

# A Stop ON THE Road

*This Pacific Coast  
oasis seamlessly blends  
with its rugged,  
starkly beautiful  
surroundings!*

*-by Joan Tucker and Paul Papanek-  
-photos by Paul Papanek-*

The directions were as simple as they were casual: “Driving north from Cabo towards Todos Santos on Highway 19, look for a small white building around kilometer 59 and turn left onto the dirt road.” There would be no sign with the hotel’s name—though we were told that one was in the works.

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Easy, right?

Well – we drove right by the white house and dirt road several times, but after a little back and forth and a quick U-turn, we finally found it.

As we made our way slowly down that dirt road, which cut through seemingly endless fields of the organic farms of Pescadero, we strained to find any hint of a hotel. A low mountain range stretched out in front of us providing a backstop to the verdant fields. As we got closer, we could just begin to make out something in the distance that seemed to be at once a part of the mountain yet separate from it.

**(BELOW)** | Sign (which is not on the highway) to Paradero Todos Santos. Paradero Todos Santos blends in with the landscape as if it was part of it. The entrance to Paradero.



It was the Paradero Todos Santos, its poured beige concrete exterior blending as naturally into the landscape as if it had always been there.

The gate keeper at the turnoff to the hotel greeted us warmly as he checked our names on his list, then directed us to proceed to the entrance. Several staff were waiting to take us through the monolithic façade that opened onto the hotel grounds.

Paradero sits on a five and a half-acre plot situated right in the middle of 160 acres of family-owned farmland. In order to preserve these farms, the hotel founders – Mexico City-based Pablo Carmona and Josh



Kremmer - created a compound that exists almost invisibly within that acreage. Their vision was that the hotel should appear as though a giant hand had scooped up the Baja soil and then let it slip through its fingers forming a variety of high and low shapes. They engaged architects Ruben Valdez and Yashar Yektajo to bring that concept to fruition.

The result of their partnership is an amazing oasis of palm trees and native plants, water features, an organic vegetable garden, a beautiful spa, and an amazing open-kitchen restaurant and bar - all rimmed by the physically undulating austere two-story 35-suite structure made entirely of earth-hued raw poured concrete. The texture

of the walls had been defined by the rough wood forms used in its construction, and the impression was of something we had never seen before as the sun played on the surface with endless variations of light and shadows.

In the center of the property was the “living room” – a three-tiered covered structure that serves as the social heart of the hotel. Along with a firepit, comfy wood and leather chairs, jute floor pillows, and hammocks, there is a long wood table with plenty of outlets for anyone needing to do some work online. It’s also where the front desk is and while we were checking in, we

**(ABOVE)** | The austere undulating shapes of the poured concrete structure are a study in light, shadow and texture. The living room and front desk. The multi-level living room is the heart of the hotel.

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**(ABOVE)** | A calming mix of cool surfaces and soft fabrics with the bathroom across the patio. The view from the shower is amazing. Each suite has a window lounging seat with a view to the wild landscape just outside.

were served a perfect welcome drink: mezcal, fresh grapefruit juice, Aperol and a splash of *agua mineral* on ice. What could be wrong with that? Just nothing.

As we approached the entrance to our rooftop suite, we had no idea what to expect as we swung the oversize metal door open. A winding concrete staircase, lit by small triangular windows reminiscent of Mayan symbols – a motif repeated throughout the property – opened onto an airy patio that looked out to a field of ancient cardon cactus. To the right was the spacious bedroom – a minimalist and sophisticated room with a

cool, smooth concrete floor, king size bed, and beautiful custom-made natural wood furnishings and fabrics – a fascinating juxtaposition of hard and soft that turned out to be very calming. To the left was the bathroom with a large shower stocked with Paradero’s own private label organic products and lots of the best waffle-weave bamboo and cotton towels.

There was one more surprise waiting for us up another short flight of stairs: the private roof-top deck complete with two lounging mats and Paradero’s “Star Net” which is not an internet connection. It’s

actually a very inviting and sturdy woven triangular lounging net bolted into three walls and stretched over the patio below. We were advised to wait until after dark to check it out.

After settling in, we made our way down to the restaurant for dinner, grabbed a couple of stools at the bar which formed a perimeter around the open kitchen, and immediately ordered another round of those mezcal cocktails. The menu, created by executive chef Eduardo Rios – formerly from Pujol in Mexico City – is as exciting and innovative

as the property itself. Usually soft-spoken and reserved, he enthusiastically suggested that we start with the scallops aguachile with chili ash, avocado, and basil, as well as the Hiramasa yellowtail on a house-made tostada with grilled avocado and habanero mayo. Both were incredible, and perfectly showed off his love for everything local. We then segued to the fish of the day Zarandeado.

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**(BELOW)** | Our welcome drink: mezcal, fresh grapefruit juice, aperol, and agua mineral on ice. Wow! Tomatoes and peppers roasting over a wood fire. The open-kitchen restaurant and bar.



Smothered in chile and spices, the whole fileted fish is cooked slowly over a mesquite fire while being continually basted with yet more chili and spices. That was accompanied by burnt cauliflower with aioli and a truffled pickle. Our heads were spinning. Dessert was the perfect palette cleanser, a subtle and refreshing toasted coconut sorbet.

