



nileGUIDE

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Lisa Andres

First Time in Puerto Vallarta

Puerto Vallarta, 6 Days

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Guide Description







AUTHOR NOTE: Puerto Vallarta is one of Mexico's top tourist destinations, but it retains much of its individuality with the bustling art scene and the friendly, laidback atmosphere. There are also some historic locations and incredible natural sights within a short distance of the city.

Itinerary Overview


things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Puerto Vallarta

DAY NOTE: You can't get any better in Puerto Vallarta than the Hacienda San Angel. One of the most luxurious resorts in town, the Hacienda also manages to maintain an air of originality and tranquility. Each of the suites is individually and beautifully decorated, and the pools, grounds/gardens, and restaurants are all first-rate. After you check in in the morning, head out for a walk around downtown PV to get a feel for the city. Take a stroll down the Malecon, and check out the street vendors and performers and the fascinating sculptures and other artwork all along the boardwalk. This is definitely the most touristy part of town, however, so keep in mind that souvenirs and dining are priced accordingly, and may not be the most authentic. An exception to that is La Bodeguita del Medio, a lovely Cuban cafe with great pork dishes and exceptional mojitos. Also take some time to walk around the town square, or zocalo, that surrounds the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The site of a yearly pilgrimage for thousands of Mexican and international Catholics, this church is one of Puerto Vallarta's most well-known and loved landmarks. If you're in the mood for some beachtime, walk south from the Malecon to the Playa de los Muertos, one of the city's more popular beaches. There's beautiful sand for sunbathing, swimming (best near the pier), parasailing, beach volleyball, and lots of little cafes and shops to explore here. The Playa is also a lovely place to watch the sunset, particularly over a cold beer at one of the beachside cafes. Afterwards, take part in one of the city's most enjoyable evening activities, the art walk. There are dozens of locally owned and run art galleries around the downtown area, and many open their doors in the evening for fun, informal cocktail open houses. There is one large organized walk per week, but plenty of other smaller events going on throughout the week as well. Visit as many or as few galleries as you'd like, but this is a great way to get to experience some of PV's less touristy local culture. When you get hungry for dinner, walk over to the Rio Grande restaurant. As you would expect, PV has access to some incredible seafood, and it's best showcased in the grilled entrees at Rio Grande.

	Malecón (EI) Downtown PV's Heart & Soul
	Bodeguita del Medio (La) Traditional Cuban dining in Puerto Vallarta
	Art Walks Downtown Discover the galleries
	Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe Crowned Cathedral

	Playa los Muertos The Zona Romantica beach
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	Rio Grande Downtown dining
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	Hacienda San Angel Stay by the bay
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Day 2 - Puerto Vallarta

DAY NOTE: Getting the chance to swim with dolphins is an incredible experience, but it is too often only available in an enclosed setting. Not so in Puerto Vallarta -- try the ocean Eco Dolphin tour with Wildlife Connection. This is an all-day tour, and is most appropriate for good swimmers. The guides that take out tours for Wildlife Connection are all professional marine biologists, so they're ecologically responsible and amazingly knowledgeable about the PV sealife. They're currently conducting studies about the dolphin pods in Banderas Bay, so are familiar with the dolphin families and their behavior. From December to March the tours also include whale watching, and the boats are always equipped with hydrophones to listen to the animals underwater. You'll get back to town just in time to swing by the hotel to change and grab something to eat, then set off with Vallarta Adventures for their Canopy Tour. There are hundreds of birds species alone, and tons of other amazing wildlife in the tropical forests around PV, and the zipline Canopy Tour is a great way to get an aerial view of the diverse flora and fauna. The guides here are fun and very focused on safety, too. After such an active day, spoil yourself with dinner at Cafe des Artistes back in town. Don't be put off by their claims to grandeur - they live up to the hype. Run by PV's best chef, you can sit back on the patio and bliss out on Thierry Blouet's Mediterranean delicacies.

	Wild Dolphins and Snorkeling Day Tour from Puerto Vallarta Ports of Call Tours
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	Vallarta Adventures Watch Them Whales!
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	Cafe des Artistes Award-winning chef with first-class dining
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	Hacienda San Angel Stay by the bay
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Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 3 - Puerto Vallarta

DAY NOTE: There are a number of horseback riding in and around PV, and one of the most beautiful rides you can take is up to the Cuale waterfalls. The ride is through several miles of light forest and along several secluded beaches, and you're well rewarded once you get there with crystal-clear pools to take a dip in and magnificent scenery. Remember to bring a change of clothes for the ride back, and some bug repellent! There should be plenty of information about this trip around the hotel, as most of the local tour companies are able to arrange horses and a bilingual guide. Take the rest of the afternoon to relax beachside when you get back at Playa Mismaloya, south of the city. Rent a snorkel to check out some of the corals and sealife right off the beach, or just swim in the clear waters and relax on the sand. There was a movie filmed here some years ago, and so there are occasional tour groups coming through, but most of the time this beach is serenely quiet. There are several nearby restaurants to grab a snack and a drink, too. Take a cab or bus back into town in the evening for another great dinner, this time at Trio, which is one of PV's up-and-coming restaurants but its cuisine is already some of the area's best. Sit on the rooftop terrace to make the most of the cozy ambiance here, and try the incredible rack of lamb.



Cuale Waterfalls

For nature lovers



Playa Mismaloya

Resort Beach



Trio Restaurante

Culinary delights at inexpensive prices



Hacienda San Angel

Stay by the bay

Day 4 - Puerto Vallarta

DAY NOTE: Of all the restaurants in PV that feature local cuisine, Las Palomas is the most famous breakfast/brunch place. Right on the Malecon, the breads and coffee here is a delicious and energizing way to start your day. There are several good tour groups that take day trips to Las Marietas, including Vallarta Adventures and Geronimo (by catamaran!), both of whom feature tours by naturalists or biologists. The Marietas islands are a marine reserve, with hundreds of bird species, some of which are only found on these islands, and some amazing snorkeling sites, with jellyfish, rays, eels, sea turtles, and of course tons of brilliantly colored fish. Most tours, including those mentioned

above, provide lunch, snorkeling equipment, beverages, and equipment for other activities to enjoy on the islands' beaches such as kayaks. You'll be starving by the time you are ready for dinner after stopping back at the hotel, and if there's one thing you can count on at an Argentinian restaurant, it's fabulous steaks, and Los Pibes is no exception. Choose your steak and have it seasoned and cooked however you want, and there's a wide range of delicious side dishes to complete your meal.



Palomas (Las)

Breakfast favorite



Pibes (Los)

Argentinian outpost



Hacienda San Angel

Stay by the bay

Day 5 - Puerto Vallarta

DAY NOTE: One of the best day trips you can take from PV is to San Sebastian, a town that was previously at the heart of Mexico's mining industry. Now, it is a sleepy, peaceful little village which doesn't appear to have changed much over the last couple of centuries. You can rent a car to get out to Sierra Madre and San Sebastian, or can go with several tour companies, which either take buses or even planes, which is nice and quick, although obviously more expensive. It's preferable to make the trip with a tour company, since they frequently have tour guides that grew up in the area and are passionate and well-informed about local history. Lunch is usually included on these tours, but there are also a couple good small restaurants in town if you go on your own. Full of history and local flavor, this trip is a memorable journey into the non-tourist PV life. Get some more beach time in after you get back to the city with a visit to Playa Conchas Chinas, just far enough away from downtown and the Malecon for there to be little or no vendors and other hecklers to interrupt your beach bliss. Stay until the sun sets, and then stop in for dinner at the Red Cabbage Cafe. Meals are always an interesting cultural and culinary experience at this restaurant, which features recipes created by two of Mexico's most respected artists, Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera. A bit off the main tourist track, this is definitely worth the journey, as the food (such good mole!) is gourmet Mexican at its best.



San Sebastian Expeditions

Old mining town a top the High Sierra

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife



Playa Conchas Chinas

Beautiful Rocky Beach



Red Cabbage Cafe (The)

Stars in your eyes



Hacienda San Angel

Stay by the bay

Day 6 - Puerto Vallarta

DAY NOTE: Try some more snorkeling on your last day in PV in Los Arcos, a marine reserve filled with undersea flora and fauna. Named after its spectacular underwater arches, trenches and caverns here are filled with fish, corals, turtles, and rays. There are a number of good dive shops that take trips here, including Ocean Quest, a small, fun and ecologically responsible PV outfit. Dry off after and take a late afternoon/evening walk around Marina Vallarta, which is less touristy and crowded than the Malecon, to enjoy the views of the ocean and the mountains. Stop in for a sunset drink at the lighthouse bar (El Faro), and walk around to see some of the interesting little shops and live music/dancing which is frequently going on in the evening. For a fitting end to the trip, head to Los Xitomates for dinner. Respected as one of PV's finest restaurants, this place is also one of its coziest. Sit on the terrace with an expansive view of the ocean, and try one of the chef's innovative dishes, mixing Mexican and Mediterranean cuisine. There's a nice wine list, but the margaritas are the best.



