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Hotel Review: La Amada in Playa Mujeres, Mexico

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BASICS

La Amada is an oasis of relaxation and resplendence just a few miles north of the frenetic Cancún strip. The hotel is designed as a full-service, self-contained compound, making it possible to never have to venture beyond its well-fortified gates if you don't want to. It opened in winter 2009 as part of a vast marina, **golf** and condominium complex that is still in development. Despite the sheer size of the place, the hotel itself manages to maintain an intimacy. Its 109 suites are spread out among several low-rise buildings that either face the sea or look out onto one of three sparkling blue swimming pools.

LOCATION

Though some of the hotel signage says Cancún, that seems to be more of a geographic locator for tourists. La Amada is part of an area called Playa Mujeres, which the hotel staff is quick to point out — almost as a point of pride — actually belongs to the sleepier Isla Mujeres municipality. It sits on a sandy peninsula that has been spared from the tacky development that has overrun much of Cancún. No Señor Frogs or T.G.I. Friday's here.

THE ROOM

The suite my partner, Brendan, and I stayed in, Tierna 3, was in one of the seven small buildings that house the resort's larger accommodations. We booked one of the two-level suites, which offered more outdoor space than two people could ever know what to do with. There was one balcony with a table and chairs and a sun bed on the main level. The second level was devoted to a large terrace, which had a private plunge pool and another, larger sun bed. The room itself, done in soft beige and white hues, was spacious. There was room for a Jacuzzi, a couch, a desk, a table and chairs and a king-size bed.

THE BATHROOM

As with the room, space was not an issue. The marble shower was as large as the bathroom in a decent-size New York apartment. It had so many fixtures that it seemed like a car wash: there were three jets attached to the wall, an oversize shower head and a hand-held sprayer. There was plenty of counter space and two deep sinks. The separate room for the toilet had a frosted glass door that stopped short of going all the way up or down, giving it the feel of a public restroom stall. A very nice one, but still.

AMENITIES

La Amada excels at attentive, exceedingly polite service. We were greeted at check-in with cold, moist towels and flutes of Champagne. There seemed to be no accommodation too small for the staff to arrange. There was a “pillow menu” in the room that listed a variety (ergonomic, down-lite, and so on) that were available on request. But the most impressive amenity had to be the 35,000-square-foot **spa** — a palace in itself with its own pool, **yoga** studio and 14 separate massage therapy rooms.

ROOM SERVICE

Food is not La Amada’s strong suit. It is often inconsistent. The one saving grace was the breakfast buffet. The beef fajitas (180 pesos, about \$15 at 12 pesos to the dollar) and ceviche (140 pesos) we ordered from room service were unfortunately no exception. There is also a 24-hour menu, and staff members were very obliging about arranging our spread on the second-level terrace.

BOTTOM LINE

If you are looking for a full-service resort with the convenience of being close to a transportation hub like Cancún without some of the inevitable unpleasantness, La Amada is your place.

La Amada, Playa Mujeres, Mexico; (52-998) 872-8730; laamadahotel.com. Rates start at \$289 a night for a junior suite.

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