



SUSTAINABLE RESORT & RESIDENCE COMMUNITY

FOR: PLAYA VIVA
Carretera Zihuatanejo-Acapulco
Playa Icacos
40834 Juluchuca, GRO
Mexico
650.292.0432
www.playaviva.com
Playa Viva on [Facebook](#)

CONTACT: WAGSTAFF WORLDWIDE
Ty Bentsen / Trisha Cole
323.871.1151
tyb@wagstaffworldwide.com
trisha@wagstaffworldwide.com

**PLAYA VIVA INVITES TRAVELERS TO ENJOY ECOLOGY IN HARMONY AT
NEW ECO-LUXE PROPERTY ON MEXICO'S PACIFIC COAST**

From helping conserve the endangered turtle population to restoring the coastal forest and mangroves, Playa Viva offers a complete regenerative experience for the mind, body, and planet

(JULUCHUCA, MEXICO; March 2010)—Combining simple elegance with natural beauty and a commitment to improving the environment, [Playa Viva](#) is a sustainable boutique hotel located on the western coast of Mexico, just 30 minutes south of Zihuatanejo/Ixtapa International Airport. Nestled between the sparkling waters of the Pacific Ocean and the majestic Sierra Madre Mountains near the village of Juluchuca, Playa Viva is situated on a mile of pristine and private beach. The property's nearly 200 acres includes an estuary, an Aztec archeological site, turtle sanctuary, and a coastal forest and mangrove ecosystem which supports an array of stunning wildlife.

Guests can enjoy the rugged, unspoiled beauty of Mexico from the comfort of Playa Viva's first five rooms—opened in November 2009—and experience the bounty of this unique habitat while actually helping it thrive. Beyond being “green” and minimizing

environmental impact or “sustainable” and generating zero damage, Playa Viva is committed to being a “regenerative” property—improving the abundance and well-being of both the natural systems and community through a host of initiatives including the restoration of the coastal ecosystem, an on-site turtle sanctuary which works to preserve Mexico’s endangered green sea turtle population; a community-supported agriculture program, and working with a local salt co-operative to find equitable markets for an organically produced, artisanal salt called Sal Viva.

Regenerative Practices, “Slow Food, Slow Vacation,” and Eco-Luxe Amenities

Proprietor David Leventhal and his wife, Sandra Kahn, were inspired to build Playa Viva after opening the popular Casa Viva B&B in Troncones, about 30 minutes north Zihuatanejo/Ixtapa. The couple also founded [Rainforest 2 Reef](#), a preserve in Mexico’s Yucatan Peninsula that protects over 350,000 acres of jaguar habitat. Born and raised in Mexico City, Kahn has long been committed to improving the environment and the communities in which she lives. The couple spearheaded a commitment to regenerative development, ensuring that Playa Viva is an active part of improving the health of the local ecosystem and the nearby community. The hotel runs on 100% off-grid solar energy and was constructed with the best available green technology, including solar thermal water heating, grey and black water processing, and the use of natural and local building materials. The property also repurposes waste materials into organic matter for the on-property farm, and utilizes natural and local products in building, maintenance, and cleaning. “We are constantly striving to make the local living systems stronger and the entire ecology more resilient,” Leventhal says.

Leventhal and Kahn worked with a team of architects, designers, and local craftspeople to give Playa Viva an open, airy feel, allowing the rooms to feel like an extension of the natural surroundings. The frames of the casitas are constructed from bamboo brought from Veracruz, with palm fronds found on property woven by hand to create the thatched roofs. Attention is given to the smallest detail, where walls were constructed with local clay and then cast with materials such as hay (for a softer interior finish) and even sea shells (for a harder exterior finish).

All guest structures are situated beach-front to capture the cooling breezes from the Pacific. The floor plans for the casitas seamlessly blend indoor and outdoor living spaces while still maintaining privacy for guests. Playa Viva features a one-bedroom private suite with an unobstructed beach view, as well as a four-bedroom casita, which includes two deluxe suites and two studios (which can be combined for larger parties)—all with ocean views. The spacious suites include a king and two single beds. The studios have two single beds that can be joined as king-size bed, as well as a seating area, desk/work area, and closet. Beds at Playa Viva are full-canopy beds with mosquito netting and were built by hand by local craftsmen. All rooms also feature a security safe, desks, and furniture built by artisans from native and locally harvested woods such as teak,

huapinol (a rich, ruby-red wood), and bocote, a chocolate-brown wood with blond streaks used for floors, as well as a communal dining table. Playa Viva's common areas—including the pool, living room, bar, kitchen, and dining area—create a balance between private and public spaces, while nurturing a feeling of community and allowing friends and family to enjoy each other's company within the luxury of nature. Fixtures throughout the property reflect the diversity of Mexican craftsmanship: handmade lampshades and hand-woven wool blankets; chandeliers from Santa Clara del Cobre and hand-painted plates from Capula in neighboring Michoacan state; brass faucets and fixtures from San Miguel de Allende; and organic cotton blankets, napkins, and place mats made at a historic cotton mill in Uruapan.

Guests at Playa Viva have all the conveniences they need to minimize their ecological footprint without sacrificing any creature comforts. Included as part of the stay are a wide range of amenities, such as airport pick-up and drop-off in a low-emission, diesel-fueled van; luxury organic cotton sheets and towels, along with biodegradable organic soaps and lotions; beer and organic tequila; yoga classes and excursions to nearby towns; and tours of the Playa Viva Turtle Sanctuary, where guests are invited to aid in the volunteer effort to preserve Mexico's population of endangered sea turtles. Guests also have access to an array of recreational activities, such as exploring nearby estuaries, swimming, surfing, whale watching, and hiking in the nature preserve on property, not to mention indulgences such as massages. "Luxury is about attention to detail in service so our guests enjoy their stay at Playa Viva to the fullest," Leventhal notes.