Arcos (Los)

Ecological preserve



Plaza Neptuno (Plaza)

Shopping by the Marina



Los Xitomates

Constantly evolving Mexican kitchen



Hacienda San Angel

Stay by the bay

Day 1 - Puerto Vallarta

QUICK NOTE

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location:

Paseo Díaz Ordaz
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48300

hours:

24 hrs

1 Malecón (EI)

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

La Paloma restaurant is great for people watching. Take a cab -- parking can be tricky.

DESCRIPTION: Returning visitors to Puerto Vallarta long for two things – that first margarita and a visit to the magnificent El Malecón (boardwalk). This beautiful, mile long oceanfront walkway, an easy walk or short car ride from most of the city's hotels, traces the beach, running parallel to the main street. The Malecon offers stunning, unobstructed views of sand and surf and is the perfect place to watch Vallarta's magical sunsets. In 2005 the Malecon was extended to link downtown with the popular Romantic Zone, giving all visitors easier access to enjoying it. Whether you are looking for shopping, dining or music – you won't be disappointed with a visit to the Malen. Don't miss the famous permanent sculptures by local artists. On Saturday nights, you are likely to see the customary Mexican "courting" ritual as teenagers walk hand-in-hand along the boardwalk, their entire family trailing two feet behind. Restaurants, bars and boutiques selling trendy clothing, silver, folk art, Cuban Cigars and tequila abound near the Malecon. If you want to dance the night away, head for the Malecon where the music begins at 11 pm and can continue to 6 a.m. the next morning © NileGuide



contact:
tel: 52 322 223 1585

location:
Paseo Diaz Ordaz 858
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48380

hours:
Noon-3a

2 Bodeguita del Medio (La)

DESCRIPTION: Living up to its Havana namesake, this Cuban restaurant provides an authentic atmosphere, live music and dozens of Cuban dining favorites. There is a succulent pork roll, flavorful black beans, fried bananas, and a shredded beef hash just like Mama used to make back in Cuba. There's also a special room for cigar smoking and a giant humidor. The rum rich mojitos drink will help keep patrons happy; it supposedly was "Papa" Hemingway's favorite drink when he used to tipple at the original Havana location. © wcities.com



location:
Old Town Art District
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48310

3 Art Walks Downtown

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Casual attire is acceptable almost everywhere in PV, but why not take the opportunity to dress up a little and pair this evening with a trip to one of the exquisite view restaurants.

DESCRIPTION: Puerto Vallarta is on its way to becoming one of Mexico's most important artist enclaves, representing some of Mexico's finest artists as well as international artists who now call this seaside paradise home. Already, Puerto Vallarta can claim bragging rights for having more galleries than any other Mexican seaside destination, and each year the numbers increase. The Old Town Art Walk kicks off the "Art Season" at the end of October, and runs through the end of May each year. This event, which began in 1996 with only a handful galleries, has become a much-anticipated favorite for both tourists and locals. Every season brings a few changes, but typically, fifteen to twenty galleries throw open their doors one evening each week, inviting art lovers to visit for free cocktail art expositions. Most of the galleries are located in the historic center, and within easy walking distance from each other and the main plaza. There is no fee for this event and free Art Walk brochures and gallery maps are available in most hotels, tourist information booths and restaurants. © NileGuide

contact:
tel: +52 322 222 1326

location:
Calle Hidalgo
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48310

hours:
English Mass: Su 10a

4 Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Although people do enter the church in beach clothes, it is considered polite for women to wear a skirt or long pants and for men to wear a dress shirt when visiting churches in Mexico.

DESCRIPTION: The stunning Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe that dominates the Puerto Vallarta skyline, is the subject of millions of photographs, and Puerto Vallarta's best known and most treasured landmark, is a must-see attraction. Each year it receives thousands of visitors, particularly during the 12-day festival celebrating the Feast of Guadalupe in December. There are guided tours daily. The original church was built over a 12 year period (1929-1941) but it was expanded and modified several times over the next 45 years.. From outside you will be enchanted by the majestic structure that is topped with a crown that is said to be a replica of a tiara once worn by the mistress of the Emperor Maxmillian. A little known fact among tourists is that the crown you see



today is actually a replica of the replica. The original concrete crown was destroyed by a 7.5 earthquake in 1985. A fiberglass replacement was quickly commissioned but the material could not withstand its own weight and the crown you see today is slightly distorted. On-going fund raising efforts are in the works to restore the crown to its original state. Although you are welcome to tour the church yourself, information about guided tours can be found at the church or at information booths around Vallarta. © NileGuide

contact:
tel: +52 322 223 2500 x 230

location:
Olas Altas S/N
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48300

hours:
24 hrs

5 Playa los Muertos

DESCRIPTION: Playa Los Muertos (Dead man's Beach), named for some brutal pirate attacks on local villagers back when there were pirates, has long held the honor for being the most popular beach in Puerto Vallarta for both locals and visitors. Playa Los Muertos is surrounded by the Olas Altas neighborhood (also known as the zona romantica), and that means beach-goers are never far away from scores of delicious restaurants, great shopping and plenty of good lodging. But, most people seem content to spend the day lounging on the beautiful soft beige sand and soaking up the radiant sunshine while contemplating the colorful parasails floating lazily above the clear blue waters. There are plenty of beach restaurants and they all have comfortable seating under palapas or beach chairs and umbrellas that are yours for the taking if you order a few cocktails or a snack. There are lots of friendly beach vendors haggling there way up and down the beach and often times little mariachi bands show up to serenade you as you tuck into some yummy guacamole and a frozen margarita. Each evening, 30 minutes before sunset, the beach-front bars and restaurants fill to capacity as the locals hurry to their favorite spot to enjoy happy hour and watch one more spectacular sunset with friends. The Los Muertos beach pier jutting out from the beach is a picturesque gathering spot and also the launching point for fishing boats, water taxis, tour boats and even the much sought after banana boat ride. © NileGuide

contact:
tel: 52 322 2 0095
<http://www.riograndemexico.com/>

location:
Avenue Mexico 1775
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48330

hours:
11a-10p

6 Rio Grande

DESCRIPTION: Rich flavors, fresh meats, and attentive family ownership make this small, elegant restaurant in downtown Puerto Vallarta a favorite. Shrimp turnovers are popular appetizers, and the slab of Barbecued Ribs can tame even the heartiest appetite. The interesting flavors result from a skillful blend of Mexican and Yucatan regional spices, and everything is cooked over fragrant mesquite wood. The women-run kitchen turns out dozens of dishes created from family recipes. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Rio Grande

contact:
tel: 52 322 222 2692
fax: 52 322 223 1941
<http://www.haciendasanangel.com/>

location:
MIRAMAR 336 COL.
CENTRO
PUERTO VALLARTA Jal
48300

7 Hacienda San Angel

DESCRIPTION: This enchanting boutique hotel is my top choice for a luxury stay in Puerto Vallarta -- even though it's not on the beach. You'll hardly miss the surf, you'll be so pampered in the stunning suites, or satisfied by the view from the rooftop heated pool or Jacuzzi and sun deck. Once the home of Richard Burton, it's just behind Puerto Vallarta's famed church, within easy walking distance to downtown. The Hacienda consists of five villas; the first two are joined to the third villa by a path that winds through a lovely terraced tropical garden with statuary and a fountain. The Las Campañas private one-



bedroom villa is on the garden's northern border. The newest villa has four suites with sweeping views. A large, heated pool and deck afford panoramic views of the city and Bay of Banderas. A second sun deck with Jacuzzi overlooks the church and water beyond. All suites have exquisite antiques, original art, and fine bed linens with goose-down pillows. Each morning, continental breakfast is served outside your suite at the hour you request. Vallarta-style casual sophistication make this place Mexico's top "find" for discriminating travelers. Hacienda is open for dinner to nonguests. © Frommer's

Day 2 - Puerto Vallarta

QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: Getting the chance to swim with dolphins is an incredible experience, but it is too often only available in an enclosed setting. Not so in Puerto Vallarta -- try the ocean Eco Dolphin tour with Wildlife Connection. This is an all-day tour, and is most appropriate for good swimmers. The guides that take out tours for Wildlife Connection are all professional marine biologists, so they're ecologically responsible and amazingly knowledgeable about the PV sealife. They're currently conducting studies about the dolphin pods in Banderas Bay, so are familiar with the dolphin families and their behavior. From December to March the tours also include whale watching, and the boats are always equipped with hydrophones to listen to the animals underwater. You'll get back to town just in time to swing by the hotel to change and grab something to eat, then set off with Vallarta Adventures for their Canopy Tour. There are hundreds of birds species alone, and tons of other amazing wildlife in the tropical forests around PV, and the zipline Canopy Tour is a great way to get an aerial view of the diverse flora and fauna. The guides here are fun and very focused on safety, too. After such an active day, spoil yourself with dinner at Cafe des Artistes back in town. Don't be put off by their claims to grandeur - they live up to the hype. Run by PV's best chef, you can sit back on the patio and bliss out on Thierry Blouet's Mediterranean delicacies.

contact:

http://www.partner.viator.com/en/6793/tours/Puerto-Vallarta/Wild-Dolphins-and-Snorkeling-Day-Tour-from-Puerto-Vallarta/d630-2736SEA_WILD

location:

