NEW OPENING La Paz, Baja California At the club

Mexican hospitality firm Grupo Habita has brought a down-at-heel villa in the seaside town La Paz back to life. Welcome to Baia Club.

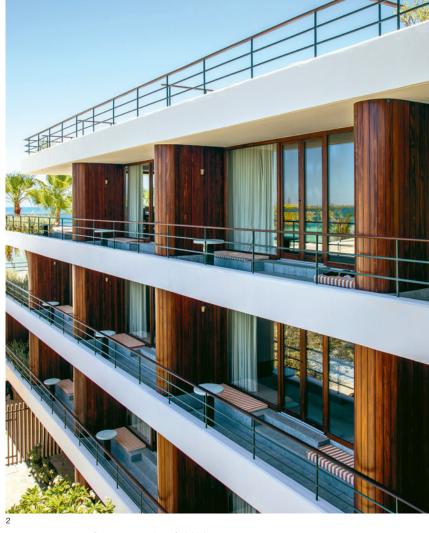
By Mary Holland Photography Ana Hop



"The villa seemed to be waiting for Max von Werz. One example of this is us," says Carlos Couturier, co-founder in the wide, open-air spiral staircase, and one of four managing partners of which swirls down to the pool and Grupo Habita. "It was left exactly as it was originally conceived, everything trees, against the backdrop of an origifrom the old lamps to the bookshelves nal wall hewn from handmade bricks. and original windows was in place. We had to buy it."

latest property, the sea-facing Baja Club in the coastal Mexican town of La Paz, occupies a mission-style villa dating from 1910. From the street, the building's stucco walls, amber-glazed doors and colonial-style windows with most of the finishes were produced or ornate cast-iron grills give it a timeless applied by hand, by artisans. feel. Grupo Habita has restored the old hacienda and joined forces with original style but also to the use of design firms Max von Werz Architects and Jaune Architecture. They worked to maintain the appeal of the old prop- if not in Baja California, then at least erty while adding space and bringing in Mexico," says Jaune Architecture's the hotel up to date.

build on a site's rich history and char-replicated in a bottle-green version life," says the Mexico City-based firm's



courtyard freckled with frangipani

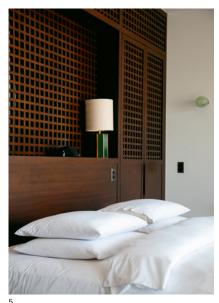
It's these kinds of materials used in the original villa – brick, timber beams The Mexican hospitality brand's and terrazzo tiles – which formed the DNA for the fit-out. "Our intention was to employ simple but tactile materials with visual qualities, giving the project a richness in its colours, textures and shades," says Von Werz, adding that

Inside, the spaces stay true to the Mexican designers and artisans. "We tried to have everything made nearby; Paula Alvarez de Toledo. The villa's "One of the challenges was how to original burgundy floor tiles were acter but also to give it a new lease of made by hand in a La Paz studio. "Using local craftsmanship was a way

(1) Catch of the day (2) Rooms with a view (3) Secluded pool (4) Everything inside is made in Mexico (5) Place to rest (5) Baja Club hostess Fernanda (7) Inviting entrance







"Using local craftsmanship was a way to anchor the project and achieve authenticity with a strong connection to the old villa"

to anchor the project and achieve authenticity with a strong connection to the old villa," says Von Werz.

The ocean-facing rooms that spill onto balconies give a nod to the area's maritime history with smooth, wood-panelled walls that look like they belong on a stately cruise ship. "The new building feels almost like it's docked in downtown La Paz," says Couturier, with a knowing nod to the nautical themes throughout the hotel.

With a restaurant, bar, spa and a rooftop and courtyard pool, guests needn't venture too far for diversions either. But there's a reason the team chose La Paz as the destination for their hotel. Despite the town's sometimes unfairly garnered reputation for being a bit touristy, it has a number of draws, such as the beaches and the Unesco heritage islands, which Couturier believes are the area's bestkept secret. "It feels like a calm fishermen's port," he says. "A paradise waiting to be discovered." — (M) bajaclubhotel.com





La Paz address book:

Jazamango A restaurant, bakery and organic garden where chef Javier Plascencia serves fresh catches that are paired with sublime cocktails best enjoyed on the venue's patio. jazamango.mx

Docecuarenta

For early risers, this buzzv café serves cold brews and cortados as well as smoothies and pastries. It also stocks freshly roasted beans to take away. docecuarenta.com

DRINK Hambrusia

One of the town's hippest and most inventive margarita and taco joints, Hambrusia puts its own delicious spin on classics such as confit tuna tostada with wasabi and ponzu. hambrusia.com

SHOP Étnica

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