But that wasn't the end. The bartender treated us to a mezcal tasting and agave education, and we've been trying to find a bottle of Gracias a Dios Tepextate mezcal here at home ever since – a mezcal made

from 25-year-old wild agaves that has a particular softness and complexity with hints of minerals, grapefruit, lime, and ginger. This goes to the heart of the level of detail with which Paradero's bartender selects and uses the most appropriate liquor for each of their house special cocktails.

The Star Net was calling, and let me just say that stepping into it is a leap of faith that's totally rewarded by the sensation of weightlessness as you watch the bright night stars passing over you.

It had been a wonderful day.

**(BELOW)** | Shrimp zarandeados cooking over wood. Burnt cauliflower with aioli and a truffled pickle. Amazing! The corn tostada with Hiramasa Yellowtail, habanero mayo, avocado, and habanero kosho. Words fail us!



Paradero – which loosely translates as “a stop on the road” – isn't just a hotel. Activities that immerse guests in the unique ecosystem of Baja Sur are just as important as the rooms, restaurant, and spa and to that end, a daily “Experience” is included in each overnight stay. There's an Experience Menu, of course, and Joan and I chose one for each day of our 3-night stay: Learn to Garden; Local Taco Tour; and Go to the Beach (if you're regular readers of ours in *Cabo Living*, the last two on our little list should not have come as a surprise). Along with surfing lessons, mountain biking, hiking, and organic farming, each experience brings you back to the hotel with a deeper understanding of where you are, making you

feel a part of the surrounding community.

After a delicious breakfast of sunny side-up eggs cooked on an *ojo santos* leaf on the flat top of the traditional Oaxacan wood-burning clay oven, and the best French Toast ever, we met up with Carla who walked us over to the greenhouse to show us how to grow a plant. I know that that sounds pretty basic - and Joan and I grow a lot of tomatoes and herbs at home – but we did learn quite a few tricks for getting better results. In fact, we each adopted a plant after transferring the seedling to a larger pot, Joan a tomato and

**(ABOVE)** | No light pollution means endless stars at night. House-made tortillas with a selection of salsas - the perfect snack. Sunny-side up eggs on *ojos santos* leaves cooking on the comal.

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**(ABOVE AND FAR RIGHT) | THIS PAGE:** No stools available at bar? There's plenty of space for dinner just outside. Our little plants. Can't wait to watch them grow up! The entrance to the infinity pool deck. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Ground-floor suites all have a relaxing hammock that puts you in direct touch with the landscape. Our beach experience. We were the only people there! The amazing infinity pool.

a poblano for me. We're promised photos of them as they grow up and we're looking forward to seeing their progress!

The rest of the day was spent poolside until it was time for a visit to their Ojo de Aqua spa. Joan had booked a 2-hour classic Mayan massage which combined water, fire, earth, air, and sound. Having done a little research about Mayan massage, Joan was a bit apprehensive about what to expect, but after having been wrapped in warm heavy blankets by her wonderfully intuitive and gentle masseuse, she relaxed and enjoyed herself. The massage released so much

tension that afterward, she felt like she was floating. I had the shorter deep tissue massage which was also amazing. Afterward – and with both of us feeling pretty blissed out – we ordered a couple of the bartender's special Mezcal Negronis to take up to our rooftop and sipped them slowly as the sun set over the mountains. Kind of perfect.

Late the next morning, we piled into one of the hotel's Suburbans for the Taco Tour. Out of the three off the beaten path staff favorites, the one we fell in love with was Barracuda Cantina and Bar in Cerritos Beach. The tiny place, which consisted of a

large palapa and a taco truck, was packed. It's easy to think that it was because it had been featured on the Netflix show *The Taco Chronicles*, but the truth is they serve some of the best Baja-style fish and shrimp tacos we'd ever had. And their Flor de Mexico cocktail with mezcal, Aperol, lime, jamaica, and Angostura bitters was perfect. Yes – we had several, and yes - we have the recipe.

On our last full day, we headed to the Pacific for the last of our experiences. Our guides brought us to a lovely remote and completely empty beach about a 10-minute drive from the hotel where they set up a huge umbrella, soft beach mats and towels, snacks and a wonderful lunch. It couldn't have been

more relaxing – the only sound being the gentle waves quietly breaking on the deep beach. It was a great way to end our stay.

Even though the hotel had only been open for a few months before we arrived, the entire staff was so invested in the project that their genuine warmth and enthusiasm was evident in every interaction we had and played a huge part in our enjoyment and sense of well-being. They made us feel that we were all sharing a big secret together – all part of the developing story of Paradero.

**For more information, visit:**  
[www.paraderohotels.com](http://www.paraderohotels.com)  
[www.barracudacantina.com](http://www.barracudacantina.com)

**El Fin!**

**Recipe for Barracuda Cantina's Flor de Mexico cocktail from owner Danny Sanchez:**

Into a cocktail shaker, pour

- 1 oz Jamaica tea
- 1 oz Aperol
- 1 3/4 oz Mezcal
- 1/4 oz Agave syrup
- 1 pinch Salt

Shake and pour over ice, finishing by floating 3 dashes of Angostura bitters on top.

You're welcome.

