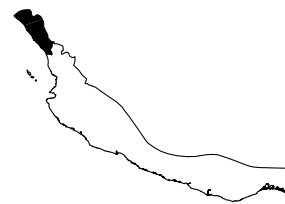


# Mazatlán



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

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

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

## HIGHLIGHTS

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



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

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

■ ☎ 669

## History

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

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

## Orientation

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



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

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

### MAPS

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

### Information

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

### BOOKSTORES

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

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

### EMERGENCY

**Ambulance** (☎ 986-79-11)

**Fire Department** (☎ 981-27-69)

**Police** (☎ 060)

### INTERNET ACCESS

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

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

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

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

### LAUNDRY

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

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

### MEDIA

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

### MEDICAL SERVICES

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

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

### MONEY

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

### POST

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

### TELEPHONE

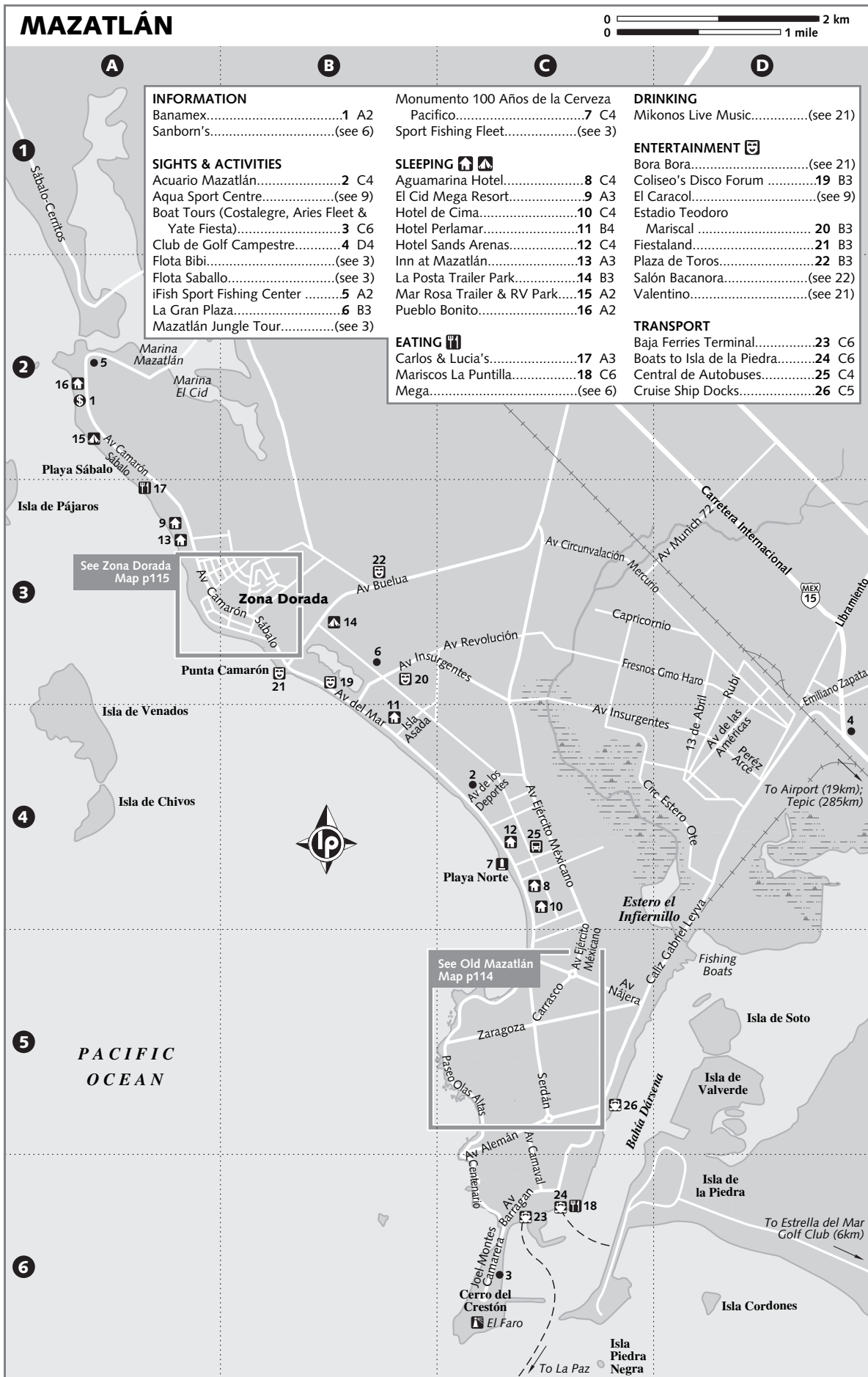
**Computel** (Map p114; Serdán 1516; 🕒 7am-9pm)

