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TRAVEL

The Design Mind Behind Mexico's Next Great Hotel Brand

Interior designer Paulina Morán brings a deep reverence for local culture to Chablé Hotels, imbuing each of the properties with a distinct sense of place. With Yucatán's recently debuted Casa Chablé and the soon-to-open Chablé Sea of Cortez in Baja California, Morán is relishing the opportunity to dive into new regional heritages.

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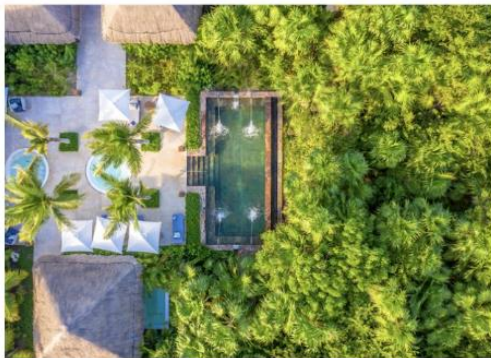
Chablé Maroma in Riviera Maya, Mexico.

Described as bold and eclectic, the work of Cancun-based designer [Paulina Morán](#) presents a modern vision of Mexico while staying true to the principles of traditional hacienda design and ancient Mayan techniques. The nimble balance is on display at [Chablé Hotels](#), the Mexican brand whose holistic ethos, breathtaking locations, and dedication to local artisans have earned it international acclaim (including a Surface Travel Award.)

[Chablé Yucatán](#), for instance, is home to a natural cenote, a sacred sinkhole that serves as the heart of the resort's wellness retreat whose treatments offer a blend of ancient Mayan practices and modern techniques. With a strong commitment to supporting local farmers and promoting sustainable agriculture, renowned chef Jorge Vallejo, owner of Quintonil in Mexico City, currently [ranked #9](#) in the World's 50 Best Restaurants, helms the kitchen at Ixi'im where structural walls from the former hacienda's *henequen* factory make for a striking dinner ambiance. (Vallejo leads the culinary programs across the portfolio.)

Fringing the pristine coastline in the Reserve of Punta Maroma, near Playa Del Carmen, a collection of villas connected by moonlit sascab pathways wrestle with the untamed jungle at [Chablé Maroma](#). Inside, guests will find 600-thread Egyptian cotton sheets sewn in local workshops, embroidered cushions fashioned by the Sna Jolobil community in Chiapas, and outdoor showers lined in Cumaru wood and Galarza stone.

The latest to join the mix is the super-special Casa Chablé, a collection of ten standalone bungalows accessed by a 35-minute boat ride through verdant mangroves to the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve not far from Tulum. With another property opening soon in Baja California, *Surface* spoke with Morán about Chablé's expanding footprint.



Chablé Maroma.



How do you bring a sense of place to each Chablé property?

Each Chablé destination is unique: the new Casa Chablé in the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve, Chablé Yucatán in Merida, Chablé Maroma in the Mayan Riviera, and the forthcoming Chablé Sea of Cortez in Baja California. When we embark on a project, our first step is a profound immersion in the culture of the location. The Yucatan Peninsula, for instance, is steeped in the rich heritage of the Mayan culture—an irresistible landscape for us to work within. However, the same approach wouldn't apply to Los Cabos with its distinct Sioux and Yaqui cultures. It's astonishing, really, the richness of cultural diversity within Mexico.

What's your creative process like when you start to design a new location?

We delve into the locale—its producers, art, culture, and customs. If we're in Los Cabos, we would need to understand the culture and ecosystem of the desert; in Chablé Maroma or Chablé Yucatán, we engage with the fascinating Mayan culture—how they construct their homes, their food customs, and the materials they use. Another crucial element is the mix of cultures that influenced these regions post the Mayan civilization. For instance, the French influence in Merida. We try to distill all these elements, creating a distinctive result for Chablé.



Chablé Yucatán. (Photos courtesy of Chablé Hotels.)

Does the holistic approach also extend to the culinary program?

Absolutely. Jorge Vallejo develops menus reflecting the local culture. In Los Cabos, for example, the cuisine might revolve around desert culture and delicacies. In a similar vein, the design also taps into the local ethos. At Chablé Maroma in Riviera Maya, we extensively use the local sandstone, which gives the pools their crystalline, light-blue appearance. It's all about embedding the project into its surroundings, creating a sense of belonging—much like how animals seamlessly blend into their habitats. Each project, therefore, has its unique personality. This philosophy aligns with the motto of the hotels—to work with the best regional resources, be it textiles, materials, or artisans.

Do you think guests can sense and appreciate the authenticity that lives in the small details?

The authenticity seeps into the very soul of the project. It's true that not all lavish projects evoke a sense of connection, but we aim to instill this elusive quality by respecting and incorporating local traditions and cultures. For example, every Chablé hotel celebrates the Day of the Dead, but the rituals vary based on local traditions. Mexico is a treasure trove of artistic and cultural richness, and we work closely with local artisans to elevate their crafts to an art form.



Casa Chablé. (Photo by Edgardo Contreras.)



Casa Chablé, located in Mexico's Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve. (Photos by Isabel Borberg and Edgardo Contreras.)

Chablé is deeply committed to sustainability.

Indeed, sustainability is a core principle. We work with architects who, like us, have a profound respect for the land. For example, Chablé Yucatán was designed to preserve the oldest trees in the area. Similarly, Chablé Sea of Cortez incorporates nature into its design, using vegetation to provide a cooling effect. We are not merely constructing beautiful places—we are building a lifestyle rooted in the appreciation of Mexican culture, and we do so sustainably and respectfully.

While each property is true to its location, the DNA of each one is familiar.

The relationship between the properties and nature is one such signature element. We strive to create spaces that encourage a natural connection with the surroundings. This is why outdoor showers have become one of the hallmarks of Chablé design. We are creating an experience that is both authentically Mexican and chic—a celebration of the best that each region has to offer.

<https://www.surface.com/articles/chable-hotels-holistic-design/>