



Palmilla's pool overlooks the coastline at Los Cabos.

PALMILLA PLEASURE

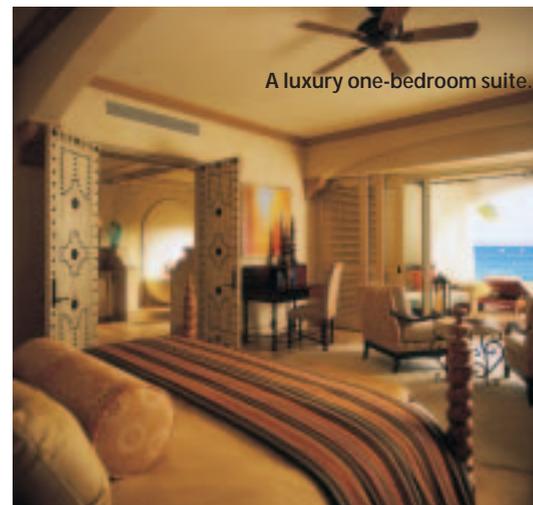
Experiencing the ultimate in luxe at the newly reopened Mexican resort on Baja California Sur

BY MICHAEL SHULMAN

Recently, I spent a week at Palmilla in Los Cabos, Mexico, and words from a song ("Flawless") by the Ones kept racing through my mind. Words like "grand" and "grace" and expressions like "beck and call" and "leaving nothing to be desired" perfectly summed up my stay at a resort that had only popped up on my radar when One&Only Resorts reopened these classy coastal *casitas* with an ultra-VIP 50th-birthday gala for John Travolta last February. Apparently, they'd just purchased the resort and then threw \$80 million toward sprucing up what was already considered a top-notch getaway for those in the know (going back to the '50s when it was a favorite for the likes of everyone from Dwight and Mamie Eisenhower to Ernest Hemingway).

The 15-minute drive to Palmilla (in a Hummer that awaits you outside customs) was spent listening to a surprisingly tranquil fusion of classical string quartet and mariachi music, and enjoying the cooling welcome kit with its ylang-ylang spritzes and Evian atomizers, while the Sea of Cortez went zipping by on our left, contrasting nicely with the arid desert terrain on our right.

Upon arrival, we were greeted by name. Our things were whisked to our rooms while we sat down at Breezes in the shadow of the main building, and as we sat there, overlooking the infinity pool and beach, watching the wind gently rustling the palm fronds, there it was: "Just like perfection..." Now, it isn't that I was getting away from a workday, nine-to-five life (some might question what, if



A luxury one-bedroom suite.

anything, I was vacationing from), but almost immediately, my whole body began to unwind, as if I'd just taken a Soma and washed it down with the perfection of the subtle, yet supple, 1959 Château Lafite Rothschild. As a matter of fact, one could very well hold up the '59 Lafite as the perfect analogy to Palmilla: Both are delicate and possess great elegance.

After a light but suitably breezy lunch, we were escorted to the gift shop (where I had to buy a bathing suit). From there we were taken to our adjoining beachfront patio suites and introduced to

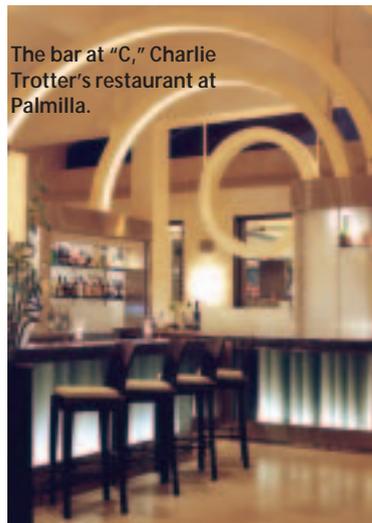
dinner each night you choose that evening's scent from the aromatherapy menu, might very well explain why we didn't resurface until the following dinnertime, whereupon we opted to order from the room-service menu, also prepared by Charlie Trotter.

Day number three arrived and we teetered off to breakfast. It's in the morning after a good night's sleep that the true magnificence of Palmilla really becomes apparent. The dwarf bougainvillea (which at Palmilla puts out vibrant seas of fuchsia flowers) is as meticulously manicured as any Gin Lane privet hedge; and the birds of paradise, orchid trees and

private treatment villa and given the Floral Foot Wash Ritual to wash away the stresses of my life and prepare me for total relaxation (it worked). The ritual progressed to an intense Swedish massage with scented oils, and included a scalp massage, during which I might have experienced the Rapture. The whole thing concluded with a Tea Ceremony by candlelight (I chose White Nectarine), which I opted to take during my soak in the hot whirlpool filled with scented oils and rose petals.