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

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

### TOURIST INFORMATION

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



INFORMATION		SLEEPING		DRINKING	
Banamex.....	1 A2	Aguamarina Hotel.....	8 C4	Mikonos Live Music.....	(see 21)
Sanborn's.....	(see 6)	El Cid Mega Resort.....	9 A3	<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b>	
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>		Hotel de Cima.....	10 C4	Bora Bora.....	(see 21)
Acuario Mazatlán.....	2 C4	Hotel Perlamar.....	11 B4	Coliseo's Disco Forum.....	19 B3
Aqua Sport Centre.....	(see 9)	Hotel Sands Arenas.....	12 C4	El Caracol.....	(see 9)
Boat Tours (Costalegre, Aries Fleet & Yate Fiesta).....	3 C6	Inn at Mazatlán.....	13 A3	Estadio Teodoro	
Club de Golf Campestre.....	4 D4	La Posta Trailer Park.....	14 B3	Mariscal.....	20 B3
Flota Bibi.....	(see 3)	Mar Rosa Trailer & RV Park.....	15 A2	Fiestaland.....	21 B3
Flota Saballo.....	(see 3)	Pueblo Bonito.....	16 A2	Plaza de Toros.....	22 B3
iFish Sport Fishing Center.....	5 A2	<b>EATING</b>		Salón Bacanora.....	(see 22)
La Gran Plaza.....	6 B3	Carlos & Lucia's.....	17 A3	Valentino.....	(see 21)
Mazatlán Jungle Tour.....	(see 3)	Mariscos La Puntilla.....	18 C6	<b>TRANSPORT</b>	
Monumento 100 Años de la Cerveza		Mega.....	(see 6)	Baja Ferries Terminal.....	23 C6
Pacífico.....	7 C4	<b>DRINKING</b>		Boats to Isla de la Piedra.....	24 C6
Sport Fishing Fleet.....	(see 3)	<b>SLEEPING</b>		Central de Autobuses.....	25 C4
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>		<b>EATING</b>		Cruise Ship Docks.....	26 C5
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>		<b>EATING</b>			

PACIFIC OCEAN

See Old Mazatlán Map p114

See Zona Dorada Map p115

To Airport (19km); Tepic (285km)

To Estrella del Mar Golf Club (6km)

To La Paz

## Sights

### OLD MAZATLÁN

Old Mazatlán is a forward-thinking place rooted firmly in the past. It's the cultural heart of the city with well-curated museums, contemporary galleries, colonial architecture and historic monuments. At its center is the soaring 19th-century **cathedral** (Map p114; cnr Juárez & 21 de Marzo) with its high, yellow twin towers and a dramatic interior. Built from 1875 to 1890, it faces the shady, peaceful **Plaza Principal**.

A short walk southwest will bring you to the tree-lined **Plazuela Machado** (Map p114; cnr Carnaval & Constitución). The plaza and surrounding streets are abuzz with art galleries, cafés and restaurants. Here is the heart of Mazatlán's cultural flowering and the continuing focus of the city's admirable restoration efforts. The center of attention is the **Teatro Ángela Peralta** (Map p114; ☎ 982-44-46; www.teatroangelaperalta.com in Spanish; Carnaval 47), half a block south of the plaza. The theater was built in 1860, and reopened in 1992 after a five-year restoration project. Cultural events of all kinds are presented here (see p122), and the opulent interior is open for viewing most days. It's surrounded by historic buildings and attractive sidewalk cafés, restaurants and bars.

At the southern end of the peninsula, a particularly prominent rocky outcrop provides the base for **El Faro** (Map p112), 135m above sea level and supposedly the second-highest lighthouse in the world (after the one in Gibraltar). You can climb up there for a spectacular view of the city and coast. The hill, called Cerro del Crestón, was once an island, but a causeway built in the 1930s now joins it to the mainland. Mazatlán's sportfishing fleet, the ferry to La Paz and some tourist boats (see p117) dock in the marina on the east side of the causeway.

