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## THE COLORFUL CITY OF ROSARITO CELEBRATES THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF ROSARITO BEACH HOTEL.

STORY BY JENNA CAVELLE • PHOTOS BY ERIK CUTTER

JUST A HOP, SKIP AND A SHORT 3-hour jump south of Los Angeles, lies the Rosarito Beach Hotel, a Spanish-Colonial hostelry that continues to attract the same air of fame it exudes. Revered as a favorite escape during the Prohibition era, Hollywood legends Orson Welles, Lana Turner and Rita Hayworth patronized the hotel regularly. Enjoying as much fame as its guests, Rosarito Beach Hotel has much to celebrate. It's no secret that festivity and good cheer are second nature for Mexico and at the Rosarito Beach Hotel – it's simply what they do best. In 1935, ninety airplanes parked on the hotel grounds in honor of the New Year's celebration. Seventy years later, this grandeur approach to commemoration lives on and the excitement is contagious.

The hotel is a dramatic city within itself, an achievement further illustrated by a map of the hotel grounds presented along with your room key upon check-in. Built by

Manuel P. Barbachano in the late 1920's, the hotel is nestled on the white-sand beach of the Pacific side of Baja Norte, just south of the Tijuana border. By 1933, Barbachano built the first paved highway in the area to make it easier for his SoCal guests to get to the hotel. Soon thereafter, he built the first power and telephone companies in Baja, making the hotel an accessible, comfortable getaway for sun-seeking vacationers and celebrities alike.

Today, nephew and hotel manager Hugo Torres Chabert continues Barbachano's efforts, expanding the hotel's services and architecture. Plans for a marina are already underway as a follow-up phase to the fishing pier that stretches out to the sea. In eight decades, the hotel has evolved from an eight-room hunting lodge to a 280-room resort hotel. My room boasted 2 stories, 2 bedrooms, a wrought iron spiral staircase, a full kitchen and a cozy living area with a sweeping view of the ocean.



When you enter the open, wood-beamed lobby displaying original 1920's murals, a deep appreciation of Mexico's culture and history envelopes you. In the near distance, a superbly tiled Olympic-size swimming pool beckons you to its courtyard. From here, you might bask in the sunshine while listening to the live mariachi music pouring from the Azteca Restaurant. Whether you choose to stroll the maze of ballrooms or find yourself seduced to the beach by the thunder of crashing waves – there is no shortage of stimulation at the Rosarito Beach Hotel. The property is all-inclusive with a fishing pier, two restaurants, three bars, a coffee shop, two ballrooms, a museum, boutique shops, racquetball courts, a full-service spa and a myriad of activities such as cooking lessons, dancing instruction and Mexican handcrafts just to name a few.

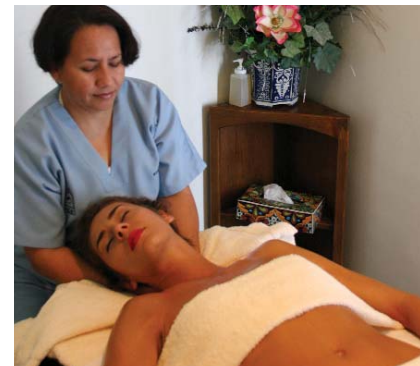
Beyond the hotel, Rosarito activities include horseback riding and ATVing on the beach, shopping and fine dining. Fox-plotation - a studio tour type attraction at the place where parts of "Titanic" and "Pearl Harbor" were filmed - is a couple of miles south of town.

One of the hotel's most striking features is the palace-like spa – a soaring chamber with an artfully symmetric staircase leading to a wrap-around gallery

**(Opposite)** "Through this door pass the most beautiful women in the world," reads the inscription above the hotel entrance —the ambiance echoes charm and elegance dating back to the 1930's. **(Above left)** Friendly staff and warm smiles greet you as soon as you arrive at the front desk. **(Above right)** Shops with Mexican handcrafts and traditional art make for interesting shopping sprees within the hotel's boutique plaza.



*(This page, clockwise from left)*  
 Built in 1926 as the owners' home, this magnificent mansion has been restored and now houses a luxuriously appointed spa ■ Massage therapist Camelia Mendoza offers a relaxing massage treatment ■ The world class Casa Playa Spa offers an array of services and treatments to ensure a relaxing and rejuvenating experience. *(Opposite page, clockwise from top left)* Separated from the sea by an enclosed sitting room, the Olympic-size swimming pool makes for a great sunbathing or exercise spot ■ A mother and daughter enjoy a light-hearted moment in the children's pool ■ The hotel lobby is adorned with original, life-like murals rich in color and history ■ Located in the palatial founder's mansion, Chabert's Restaurant offers gourmet dining in an elegant ambiance ■ The Azteca restaurant, the more casual of the hotel's dining areas, serves up delicious traditional Mexican cuisine every morning, noon and well into the evening.





and railed in vintage wrought iron. A first-class staff offers an elaborate variety of massages and beauty treatments that are unparalleled in quality. The spa houses a complete gym outfitted with universal equipment and a large room for aerobics. Additionally, the beauty salon offers hair, nail and make-up services.

Although expansion seems impossible at a hotel that already offers anything and everything, Torres foresees more growth in the years to come. His only condition is to uphold Rosarito Beach Hotel's proud heritage and increase the prosperity of the surrounding town and its people.

"We want to make Rosarito Beach a model city for Baja California Norte and for all of Mexico. We are blessed with a coastline of white sandy beaches and inlands of natural open beauty. Our goal is to enhance the resources of Rosarito Beach, both for our residents and the visitors who enjoy our wonderful city," states Torres.

Whether it be for just a night or an extended weekend with friends and family, with 80 years of presenting the best of Mexican hospitality, this nearby getaway is a sure bet to please you. ■

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A MODEL CITY FOR BAJA CALIFORNIA  
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-JUGO TORRES CHABERT

