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Insider's Guide to Puerto Vallarta & Punta Mita

 SHARE*Travel Advisor***Gregory Rhoney**[CONTACT GREGORY](#)

Image courtesy of One&Only Mandarina

Puerto Vallarta has something for everyone. You can take advantage of the city's nightlife and culture, spend your days getting active in nature, relax on beautiful beaches, stay at world-

class resorts, golf, surf, see whales and so much more.

Below, my curated guide provides an overview of places to stay, what to do and where to eat in Puerto Vallarta (and nearby Punta Mita). Consider it a mere starting point to spark a little wanderlust. When you're ready, reach out to plan and book your dream Puerto Vallarta getaway.

Need to know

Puerto Vallarta is relatively easy to get to, especially from the United States' west coast. Expect a mix of beach, culture, relaxation and adventure.



Image courtesy of Susurros del Corazón

- **Currency:** The official currency is the Mexican peso (\$), although most tourist areas accept US dollars.
- **Language:** Spanish is the official language, but again, English is widely spoken in areas that see many tourists.
- **Airport:** Licenciado Gustavo Díaz Ordaz International Airport (PVR) is the area's main port of entry.

- **Transportation:** Most people opt not to rent a car. Instead, arrange transportation through your hotel.
- **Best time to visit:** November through April (especially December through January) brings great weather, and whale-watching season extends from November to March. As such, expect more crowds during these months. For more approachable prices, go during the summer. It gets pretty hot, but you'll avoid the largest crowds and elevated rates.
- **Ideal length of stay:** Five to seven days is the sweet spot. Puerto Vallarta / Punta Mita is great for holidays, family getaways, couples escapes, spring break, summer vacation...You'll want enough time to relax and explore.
- **Signature dishes:** A few foodies highlights include tacos (and all their iterations), pescado zarandeado (slow-cooked whole fish marinated in spices), burritas de marlin (grilled marlin, tomatoes and lettuce wrapped in a tortilla), camarones embarazados (grilled shrimp skewers often served on the beach), fresh ceviche, guacamole and chilaquiles (crispy tortilla strips smothered in red and green sauce, often topped with meat, fried eggs, sour cream, onion and/or avocado).
- **Key phrases:** “Buenos días” (Good morning), “Hasta luego” (See you later), “Que tal?” (How's it going?), “Gracias” (Thank you), “Que rico!” (It's delicious!)
- **What to wear:** Pack breezy, comfortable clothing that will keep you cool. Also bring dressier (but nonetheless beachy) options for going out, as well as lots of activewear if you plan on getting outdoors.

Where to stay

Puerto Vallarta is a lively city on Banderas Bay. About an hour north on a private peninsula is Punta Mita, the region's primary resort area. The development comprises luxury resorts, golf courses, beach clubs, villas and condos. (Punta Mita is not to be confused with Punta de Mita, which is a coastal town located near the private Punta Mita development.)

Stay in Puerto Vallarta if you're into nightlife, urban exploration, cultural immersion and hotels with more accessible price points. For a relaxing, luxurious resort vacation, opt for Punta Mita. The hotel options here are impressive. A fair warning: You may find it hard to leave.



Image courtesy of One&Only Mandarina

One&Only Mandarina: A luxe getaway with treehouses, cliffside villas and an eco-conscious disposition. It's blissfully private and remote. Expect personalized wellness treatments and amazing dining. Fora Perks include \$100 resort credit, breakfast daily, an upgrade & extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Susurros del Corazón, Auberge Resorts Collection: A beachfront paradise with nature-focused activities like snorkeling, paddleboarding, whale watching and surf safaris (surfing is big here). The food is sustainably and locally sourced, and the breezy aesthetic is laid-back luxury at its finest. Fora Perks include \$100 resort credit, breakfast daily, an upgrade & extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Four Seasons Resort Punta Mita: This ultra-luxe oceanfront resort is a celebration of the region's natural surroundings. Stay in breezy casitas, plunge-pool suites or sprawling residences. Paddleboard, golf, go boating, fish, surf...But whatever you do, don't miss the hotel's tequila-mixing class, where you'll try different iterations of the spirit, see what you like

and create your own concoction. When you book Four Seasons with me, you'll enjoy exclusive Four Seasons Preferred Partner amenities. I'll be pleased to give you more details.

Naviva, A Four Seasons Resort, Punta Mita, Mexico: For bucket-list-worthy wellness experience, Naviva should top your list. The exclusive jungle escape comprises 15 beautiful tents. You'll be treated to hyper-personalized service and transformative wellness rituals. Even better, it's all-inclusive. When you book Four Seasons with me, you'll enjoy exclusive Four Seasons Preferred Partner amenities. I'll be pleased to give you more details.