Playa Viva's commitment to the environment naturally extends to food, with meals on property being made from local and organic ingredients whenever possible. Working collaboratively with local farmers, Playa Viva is helping to develop a market for organic produce, as well as promoting what Leventhal describes as the "slow food, slow vacation" movement. Guests can accompany Playa Viva Chef Alejandro every Wednesday on an excursion to the local market and assist in preparing the evening meal, learn how to make local favorites, and provide their recommendations for dishes and ingredients. The hotel has also been host to notable chefs such as Chef Zack Nishimura of the renowned Chez Panisse restaurant in Berkeley, CA and is currently developing a guest chef series that will bring other sustainably focused culinary luminaries to Playa Viva.

Designed with families in mind, Playa Viva offers many activities for kids. From outdoor pursuits such as the kid-friendly swimming pool, wildlife spotting, and kayaking to working with the nearby turtle sanctuary, arts and crafts, and games, Leventhal notes: "We ascribe to the philosophy that children need wild places to grow and thrive. We provide a safe environment for kids to explore, learn, and play, and disconnect from the daily trappings of 'Nature Deficit Disorder.'" Playa Viva can also provide child care services with advance notice for parents who need extra support during their stay.

Building Community: The Playa Viva Turtle Sanctuary, Sal Viva, and More

Playa Viva's commitment to regenerative travel also encompasses the property's efforts to build a better community where guests are encouraged to get involved. One unique opportunity for nature lovers is volunteering alongside local residents at the [Playa Viva Turtle Sanctuary](#) to help protect the native Olive Ridley and Leatherback turtles. An all-volunteer team of residents from Juluchuca dubbed "La Tortuga Feliz" ("Happy Turtle") work with the Mexican Department for the Protection of Endangered Species to ensure the continued breeding of the native turtles. Guests at Playa Viva can join La Tortuga Feliz in night patrols on the beach searching for turtle tracks that lead to nests and assist in counting eggs and transporting them to the sanctuary. The turtle eggs are then buried in a safe nesting place, free from predators. In the morning, guests are invited to collect just-hatched turtles from each nest, count them, and take them down the beach, making sure they make it into the ocean free from harm.

Playa Viva also works with a local salt co-operative to produce and find equitable markets for an artisanal salt called [Sal Viva: the Salt of Life](#). Originally gifted as tribute to Aztec kings, Sal Viva has been harvested by hand in nearby Juluchuca for centuries. The salt is the result of a natural process: Summer rains wash the rich minerals off the Sierra Madre range, filling seaside lagoons, eventually bursting past sand barriers, fusing with the salty Pacific Ocean. As heat evaporates the lagoons, local farmers hand form calcium drying ponds and rake in the salt. Playa Viva is working to make the product available to the public, whether they are visiting Playa Viva or not. Sal Viva is currently being used by Los Angeles area restaurants such as Akasha, and Playa Viva plans to make the product more widely available in 2010. All profits from the sale of Sal Viva return to community development efforts. The goal is to ensure that the local co-operative can obtain a fair price and continue harvesting salt using traditional methods handed down over many generations.

Playa Viva's active engagement with its neighbors in the community includes working with farmers to conduct organic agriculture courses, as well as workshops to engage the community recycling waste. Playa Viva has also partnered with a local organic farmer to launch [Canasta Viva](#), a community-supported agriculture program that delivers baskets of high-quality, organic produce to residents of Zihuatanejo and Ixtapa. Already well received, the CSA will serve as a catalyst for organic agricultural production throughout the area. The property contributes at least 1% of gross revenue toward community development activities including a partnership with the Ocean Foundation to provide funds for initiatives that increase the general health, economy, and well-being of Juluchuca.

Early in the process of purchasing and developing the land, Playa Viva's owners discovered an [Aztec archaeological site](#) within the property boundaries. They invited

the Mexican Department of Archeology to visit the site and assist in developing a better understanding of the area's historic inhabitants. The archeologist researched the site's history and found evidence of a community called Xolochiuhyan. The meaning of this name has various interpretations, including "place to grow old," or "place of the ancient ones," to "place of the gourd" (important as a tool for collecting and storing water). Archaeologists believe three mounds on property served as agricultural terraces, with the nearby lake serving as a reliable source of fresh water. A small pyramid made an excellent vantage point for seeing across the watershed and into neighboring valleys, providing plenty of advanced warning from invaders. Aztec records show that this area provided tribute to the kings in the form of salt, cacao, and cloth made from locally grown cotton. Playa Viva is currently spearheading an effort to further research and restore the site.

The Essentials

Playa Viva is located near the village of Juluchuca, Mexico, 30 minutes south of the Zihuatanejo/Ixtapa International Airport, which offers 78 direct flights per week, including nonstop service from a number of U.S. cities including Los Angeles, Phoenix, Dallas, and Minneapolis. Rates range from \$195-795, all-inclusive, for rooms depending on season. For more information on Playa Viva and all aspects of its environmental and community initiatives, or to make a reservation, please visit www.playaviva.com or call 650.292.0432 (in Mexico +52 (55) 5350 3877). Playa Viva is also on [Facebook](#).

###

**For more information, please contact Ty Bentsen at Wagstaff Worldwide:
tyb@wagstaffworldwide.com or 323.871.1151**