

Mexico's Grupo Vidanta, Second Cirque du Soleil Project

By Bryen Dunn



Grupo Vidanta is the largest and most luxurious group of resort properties in Mexico, with several locations spread out across the country in prime tourist locations. The story of Grupo Vidanta dates back to 1974, when a team of young entrepreneurs opened a small hotel in Mazatlán called Paraíso Mazatlán, and the dream grew year after year with new resort destinations and hotels. The company celebrated its 40th anniversary last year, and 2015 is shaping up to be another grand year of expansion, especially at the Nuevo Vallarta location.

One of the biggest additions to their portfolio of offerings was their partnership with Canada's Cirque du Soleil. The two companies recently announced their second development project, with plans to construct and operate a first-of-its-kind immersive entertainment theme park experience in Nuevo Vallarta. While still in the initial phases of conception, this new project is proposed to include water and nature park elements, as well as outdoor evening performances. Each experience within the entertainment park will be animated by Cirque du

Soleil artists and follow a common storyline. Guy Laliberté, founder of Cirque du Soleil, remarked "We set ourselves the challenge of creating something unlike anything the world has seen before."

Visitors will be immersed in a new and magical realm full of surreal structures, strange characters, spectacular rides, and unexpected experiences. The park will feature three in-park resort hotels, each themed, as well as a full Cirque du Soleil show and water park experience. This announcement came on the eve of the launch of JOYÀ, an intimate and immersive theatrical and culinary experience that premiered at the Riviera Maya property, November 2014. This is Cirque du Soleil's first-ever resident show in Mexico, about a rebellious teenage girl who gets caught up in her eccentric grandfather's search for the secrets of life in the jungle. JOYÀ is the first Cirque du Soleil show to include a dining experience as part of the performance, and has been playing to sold-out audiences since its debut performance.

Development of the new Nuevo Vallarta project aims to reimagine





the theme park experience in the same way JOYÀ redefines theatrical and culinary entertainment. “We have been dreaming together with Cirque du Soleil to create new categories of entertainment for Mexico and the world for more than five years,” said Grupo Vidanta founder Daniel Chávez Morán. Construction is expected to be complete in 2018.

Another major development at the property is the new Greg Norman-designed golf course, which will be in addition to the Jack Nicklaus course already in operation. The company currently has six golf courses within its network, making it the largest golf developer in the country. Late last year, professional golfer Carlos Ortiz was signed to represent the company as a brand ambassador. Ortiz, who grew up in Guadalajara, Mexico stated, “I’m grateful for the support they have always given to golf in Mexico.”

Each of the Grupo Vidanta resort properties are presented in much the same fashion, with accommodation and dining options being standardized to offer that comfort of knowing exactly what to expect upon arrival. The Grand Luxxe segment is top level luxury, having received the 2014 AAA Five-Diamond Award for lavish décor, specially commissioned sculptures and paintings, private pools and beaches, and round the clock personal service. Currently, there are a total of just over 2100 rooms available at the Nuevo Vallarta resort, with nearly 700 at Grand Luxxe, and it is expected to increase to over 800 by the end of 2015. The Grand Bliss offers similar features for the sophisticated vacationer, while the Grand Mayan is more suited to families with its extensive option of outdoor pursuits, such as river floating on inner tubes, water slides, and children’s play stations.

The Nuevo Vallarta resort is a village within itself, sprawling hundreds of acres interconnected via wooden boardwalks within lush manicured greenery and along gorgeous sandy beaches and emerald blue waters. Guests can also enjoy a relaxing treatment at Spatium Spa or an energizing exercise class at Brio Fitness Center, improve your skills at the onsite Tennis Center or Jack Nicklaus Golf Academy, and dine at over a dozen restaurant options from beach-chic to elegantly formal. Both Mexican and international cuisine can be found throughout, and include

Epazote, Punta Arena, Blue Fish, Chiringuito, Tramonto, Gong, Havana Moon, Samba, The Burger Custom Made, or poolside snacking huts.

The opulent Spatium pampers guests within 25 service cabins and six outside private treatment rooms. Each outside treatment room features a different theme based on various foreign countries and featuring spa services and techniques common to that country, including treatments from Mexico, the Mediterranean, India, Italy, other parts of Europe and Thailand. Spa services include a variety of massage techniques, body treatments such as facials and reflexology, beauty salon for hair and nails, and full use of its steam rooms, saunas, and hot/cold plunge pools. An exclusive line of organic body treatment products is also available for purchase.

Santuario in an architectural marvel, with towering palapas that soar over a 75,000 square feet at the heart of the Nuevo Vallarta property. It comes alive nightly with top notch entertainment and mixology cocktails. This outdoor covered facility is a work of art in itself, with elegant lounging areas and reflection pools, and the performances go above and beyond typical resort entertainment. Singers, stunt-walkers, and sand artists come together to create a one-of-a-kind showcase. During the day, Santuario is a tranquil space for relaxation, where guests can enjoy coffee and pastries, before transforming into a vibrant night of entertainment.

The newly opened Marketplace is basically a shopping mall within the resort. Stop by to pick up groceries, pharmaceuticals, alcohol, fashionable attire, and beach accessories. There are also specialty pastry shops, chocolate and smoothie counters, and other delicacies.

Membership-based travel is essentially the purchasing of a yearly accommodation option that best suits individual needs. Purchasers then have the option to book their annual allotted time at any of the Grupo Vidanta properties within that same accommodation category, which can be as simple as a standard hotel room, or as extravagant as a multi-level suite with private infinity pools. Its hotel brands include Grand Luxxe, The Grand Bliss, The Grand Mayan, The Bliss, Mayan Palace, Ocean Breeze, and Sea Garden. To date, the company has built seven luxury



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resort hotel brands and seven mega-resort-style vacation destinations in Mexico. Members also have the option to let family and friends use the allotted time slot on their behalf, or invite guests to accompany them during their stay. Minimum contract length for new members is 10 years, and appointments can be booked in advance most days of the year.

What sets these Grupo Vidanta properties apart is attention to detail throughout the resort, from accommodations and dining, to entertainment and relaxation facilities. In addition, the level of service provided by each and every employee is a testament to having well trained and satisfied individuals in place. In fact, Grupo Vidanta was recently ranked the number one Place to Work in the Latin America Hospitality Industry by Great Place to Work Institute. The company also operates two foundations to improve the lives of Latin Americans.

For many, the allure of resort properties is the convenience of getting there, the comforts of home during your stay, and memories that remain after your visit. Grupo Vidanta lives by its vision "to bring vacation dreams to life and create extraordinary guest experiences",

and they continue to fulfill these dreams on a daily basis!

Optional Activities

The Activity Desk located in the Grand Luxe lobby can make arrangements for a variety of day excursions. Vallarta Adventures has offices around the country and have been operating for many years. They offer everything from cultural tours, boat cruises, and dolphin swims to mountain trekking, ziplining and the newest adventure water sport around – flyboarding. First developed in 2011, it uses the thrust of a jet ski to propel the board through the water and up into the air, giving you the sensation of flying!

Getting There

There are several non-stop flights a day arriving into Puerto Vallarta Airport, and a complimentary transport service meets guests upon arrival to shuttle them directly to the resort property in about 15 minutes. The property is also within easy walking distance (15 minutes from the entrance) to shops and activities in the nearby Nuevo Vallarta residential-resort community.

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Website - www.grupovidanta.com

