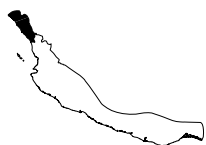


# Mazatlán



At first glance Mazatlán may seem like your typical resort offering standard-issue tourist fare, but beyond the posh hotels and thumping discos awaits an old port city with intriguing local flavor. Dubbed the ‘Pearl of the Pacific,’ Mazatlán is a place of many faces. On the south side, revamped Old Mazatlán has emerged as the center of a thriving new cultural movement, while scores of contemporary galleries, sidewalk restaurants and hip bars sprout up along the narrow streets of the new-look historic center.

Southeast of Old Mazatlán, and just a five-minute boat ride away, you couldn’t ask for a lovelier place to while away the time than the coconut grove–edged beach of Isla de la Piedra (Stone Island). The hardest decision you’ll have to make here is deciding which *palapa* seafood restaurant you want to eat at. Head north of Old Mazatlán and you’ll hit party central in the Zona Dorada, a vibrant tourist playground where the agenda consists mostly of fine dining, boozing and uninhibited dancing. While in the ‘hood, be sure to visit one of several venues that stage live *banda* concerts. Mazatlán is the birthplace of the brass-band sounds of *banda sinaloense*, making it a treat to see a live performance.

If time allows, make a special point of checking out the surrounding areas. For an invigorating breath of mountain air, venture out to the small mining towns of Copala and Cosalá. And just about 30 minutes northeast of the city, you can enjoy a joyful slice of rural life on the cobblestone streets of El Quelite.

So much to do, so little time.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Wining, dining and soaking up the cultural offerings in revamped **Old Mazatlán** (p104)
- Bopping and swinging your partner to the beat of Mazatlán’s famed **banda music** (p114)
- Strolling along the cobblestone streets of the friendly mountain villages of **Copala** (p116) and **Cosalá** (p117)
- Boating through mangrove swamps and beach bumming at **Teacapán** (p118)
- Swimming in calm waters and spending a lazy day under a beachfront *palapa* restaurant at **Isla de la Piedra** (p107)



■ AVERAGE JANUARY DAILY HIGH: 28°C | 82°F

■ AVERAGE JULY DAILY HIGH: 33°C | 91°F

■ TELEPHONE CODE: 669 / POPULATION: 404,000

## HISTORY

Researchers have found numerous petroglyphs (images carved into rocks) in nearby areas, some of which date back 10,000 years. In pre-Hispanic times Mazatlán (which means 'place of deer' in Nahuatl) was populated by the Totorames, who lived by hunting, gathering, fishing and agriculture. They also were accomplished ceramic artisans.

On Easter Sunday in 1531, an army of about 150 Spaniards and 8000 Indians led by Nuño de Guzmán officially founded a settlement here, but almost three centuries elapsed before a permanent colony was established in the early 1820s. German immigrants played a crucial role in developing Mazatlán's port, which established its first customs office in 1828. In 1848 US forces blockaded the port during the Mexican-American war. Commercial trade started to flourish in the latter part of the 19th century with the arrival of the railroad.

Today Mazatlán ranks among Mexico's largest ports and is home to one of the biggest fishing fleets in the nation. Tourists started coming in the 1930s, mainly for fishing and hunting, and some hotels appeared along Playa Olas Altas, Mazatlán's first tourist beach, in the 1950s.

From the 1970s onward, a long strip of modern hotels and tourist facilities had extended north along the coast. As large resort hotels spread like wildfire in the Zona Dorada, Old Mazatlán, which dates from the 19th century, was abandoned for decades. Yet in recent years, thanks to an ambitious renovation program, the historic center has reclaimed its glorious past.

## ORIENTATION

Old Mazatlán, the city center, is near the southern end of a peninsula, bounded by the Pacific Ocean on the west and the Bahía Dársena channel on the east. The center of the 'old' city is Plaza Principal, surrounded by a rectangular street grid. Several blocks southwest of the plaza lies the Plazuela Machado, a restaurant zone and the heart of Mazatlán's cultural renaissance.

Heading north from Old Mazatlán, the beachside boulevard Paseo Olas Altas becomes Av del Mar along the coast of Playa Norte. Once you hit the hotel zone in Zona Dorada, the avenue converts into Camarón Sábalo, which extends north to the marina.

Continuing north from the marina along Sábalo-Cerritos, you'll pass some new hotels and timeshare developments before arriving at surfers' paradise Playa Brujas at the end of the road.

On the southern end of the city, at the tip of the peninsula, El Faro (the Lighthouse) stands on a rocky prominence overlooking Mazatlán's sportfishing fleet and La Paz ferry terminal. East of the peninsula are the cruise-ship docks, the ferry terminal and a boat operator offering rides to Isla de la Piedra.

## Maps

Guía Roji publishes a detailed *Ciudad de Mazatlán* map that's available from major internet booksellers. Basic tourist maps are available at the tourist office and most hotels.

## INFORMATION

Opening hours reflect winter schedules; summer hours may be more limited.

## Bookstores

**Mazatlán Book & Coffee Company** (Map p106; ☎ 916-78-99; Camarón Sábalo 610; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat) Across from Hotel Costa de Oro and hidden behind Banco Santander, this store has more than 6000 titles in English. It also buys and trades used books.

**Sanborns** (Map p103; ☎ 992-01-91; La Gran Plaza; ☎ 7:30am-1am) Spanish-language books, maps and guidebooks.

## Emergency

**Ambulance, fire department, police** (☎ 066)

## Internet Access

Internet cafés are plentiful in Mazatlán, with prices ranging between M\$15 and M\$35 per hour. All places listed here have speedy connections and air-con.

**Café Internet Online** (Map p105; Sixto Osuna 115; per hr M\$16; ☎ 11am-8:30pm Mon-Sat) High-speed internet and fax service.

**Cyber Café** (Map p106; Camarón Sábalo 610; per hr M\$35; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 1-7pm Sat & Sun) Pricey but fast and convenient.

**Italian Coffee Company** (Map p103; Av del Mar 1020; ☎ 7am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-10pm Sun) Free wireless access and good java.

## Laundry

**Lavamar** (Map p106; Playa Gaviotas 214; per kg M\$70)