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Vallarta's New Charmer

Renovations are under way at the Buenaventura Grand Hotel and Spa

by Janeen Christoff
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The pool overlooks the Bay of Banderas.

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Deep in the heart of downtown Puerto Vallarta, just five blocks from the Malecon and steps from the ocean, employees are hard at work at the Buenaventura Grand Hotel and Spa. The resort, currently undergoing a \$9 million renovation, is transforming itself into a boutique beauty.

Once branded for a national and Canadian market, the family resort — which is celebrating its 25th anniversary — is reinventing itself to target an American clientele. As the perfect complement to its adult-only

sister hotel, next-door-neighbor the Villa Premier, the Buenaventura will offer all-inclusive amenities in a family-friendly atmosphere. The goal is for the first phase of renovations to be complete by Dec. 23, just in time for the holidays — and the high season. Among the first of the changes to the 236-room hotel was to upgrade the room categories, which now include three variations: deluxe room, honeymoon suite and junior suites.

Deluxe king rooms will include a balcony, fully stocked mini bar, flat-screen television, coffeemaker, hair dryer and a safe. Many deluxe rooms have ocean views, but some offer views of the city below. The honeymoon suite has a similar layout and includes an ocean view with additional amenities such as a CD player and Jacuzzi tub. Perfect for families, the resort's four junior suites have two rooms, including a king-size bed and a pull-out couch, two balconies, two flat-screen televisions and all other standard amenities. When room renovations are complete and the transformation is official, rooms will also have another added benefit not often found at an all-inclusive: room service. The only amenity not included is Wi-Fi, which is available for \$15 per day.

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Improvements have not been limited to rooms alone. The lobby has undergone a complete overhaul, with beautiful new artwork, new couches and tables, new tile and a fresh coat of paint. The hotel has also added a business center, which overlooks the lobby and offers



Deluxe King room

guests a place to store luggage, check e-mail, watch television and wash up upon arrival or before heading home.

The pool area has been revamped as well. Gone are the loud activities directors and booming music. In their place, chrome deck chairs line the three pools, white umbrellas offer a shady respite from the sun and new palapas line the sandy beach — the hotel is located on one of Vallarta's only swimmable beaches. A small sundeck can now be transformed into a stage for poolside entertainment in the evenings, and a tranquil, open-air spa with four treatment rooms and a blissful rooftop Jacuzzi resides above the newly built Sunset Bar and Grill, adjacent to the pool.

A little landscaping has also taken place, although, the work continues. Rooms, once bombarded by jungle vegetation, now offer sweeping views of the Bay of Banderas.



Frutas and Flores restaurant has a new patio terrace, part of the renovations.

Other upgrades include the renovation of the existing restaurants: the buffet-style Frutas and Floras and Rodizo Restaurant, a Brazilian-style steakhouse. Menus at both eateries have been reinvented and the new Sunset Bar and Grill offers gourmet fusion

cuisine.

To further improve their all-inclusive offering, alcohol at all the restaurants and bars is being upgraded with premium liquor.

Of course, there are some last-minute touches that need to be addressed, and the resort has a "phase two" starting in April, during which even more transformation will take place. But in its current state, the Buenaventura is a charming, authentic hotel for clients looking for a resort experience, without being isolated from one of Mexico's most popular towns.

CONTACT

Buenaventura Grand Hotel and Spa

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The resort will offer both all-inclusive and European plan options. All-inclusive rates for a deluxe room start at \$113, double. Clients can upgrade to a Honeymoon or Junior Suite for \$62 per person, per night. European plan rates start at \$123, double.

EATING OUT

The Buenaventura, perfectly situated in the heart of downtown, allows clients to get a taste of Vallarta without even getting in a cab. Below are some eateries your clients will love:

Archie's Wok

If you are looking to add some Asian flavor to your Mexican experience, this is the place. Don't miss the Szechwan margarita.
322-222-0411

Banana Cantina

Contemporary Mexican cuisine at an affordable price.
www.bananacantina.com

Cafe Des Artistes

This restaurant is famous for its culinary prowess.
www.cafedesartistes.com

Daiquiri Dicks

A haven for ex-pats, Daiquiri Dicks is the perfect place for brunch.
www.ddpv.com

La Palapa

Hidden away in the romantic zone, La Palapa is perfect on a sunny afternoon.
www.lapalapav.com

Los Xitomates

Haute cuisine just a few minutes' walk from the resort.
www.losxitomates.com

Pepe's Tacos

Just up the street from the hotel, this fast-food establishment offers some of the best tacos in town — and they are open late.