



It's an unexpected paradise perfect for Boomers with deluxe dreams and casual chic lifestyle.

It didn't take more than 5 minutes from the airport in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico to reach Casa Velas, Boutique Hotel but since this wasn't peak hour traffic, I was shocked that we were soon at the security gate. (During my stay never I was aware of any noise from the jets.)

In a nano second, at first glance, I knew that this was exactly what I wanted for my few days in the sun. This huge lush area with the most perfectly manicured trees, blossoming and hanging colorful flowers, five peacocks casually wandering around as though they were the managers, there in the midst of this wondrous space was an elegant 80 suite, terra cotta roofed 'casa' with a photo perfect back drop of the Sierra Madre Mountains and right on the Pacific coast.

When I entered the lobby, my jaw dropped. The persimmon colored sofas, low coffee tables, a divider of several 6 foot high and unknown circular dimensions wax candles (lit every night), were all set on an island surrounded by a small stream of water. How could I not be impressed by this unique ambiance. It was certainly a great intro to this casual chic hotel.

I thought about what author/playwright George Bernard Shaw had written. "The great advantage of a hotel is that it is a refuge from home life". Home was nothing like this.

Much has to do with 47 year old, Manuel Oviedo, the managing director who makes time to meet as many guests as possible and believes in a hands-on policy.

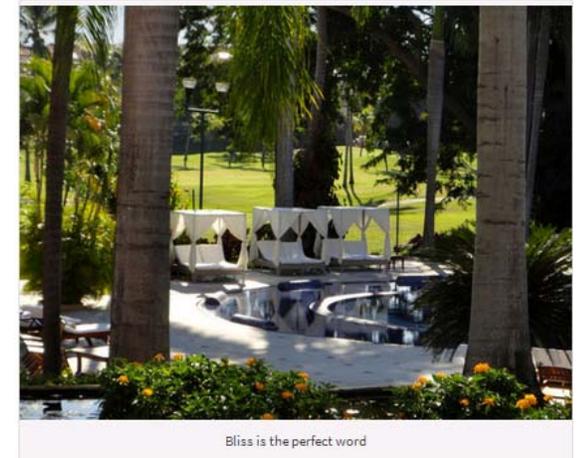
It took less than an hour before every staff member knew my name. I don't know about you but I appreciate gracious manners. Little wonder that Puerto Vallarta was awarded "La Ciudad mas amigable del mundo"- the friendliest city in the world. Another manifestation was the tradition of placing the right hand over the heart to welcome or thank you.

One of my great dislikes when I enter the hotel room assigned to me, is trying to discover what switch goes with the various lights, how to lower the air/con and fan, fiddle for hours trying to discover how the TV and Safe box works and getting the right tap in the shower. All this was shown when I settled in with my luggage. Also, I don't want a map to figure out the locations of various public rooms, pools, restaurants. Casa Velas was built with a clear plan and a pathway that even the most directionally handicapped person could find their way. This is, after all, a place for relaxation, rejuvenation, not frustration.

Never having been to Puerto Vallarta before, so many of my friends had told me how romantic all Velas Resorts are. I was on my own, not looking for romance but getting a good story about a deluxe hotel. The latter was the easy part. As for the former, I did see so many couples of various ages all looking adoringly at each other and hand holding as they walked through the lovely botanical garden. Was there something in the air? Yes, it was the poignant scent of all the herbs and veggies from the very large area for use in the restaurants and the aroma came from the bountiful flora throughout the acres



Water, trees, sculptures flowering bushes at the Casa



Bliss is the perfect word

Much thought has been given for the needs of the guests. The imagination and innovations just thrilled me. Perhaps, if the environment proved to be so very romantic, some couple may have become overwhelmed. It's a perfect venue for a marriage or a proposal and there's a wonderful situation solver. Rent a Rock, is for the unexpected engagements or marriages. There are numerous choices of genuine diamonds and other precious stones starting at .8 to 4 carats, with a reasonable rental charge..that is, unless you wanted to purchase the gem to savor this memorable moment. And to continue with clever rentals, if you happen to have forgotten a designer label evening bag, you could borrow. Some of them by designers, Michael Kors, Chanel, Carolina Herarra and more. From the public outdoor patio with wicker chairs and tables, always filled with guests having tea, coffee or whatever, before heading to my room on the 2nd floor, I looked through the palm trees and could see the wonderful large pool and its poolside restaurant.

Casa Velas does provide an abundance of activities. It sits beside a well tended 18 hole golf course, which my room overlooked and was gratis for the guests to use. There are two tennis courts, a very active gym, and a not-to-be forgotten spa. My 80 minute Shiatsu deep tissue/muscle massage, was expertly done. The spa menu has a variety of treatments all performed by specially trained estheticians.

With all richness of food and drink and to-the-manner-born atmosphere, this is an exceptional all-inclusive, adult-only hotel. No screeching from kiddies but sweet noises from the various birds that tweeted all day and was my morning alarm clock. What a way to be awakened.

As for my accommodation, it was lavish. The balcony had a plunge pool from where, I could see the bluest sky with white stripes clouds looking as though they were being pulled by invisible angels. Inside the seating area and desk was a step down from the larger than usual ecru decorated room, marble flooring and walls featuring original paintings by Mexican artists and a very ample marble bathroom. Not fond of high air.con, it was a delight to open the doors and have the slight breeze waft through the room.

Although I hadn't yet tried their truly wonderful coffee (I see myself as a java aficionado), I had this sudden caffeine high when the always available shuttles, drove me to the private Casa Velas Beach Club, just minutes from the main building. This is an option instead of the swimming pools. The sand was fine, the beach clean while the Pacific was refreshing and the Oriental cuisine served was the perfect mixture as the soft, gentle waves swished in and out.

As for fine dining, Emiliano Restaurant, overseen by executive Chef Juan Luis Ruelas, has designed a great and tasty international menu accompanied by the perfect wines. With the great ocean view, a small group took a hands-on cooking class at the Beach Club. My job was to prepare the crusting of tuna sashimi. Honey, soya,pepper, paprika and heavy on the sesame seeds, before it was set on the barbecue for a short time. Keeping the tuna reddish under the crust.

Of course there was a day trip to downtown Puerto Vallarta. Walking in the charming cobblestoned (flat shoes are a given) historic quarters then viewing the marvelous Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, a stroll the El Malecon (promenade) beside the ocean and adorned with sculptures, cafes, art, made for a fine afternoon.

Since the USA has non stops as do some Canadian cities, getting here is really painless. And the Casa Velas Boutique Hotel gives you what is promised..rest, relaxation and easy, laid back as you desire or as active as you want.

www.hotelcasavelas.com



Choice of lend a bag



Wish I was there



Your choice for treatment, outdoors or inside



The beach club... what a treat to hear the waves