Puerto Vallarta Jalisco

Wild Dolphins and Snorkeling Day Tour from Puerto Vallarta

DESCRIPTION: The Bay of Banderas and the Mexican Pacific are available for you to explore during this exciting Wild Dolphins and Snorkeling Day Tour. You'll have the opportunity to discover the wonders of nature while observing dolphins in the wild, bird watching, swimming, snorkeling, scuba diving and kayaking in the warm waters that surround the Marietas Islands. Add this exciting Puerto Vallarta day trip to your vacation itinerary! This day tour successfully combines a day of fun in the sun with the wonderful opportunity to learn more about the ideal ecosystem and diverse sea life that Banderas Bay has to offer. Gaze at Pacific Bottlenose dolphins, spotted dolphins and spinner dolphins as they swim in their luxurious Banderas Bay habitat. Watching them all-year round is a great way to learn more about these beautiful and intelligent mammals. Encounter other marine life such as whales, giant manta ray and tropical fish as well as indigenous birds including the blue-footed booby and red-billed tropic bird that are situated at the Northern end of Banderas Bay. During the day, you'll have time to explore the islands' rocky caverns and archways while on a kayak, snorkeling or even scuba diving! For your comfort and safety, knowledgeable and bilingual eco-guides are always on hand to help, advise and entertain you! After you explore to your heart's content, a relaxing afternoon siesta gives you the opportunity to kick back and relax on the white sands of a beautiful, secluded beach. © Viator



viator

contact:

tel: +1 888 303 2653
http://Vallarta-Adventures.com/
m/

location:

39 Paseo de las Palmas
Nayarit 63732

1 Vallarta Adventures

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Book online to receive a 10% discount. Get ready to laugh - the guides are a riot.

DESCRIPTION: If you are looking for adventure while visiting Puerto Vallarta, you may want to contact this company. Love dolphins? Go for a swim with them. They provide a unique opportunity to experience marine life like dolphins and humpback whales from a closer perspective. If you want to learn to scuba dive, a staff of skilled certified divers will teach you so that you are able to enjoy your adventure even more. For a terra firma adventure, they will fly you to the 16th century mining village of San Sebastian and to explore the Sierra Madre foothills. © wcities.com



wcities

contact:

tel: 52 322 22 2 3228
fax: +52 322 22 2 3229
http://www.cafedesartistes.com/
m/

location:

Guadalupe Sanchez 740
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48300

hours:

6p-11:30p

2 Cafe des Artistes

DESCRIPTION: This renowned cafe claims to be "one of the best restaurants in the world" and has the reviews to support that notion. Chef Thierry Blouet was recently named a Maitre Cuisenaire de France. The menu changes seasonally; a recent offering included grilled lamb chops cooked with local spices and balsamic vinegar, served with a garlic creme brulee. The desserts are also extraordinary. The self-described dress code is "dressy to casual," but you may wish to dress up a bit. Located across the street from the Galerie des Artistes. © wcities.com



contact:

tel: 52 322 222 2692
fax: 52 322 223 1941
http://www.haciendasanangel.com/
m/

location:

MIRAMAR 336 COL.
CENTRO
PUERTO VALLARTA Jalisco
48300

3 Hacienda San Angel

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Hacienda is open for dinner to nonguests. © Frommer's

Day 3 - Puerto Vallarta

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location:
Aguiles Serán
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48300

1 Cuale Waterfalls

hours:
9a onwards, M-Su

DESCRIPTION: A visit to the Cuale Waterfalls may not be for everyone, as you need to be a nature lover willing to trek for about four hours to get there. Those making the trek will be rewarded with a dip in the pools that have formed below the beautiful waterfalls. Those who do not wish to walk can enjoy the adventure on horseback. The ride takes you through some of the most beautiful Sierra Madre scenery, with views of some serene and untouched beaches along the way. Guided tours are available. © wcities.com

location:
Highway 200 Sur Km 11.5
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48300

2 Playa Mismaloya

DESCRIPTION: Mismaloya deserves the credit (although some say they deserve the blame) for the tourism boom in Puerto Vallarta. In 1963, John Huston chose this almost inaccessible, deserted beach as the set for his award winning film, *The Night of the Iguana*. The movie made Vallarta famous, but the set, sadly, was soon forgotten. However, Mismaloya is still worth the 6-mile drive from downtown. Not only is it a sweet little beach perfect for chilling out, it has a killer view of the famous Los Arcos sea rocks (a favorite destination for snorkelers and scuba divers). If you want to go to Los Arcos, there are plenty of boats available for hire. But before you board a boat and get too far away from the mango margaritas, consider snorkeling right off the beach where the crystal clear water is teeming with gaily painted tropical fish. There are also plenty of good restaurants competing for your business, many of them offering beach chairs and umbrellas. © NileGuide

contact:
tel: 52 322 22 2 2196
fax: +52 322 222 4228
<http://www.triopv.com>

3 Trio Restaurante

location:
Guerrero 264 Col. Centro
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48330

hours:

DESCRIPTION: This warm, inexpensive gourmet restaurant offers international cuisine served by friendly waiters. A rooftop bar provides appetizers, drinks and stargazing. French and Middle Eastern-inspired dishes are created with fresh ingredients from the Puerto Vallarta and surrounding areas; the result provides a very memorable dining experience. The Chile-roasted Red Snapper is one of the most-touted favorites at this increasingly popular restaurant. Casual dress is preferred, so leave the beachwear on the beach. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Trio Restaurante

Lunch: noon-4p (high season only); Dinner: 6p-11:30p

contact:

tel: 52 322 222 2692

fax: 52 322 223 1941

<http://www.haciendasanangel.com/>

location:

MIRAMAR 336 COL.

CENTRO

PUERTO VALLARTA Jal

48300

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Day 4 - Puerto Vallarta

QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: Of all the restaurants in PV that feature local cuisine, Las Palomas is the most famous breakfast/brunch place. Right on the Malecon, the breads and coffee here is a delicious and energizing way to start your day. There are several good tour groups that take day trips to Las Marietas, including Vallarta Adventures and Geronimo (by catamaran!), both of whom feature tours by naturalists or biologists. The Marietas islands are a marine reserve, with hundreds of bird species, some of which are only found on these islands, and some amazing snorkeling sites, with jellyfish, rays, eels, sea turtles, and of course tons of brilliantly colored fish. Most tours, including those mentioned above, provide lunch, snorkeling equipment, beverages, and equipment for other activities to enjoy on the islands' beaches such as kayaks. You'll be starving by the time you are ready for dinner after stopping back at the hotel, and if there's one thing you can count on at an Argentinian restaurant, it's fabulous steaks, and Los Pibes is no exception. Choose your steak and have it seasoned and cooked however you want, and there's a wide range of delicious side dishes to complete your meal.

contact:

tel: 52 322 222 3675
fax: +52 322 223 0554
<http://www.laspalomaspv.com/>

location:

Paseo Diaz Ordaz No. 610
Puerto Vallarta 48300

hours:

Daily 8a-1a

1 Palomas (Las)

DESCRIPTION: One of Puerto Vallarta's first restaurants, this is the power-breakfast place of choice -- and a popular hangout for everyone else throughout the day. Authentic in atmosphere and menu, it's one of Puerto Vallarta's few genuine Mexican restaurants. Breakfast is the best value. The staff pours mugs of steaming coffee spiced with cinnamon as soon as you're seated. Try classic huevos rancheros or chilaquiles (tortilla strips, fried and topped with red or green spicy sauce, cream, cheese, and fried eggs). Lunch and dinner offer traditional Mexican specialties, plus a selection of stuffed crepes. The best places for checking out the malecón and watching the sunset while sipping an icy margarita are the spacious bar and the upstairs terrace. © Frommer's



contact:

tel: 52 322 3 1557
<http://www.pibes.com.mx/>

location:

Basilio Badillo 261
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48380

hours:

2p-2a W-M, closed Tu

2 Pibes (Los)

DESCRIPTION: Argentina raises and knows good beef, and so it is no surprise that this friendly Argentine-run restaurant knows how to serve up a steak. Select your own from the meat tray brought to your table, then munch on an Empanada while your steak is perfectly prepared and brought to your table. Dozens of traditionally prepared South American dishes spice up the menu. An extensive wine list offers dozens of selections to enhance your meal. © wcities.com

contact:

tel: 52 322 222 2692
fax: 52 322 223 1941
<http://www.haciendasanangel.com/>

location:

MIRAMAR 336 COL.
CENTRO

3 Hacienda San Angel

DESCRIPTION: This enchanting boutique hotel is my top choice for a luxury stay in Puerto Vallarta -- even though it's not on the beach. You'll hardly miss the surf, you'll be so pampered in the stunning suites, or satisfied by the view from the rooftop heated pool or Jacuzzi and sun deck. Once the home of Richard Burton, it's just behind Puerto Vallarta's famed church,



