

The Travellin' Canadian A taste of real Mexico

► Beyond the beaches and resorts of Mazatlan lies a world of natural beauty and quaint towns



DARREN PARKMAN/METRO NEWS

Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Mazatlan is an 1875 church that was restored just a few years ago.

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Mazatlan, Mexico, is famous for its long-winding Golden Zone, packed with tourists, resorts, and fantastic beaches, but beyond all the glitter lies a world of adventure rarely seen.

Soon after reaching the outskirts of town I was surprised how different and desolate greater Mazatlan really is when you leave the comfort of the all-inclusive resort.

In the middle of the back country we traded our air conditioned SUV, for roaring bush ATVs, and that's when the fun started.

Other cool things to do in Mazatlan

Check out the downtown history: Visit the stunning Cathedral Basilica built in 1875. It was restored a few years ago and the interior is nothing short of spectacular. There is a lot of great architecture in this old part of town.

Mazatlan Aquarium: One of the coolest Sea Lion shows you'll ever see, along with tons of exotic creatures including crocodiles, exotic birds and much more.
acuariomazatlan.com

Here is a Mexico rarely seen. Our guide warned us that the trails would be bumpy with a lot of large rocks and potholes.

There are potholes and then there are craters, which I soon found myself roaring through, as we made our way all through the dense jungle-like growth.

I felt privileged to catch a glimpse of the real Mexico, with beautiful scenery, peaceful rivers, and even the odd lazy lizard sunning itself.

As we roared on on our trusty quads, we suddenly emerged from the bush to find a great little Mexican village seemingly in the middle of nowhere.

The locals in this town, which we learned was called La Noria, couldn't have been more friendly, despite the fact we were invading their space like a group of Hells Angels bikers.

Young and old smiled, waved and even cheered as we roared down the main street.

It was almost like being in a time warp watching villagers fetching water from a well and tanning leather to make belts. This, in the end, turned out to be well worth the sore back and dusty throat.

Our reward for making it through it all was a whirlwind stop at the Blue Agave distillery. This, amigos, is where they make the fun juice. This historic Tequila factory draws mucho tourists who observe the ancient process of making real tequila from the locally grown blue agave plant. It is strong stuff. And I do mean strong!

Luckily I had a designated driver to take me back to the comfort of the Golden Zone and my cool little all inclusive hotel, the El Cid.

I've been pretty much all over Mexico, and can honestly say that Mazatlan ranks among my very favourite spots in this country.

Despite that the area has been given a bit of a bad rap recently with reports of increased gang crime, I felt perfectly safe walking the streets on my way to my favourite watering hole in all of Mexico, Joe's Oyster Bar! This place is the perfect beachfront venue to cap off a busy day on ATVS in the bush.

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