Image courtesy of Naviva, A Four Seasons Resort, Punta Mita, Mexico

The St. Regis Punta Mita Resort: The St. Regis' signature luxury (which includes butler service, no less) on a 22-acre beachfront expanse. Expect two Jack Nicklaus golf courses, a spa and a Mexico-inspired design. Fora's Marriott STARS partner perks include \$100 resort credit, a welcome amenity, breakfast daily, an upgrade & extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Hyatt Ziva Puerto Vallarta: An all-inclusive resort on a secluded beach. There are four beachfront pools, each with their own vibe, plus several swim-up rooms. Fora's Hyatt Privé

partner perks include \$100 resort credit, a welcome amenity and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

W Punta de Mita: Fun, polished and eclectic, with colorful rooms and a lively vibe. Fora's Marriott Luminous partner perks include a welcome amenity, breakfast daily, an upgrade & extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Conrad Punta de Mita: A stylish family-friendly option primed for relaxation — with a remarkable breakfast buffet to boot. Fora's Hilton for Luxury partner perks include \$100 resort credit, breakfast daily & an upgrade whenever possible.

History and culture



Image courtesy of W Punta de Mita

Puerto Vallarta started out as a small fishing village called Las Peñas. (Banderas Bay's calm waters make for great fishing conditions.) The prosperity of nearby banana plantations helped the population grow in the early 20th century, but tourism really took off after the 1964 film *The Night of the Iguana*, based on the Tennessee Williams play, was filmed there.

Hollywood luminaries like Ava Gardner, Richard Burton, Sue Lyon and Deborah Kerr starred in the John Huston film. Elizabeth Taylor even flew down to live with Burton, with whom she was having an affair, during filming. The scandal only added to Puerto Vallarta's draw.

Today, it's a vibrant region with incredible beaches, buzzing streets lined with local vendors, prime water sports, whale watching, active adventure and more. Charming towns up the coast are great for surfing and more of a bohemian vibe, while resort developments and hotels facilitate blissful relaxation (and access to the area's natural playground, perfect for hikes, horseback riding and ATV rides).

Activities



Image courtesy of Four Seasons Resort Punta Mita

- Visit local markets (and go early to beat the crowds) for crafts and amazing street food. Top picks include **Mercado Municipal**, the **Isla Cuale Flea Market**, the family-owned **Tacos El Cuñado** and anywhere in the **Zona Romántica**. Even better, take a **local food tour**.
- Stroll along the mile-long **Malecón** boardwalk (pro tip: Go at sunset), and visit the architecturally rich **Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe** nearby.

- Learn about Mexico's pre-Hispanic cultures at the small and mighty **Museo del Cuale**.
- For another museum moment, head to **Museo Histórico Naval** for exhibits on naval warfare and Mexico's maritime defense.
- Get deep into Mexican history by visiting the historic town of **San Sebastián del Oeste**, which dates back to the early 17th century, when it was first settled by silver miners.
- Admire the colorful buildings, art galleries, cobblestoned streets and bustling markets of **Zona Romántica**, Puerto Vallarta's Old Town.
- Hop on a boat to the **Marietas Islands**, often referred to as a mini Galápagos of sorts, thanks to its biodiversity and natural beauty. Spot over 100 species of fish and birds, including the blue-footed booby.
- Zipline and hike in the **Sierra Madre Mountains**. For additional outdoor adventuring, consider an **ATV** or **horseback ride**.
- Puerto Vallarta is especially well known for its **whale watching** during the migration season, which runs from about November through March.
- Leave time to relax: There are lots of world-class **golf** courses to enjoy, and be sure to reserve ample hours for **lounging by the beach or pool**. Also, you'll be in prime **surfing** territory.

Restaurants & bars



Image courtesy of Susurros del Corazón, Auberge Resorts Collection

- **La Rustica Mita**, in downtown Punta Mita, is a lively spot with handmade cocktails and wood-fired pizzas.
- The whole family will love **Zicatela**, with its colorful walls, decorative tiles and fresh, local food.
- At **Restaurant Sufi**, which overlooks the Bay of Banderas, expect the best of Mexiterranean fare.
- Head to **Mita Mary's**, at The St. Regis, for margaritas paired with sunsets.
- Go to **MINA** for authentic Mexican food and fresh margaritas near the ocean.
- The local coffee shop **El Cafecito de Mita** is the best way to start your day.
- Go to **Carolina** for a fresh, modern take on Mexican cuisine, plus great sunset views.
- The open-air taqueria **La Boquita**, at Susurros del Corazón, is not to be missed.
- The Conrad's **Codex** is great for contemporary Mexican food and tasting menus in a romantic setting.
- At the elegant **Café des Artistes**, local ingredients are treated to French technique.

Add-on destinations

Up the coast from Puerto Vallarta and Punta Mita are several towns to explore. But don't forget about what lies south of the region, nor where a short, convenient flight can take you.

- **Sayulita**, about 30 to 45 minutes by car north of Punta Mita, is a lovely coastal town known for its beaches, surfing and bohemian vibe.
- If you don't mind a bit of a longer drive (around four hours), head south to **Tamarindo**; the area's coast is quickly becoming a hotspot.
- Add **Mexico City** to your trip to get the best of both worlds: beach and city. The flight from Puerto Vallarta is less than two hours.

Get in touch with Gregory

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*Email Address *First Name *Last Name Please provide some details about your trip.

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