The second treatment was the Sublime Lime & Ginger Ritual. The easiest way to describe this three-hour treatment is to say that it was the Ritual of Touch, but before the Swedish massage, I was scrubbed down with Elemis' Lime & Ginger Salt Glow, then cleansed and soaked with Exotic Island Flower Body Lotion. Then, I received the Swedish massage for 90 minutes, and concluded with my Tea Ceremony in the hot whirlpool (this time I had Southern Peach).

After being driven back to our suites, we changed for dinner and went to Agua, a restaurant concept by Las Vegas restaurateur Elizabeth Blau. First, there's a water menu, from which you select from a comprehensive assortment of a couple dozen still and sparkling waters from around the world. The food is a combination of Mediterranean dishes prepared with a Mexican sensibility (the term being



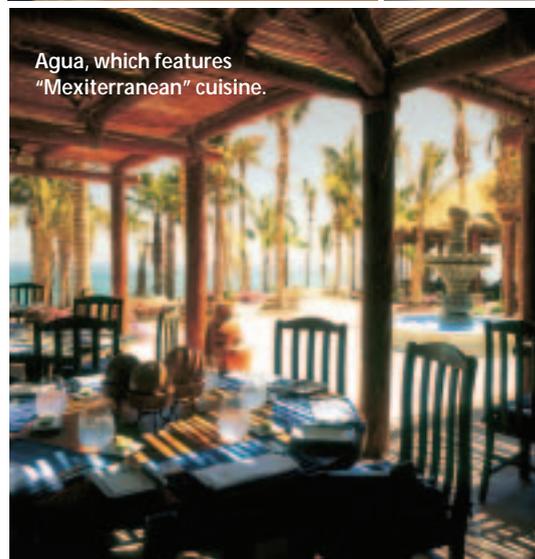
The bar at "C," Charlie Trotter's restaurant at Palmilla.



Pool concierge.



Outdoor verandah at "C."



Agua, which features "Mexiterranean" cuisine.

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other indigenous flora are so vivid that you almost expect to see a little sign in the corner of your eye that reads "Color by DeLuxe" as the pelicans and seagulls soar overhead.

I hadn't even hit the pool and I was well into my third day; so off I went to scope out the scene. The pool concierge is ready and willing to supply every possible convenience and tanning contrivance, including every shape and size of pillow, including a long, triangular pillow that props up one's legs in a very ergonomic way, as well as a bizarre yet insanely comfortable pillow, shaped like an apostrophe, that allows one to lie on one side (I think). There's even a number of iPod Minis with a range of well-programmed selections. Next to the chairs are placed ice buckets filled with Evian Atomizateurs as well as cooling Oxygen Shots.

As the sun began to fall in the afternoon sky, an attendant came to my chair to remind me of our appointments at the One&Only Spa, which is run by Elemis and combines the finest products with a decadent selection of treatments that leave one feeling pampered to the point of luxuriant gratification. I lavished myself with two most indulgent spa treatments: The first was the Ritual of Touch massage: a two-hour, 20-minute journey. I was led to a

bandied about is "Mexiterranean"). I had a terrific pork chop, with a side of shredded pork. My companion had a rock-crab appetizer that was so good, we ordered another before waiting for our entrees! To top off our meal, we split a bottle of 1995 Nicholas Feuillatte Grand Cuvée Palmes d'Or, which made for a fantastic and lively accompaniment.

Now, in most settings I am an inveterate night owl, but at Palmilla I was contentedly in my room by 10 each night. The egg-shaped bathtub faced an amazing view of the Sea of Cortez and each day a glass jar of eucalyptus-scented bath salts was brought to my room. After a leisurely soak, I took a quick rinse under my rain-shower and donned a luxurious Turkish cotton robe. Our suites were equipped with satellite television on flat-screen TVs, DVD/CD players, and Bose systems with surround sound. High-speed internet is available in all rooms.

I didn't even get around to trying out the supposedly amazing facilities for golf, scuba-diving, deep-sea fishing, whale-watching or any of the other things requiring that I actually partake of physical activity, but frankly, how could I be bothered to expend the necessary energy? I was having far too much fun doing absolutely nothing! As my friend Paul Alexander says, "Just like perfection...." 🏠

our morning butler, Jorge (our evening butler, Pedro would come later on), who showed us how to ring for our maids, our butlers or our golf carts (no walking at Palmilla unless you choose to do so—which we did not).

That night we dined at Charlie Trotter's "C" restaurant. After partaking of a special cocktail consisting of tequila, the juice of a fresh *yuzu* and pineapple juice garnished with cilantro, we started with chilled chicken and lobster tortillas, and then dined on a decadent portion of Wagyu/Kobe beef tenderloin served with a potato and garlic flan. A very charming 1995 Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin Rosé Réserve, added to the fact that when you leave for