

Press Coverage: Alila Hotels & Resorts

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Above: guests at Ventana Big Sur can opt for one of the 15 luxury tents set in the hotel's 160 acres of wilderness. Below: a beachfront villa at Rosewood Phuket, with a generous portion of outdoor space

has reopened, after a series of landslides earlier this year closed large sections of the coastal route, scuppering one of the Golden State's most iconic drives. The timing of Alila Hotels and Resorts couldn't be better, then, with this month seeing the Asian company relaunching an old Big Sur favourite. **Ventana Big Sur, an Alila Resort** (alilahotels.com; from \$675) has been completely redone – its 59 rooms and acclaimed Sur Restaurant renovated, Alila's own spa brand installed, and a standalone art gallery built. But best of all is the addition of 15 luxury tents on Ventana's 160-acre wilderness, for a California-under-canvas experience that aims to be unequalled in these parts. Another icon, this one on

MEXICO's Riviera Maya, has just emerged from similar attentions: the 11 massive new suites at **Hotel Esencia** (hotelesencia.com; from \$850) – scattered along gleaming-white Xpu-ha beach and in the dense palm forest – bring to 40 the number of highly coveted keys at this mainstay of the New York *movida*. And the new restaurant, with its whitewashed floors, palapa roof and cinematic sunset views, is manned by an elBulli alumnus.

➔ And finally, those who thought **PHUKET** had reached critical resort mass may have to revise their assessment, now that one eminent luxury company is entering the scene in time for the high season. **Rosewood Phuket** (rosewoodhotels.com; from \$750) is set on the silvery filament of Tri Trang beach, just a couple of kilometres – but, in terms of tranquillity, light years away – from the throngs at Patong. Rosewood has excellent form with resorts (witness its masterful management of Castiglione del Bosco, Massimo and Chiara Ferragamo's meticulously restored estate in Tuscany's Val d'Orcia) and this should be no different: the 71 rooms and villas, long on outdoor space and gratifyingly short on predictable Thai frippery, are cast in whites and pretty aqueous tones. But it's the beach restaurant, built using reclaimed teak, that will probably take the fantasy-fulfilment prize. ✦



Above: the gleaming-white Xpu-ha beach at Hotel Esencia, on Mexico's Riviera Maya



architecture are collectable and vintage design pieces, with each room boasting a clutch of unique details, from bespoke tile work to original art. The dead-central location, a stone's throw from the Cathedral of Sant'Agata – Catania's patron saint – and a few blocks from the sea, only adds to the appeal.

➔ The big news in central **CALIFORNIA** is that Highway 1 from San Francisco down to Big Sur