

THE HISTORY OF MAYAKOBA: “SENSATIONAL AND SINGULAR”

Excellence is rare enough. Excellence that is also original and forward thinking is very rare. Thanks to the vision and persistence of the gifted designers, architects, engineers, biologists, hoteliers and business people inspired by its beauty, Mayakoba falls into the ‘extremely unique’ category.

Mayakoba began with a few unlikely twists of fate. OHL acquired its first piece of land on the Riviera Maya in the late 1980s. At the time, OHL was purely a construction company and the coastline south of Cancun was undeveloped. During the 90s, OHL began diversifying its operations just as the sleepy fishing village of Playa del Carmen and the area around it came alive as a tourist destination. Still, OHL was not interested in developing their land. In 1995, the company intended to visit the site and find a buyer, but instead recognized the blue of the sky and the sea and the green depths of the mangrove forest and recognized the value. OHL redirected their efforts, allocating one year and one-and-a-half million dollars to turning the land into something ‘Sensational and Singular’.

What could be done with 590 square acres of mangrove forest and jungle that had a relatively short coastline of one mile? Mexican architect Mario Lazo, admired for his work on resorts and hotels on the Pacific coast, was hired to design the Master Plan of the site. With about a dozen members including engineers, architects, biologists, hydrologists and tourism marketing experts, the design team camped out on the land for two weeks, walking, getting acquainted with the flora and fauna and thinking of possibilities. To complicate things further, the Mexican government imposed a heavy list of restrictions when it came to mangrove preservation.

The old way, as seen at Cancun, would have been to build a wall of 22-story hotels on the beach. That was impossible, both because of government controls and the team’s “green” design philosophy: “Let the site be what it wants. Nature knows, and you can’t negotiate with that.” Instead of struggling with Nature, they refocused the space as well as the definition of a Caribbean resort. Rather than a thin strip of intensive development on the beach, they would introduce a number of hotel lots of 10 to 15 hectares each throughout the site. They would open up the jungle to let the Caribbean breeze waft through the land, and thread through it a golf course that would exploit the various landscapes of forest, jungle and beach. Each hotel’s connection to the sea would be through a beach club. It was a brilliant solution that used the whole space rather than a

tiny fraction, enlivened and animated the usually “dead” zone behind the beach, and preserved the dunes, the mangroves and the coral reefs for future generations.

The designers’ redefinition of the resort raised another problem. How would visitors make their way through this rich and constantly changing landscape? The answer, again, came from Nature. The Yucatan has no surface rivers, but instead a vast network of pure underground waters which lie close to the limestone surface. Using this water and sculpting a series of lagoons and canals through the site would enable visitors to travel from golf course to spa to hotel to beach via a fleet of small electric boats, or *lanchas*. “Liberating” the Yucatan’s waters and bringing them to the surface was an original idea that would give visitors an even fuller experience of Nature. As well, for visitors who want to walk, bicycle or drive golf carts, there would be quiet, narrow trails that sacrificed a minimum of trees.

The ideas were aggressive and revolutionary, but with recognizable sense behind them. At the year deadline, the Master Plan was presented and won the Authorities approval four days after. Despite this, not everyone had the imagination to understand the team’s vision; often referring to them as ‘dreamers’ for intending to build a system of waterways for a Caribbean resort that wasn’t completely on the beach.

The design team had crafted a resort that offered much more diversity than usual, added to that was the novel idea of a “community of luxury brands” – the fact that three subtly different, high-end hotels share the space and multiply the visitor’s options. At Mayakoba, it’s possible to select treatments from five spas, bar-hop before choosing from more than a dozen dinner possibilities and to compare beach clubs.

These days, the dreamers and visionaries who saw its unusual potential are beyond content. Everyone is justifiably proud of the way Mayakoba respects and guards its dunes, jungle and mangroves. Because they listened to Nature, they have made a rare and diverse experience for visitors.

ABOUT MAYAKOBA

Under the vast blue skies of Mexico’s Riviera Maya stands Mayakoba, as beautiful as the nature that surrounds it. Once just a dream of a resort community of luxury hotels standing along crystal clear waterways and white sand beaches, Mayakoba has grown from a vision to provide one of the most captivating resorts in the Caribbean coastline. Mayakoba holds the immaculate greens of Greg Norman’s 18-hole El Camaleón golf



course, the luxurious casitas of Fairmont Mayakoba, the high-end Rosewood Mayakoba suites, the unique all-pool villas of Banyan Tree Mayakoba, the Jim McLean Golf School and the latest addition to the family will be the Andaz Mayakoba. The signature course is home to the OHL Classic at Mayakoba – the only PGA TOUR event in Mexico. Developed in complete harmony with the tropical forest and mangrove, Mayakoba is connected with a series of lagoons enabling guests to be transported through the resort using the “lanchas” (covered boats) as well as every beach restaurant of the resorts through the Mayakoba Connection ferry service. Mayakoba: a luxury destination like no other, where you are immersed in unspoiled natural beauty near the mysteries of an ancient civilization and pampered by the outstanding service of its hotels. For more information visit www.mayakoba.com

Media Requests:

Pieter Ruig
Castillo & Ruig Communications
(310) 882-5441 x102
pruig@discovercrc.com