### MUSEUMS

The **Museo Arqueológico** (Map p114; ☎ 981-14-55; Sixto Osuna 76; admission US\$2.50; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) is an interesting little archaeological museum with a small permanent collection of artifacts from around Sinaloa state, a selection of historical photos of Mazatlán, and changing thematic exhibitions. Some signs are in English. Opposite, the small **Museo de Arte** (Map p114; ☎ 985-35-02; cnr Sixto Osuna & Carranza; admission free; 🕒 10am-2pm &

4-7pm Tue-Sun) has permanent and changing exhibits by Mexican artists (all signs are in Spanish).

Also worth a peek is the **Machado Museo Casa** (Map p114; Constitución 79; adult/student US\$2/1; 🕒 9am-6pm), a beautifully restored 19th-century house filled with a collection of French and Austrian furniture, clothing and other antiques. Some exhibits have signs in English.

### BEACHES & ZONA DORADA

With over 16km of beaches, it's easy to find a stretch of sand to call your own in Mazatlán. The following beaches are listed in geographic order, from south to north.

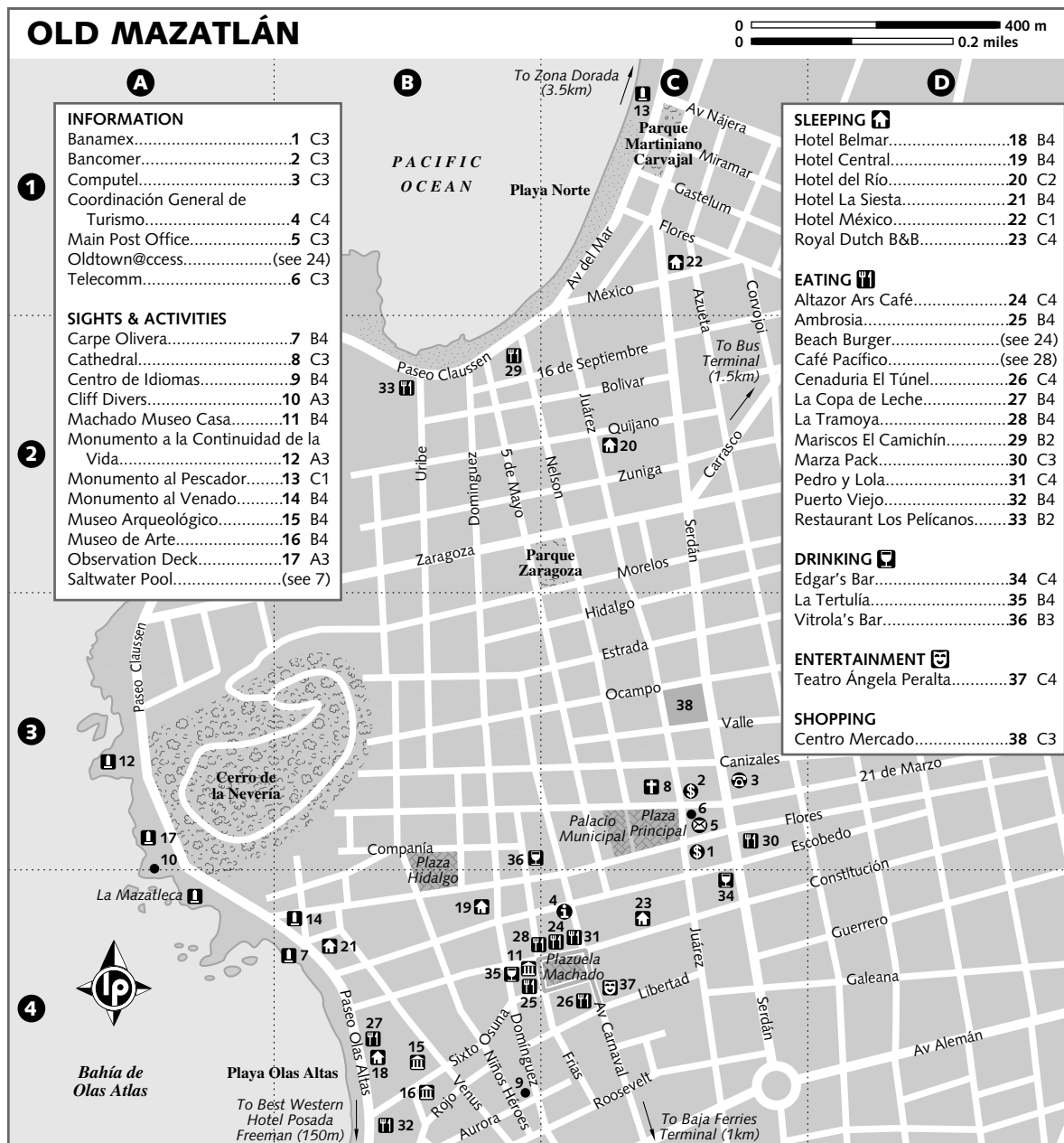
In Old Mazatlán, the crescent-shaped **Playa Olas Altas** (Map p114) is where tourism first flourished in the 1950s. The pebbly beach is not ideal for swimming but it's a grand place to watch the sun drop into the sea or soak up some regional history. Signs on the faded '50s hotels facing along the seafront road, Paseo Olas Altas, commemorate some of the area's first visitors, such as writer Jack Kerouac and photographers Tina Modotti (p39) and Edward Weston.

