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# VEGAN

# Life

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## Robin Raven writes about her Wellness Getaway in the Riviera Nayarit

**A**s my plane landed at the Puerto Vallarta International Airport, I felt a bit overwhelmed with excitement. I'd long wanted to visit Mexico, and to be there for a wellness getaway was just what I needed. Ironically, I had gotten a cold the night before, but I was determined to not let that stop a bit of my fun. After all, where better to be when you're feeling a little under the weather than a trip that's focused on wellness?

My getaway was in the Nayarit state, one of the smallest of the 31 states of Mexico, on the beautiful west coast. The Riviera Nayarit is a 200 mile stretch of coastline and it is well known for its stunning beaches, bird watching and as a great stretch for surfers. If you are looking to visit a more rural and isolated part of Mexico, the Nayarit Riviera may be the perfect destination for you — it is far less populated than other parts of Mexico. Along the coast there are many

attractions including colonial Tepic, volcanic El Ceboruco and the Salto de Jala waterfall, but my visit was focused on wellness and therefore I made my way to the AAA Five Diamond Grand Velas Riviera Nayarit.

First up was checking into a "Wellness Suite" at the Grand Velas Riviera Nayarit, which is located on the edge of the infamous Banderas Bay and just fifteen minutes from the airport. The resort



has a total of twelve Wellness Suites. My suite had two floors, with the top floor having a private hot tub and superb views — I was already starting to feel better... The room also included an exercise bike near the bed and an in-suite exercise kit that included a yoga mat, dumbbells, and resistance bands — perfect for gym bunnies. The room was also scented with citrus, which helped me feel rejuvenated. To my immense surprise, and pleasure, there was also a vitamin C sprinkler in the shower which spritzed me with vitamin C essential oils.

Grand Velas Riviera Nayarit is an all-inclusive resort with 267 ocean-view suites. The balconies which look over the tranquil bay and the Pacific Ocean beyond are truly breathtaking and it is easy to see why people come here to relax. Sitting with a book, pen and paper or simply accompanied by the gently lull of the ocean is the perfect way to get away from hectic modern day life. After I had seen the wonders of my room, I was ready to embrace the wellness getaway to the fullest.

Part of the getaway package included eating Ayurvedic food. Ayurveda considers food to be as powerful as medicine and good digestion is the key to being cleansed on the inside and out. I had not experienced Ayurvedic food at all before and my first meal there was one I won't forget.

We had to put our cell phones on a table in another room so that we could fully



Grand Velas Riviera Nayarit

concentrate on the food that we were eating. Mindful eating is very important to wellness, although dining without a cell phone or camera isn't something that travel writers often do and it did feel a little strange at first, but I respected the wishes of the host. We all removed our shoes, did a wellness game where all attendees got to know each other, and danced.

The host kindly accommodated my vegan diet. I was served a delicious salad, then a main course that primarily consisted of simply prepared, but tasty, garbanzo beans. Dessert was an avocado mousse. As I ate, live music was played and the sound of running water. It was an experience as much as it was a meal, and it helped me focus on the mind-body connection to wellness.

I was already feeling much better after my Ayurvedic dinner, the next step was to visit the Spa. The next day, I delighted in a hydrotherapy ritual at the on-site Se Spa. I put on my swimsuit and took a revitalizing shower. Next up, was the herbal steam and sauna which is beneficial for liver health and cleaning toxins from the skin by opening your pores. My face felt so soft and smooth afterwards. At the Se-Spa they also have a two-temperature lagoon, Jacuzzi and a multi-jet Swiss shower.

This was a preparation of sorts for an aromatherapy massage. My masseuse was kind and considerate, and used vegan products in the massage. The massage included the use of fresh local herbs and traditional Mexican plants that were hand-picked from the resort's on-site organic garden.

During the massage, I felt a physical transformation and an inner one as well. At first, I tensed up because I am not used to massages, but I breathed through it and found myself immersed in the moment. Savoring the experience and feeling the simple pleasure and release of rejuvenation through massage, I found myself feeling at peace at the end of the massage.

That evening, the most delectable moment of my trip took place at a nearby Grand Velas. I had dinner at Emiliano, a casual Mexican restaurant at Casa Velas. The appetizer was fun; a

Lobby





## Se-Spa



mini kebob of vegetable followed by a peach, beetroot and arugula salad that was flavoured with a vibrant orange vinaigrette.

Spinach with rice soup was unexpectedly rich and filling, then a stuffed pepper with zucchini and vegetables delighted my taste buds. Finally, the baked pear with chocolate was so completely delicious that it made me want to ask for seconds.

It was my first wellness getaway and the biggest lesson I learnt was the power of gratitude. I have a naturally grateful heart, and I keep a gratitude journal.

Even so, I strive to find ways to be more thankful each day. So, I really took to an unexpected gift that I found in my room when I returned to it one day during my stay. It was a stone.

With the stone was a nice letter that said in part, “Before going to sleep, hold your Gratitude Stone in your hand, close to your heart, and give thanks for the best moment of your day. Do this every night to fill your life with appreciation.”

Ever willing to try new things, I held that stone close to my heart each night of my stay and gave thanks. I’ve tried doing that beyond my stay, too, and it does

help. I feel like my sense of gratitude continues to grow. I appreciate that resorts make the effort to focus on the experience and offer unique touches that you wouldn’t find at another hotel, inn, or resort.

So, ultimately, vegans can have a fulfilling, exciting, and dynamic experience at the Grand Velas Riviera Nayarit. You can plan a wellness getaway or another kind of all-inclusive vacation. I hope to return to the shores of Mexico’s Riviera Nayarit to experience more of its splendor and local vegan cuisine.

## Emiliano Restaurant



## Wellness Suite