

Central Pacific Coast



Those gigantic aquamarine waves keep rolling in, just as they always have along Mexico's central Pacific coast. It's the primal rhythm backing any visit to this land of isolated beaches and giant sunsets. Sit yourself down in the sand for a week or an afternoon, and if you're lucky, spy humpback whales breaching on the horizon, or a pod of dolphins surfacing from the waves. Beyond the beach, experience a natural high in mangrove-fringed lagoons, pristine bays and ramshackle fishing villages, or mix it up with some good living in a cosmopolitan resort town.

Don't stop there: head deeper inland toward the blue silhouette of the lofty Sierras Madre, where the tourism track becomes a rutted path that sometimes disappears completely. You can take months exploring the coast on the cheap, roaring along the coastal highway in 2nd-class buses, or hanging onto the back of a pickup packed with locals on your way to a fishing village where nets are still strung by hand.

One of the world's top tourist destinations, the coast is also a land of megaresorts, cruise ships, camera-toting tourists and rowdy spring-breakers on weekend drinking binges. Join in, or ignore them completely. You can snorkel, surf, sail, ride horses, scuba dive, explore lagoons by boat, mountain-bike along ocean cliffs and drink yourself silly. Spend a week in a fabulous beachfront guesthouse, where food and drink are prepared fresh daily, or enjoy considerable luxury in a world-class hotel, where you can soak up the sun and read a book before indulging in the best spa treatment or full-body massage of your life. The good life here means finding your own rhythm.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Take the pulse of the new **Old Mazatlán** (p377) in its gorgeously renovated historic center
- Experience the living history of **Mexcaltitán** (p388), thought by some to be the ancestral homeland of the Aztecs
- People-watch and promenade on the beautiful beachfront *malecón* in **Puerto Vallarta** (p401)
- Surf the aggressive barrel swells in **Boca de Pascuales** (p424)
- Thrill at the fearless finesse of **La Quebrada cliff-divers** (p446) in Acapulco



■ BIGGEST CITY: ACAPULCO
(POPULATION 620,000)

■ HIGHEST PEAK: VOLCÁN CEBORUCO
(2280M)