Flanked by a broad *malecón* (waterfront street) popular with joggers and strollers, the golden sands of **Playa Norte** (Map p112) begin just north of Old Mazatlán and arc toward **Punta Camarón** (Map p112), a rocky point dominated by the conspicuous castle-like Fiesta Land nightclub complex. The traffic circle here marks the southern end of the **Zona Dorada**, an unabashedly touristy precinct of hotels, restaurants, bars and souvenir shops.

The most luxurious hotels face the fine, uncrowded beaches of **Playa Las Gaviotas** (Map p115) and **Playa Sábalo** (Map p112), which extends north of the Zona Dorada. Sheltered by picturesque islands, here the waters are generally calm and ideal for swimming and water sports; on offer are sailing excursions, water-skiing, banana-boat rides and parasailing. To reach these beaches from downtown, just hop on a 'Sábalo-Centro' bus; these originate at the market on Juárez and travel along Av del Mar.

Further north, past the ever-evolving Marina Mazatlán, are the undeveloped, serene beaches of **Playa Brujas** (Witches' Beach) and **Playa Cerritos**. Both sport a few excellent seafood restaurants and are well

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loved by surfers. To get there by bus, catch a 'Cerritos Juárez' bus from the Fiestaland complex or from along Camarón Sábalo in the Zona Dorada.

**ISLANDS**

Those three photogenic land masses jutting from the sea are Mazatlán's signature islands. **Isla de Chivos** (Island of Goats; Map p112) is on the left, and **Isla de Pájaros** (Island of Birds; Map p112) is on the right. The most visited is the one in the middle, **Isla de Venados** (Deer Island; Map p112). Designated a natural reserve for the protection of native flora and fauna, its secluded beaches are wonderful for a day trip and its limpid waters ideal for snorkeling.

A five-hour excursion to Isla de Venados leaves from the marina at **El Cid Mega Resort** (Map p112; ☎ 913-33-33, ext 3341; www.elcid.com; Camarón Sábalo s/n; 🕒 9:30am Tue-Sat). The trip costs US\$42 per person, lasts five hours and includes a banana-boat ride, snorkel equipment, a bilingual guide, kayak access, lunch and drinks. Alternatively, from the beach at El Cid catch a ride to the island on an amphibious vehicle (per person US\$8; 🕒 10am, noon & 2pm).

**Isla de la Piedra**

Escape artists love Stone Island for its beautiful, long, sandy beach bordered by coconut groves, and anyone with an appetite sings the praises of the simple *palapa* restaurants. Surfers come for the waves, and on Sunday

afternoons and holidays the restaurants draw Mexican families for music and dancing, and an infectious party vibe takes over. At other times the beach is nearly empty. It is possible to camp here, too.

To get there, take a small boat from the Playa Sur embarcadero near the Baja Ferries terminal (US\$1 round-trip; ☎ every 10min 7am-6pm). You'll be dropped off at a jetty a short walk from the Isla de la Piedra beach. 'Playa Sur' buses leave for the boat dock from the north side of the Plaza Principal.

