

Bringing Back the Magic The Resurgence of Mexico's Mazatlan and Puerto Vallarta

Story by Ronnie Greenberg • Photos by Joe Hilbers

The Golden Allure of Mazatlan

Pearl of the Pacific as Mazatlan is known is the northernmost of the beautiful sun-drenched port cities of Mexico. Nestled at the foot of the majestic Sierra Madre Mountains, it is Mexico's largest Pacific seaport with the longest stretch of beach.

Built on a peninsula, Mazatlan juts into a sheltered natural harbor where the Pacific Ocean and Sea of Cortez meet. It is easy to fall in love with its distinct Spanish-colonial accent and contagious lay-back lifestyle.

The Malecon encompassing much of the city is a combination seawall and seaside promenade newly rebuilt, and the favorite place for strollers, joggers and street vendors. It winds its way from Olas Altas through the



Statue of the Dolphins along the Malecon in Mazatlan

Golden Zone, and north to the ends of Puenta Cerritos. Meandering alongside the shoreline, it is serenaded by the cawing of seabirds and lined with beautiful monuments including the Fisherman's Monument, The Beautiful Women of Mazatlan, and the newest of the monuments, La Continuidad De La Vida (The Continuity of Life).

Mazatlan remains a fisher-

man's paradise with superb year-round world class fishing. Local waters brim with swordfish sailfish, (from May to November) marlin, (from November to May) tuna and Dorado. Light tackle fishing is plentiful along the lagoons for Snook and barracuda.

A string of crescent shaped beaches run from the tip of the peninsula across 16 miles to the north of town. Silvery foam waves lap onto

psychedelic-colored fish in the crystalline aqua and cobalt waters of Chivos, Blacas, Cardon, Tres Islas and Isla de los Venados. Surfing, water-skiing, parachute gliding and windsurfing are popular throughout the area.

Amid the shops in downtown, colorful markets and colonial-era architecture, there is a fervor and passion for preserving the past. It is evident in the culturally growing 20 block historic area around the main plaza where the people have

ering place for people of all ages.

Where to Stay

Pueblo Bonito Emerald Bay Resort & Spa is steeped in tradition of romance and elegance, as well as a fantastic family venue. Architecturally resembling old time Mazatlan, and set on 20 acres overlooking the Pacific Ocean, it is the only AAA -Four Diamond Resort in Mazatlan with a world-class spa. Two crystalline pools are situated near state-ly palms, lush gardens and



Bringing Back the Magic The Resurgence of Mexico's Mazatlan and Puerto Vallarta continued



Mazatlan best city tour and guides

Sinaloa-style asado, and for dessert, sweet corn flan, turtle cheesecake, Mazatlan-style banana cream pie, and a variety of ice cream. Located at 201 Avenida Ernesto Coppel/Campana, S/N Nueva Mazatlan CP8210. For reservations and information, visit www.pueblobonito.com/resorts/emerald_bay or call (800) 990-8250 or (800) 966-0606.

How to Get Around

Unique to Mazatlan are

Puerto Vallarta is spirited and captivated by the bluest of skies, and cuddled by the lush tropical greenery of the Sierra Madre Mountains. This magical paradise known throughout the world is loved for its natural beauty, its crystal waters that flirt with pristine beaches, and an unhurried lifestyle. It savors the flavor and charm of a small Mexican town with the luxuries of a city.

In the old downtown around the Rio Cuale, whitewashed houses splashed with fuchsia bougainvillea and red-tiled roofs, border the cobblestone streets that wind up the hills. In the center of town is the Malecon, a broad tree-lined promenade. The action is in lively Plaza de Armas, the town's main square at the southern end. The sculptures of The Dolphins and The Arches (Los Arcos) are the symbols of the Malecon, but the crown and bell tower of the Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe church is Puerto Vallarta's most distinct landmark.

In Gringo Gulch, Casa Kimberly, formerly the Elizabeth Taylor-Richard Burton love nest looks out over Banderas Bay. Now a luxurious nine-suite boutique hotel with an open-air rooftop restaurant called the Iguana, a tequila bar, pool



La Palapa in Puerto Vallarta

and an intimate spa. It is connected by a walking bridge to the guest house.

There's a whole variety of sea-bound adventures including boating, sailing, yachting, Banana boats towed by speed boats, para-sailing, water-skiing, diving and snorkeling in the waters of Banderas Bay. Dolphin Adventure is a memory of a lifetime. Get to

swim and interact with the dolphins in their own environment.

For a change of pace, hike up mountain trails to primitive villages, swim in waterfalls or hike along the Pacific Ocean's edge alongside a stunning sunset. Travel on horseback through the foothills of the Sierra Madre mountains and discover the natural wonders of the tropical forest. A safari tour into the rugged Sierra Madre



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Mazatlan

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scuba diving and snorkeling. Mismayola Beach, six miles south of town, is seductively hidden in a small natural cove surrounded by high cliffs. In the hills on the south side of the cove are the remains of a set from the *Night of the Iguana*. Artists now live in the houses built for the original set of the 1963 movie.

Where to Stay

The Westin Resort & Spa is a lush world class ocean-front resort in Marina Vallarta with a sultry golden sand beach, and breathtaking views of Banderas Bay. In this tropical atmosphere, dotted with swaying palms the ambience of colonial Mexico is tastefully blended with luxurious amenities. Four swimming pools, three lighted tennis courts, a full health and fitness center and spa are offered here. Restaurants include: El Palmar for Mexican cuisine; Arrecitas Seafood and Steakhouse; La Cascade Restaurant and

walls and rustic wooded beachfront restaurant. The soft sounds of acoustic guitars serenade you as you dine on delicious Mexican and continental gourmet cuisine specializing in delicious local ingredients. Visit, www.lapalapapv.com

Stop at the landmark **El Faro-The Lighthouse** for cocktails and light snacks as you view the entire marina.

Shopping

The Mercado Municipal is a traditional Mexican market with produce, souvenirs, flowers and piñatas. Isla Rio Cuale has open-air shops selling leather, souvenirs, and upscale funky clothes.

For information on Puerto Vallarta, visit www.visitpuertovallarta.com

HOT Trends For GREEN Living

As homeowners consider ways to “live green”, many may be surprised to learn the powerful effect home heating



heating solution that’s both Earth and financially friendly? Here are a few hints that can help.

Selecting the optimal climate control system is critical with home heating using more energy and costing more money than any other system in your home—typically making up nearly half your utility bill. There are several types of heating systems that range from blowing hot air through ductwork to piping hot water through your floor. Forced-air systems, the most common, heat quickly and evenly, but many are not energy efficient and some users complain that moving air is noisy and blows allergens around the house. In addition, they require ductwork, which many older homes don’t have.

A lesser-known option, at least among Americans, is called ductless mini-split systems, distributed by such companies