico, Hilton Playa del Carmen has well-appointed accommodation and a variety of à la carte dining.”



The Hyatt Zilara Cancun sprawls across the widest stretch of golden, sandy beach in Cancun. This oceanfront adult-only resort is as grand as it is luxurious, with six restaurants, five bars, an expansive spa and a vast pool complex.


Dining options abound, with six speciality restaurants including contemporary Asian show-cooking, a Mexican cantina, an international buffet, private haute-cuisine dining room, and an open-air Caribbean and seafood restaurant with breathtaking views of the beach – and coconut-crusted shrimp to die for.

The resort is ideal for couples looking for romance, offering private on-the-beach dining. My partner and I take our seats under a canopy, our table facing the ocean and a star-scattered sky. Our dedicated waiter presents us with a selection of wines to choose from, followed by warm homemade bread, creamy soup, a mouth-watering fillet steak and indulgent chocolate dessert. Included in the package is a couple’s photography session during dinner. It’s the perfect setting for a romantic proposal – alas, I am not so lucky.

All the rooms face the ocean and every suite features

a Jacuzzi and king-sized bed, so guests can take in spectacular views of the azure-blue sea while sipping champagne and enjoying the jets. On the ground floor are swim-up suites with semi-private pools, plus a telescope for stargazing.

The Zen Spa is the Hyatt Zilara’s crowning glory, with a modern hydrotherapy circuit, 11 treatment rooms and a relaxation lounge with an outdoor terrace where guests enjoy yoga. As well as traditional treatments, a new Alchemy Workshop invites guests to try their hand at creating all-natural products. I start by grinding down coffee beans and almond flakes as a base for my body scrub, add skin-nourishing honey and then choose the scent from a selection of essential oils. I opt for orange and bergamot, and when I try it out in the shower, my skin feels gloriously soft.

Clients seeking even more relaxation can set up camp in a private cabana on the beach, to which attentive waiters will bring drinks and snacks, so you won’t have to lift a finger. There’s also a swim-up bar in the main pool, so you can hop on an in-water stool and stay cool while you try a cocktail or two – you’ve earned it. 

# Romance



Hyatt Zilara Cancun