PUERTO VALLARTA Jal
48300

within easy walking distance to downtown. The Hacienda consists of five villas; the first two are joined to the third villa by a path that winds through a lovely terraced tropical garden with statuary and a fountain. The Las Campañas private one-bedroom villa is on the garden's northern border. The newest villa has four suites with sweeping views. A large, heated pool and deck afford panoramic views of the city and Bay of Banderas. A second sun deck with Jacuzzi overlooks the church and water beyond. All suites have exquisite antiques, original art, and fine bed linens with goose-down pillows. Each morning, continental breakfast is served outside your suite at the hour you request. Vallarta-style casual sophistication make this place Mexico's top "find" for discriminating travelers. Hacienda is open for dinner to nonguests. © Frommer's

Day 5 - Puerto Vallarta

QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: One of the best day trips you can take from PV is to San Sebastian, a town that was previously at the heart of Mexico's mining industry. Now, it is a sleepy, peaceful little village which doesn't appear to have changed much over the last couple of centuries. You can rent a car to get out to Sierra Madre and San Sebastian, or can go with several tour companies, which either take buses or even planes, which is nice and quick, although obviously more expensive. It's preferable to make the trip with a tour company, since they frequently have tour guides that grew up in the area and are passionate and well-informed about local history. Lunch is usually included on these tours, but there are also a couple good small restaurants in town if you go on your own. Full of history and local flavor, this trip is a memorable journey into the non-tourist PV life. Get some more beach time in after you get back to the city with a visit to Playa Conchas Chinas, just far enough away from downtown and the Malecon for there to be little or no vendors and other hecklers to interrupt your beach bliss. Stay until the sun sets, and then stop in for dinner at the Red Cabbage Cafe. Meals are always an interesting cultural and culinary experience at this restaurant, which features recipes created by two of Mexico's most respected artists, Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera. A bit off the main tourist track, this is definitely worth the journey, as the food (such good mole!) is gourmet Mexican at its best.

location:

A top the Sierra Madre
San Sebastian del Oeste
46990

hours:

Tours: 9a-5p

1 San Sebastian Expeditions

DESCRIPTION: Just a short two hour drive from Puerto Vallarta lies San Sebastian, a tiny mountain village dating back to the 17th century, when it was a prosperous silver mining town. The mines closed over one hundred years ago, but the town retains its colonial heritage and provides visitors an opportunity to experience the traditional ways of living and working in a remote Mexican village. San Sebastian remains largely unspoiled because until recently it was nearly impossible to get there on roads that were treacherous at best, and little more than donkey trails and washed out bridges at worst. In 2004 a modern highway was completed, linking San Sebastian to the Pacific coast of Mexico. Today San Sebastian is one of the most popular day trips from Puerto Vallarta. If you don't want to drive, there are many tours that will get you there safely, including a light plane excursion. As an emerging tourist destination, you will find hotels built in old haciendas, on-going festivals, great restaurants, a town square and, of course, the obligatory church for you to explore. © NileGuide

location:

Highway 200 Km 3.2
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48300

hours:

Daily 7a-7p

2 Playa Conchas Chinas

DESCRIPTION: Spreading out at the foot of the Conchas China, a neighborhood often referred to as the Beverly Hills of Puerto Vallarta, is one of the most dramatic beaches adorning Banderas Bay. Conchas Chinas is a fifteen-minute cab ride from Puerto Vallarta's "old town", just enough distance to keep away the thundering crowds and the beach vendors who follow them. A jungle of tropical plants and ancient trees embraces the beach and the beach is home to a variety of bird species. The solitude, the natural beauty of the jungle, the aqua sky and the clear, sparkling sea, makes Playa Conchas Chinas a perfect spot for a romantic picnic, or a long afternoon with a good book and a bottle of wine. Unlike the long stretch of sand and gentle surf at other Puerto Vallarta beaches, Conchas Chinas is a jigsaw puzzle of white sand patches separated by looming rock formations and intriguing tide pools full of teeming marine life. © NileGuide

contact:

tel: 52 322 3 0411

<http://redcabbagepv.com/>

location:

Calle Rivera del Rio 204A
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48350

hours:

1p-10p M-Sa

3 Red Cabbage Cafe (The)

DESCRIPTION: The tiny, hard-to-find cafe is worth the effort -- a visit here will reward you with exceptional traditional Mexican cuisine and a whimsical crash course in contemporary culture. The small room is covered wall-to-wall and table-to-table with photographs, paintings, movie posters, and news clippings about the cultural icons of Mexico. Frida Kahlo figures prominently in the decor, and a special menu duplicates dishes she and husband Diego Rivera prepared for guests. Specialties from all over Mexico include divine chiles en nogada (poblanos stuffed with ground beef, pine nuts, and raisins, topped with sweet cream sauce and served cold), intricate chicken mole from Puebla, and hearty carne en su jugo (steak in its juice). In addition, the vegetarian menu is probably the most diverse and tasty in town. This is not the place for an intimate conversation, however -- the poor acoustics cause everyone's conversations to blend together, although generally what you're hearing from adjacent tables are raves about the food. Also, this is a nonsmoking restaurant -- the only one I'm aware of in town. © Frommer's



Red Cabbage Cafe

contact:

tel: 52 322 222 2692

fax: 52 322 223 1941

<http://www.haciendasanangel.com/>

location:

MIRAMAR 336 COL.
CENTRO
PUERTO VALLARTA Jal
48300

4 Hacienda San Angel

DESCRIPTION: This enchanting boutique hotel is my top choice for a luxury stay in Puerto Vallarta -- even though it's not on the beach. You'll hardly miss the surf, you'll be so pampered in the stunning suites, or satisfied by the view from the rooftop heated pool or Jacuzzi and sun deck. Once the home of Richard Burton, it's just behind Puerto Vallarta's famed church, within easy walking distance to downtown. The Hacienda consists of five villas; the first two are joined to the third villa by a path that winds through a lovely terraced tropical garden with statuary and a fountain. The Las Campañas private one-bedroom villa is on the garden's northern border. The newest villa has four suites with sweeping views. A large, heated pool and deck afford panoramic views of the city and Bay of Banderas. A second sun deck with Jacuzzi overlooks the church and water beyond. All suites have exquisite antiques, original art, and fine bed linens with goose-down pillows. Each morning, continental breakfast is served outside your suite at the hour you request. Vallarta-style casual sophistication make this place Mexico's top "find" for discriminating travelers. Hacienda is open for dinner to nonguests. © Frommer's



Day 6 - Puerto Vallarta

QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: Try some more snorkeling on your last day in PV in Los Arcos, a marine reserve filled with undersea flora and fauna. Named after its spectacular underwater arches, trenches and caverns here are filled with fish, corals, turtles, and rays. There are a number of good dive shops that take trips here, including Ocean Quest, a small, fun and ecologically responsible PV outfit. Dry off after and take a late afternoon/evening walk around Marina Vallarta, which is less touristy and crowded than the Malecon, to enjoy the views of the ocean and the mountains. Stop in for a sunset drink at the lighthouse bar (El Faro), and walk around to see some of the interesting little shops and live music/dancing which is frequently going on in the evening. For a fitting end to the trip, head to Los Xitomates for dinner. Respected as one of PV's finest restaurants, this place is also one of its coziest. Sit on the terrace with an expansive view of the ocean, and try one of the chef's innovative dishes, mixing Mexican and Mediterranean cuisine. There's a nice wine list, but the margaritas are the best.

contact:
tel: +52 322 223 2500

location:
Highway 200 Sur Km 12
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48300

hours:
9a-5p

1 Arcos (Los)

DESCRIPTION: An eco-preserve is a place where the environment is Number One. All things natural are protected here at this popular destination. This is a federal underwater park that offers people the opportunity to snorkel and scuba dive in a rare environment. Go underwater and investigate the brightly colored fish and steep rock walls that protect this marine area. If you aren't comfortable being in the water, try a glass-bottom boat tour. You will see many of the same species from there as you would by swimming below the surface. © wcities.com



contact:
tel: +52 322 223 2500

location:
Boulevard Francisco Medina
Ascencio Km 7.5
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48314

2 Plaza Neptuno (Plaza)

DESCRIPTION: Plaza Neptuno's location, at the entrance of Marina Vallarta, makes this shopping center hard to miss. The Ameri-Med American Hospital is located within it, as well as a drug store and a convenience store where you may wish to buy beach essentials. There is also an internet center, with relatively fast connections, and two stores that sell furnishings. If you are in the mood for Chinese food, you may want to visit Restaurant-Bar Peking. If you are in an active mood, there is a place to practice the now popular activity of spinning. © wcities.com



wcities

contact:

tel: 52 322 222-1694
www.losxitomates.com

location:

Morelos 570
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48300

hours:

Daily 6pm-midnight

3 Los Xitomates

DESCRIPTION: This Mexican kitchen is constantly evolving its Hispanic roots, using elements from the Old World, as well as Mediterranean, continental, Caribbean and Eastern influences. The atmosphere in this space of uses earthtones combined with pieces by Mexican artists, creating an atmosphere of sober elegance. Their mission is to take the Mexican kitchen to a higher level, innovating and contributing to its evolution, with high standards of hospitality. Their vision to obtain the recognition of the culinary world as an icon of Mexican gastronomy.



