

Denver Getaway: Flavors of Mazatlan Mexico

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Spring break on your mind? How about a budget Denver getaway to Mexico? Does golden-sand beaches stretching for 16 miles along the Mexican Pacific coast, culinary delights, rich culture, ecological tours, world-class sporting events, vibrancy of color and people, and strong U.S. dollar exchange, give you the itch to travel to Mazatlan, Mexico?

Frontier Airlines has sweetened the vacation dilemma by offering direct flights to Mazatlan, starting at \$119 round trip Book by February 11, for travel through June 10, details here.

Short flights (under three hours), tropical weather and beaches create the perfect Denver budget-friendly getaway, and my renewed favorite Mexican flavor is Mazatlan. Travel & Leisure featured Mazatlan as one of the world's top emerging places for travelers in its October 2008 issue.

This is the year of the deal, and Mazatlan is a destination ready to save you hundreds of pesos, especially with the best exchange rate in years. Mazatlan is located on Mexico's Pacific Coast at the foot of the Sierra

Madre Mountains. The city is divided into three main areas: Old Mazatlan; Zona Dorada or Golden Zone, and Nuevo Mazatlan (New Mazatlan) with a seven-mile coastal road between the two.

A few weeks ago, after a more than 10 year hiatus, I revisited the busy seaport city of Mazatlan, and the changes of the infrastructure, including new hotels and resorts, created an even more attractive, budget-friendly, vacation getaway for this Denverite.

I've done the legwork for you, so take a look at my Mazatlan, Mexico getaway vacation suggestions:

Where to stay for great deals:

From charming beachside cottages to luxury resorts with spas, Mazatlan boasts more than 90 hotels and condominium properties, including nearly 50 four- and five-star resorts, anticipating more than 10,000 hotel rooms available by year end.

- Choose one of three El Cid resorts: **El Cid Castilla Beach Hotel**; the adjoining **El Cid El Moro Beach** with amazing suites and incredible oceanfront views at the tallest and most elegant Mazatlan landmark, El Moro Tower; and **El Cid Marina Beach**. (...)

What to do in Mazatlan:

- Okay, perhaps this is a bit touristy, but the City Tour (courtesy of Trolley Tours) is a great way to get familiar with the insides of Mazatlan. The tour includes stops at the city's open market, visit to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, the cliff diver point, shrimp flea market, city monuments and more of Mazatlan.
- The highlight of my 5-day visit was the welcome reception at Old Town Machado Square, where Mexican hospitality delighted us with a huge mariachi band and local Mexican dancers showcasing many colorful costumes, dances and celebrations — and tequila — all that make Mexico so appealing. An introduction to the royalty of the upcoming mammoth celebration of its city-wide pre-Lenten Carnival topped off the evening. You might not receive quite that hearty of a welcome, but the Old Town Machado Square is a definite not-miss stop, with plenty of shopping and restaurants!

- With its international sports fishing reputation, book your deep-sea fishing trip with **Aries Fishing Fleet**. A van picks you up and takes you to the El Cid Marina Beach Hotel, and all you have to do is hook the big one.
- About an hour from Mazatlan, zip your way into excitement on the zipline at the **Huana Coa Canopy Adventure**, which includes the nearby **Tequila Factory Tour**, both conducted by Trolley Tours. Both are well worth the afternoon away from the beach, especially when the finale includes the taste of the 100% blue agave at **Los Osuna**, pioneers of tequila production in Mexico. This tequila is not available in the U.S. — yet, and I'll be first in line when it does.

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