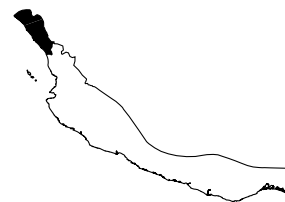


# Mazatlán



Warm and beachy Mazatlán is just a hair's breadth south of the tropic of Cancer in Sinaloa state. This is the Meh-*hee*-co you come to when all you want to do is lie back on the sand, tip that sombrero way down over your chin and let the rest of you soak up the coastal rays.

Striking for its many personalities, Mazatlán reveals itself through its gritty port, its romantic historic center and its thriving tourist playground, the Zona Dorada (Golden Zone). One of Mexico's glitzy prototypical resort towns of the mid-20th century, the city remains a prime destination for a hassle-free, fun-in-the-sun vacation, catering to visitors with an abundance of cheap knick-knack stores, taxis, oversized mega-resorts and gringo-friendly restaurants.

But there's more to discover in Old Mazatlán, which in recent years has been revitalized by a flowering cultural scene. Here you'll find a beguiling mixture of cosmopolitan restaurants, bars and art galleries against a backdrop of well-preserved colonial edifices and cobbled streets. Catch a performance at the wonderful, refurbished Teatro Ángela Peralta and then a late-night bite at the atmospheric Plazuela Machado and you may decide to stick around for an extra day to go apartment hunting.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Wandering around the streets, plazas and 19th-century buildings of **Old Mazatlán** (p113)
- Hiking up to the top of **El Faro** (p113), the world's second-highest lighthouse
- Taking a day trip to the mountain hamlet of **Copala** (p125)
- Bird-watching and navel-gazing on the beach at the end of the road in **Teacapán** (p126)
- Snorkeling around **Isla de la Piedra's** (p114) rocky point after strolling its long beach



■ AVERAGE JANUARY  
DAILY HIGH: 28°C | 82°F

■ AVERAGE JULY DAILY HIGH:  
33°C | 91°F

■ ☎ 669

MAZATLÁN

### History

In pre-Hispanic times Mazatlán (which means ‘place of deer’ in Nahuatl) was populated by the Totorames, who lived by hunting, gathering, fishing and agriculture. On Easter Sunday in 1531, a group of 25 Spaniards led by Nuño de Guzmán officially founded a settlement here, but almost three centuries elapsed before a permanent colony was established in the early 1820s. The port was blockaded by US forces in 1847, and by the French in 1864, but Mazatlán remained little more than a fishing village for the next 80 years. ‘Old’ Mazatlán, the traditional town center, dates from the 19th century. Tourists started coming in the 1930s, mainly for fishing and hunting,

and some hotels appeared along Playa Olas Altas, Mazatlán’s first tourist beach, in the 1950s. From the 1970s onward, a long strip of modern hotels and tourist facilities had spread north along the coast.

### Orientation

Old Mazatlán, the city center, is near the southern end of a peninsula, bounded by the Pacific Ocean on the west and the Bahía Dársena channel on the east. The center of the ‘old’ city is the cathedral, on Plaza Principal, surrounded by a rectangular street grid. At the southern tip of the peninsula, El Faro (the Lighthouse) stands on a rocky prominence, overlooking Mazatlán’s sport-fishing fleet and La Paz ferry terminal.



There is a bus-covered, beachside boulevard (which changes names frequently) running along the Pacific side of the peninsula from Playa Olas Altas, around some rocky outcrops, and north around the wide arc of Playa Norte to the Zona Dorada, a concentration of hotels, bars and businesses catering mainly to package tourists. Further north there are more hotels, a marina and some timeshare condominium developments.

East of the Mazatlán peninsula, Isla de la Piedra is a short boat ride from town, though it's not really an island any more – landfill from the airport construction has joined it to the mainland. The wide, sandy beach here is lined with open-sided, *palapa* (palm-thatch-roofed) restaurants.

### MAPS

Guía Roji publishes a detailed *Ciudad de Mazatlán* map that's available from major Internet booksellers. Basic tourist maps are available at the tourist office.

### Information

Opening hours reflect winter schedules; summer hours may be more limited.

### BOOKSTORES

**Mazatlán Book & Coffee Company** (Map p115; ☎ 916-78-99; Camarón Sábalo s/n; 🕒 9am-7pm Mon-Sat) Across from Hotel Costa de Oro, with used books in English for sale or barter.

**Sanborn's** (Map p112; ☎ 992-01-91; La Gran Plaza; 🕒 7:30am-1am) Spanish-language books, maps and guidebooks.

### EMERGENCY

**Ambulance** (☎ 986-79-11)

**Fire Department** (☎ 981-27-69)

**Police** (☎ 060)

### INTERNET ACCESS

Internet cafés are plentiful in Old Mazatlán and all charge about US\$1 per hour; places in the Zona Dorada charge as much as US\$2.75. Many private telephone offices also offer Internet service. All places listed here have air-con.

**Cyber Café Mazatlán** (Map p115; Camarón Sábalo 204; per hr US\$2.50 🕒 10am-10pm) Pricey but fast, hip and convenient.

**Oldtown@ccess** (Map p114; Constitución 519; per hr US\$1; 🕒 9am-1am) With a bohemian flavor, at Altazor Ars Café on Plazuela Machado.

**Italian Coffee Company** (Map p112; Av del Mar 1020; 🕒 7am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-10pm Sun) Free wireless access and good java.

### LAUNDRY

**Lavandería La Blanca** (Map p115; Camarón Sábalo 357; per 3kg US\$5)

**Lavamar** (Map p115; Playa Gaviotas 214; per kg US\$5)

### MEDIA

Most hotels have city maps, restaurant and activity advertisements, and free English-language newspapers such as *Pacific Pearl* (www.pacificpearl.com) and *Mazatlán Interactivo* (www.mazatlaninteractivo.com). In Old Mazatlán pick up the free bilingual *Viejo Mazatlán*, which is the best source of information about the cultural life around town.

### MEDICAL SERVICES

There are several clinics on Camarón Sábalo, in the Zona Dorada, that cater to gringos who come down with a case of indigestion or worse.

**Clínica Balboa** (Map p115; ☎ 916-79-33; Camarón Sábalo 4480; 🕒 24hr) English is spoken at this well-regarded walk-in medical clinic.

### MONEY

Banks, most with ATMs, and *casas de cambio* are plentiful in both old and new Mazatlán. There are Bancomer and Banamex branches near Plaza Principal (Map p114) and a **Banamex** (Map p115; Camarón Sábalo) in the Zona Dorada. **American Express** (Map p115; Centro Comercial Balboa, Camarón Sábalo s/n) is in the Zona Dorada.

### POST

**Main post office** (Map p114; Juárez s/n) On the east side of Plaza Principal.

### TELEPHONE

**Computel** (Map p114; Serdán 1516; 🕒 7am-9pm)

Telephone, fax and limited Internet services, and friendly, helpful staff.

**Telecomm** (Map p114; Juárez s/n; 🕒 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Next to the post office, with quiet pay phones in private cabins, fax and Internet service.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Coordinación General de Turismo** (Map p114; ☎ 981-88-86/87; Carnaval 1317; www.sinaloa-travel.com in Spanish; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Helpful staff with information about hotel deals as well as what to see and do in Mazatlán and Sinaloa state.