Los Xitomates

contact:

tel: 52 322 222 2692
fax: 52 322 223 1941
<http://www.haciendasanangel.com/>

location:

MIRAMAR 336 COL.
CENTRO
PUERTO VALLARTA Jal
48300

4 Hacienda San Angel

DESCRIPTION: This enchanting boutique hotel is my top choice for a luxury stay in Puerto Vallarta -- even though it's not on the beach. You'll hardly miss the surf, you'll be so pampered in the stunning suites, or satisfied by the view from the rooftop heated pool or Jacuzzi and sun deck. Once the home of Richard Burton, it's just behind Puerto Vallarta's famed church, within easy walking distance to downtown. The Hacienda consists of five villas; the first two are joined to the third villa by a path that winds through a lovely terraced tropical garden with statuary and a fountain. The Las Campañas private one-bedroom villa is on the garden's northern border. The newest villa has four suites with sweeping views. A large, heated pool and deck afford panoramic views of the city and Bay of Banderas. A second sun deck with Jacuzzi overlooks the church and water beyond. All suites have exquisite antiques, original art, and fine bed linens with goose-down pillows. Each morning, continental breakfast is served outside your suite at the hour you request. Vallarta-style casual sophistication make this place Mexico's top "find" for discriminating travelers. Hacienda is open for dinner to nonguests. © Frommer's



Puerto Vallarta Snapshot

Local Info

Puerto Vallarta offers visitors an eclectic mix of the old and new. Original pueblo architecture remains intermingled with modern, luxurious beachfront resorts. Whether you choose to frolic with the crowds or find a secluded hideaway, there is much to see in Puerto Vallarta.

The Bay Puerto Vallarta has a wealth of natural beauty, friendly people, glorious sunsets, world-class sport fishing and great cuisine. Not to mention first-class resorts, shopping, diving and sailing. The gorgeous Bahía de Banderas serves as Puerto Vallarta's playground. It begins where the Sea of Cortez meets the Pacific Ocean, forming one of the largest bays in the world and the largest in Mexico. The "Bay of Flags" extends from Punta Mita in the north (at the Sierra De Vallejo Mountains) to Cabo Corrientes (in the lower foothills of the Sierra del Cuale mountain range).

Playa Play First, let's explore the main reason most people come to Puerto Vallarta: the "playas" or beaches. Punta Mita, located in a small fishing village to the north, offers spectacular scenery and water-sport venues. Off the coast lie the Marieta Islands, which provide exceptional snorkeling, scuba diving and whale-watching sites. Going south towards the city is Bucerías, a quaint beach community and fishing village with sandy coves and cobblestone streets.

Heading into town proper, visitors will find Playa de Oro, a paradise for surfers looking for the perfect wave. Beach-goers will begin to notice more people enjoying the beaches at this point, and the multitudes of vendors who cater to them. Playa de los Muertos, the "beach of the dead," is located south of the Hotel Zone and is notorious for its treacherous undercurrents, but it is a popular venue nevertheless. Conchas Chinas, a quiet beach also in the hotel area, features natural wading-pools created by rock formations. At the southernmost point of Banderas Bay (and accessible only by boat) is the Playa Yelapa, a very secluded and beautiful spot. Breathtaking

views, a waterfall, hiking and riding make this a hidden paradise.

Viejo Vallarta A narrow island in the middle of the Cuale River divides Old Vallarta. On the island, people can visit quaint outdoor shops, museums and an arboretum. Speaking of trees, dine in a treehouse overlooking the river at Las Brisas. A seaside walkway, El Malecón, is also in this part of town and is considered to be the heart of Puerto Vallarta. The Hotel Rosita, the first hotel built in this city, enjoys this central location and a spectacular beach view. A couple of the popular restaurants in this area are Las Palomas and Carlos O'Brian's. For the after-hours crowd, the Zoo features reggae and rock music into the wee hours of the morning.

Art lovers will find the works of internationally known Mexican artists featured at the Galeria Pacifico. This gallery is well worth your time to experience a taste of Mexico's cultural best.

Visitors can also enjoy the architecture of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe, one of the most recognized landmarks of the town. With the beautiful bay as a backdrop, visitors will also see noted statuary such as Los Arcos (the arches), The Dolphins, and El Cabillito (the sea horse) while strolling along the Malecon.

Hotel Zone Boulevard Francisco Medina Ascencio runs north to south through the city and is aptly dubbed "the Hotel Zone." On the north end, the Krystal Vallarta hosts five restaurants and The Christine Discotheque, along with authentic Mexican fiestas held twice a week. The Hotel Buenaventura is another fine choice, offering marvelous ocean views and an extensive list of amenities. Villa del Mar occupies more than eight acres of gorgeous beachfront property along with its sister hotel, the Villa del Palmar. The Playa Del Sol Costa Sur is perfect for combining business with pleasure. A club especially designed for children is on the premises, as well as conference facilities for meetings.

Tours Maybe the best way to see Puerto Vallarta's sights for the first time is to use one of the many tour services available. Nature lovers will enjoy Eco Tours for whale, bird and turtle watching. Vallarta Adventures allows you to swim with dolphins or explore nearby Caletas Beach (hideaway for movie mogul John Huston). Adventure of a different sort awaits aboard the Marigalante, with both day and sunset cruises. This "pirate" ship replicates a 15th-century Spanish Galeon right down to the last detail. Passengers enjoy meals, an open bar, dancing and fireworks. ©

History

A Port in the Storm Since the 16th century, when Spanish soldiers first landed on the shores of the Banderas Bay, it has been known as a safe haven. During that era, the need for ships to find shelter along the Pacific Coast was of vital importance. These safe havens helped to provide ships with shelter if pirates and renegades were to attack. They also provided ships with a place to seek repairs and to stock up on needed supplies such as food, water and firewood.

In the late 16th century, Captain Pedro de Unamuno proposed that a settlement be built on Banderas Bay; however, he was not the first to suggest this. Other navigators such as Gonzalo de Francia, Sebastian Vizcaino and Lopez de Vicuna had proposed ideas that such colonies be constructed, but their requests never received any formal attention. However, in 1644, a shipyard was built in what is now known as Mismaloya. Two of the ships constructed in that shipyard were built for Bernardo Bernal de Pinadero and were used to help colonize the southern region of California.

A City is Created During the 19th century, mining companies from Cuale and San Sebastian used the area to load and unload materials and mining supplies. At that time the area was known as Las Peñas. Halfway through that century, the area was dubbed

Puerto Vallarta Snapshot continued

Las Peñas de Santa Maria de Guadalupe. This formal name was bestowed by Don Guadalupe Sanchez Torres (he delivered salt to the mines, which was needed in order to refine the silver). He named the area this because he arrived there on December 12, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Don Guadalupe Sanchez Torres was so fond of the area that in the latter half of 1851, he brought his entire family there to live. It wasn't long before other families began to arrive and a small village began to emerge. Each family did their part to help the local economy grow. Some brought salt while others devoted themselves to agriculture and raising cattle. It was during this time that the French and Germans began to appear in this area in search of Brazil wood, a strong wood that they processed in order to acquire dyes.

By the year 1880, Las Peñas had a population of 1,500 inhabitants. Families from various places including Cuale and San Sebastian, came to Las Peñas to make lives for themselves. Within a few years the port was officially known as Las Peñas thanks to Admiral George Dewey's report to the U.S. Naval Hydrographic Office, which was used to establish the exact geographical positions of cities along this coast in order to make an accurate map.

In 1885, Las Peñas was open to national maritime traffic and on July 23rd of that same year, a Maritime Customs Office was established. In October of the following year, the town was given its official political and judicial standing by the State Congress. Over the next 20 years, Las Peñas flourished thanks to the collective efforts of Don Guadalupe and the many families who settled there.

Growing pains In Puerta Vallarta The people of Las Peñas also suffered their share of setbacks. In mid-1888, a pot of grease, which was being heated over a fire in local restaurant, burst into flames and set the structure ablaze. The fire spread quickly, destroying more than half of the homes in town. It is said that the fire would not have caused such extensive damage

had nearly all the town's male inhabitants population not been at a cockfight. In 1911, a waterspout hit the village, leaving more than 100 inhabitants homeless. In 1922, an outbreak of Yellow Fever spread through the city, causing more than 150 deaths.

In early 1911 Las Peñas' first post office was opened, and later that same year a telegraph was installed. In 1889, the port of Las Peñas was upgraded to a municipality. It was at this time that the settlement's name was changed to Puerto Vallarta, in remembrance of the Governor of Jalisco, Don Ignacio L. Vallarta.

Thirty-five years later, the Montgomery Fruit Company purchased 70,000 acres for banana plantations in the neighboring town of Ixtapa. Because of the surplus job opportunities created by these plantations, Puerto Vallarta began to flourish. Eventually, a railway was built in order to transport the bananas to El Salado and eventually onto the United States. Unfortunately, in 1938, the company was forced to leave the area due to new laws and restrictions that had been put into effect. Other products such as beans, coconuts, corn and tobacco continued to be grown and shipped to national markets.

