

The T List

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In Mérida, Mexico, a Minimalist Hotel Opens in a Restored Mansion



Hotel Sevilla opens this month in a restored building in Mérida, Mexico. Left: a second-floor room features original trunk-like ceiling beams. Right: the former stables' stone walls enclose the hotel's new pool. Rodrigo Hermida/Courtesy of Grupo Habita

By Suleman Anaya

Mérida, the capital of Yucatán on the Mexican peninsula of the same name, draws visitors with its mix of colonial architecture and expanding art scene, as well as its proximity to important Mayan ruins such as Uxmal and Chichén Itzá. Hotel Sevilla, a 21-room property scheduled to open Nov. 13 near the city's main square, channels the city's blend of bygone majesty and contemporary vibrancy. Built in the 16th century, the stately *casona*, or grand aristocratic house, became a hotel in the 20th century but had sat abandoned since the 1980s. Grupo Habita, the Mexican hospitality company behind the renovation, kept its name, though they worked with the Mexican German architecture firm Zeller & Moye to temper the building's monumental scale with modern shapes, including a striking spiral staircase in raw concrete. Almond trees provide shade in a formal courtyard beyond a lime-washed lobby, while newly uncovered 18th-century frescoes were preserved in the cloistered corridors around it. The minimalist rooms (some over 700 square feet) pair antique window frames and soaring wood-beamed ceilings with black tile floors that have a cooling effect and local artisanal touches like pistachio-lacquered cedar furniture and lampshades made from henequen, an agave-derived rope fiber. But the lushest comforts are in the social areas: A sinkhole-inspired cold plunge offers refuge from the city's tropical steaminess, and in a second patio (the former stables), a pool is bisected by an old wall with a cutout that guests can swim through. For fuel between lounging sessions, a cantina and a bistro spanning the patios and porticos offer French-Mexican fare and drinks that nod to Mayan culture, such as a Yucatán Carajillo containing tequila, espresso and Xtabentún, a regional anise liqueur. From \$195 a night, hotelsevilla-merida.com.