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# THE OLD AND THE *New*

*The old Baja still exists, and it's becoming a new favorite destination. BY SUZANNE KOCH*

**I'M GOING TO LORETO,** I said, to which my dad replied with a confused look, questioning the existence of any resorts there. "No, Loreto with an 'o' and a 't.' Not Laredo," I explained. If you're confused too, don't be shocked. The tiny town is home to roughly 18,000 people and just two resorts, one that lies nearly an hour outside of town. So what's there? I kept getting asked. Exactly.

Before I visited Loreto, I had yet to experience an "undiscovered" place. While you don't have to fly in on a 10-seater plane and hike your way to the hotel, Loreto is by no means a popular destination—yet. Alaska Airlines currently offers service from Los Angeles, and Air Calafia offers service from Los Cabos and other destinations within Mexico, but other than that you won't find many ways to get there from the States. The airport is the entire terminal, and there's roughly one to two flights a day, sometimes none at all. Located on the Eastern side of the Baja peninsula, about four hours north of La Paz, Loreto has the feeling of what the "old Baja" felt like before the outside world invaded.

After traveling an hour south of the airport on a single dirt road, I arrived at Villa del Palmar Beach Resort & Spa that's neatly situated in Danzante Bay and surrounded by the Sierra de La Giganta Mountains. There are no other hotels, houses or towns nearby so it was no surprise that it was so quiet. Even the ocean barely made a sound, and neither did my phone. Since there's not much around, cell service is spotty at best in the rooms. Don't worry, there's still WiFi in public spaces so you don't have to fully disconnect.

While I'm all for a healthy lifestyle, I'm not one to jump into a kayak after filling up on egg whites and vegetables on vacation. I usually prefer suffering poolside after eating pounds of guacamole. But since I was visiting for wellness week, my day-to-day was a little less indulgent. The week was packed with different workouts and health-focused classes and topped off with specially designed meals to keep your diet on track. Workouts included everything from beachfront yoga to rigorous sweat seshs in the state-of-the-art gym with celebrity trainers. One day, I managed to squeeze in yoga, a hike, a workout and an hour of paddle boarding. It's like my entire New Year's resolution was resolved in one day. And I still managed to fit in three margaritas before the sun went down. A balanced life, you know?

To really keep the wellness going strong, a visit or two to the

39,000-sq.-ft. Sabila Spa was necessary. Named for the aloe found all over the property, the spa incorporates the fresh, green plant into many of its treatments. The hydrotherapy is even topped off with an aloe bath, which sounds like some morning ritual of a Hollywood celebrity that you might read about in *Vogue*, but it's

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actually DIY at its finest. Aloe cut from the property that morning was then sliced into small pieces and thrown into a warm bath, something us desert dwellers can easily do at home.

While paddling my way through the clear water post-aloe bath, above small stingrays and schools of colorful fish, I realized just how quiet it was. To avoid letting the secret out on this hidden gem I almost didn't even want to write this story, so maybe pretend you didn't even read it. ✿

**TO LEARN MORE:** Villa del Palmar Beach Resort & Spa [villadelpalmarloreto.com](http://villadelpalmarloreto.com).

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