The World Discovers Its Beauty Unlike some other cities in Mexico, Puerto Vallarta was not created for tourism. However, in the 1930's, the city got its first taste. Those who visited the area loved it so much that they began returning year after year. Word of Puerto Vallarta's beauty quickly spread, and each year the number of tourists grew. By 1950 the city was known internationally, but what really put Puerto Vallarta on the map was the movie *Night of the Iguana* (filmed in 1963) and the steamy romance between film stars Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. Thousands of tourists flocked to the area, eager to see the location where the movie was made. That exposure helped the city grow quickly. Transportation improved, hotels were built and the city now had a new primary income source, tourism.

Because of that growth, Francisco Medina Ascencio, governor of Jalisco, and Sr.

Jose Vasquez Galvan as mayor of Puerto Vallarta, pronounced decree No. 8366, which elevated Puerto Vallarta to the status of a city. Puerto Vallarta has come a long way since 1930. Today, hotels and restaurants line the beaches. Cruise ships come into port on an almost daily basis. Tourism, which was once nonexistent, now draws in more than half a million visitors a year, turning this once a tiny fishing village into a sought-after vacation destination.

©

Hotel Insights

This once tiny fishing village is now a Mecca for international visitors. The city offers visitors numerous things to see and do, but before you can begin your journey, you'll need to reserve yourself a place to stay. If you're new to the area (and even if you aren't), choosing the right hotel or resort can be a bit challenging. In order to reserve the right type of accommodations, take the following things into consideration: what your needs are and what you want to do during your stay. These factors will determine the area in which to reserve your accommodations and will also help to cut down on a lot of unnecessary travel.

Business travelers should look to the larger resorts to have their needs met. Many of the smaller hotels do not have the accommodations or facilities you may require. Instead, the staff at the smaller hotels will direct you to the local Internet cafés for computer and online services. Most of the resorts that can and will fit the needs of the business traveler tend to be along the river and beachfront or listed as luxury resorts. These resorts are larger than those found inland and have business and large conference facilities on their premises.

Beachfront and Waterfront

Accommodations Beach lovers and waterfront property seekers will find a variety of hotels around the Marina Vallarta, Nuevo Vallarta, Banderas Bay and River Cuale areas of this port city. There are a number of properties in these locations that have rooms available for less

Puerto Vallarta Snapshot continued

than USD 100. The Hotel Alagre, Hotel Buenaventura, Paradise Village Resort and Spa, Marbella All Suites Resort and the Sierra Hotel Nuevo Vallarta are just a few of the accommodations available in these waterfront areas. Places to stay near the water that newcomers might overlook (but shouldn't) include waterfront apartments, condominiums and houses. Many of these require at least a five to seven-day stay, but also offer discounts for extended visits. The La Casa del Puente apartments and the Andale Hotel (which also has apartments available) offer discounts for extended stays. One thing to remember with these types of accommodations is that typically there isn't any maid service offered.

Business and Luxury Accommodations

Sometimes everyone needs a little taste of the good life, whether it's for you or to entertain a client. Those visitors who prefer to live (or entertain) in the lap of luxury while on a trip should look to the north of the downtown area. Almost all of Puerto Vallarta's five-star resorts, luxury hotels and suites are found in and around the Marina Vallarta area. This region is, for the most part, a city in itself with shopping centers, restaurants, bars, condominiums and golf courses at your disposal. With all the amenities available in this area, visitors may never have to go in search of anything unless they want to explore all that this area has to offer.

The resorts within this northern area starting under USD 125 per night include: Marriott Casa Magna, Melia Puerto Vallarta, Omega Las Palmas Beach Resort, Premiere Hotel Gran Turmiso, Sierra Hotel Nuevo Vallarta and the Velas Vallarta Grand Suite Resort, to list just a few. Most of these resorts and hotels offer facilities and services to accommodate the business traveler. Some offer additional services such as cellular phone rental (in case you forget yours at home).

The deluxe luxury resorts starting at more than USD 150 per night include: Westin Regina, Sierra Plaza Golf and Spa Hotel, Krystal Vallarta, La Jolla de Mismaloya, Presidente Inter-Continental Puerto Vallarta and the Qualton Club. It's safe to assume

many of these resorts will run you into the USD 200 per night range, depending on the season (rates are higher during winter months). Some of these hotels incorporate an "all-inclusive plan" into their prices, especially during high season. Typically that plan includes three meals a day, all drinks (sodas and call brands), resort activities (on sister properties, as well) and limited water sports. Some resorts offer 50 percent off for water sports with the all-inclusive packages. Also, it is not uncommon to see a hotel charging an additional 5-15 percent for lobster, shrimp and fine cuts of meat if you choose those items from the menu. Most of these "all-inclusive" packages are the same, however, and special deals for honeymooners and those on anniversary and birthday trips are available. If you are interested in the all-inclusive packages, be sure to specify your needs when making your reservations.

Moderate Range Accommodations

Hybrids between moderate and luxury resorts (less than USD 110 per night) are the Mayan Palace and the Omega Las Palmas Beach Resort. Each hotel offers many (if not all) of the same amenities and facilities that the bigger luxury resorts do. The only real difference, in most cases, is the standard room size. These rooms may be a bit smaller in square footage (but not substantially). Of course, the price is smaller too, usually half that of the luxury resorts.

If you're not into the high-end resorts and prefer something a little more down to earth, there are still plenty of accommodations to choose from. Many of these offer luxury perks without the luxury price. The Hacienda Hotel, Hotel Rosita, Hotel Buenaventura and the Marbella All Suites Resort are a few of the places you may want to consider if accommodations less than USD 80 per night are more suited to your budget.

If you're looking for something a little more untraditional, say perhaps a unique bed and breakfast, then Casa Kimberly is highly recommended. This B&B used to be the home of Elizabeth Taylor and is a real

treat for would-be starlets, movie buffs and nostalgia seekers.

Budget Travel Accommodations Those traveling on limited means needn't look far for accommodations. There is a large selection of hotels and motels within city limits for less than USD 35 a night. The Hotel Alegre, Hotel Frankfurt, Andale Hotel, Posada de Roger Hotel and the Yasmin Hotel are the most commonly selected and recommended for the budget-minded. Some of these hotels will provide guests with discounts if they're staying for extended periods of time, usually longer than a week.

©

Restaurants Insights

Puerto Vallarta is a city rich with history and an integral part of that stems from its cuisine. A few hundred years ago, as the city was just beginning, inhabitants didn't have the luxury of dining at four-star restaurants. Residents had to rely on their own knowledge and experience in order to feed their families. Through trial and error, a great number of the recipes that Puerto Vallarta cherishes today were created. Many of those same recipes have been handed down from one relative to the next, for generations. Some families have taken their prized recipes and opened restaurants. Today, many share them with locals and tourists alike.

Today, finding a restaurant in Puerto Vallarta is easy. The only foreseeable problem is which restaurant to choose. There are the typical chains and fast food restaurants such as McDonald's, Subway, Burger King, KFC and Taco Bell, if that's what you're in the mood for. Places like Planet Hollywood and the Hard Rock Café are around for those who want to drink in a familiar environment. There is also a wide variety of international restaurants and bars in the city—German, Italian, American, Asian, South American and Moroccan are just a few of the types you can expect to find. There are also the more regionalized Mexican restaurants and taverns that seem, logically, to be the biggest draw.

Puerto Vallarta Snapshot continued

Northern Puerto Vallarta North of the downtown area and the Cuale River are a number of popular eateries and taverns. Abadia Basso (on Hildago) is one of the area's most romantic and frequently visited restaurants. The Mezza Luna (also on Hildago) is Vallarta's premier Italian restaurant. If you head a little closer to the downtown area, you're bound to find Chez Elena (on Matamoros); the best time to dine here is in the evening, when the garden is illuminated. On Paseo Diaz Ordaz there are a couple of tasty choices: for burgers and traditional Mexican cuisine in a casual atmosphere, there's Cheeseburger in Paradise; Old-World Italian cuisine can be found at La Dolce Vita. Over on Morelos is Mickey's No Name Café, the area's best BBQ hands down; be prepared for a wait here regardless of when you arrive.

The Downtown Area In the downtown district choices include hip nouveau eateries and small out of the way places. One of the more trendy places to dine is Café des Artistes (on Guadalupe Sanchez). Its combination of French cuisine and original artwork creates a serene atmosphere that is unmatched anywhere else in town. International fare has become quite the trend amongst Puerto Vallarta's restaurant community, and Cafe Maximilian (on Olas Altas) is no exception. Memo's Casa de Hotcakes (on Basilio Badillo) is where virtually everyone in Puerto Vallarta goes for breakfast, so there's always a wait to get in. Vegetarians will enjoy Papaya 3 (on Abasolo) serving only 100% all-natural cuisine. For some truly authentic Mexican cuisine there's only one place to go downtown, Café Olla (on Basilio Badillo). Be prepared for a wait, as it does not accept reservations.

