

## Mexico's Hidden Gem: Mazatlan

With 10 miles of beaches and the Sierra Madres not too far away, Mazatlan's wonders never cease to amaze - Explore the city's culture, but bull fights aren't for the faint of heart



**The Travellin' Canadian by Derran Parkman**  
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Just up the coast from all the hustle and bustle of commercialized Puerto Vallarta sits a city known as Mexico's "Pearl of the Pacific."



Little Mazatlan has everything you could ever want in a Mexican resort destination, and without the huge crowds and the high prices. The city's Golden Zone features 10 miles of uninterrupted beaches, and in some areas the waves are high enough to attract local and visiting surfers.

During a day tour of the nearby Sierra Madre Mountains, I was fascinated to catch a glimpse of real Mexican culture in a remote village at the foot of the beautiful mountains. While strolling through this town, which dates back to the 16th century, I came across a church in the middle of nowhere decorated with a beautiful baroque façade and elaborately decorated columns. The local people couldn't have been more easy going and friendly either.

All this relaxed culture even inspired me to partake in another famous local tradition: the weekly bullfight at the Plaza De Toros Monumental. This, I admit, was a mistake. These authentic bullfights are not for the faint-hearted. In fact, they aren't for the strong-hearted either. Be warned, this is a very violent, and bloody event, that never ends well for the poor bull. Surveying the audience of mostly thrilled locals, I noticed I wasn't the only shocked tourist in the crowded arena.

Still, sacrificing bulls is a longstanding tradition dating back to prehistoric times in Europe, and it's nice to know the poor bull isn't wasted. Spectators are invited to attend a post bullfight barbecue afterwards. I confess, I couldn't quite bring myself to attend that celebration.

I was happy to retreat to an unbroken stretch of golden sand in an area famous for its perpetual summer-like weather. Who needs bullfighting?

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