

Tourist Information for Mazatlan, Mexico

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By Mary Freeman, Demand Media

Overview

Once a party city for spring breakers, Mazatlan has evolved into a travel destination for families, older tourists and budget travelers. Situated on the Mexican Gold Coast, the city, with its expansive beaches, has been nicknamed the "Pearl of the Pacific." Even with a population of almost 500,000, making it the largest port city between the Panama Canal and Los Angeles, Frommer's still calls Mazatlan "comfortable, casual, value-packed Mexico at its best."



Attractions

With 17 miles of shoreline, the beaches -- and the coastal activities that go along with them -- are the main attraction for most Mazatlan visitors. Sport fishing and whale and dolphin watching are all favorite activities here. More recently, golf courses designed by Lee Trevino and Robert Trent Jones Jr. have helped Mazatlan emerge as a golfing destination. Beer connoisseurs can test out specialty brews at the Pacifico brewery located in Mazatlan. Pueblo Viejo (Old Town) sets itself apart from the rest of Mazatlan with its cobbled streets and historic buildings.

Accommodations and Dining

Like most resort areas, Mazatlan offers a range of accommodation options. Downtown hotels tend to be on the less expensive side; rates rise as you journey north and into Zona Dorada. The higher-priced hotels sometimes cut their prices during the off-season, between May and September. Nuevo Mazatlan (New Mazatlan) is the most recently developed neighborhood. While most restaurants and hotels are located in Zona Dorada, the neighborhood is a well-known tourist trap. Tourists can find a range of restaurants, from fine dining establishments to the budget loncherias, which only serve lunch. Mazatlan is home to one of the largest shrimp fleets in the world, and fresh shrimp is often on the menu.

Climate

Slightly cooler than the beaches to the south, Mazatlan experiences high temperatures ranging from the 70s to the 80s Fahrenheit throughout the year. It frequently rains in the afternoon throughout the summer, and the wettest month of the year is September. During the winter, daytime highs reach into the 70s, while evenings are quite a bit cooler, with temperatures sometimes dropping as low as 50 degrees.

Getting There

Rafael Buelna International Airport is 17 miles from Mazatlan; AeroMexico, Mexicana, Alaska Airlines, Continental Airlines and Aero Calafia offer direct or connecting flights to Rafael. However, departing destinations are limited mostly to the West Coast of the US. From Rafael, travelers can rent a car or take the bus, taxi or colectivo, which usually carries up to 12 people and stops more frequently. Only taxis make the return journey to the airport. The main bus carrier to Mazatlan is TAP, although most bus lines make connections from Guadalajara, Mexico City and Puerto Vallarta. Motorists can drive to Mazatlan from the US by way of Highway 15 from Nogales, Arizona. At Culiacan, drivers should switch to the four-lane tollway, since it is the only safe and drivable road into Mazatlan. From Puerto Vallarta, motorists can take Highway 200 to Highway 68 to Highway 15; these roads are a bit more dangerous and wind through mountains.

Getting Around

The public bus system in the city is easy to use and inexpensive. Taxis and rental cars are a better option for tourists making many stops throughout Mazatlan. Pulmonias, or open-air carts, are more expensive than taxis but offer a chance to experience the local culture firsthand.

About the Author

Mary Freeman is a freelance writer; she has held several editorial positions at the print publication, "The Otter Realm." She traveled throughout Europe, which ultimately resulted in an impromptu move to London, where she stayed for eight months. This life experience has inspired her to pursue travel writing. Freeman received a degree in human communication from California State University.

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