Southern Puerto Vallarta To the south of the downtown area is Olas Altas, also known as "Restaurant Row." It is the most heavily visited street in south Puerto Vallarta, due mainly to the sheer number of restaurants located there. Some of the eateries in this area include Chianti's, where fresh homemade pasta is always the house specialty. Just down the road, party-goers will find Daiquiri Dick's, renowned

for its frozen daiquiris and Sunday brunch. Papaya 3, the vegetarian eatery, has a second location on this street. Another popular stop is Rosie's at Santa Barbara, well known throughout the city for its authentic American-style cuisine. Located just a short walk from Olas Atlas is Café Frankfurt (on Basilio Badillo). The German cuisine and open-air dining experience is what customers come here for.

Banderas Bay Scenic views, spectacular sunsets and an abundance of romantic intentions are what you can expect if dining along the Banderas Bay. Bombo's (on Matamoros) has a beautiful view of the bay and is perfect for those interested in gourmet cuisine and a romantic interlude for two. Spectacular sunsets and jazz music at El Manglar (inside the Buenaventura Hotel) is just what the love doctor ordered. Tropical plants and an impressive waterfall surround you at El Palomar (on Aguacuate). International cuisine with a Mediterranean flare is the specialty of the house at Coco's Tropical (on Olas Altas).

Cuale River Area If you enjoy dining with a view, there are plenty of places to choose from along the Cuale River. Cuiza (on Isla Rio Cuale) is a popular spot for couples, especially those with marriage on their minds. If you enjoy dining in an open-air restaurant that overlooks the river, Caruso's (on Insurgentes) is your best bet. Avid jazz enthusiasts can often be found dining at Le Bistro Jazz (on East Bridge). An enchanting spot for two is Las Brias (on Calle Aquiles Serdán), a tree-house restaurant that overlooks the "Gringo Gulch."

One last bit of advice—If you're having a hard time deciding, ask the hotel management where you're staying or one of the local store owners. Do not ask the cabdrivers; many of them get paid to recommend specific restaurants.

©

Nightlife Insights

Puerto Vallarta offers visitors a wealth of things to see and do, whether it's shopping, scuba diving, snorkeling, fishing,

golfing, clubbing, visiting ruins or just plain relaxing on the beach. Regardless of what your budget is, or what your interests are, "Vallarta" offers unlimited fun, day or night.

Sun and Fun Puerto Vallarta has 26 miles of the most beautiful beaches in all Mexico, maybe even the world, and these beaches are one reason that this area has been dubbed, the "Mexican Riviera." Banderas Bay is the focal point and popular gathering place for visitors, providing easy access to many beaches. Virtually everywhere you turn there's a beach vendor renting everything from boogie boards and water bikes to jet-skis and wind surfing equipment. Thrill seekers (who don't mind heights or spending \$25 per each 10 minutes), might want to try their luck parasailing. Try Club Bananas Water Sports Center at the Las Palmas Hotel. The view from aloft is a spectacular panorama of the city and the miles and miles of surrounding coastline and jungle terrain.

Each local beach is unique in its own right and seems to serve a different purpose. Playa Los Muertos is a centrally-located, lively restaurant and vendor-strewn hot spot, regardless of its ominous-sounding name. To the north there is Punta de Mita, which has beautiful white coral beaches, making it extremely popular among sunbathers. Playa Anclote, nestled within a small cove, is perfect for swimming and surfing. Playa Pontoque offers visitors crystal clear waters, making it perfect for snorkeling. To the south (and accessible only by boat) are three beaches worth making the trip to: Playa Las Animas, another cove protected, white-sand beach popular with swimmers and sunbathers and those with small children; Quimixto another beach perfect for snorkelers; and, Vallarta's southernmost beach, Playa Yelapa, located in the well-known, once hippie-inhabited town of Yelapa.

Cruising Along the Deep Blue Sea

There's always a sense of intrigue and adventure surrounding taking to the sea in ships. Maybe it's something we dream up on our own, or maybe it's something Mother Nature instills in us. Whichever the case, it

Puerto Vallarta Snapshot continued

has become a pastime that many people enjoy, and while in Puerto Vallarta, there is no reason not to indulge this whim.

Hop aboard the 116-foot Alegre Cruise ship for a day of fun in the sun or a romantic sunset cruise. Ecological cruises have become increasingly popular in these waters and elsewhere; Humpback whale enthusiasts may fancy a whale-watching voyage with Sailing and Fishing Unlimited. The first time you see a whale it's sure to leave you speechless, and the waters surrounding this area is rife with just such opportunities from mid-November to mid-March. Those with adventure in their blood (and a playful nature) may want to try their luck aboard the pirate ship *Marigalante*, a day-long, round-trip voyage that's guaranteed to make you dream of pieces o' eight.

Back on Dry Land Puerto Vallarta's rich art culture dates back centuries to the Aztec culture and much of the artwork you'll find here—from the pottery of its indigenous peoples to gleaming streamline modern sculptures—is steeped in historical significance. One gallery not to be missed is the *Galería de Ollas*, which is devoted to exhibiting and selling the works of art created by the area's finest Mata Ortiz potters. Pre-Columbian and Talavera designed pottery is the trademark of *Studio Terra Cotta Ceramica*. This gallery also offers lessons to visitors interested in learning the trade. At *Museo Munoz Acosta*, visitors will see the exceptional plastic panorama handiwork that famed Ernesto Munoz Acosta has been perfecting since the 60s.

More contemporary works can be seen at the *Manuel Lepe Museum Gallery*, which showcases the work of the area's most renowned artist. Lepe's colorful works of art (dating back to the 60s) allow you to see a more natural side of Puerto Vallarta, a side that only Lepe has been able to bring to life. The *Galeria Pacifico* is a great starting point for novice art enthusiasts, offering an eclectic array of paintings and sculptures by up and coming local artists.

Shopping opportunities abound despite the fact that there are no major shopping malls here. In fact, many of the bargains to be had here come directly to you as you relax on the beach. Locals, hawking their wares, offer a wide variety of souvenirs, necessities and local folk art to visitors as they relax in the shade of a palapa—be sure to haggle over the prices, it's expected.

For those who simply must get a little browsing in while on vacation, be sure to stop by the municipal market in the Rio Cuale area. Everything from the mandatory souvenir T-shirt to fine silver jewelry is available there. If you get hungry while shopping up a storm, check out the food market upstairs; it serves some of the best traditional Mexican dishes around. Once fortified, you'll be ready to do the town.

Dance the Night Away Puerto Vallarta's nightlife used to be pretty tame, but within the last couple of years there has been a surge in the dance party scene. Take the *Malecón*, for example. This area used to be filled with shops and restaurants, but not anymore. Nowadays it's the place to come dance 'til dawn. *Carlos O'Brian's* and *Star's* are the area hot spots and great places to get your party started.

Those who think disco is dead are in for a rude awakening. The area's hottest nightclub is *The Christine Discotheque* and Disco is still king here. The laser light show and pulsating Donna Summeresque music keep the crowds boogying until the wee hours of the morning. Drag queens (and kings) can be found strutting their stuff across the runways of *Club Paco Paco* three nights a week (Friday-Sunday). This mind-boggling show packs the house every weekend. If you arrive early you may be able to participate in the "*Ranch Hands Show*" (run three times nightly).

For those who appreciate a less raucous form of nighttime entertainment, the *Marina Vallarta* section of town may be more suitable. Dozens of martini bars and jazz clubs offer a more subdued repose from the day's activities. Love is in the air—110 feet up in the air, to be precise—at the *El*

Faro Lighthouse Bar. Mostly couples can be found here enjoying a panoramic view of the city and listening to live jazz music.

Another way to wind down your day is to attend one of the "fiestas" hosted by several of the local hotels. These productions combine costume, lights, music and food while giving visitors a glimpse at Mexico's diverse culture. Some of the best are the hosted twice weekly by the *Krystal Vallarta Hotel*.

Day or night, Puerto Vallarta offers plenty of opportunities for visitors to do it all—or nothing at all.

©

Things to Do Insights

In the beginning, somewhere around the eighth day, Puerto Vallarta must have been created. Once you see the beauty of the area, you'll likely agree. Sunshine will be your daily companion as you walk the magnificent beaches, sail in the *Bahia de Banderas*, or hike the secluded areas. These are only some of the ways to enjoy this tropical paradise:

Water World One of the great ways for the whole family to enjoy the sights and water activities is by sailing on the *Marigalante*, a magnificent reproduction of a Spanish Galleon. Meals are served on board as you set sail for a day of snorkeling or other activities near the *Marieta Islands*. Evening cruises allow passengers to sail into the sunset while enjoying delightful cuisine, Mariachi music and fireworks. *Eco Tours* allows visitors the experience of communing with the families of humpback whales that return to *Banderas Bay* every year. You will be able to hear these wonderful creatures communicate with one another by the use of special hydrophones on board. *Turtle Camp* is another interesting and educational trip offered by *Eco Tours*. Visitors can help release baby *Olive Ridley Sea Turtles* into the bay in an effort to preserve this endangered species.

Alegre Cruises will take passengers to the beautiful and secluded fishing village of

Puerto Vallarta Snapshot continued

Yelapa. Once you arrive, enjoy swimming and snorkeling; or just bask in the peace and quiet of this unique area accessible only by boat. The Puerto Vallarta Fishing Company will take you on your quest to bring home a trophy fish. Blue, black and striped Marlin swim these waters, as do wahoo and yellowfin tuna. If you are here in November, you may want to participate in the annual International Sailfish Tournament. Cash prizes are awarded for the biggest catch and a great time is guaranteed, win or lose. **Terra Firma** If water sports are not your thing, there are still plenty of things to do besides lounging in the warm sunshine with a cool drink and being waited on hand and foot. Golf fans will be happy to see some excellent venues to perfect their skills. The Marina Vallarta Golf Club combines a magnificent ocean view with palms, lagoons and waterfalls. Herons, ducks, sand cranes, iguanas and alligators will help you keep score. Flamingos Golf Resort offers a par-72 challenge designed by Percy Clifford.

Bicycle and hiking tours are available through B-B-Bobby's Bikes located in downtown Puerto Vallarta. This outfit has an excellent reputation for guided tours through the area including trips to Las Animas and Yelapa. If you wish to pedal around town and see the sights on your own, you can do that also. BikeMex Adventures will take rides to many venues for all levels of riding skill. One exceptional day trip will take you to Punta de Mita, a beautiful coastal area north of Puerto Vallarta.

For an enjoyable tour on foot, visit the seaside walkway called Malecon, part of Old Vallarta and considered the heart of the town. Art lovers will enjoy the works of internationally known Mexican artists featured at the Galeria Pacifico, and the place is well worth your time. This gallery offers not only fine works by Mexican artists, but a "Walking Art Tour" as well. These enjoyable jaunts take place every Tuesday morning from January through the early part of April. Another must-see is the Galeria Sergio Bustamante, hosting the

artistry of this famous sculptor. Visitors can also enjoy the architecture of the Church of Guadalupe, one of the most recognized landmarks in town. With the beautiful bay as a backdrop, visitors will also see noted statuary such as Los Arcos (the arches), The Dolphins, and El Cabillito (the sea horse).

Sun, Sand and Surf Offering a combination of both water and land activities are the playas in and around Puerto Vallarta. Punta Mita, located in a small fishing village to the north, offers spectacular scenery and water sport venues. Off the coast sits the Marieta Islands that provide exceptional diving and whale-watching sites. Next, going south towards the city, is Bucerias, a quaint beach community and fishing village with sandy coves and cobblestone streets.

Heading into Puerto Vallarta proper, visitors will come to Playa de Oro, a paradise for surfers looking for the perfect wave. This beach is popular with both tourists and the many wandering vendors who cater to their every need, offering helpful items such as sunscreen as well as knickknacks like Aztec symbols. Playa de los Muertos, the "beach of the dead," is located south of the Hotel Zone. Despite its notorious treacherous undercurrents, it is an extremely popular beach. Conchas Chinas, a quiet beach also in the hotel area, features natural wading-pools created by rock formations. At the southernmost point of Banderas Bay, and accessible only by boat, is the Playa Yelapa. As beautiful as it is secluded, its breathtaking views, waterfall, hiking trails and horseback riding make this a hidden paradise.

For a variety of land and sea excursions, as well as eco-tours, contact Vallarta Encounters.

However you choose to see the sights of this city—by land, by sea, or a combination of both—Puerto Vallarta will delight you with its beauty and friendly people. Those who visit are likely to dream of returning.

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Travel Tips

Getting There

By Air: The Gustavo Diaz Ordaz International Airport (PVR) (+011 52 322 221 1298) is well suited to handle Puerto Vallarta's ranking as the sixth most popular travel destination in the world. Located six miles north of downtown it harbors the following major airlines: Aeromexico (+1 800 237 6639/ <http://www.aeromexico.com>) Alaskan Airlines (+1 800 252 7522/ <http://www.alaskaair.com>)

America West Airlines (+1 800 235 9292/ <http://www.americawest.com>)

American Airlines (+1 800 433 7300/ <http://www.aa.com>)

Continental (+1 800 525 0280/ <http://www.continental.com>)

Delta (+1 800 221 1212/ <http://www.delta.com>) Mexicana (+1 800 531 7921/ <http://www.mexicana.com>)

United (+1 800 241 6522/ <http://www.ual.com>)

Getting to downtown from the airport is loaded with options. Aeromovil taxis and Transportes Terrestres minivans use a fixed zone pricing system (as compared to metered fares). Rates are posted at ticket booths found near the baggage areas. Rates start at USD10 and go as high as USD30. A fleet federally licensed taxis that own exclusive rights to collecting passengers from the airport are conveniently located outside the terminal's doors. They charge, on average, USD12. However, if you don't mind hauling your luggage across the street from the airport you'll find an armada of yellow city taxis that only charge USD4.50.

For a budget-happy ride into downtown snare a seat on the Junta Ixtapa bus line. It conveniently drops and collects passengers in front of the airport, charging USD.30 for a one way ride. Busses operate 6AM-11PM.

If you are going to rent a vehicle limit your choices to the major car companies. Avoid the cheap hustlers advertising jeeps and convertibles for USD10. It is a camouflaged

Puerto Vallarta Snapshot continued

scam requiring that you sit through a timeshare presentation in order to qualify for the tempting rates. The area's rental car companies include: Alamo(+1 327 9633/ <http://www.alamo.com>)

Avis(+1 800 831 2847/ <http://www.avis.com>)

Budget(+1 800 527 0700/ <http://www.budget.com>)

Dollar(+1 800 800 4000/ <http://www.dollar.com>)

Enterprise(+1 800 325 8007/ <http://www.enterprise.com>)

National(+1 800 227 7368/ <http://www.nationalcar.com>)

By Bus

Buses chug into Puerto Vallarta from all of Mexico's major cities including Guadalajara, Mazatlan, Mexico City and Tijuana. The major bus companies include Primera Plus(<http://www.primeraplus.com.mx>), Pacifico and Elite(+011 52 322 223 1117). The main bus station, Central Camionero(+011 52 322 221 0739), lies seven miles north of downtown, near the airport. Taxis from the bus station cost USD13.50.

By Car: Coastal Highway 200 is the main artery into Puerto Vallarta. Mazatlan is a six hours drive and Manzanillo is four hours away.

Getting Around Town

Puerto Vallarta is blessed with an efficient bus system that runs daily from 6AM-11PM. Bus stops are designated with blue and

white signs and are usually every two or three blocks. Routes are marked on the front windows. The Centro route, the most popular with tourists, covers the hotel zone. Bus fares cost USD.45 and most drivers are change-deficient so don't try to pay with large bills. There are no transfer passes.

Taxis are plentiful and easy to hail from any street corner. Rather than charge by meters they charge a set price determined by city zones. Most hotel lobbies offer price sheets. Nevertheless, it is highly recommended to agree to a price before entering a cab. Rides around town cost anywhere from USD2-USD10.

Water taxis exit the pier from Los Muertos Beach daily at 10:30AM and 11AM. They service the bay's southern beaches that are only accessible by boat. Rates are based upon beaches and fall between USD20-USD25.

Driving in Puerto Vallarta is not encouraged, especially during the busy tourist months between December-April. The streets are narrow and parking is extremely limited.

If you plan on walking be aware that unlike other parts of the world Puerto Vallarta bus drivers are unaware of the "yield to pedestrians" code. Either cross the streets with caution or run really fast.

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Fun Facts

Puerto Vallarta

State: Jalisco

Country: Mexico

Puerto Vallarta by the Numbers

Population: 350,000

Land Area: 670 square miles

Average January Temperature: 81degrees F

Average July Temperature: 88 degrees F

Average Sunshine Days: 345

Quick Facts

Major Industries: Tourism

Electricity: 110-120 volts AC; standard flat, two-pin plugs

Time Zone: GMT-6 or GMT-7 April through October

Country Dialing Code: 011

Area Code: 322

Did You Know? John Huston's "The Night of the Iguana" was filmed in Puerto Vallarta in 1963.

Orientation

Nestled on the west coast of Mexico's mainland, Puerto Vallarta shares the same latitude as Hawaii. The Banderas Bay(one of the largest in the world) laps ashore from the west while the Sierra Madre Mountains border the town from the south and east. It is 553 miles northwest of Mexico City, 278 miles southeast of Mazatlan, and 1,200 miles south of Nogales, Arizona.

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Puerto Vallarta Snapshot continued

Weather

Statistics	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Temperature C												
Average High	26	27	28	30	31	31	30	30	29	29	28	26
Average Mean	18	19	19	21	23	25	25	25	24	23	21	19
Average Low	10	11	11	13	15	19	20	20	20	18	14	12
Temperature F												
Average High	79	81	83	87	88	87	85	85	85	84	83	79
Average Mean	65	66	62	67	73	77	76	76	76	74	64	66
Average Low	51	51	52	55	59	67	68	68	68	64	57	53
Rainy Days	2	1	0	0	1	10	15	15	14	5	1	2
Rain Fall (cm)	1.8	0.6	0.1	0.1	0.3	6.6	15.6	14.3	10.7	3.6	0.7	0.7
Rain Fall (in)	0.7	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.1	2.6	6.2	5.6	4.2	1.4	0.3	0.3

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