**Activities**

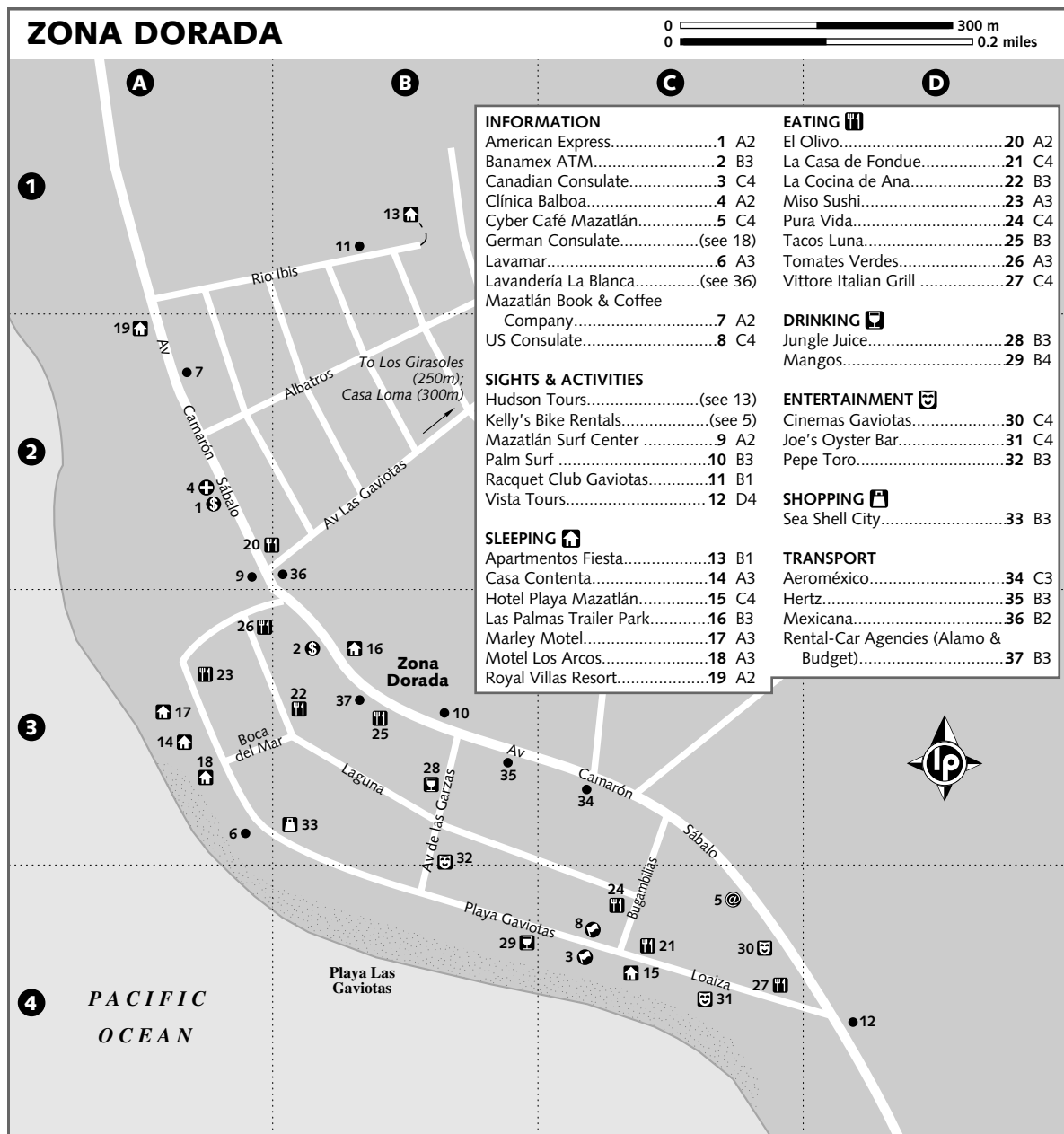
**SURFING**

With a season lasting from late March through November, Mazatlán sports several

noteworthy surfing sites and a couple of great surf shops to boot. The most famous waves include two that break near downtown. Off **Punta Camarón** is a dependable right-hander, and north of the old fort is a famous lefty known as the **Cannon**. Off **Isla de la Piedra** (Map p112) you'll find a beach break with perfect peaks, but unless there's a decent swell you're better off grabbing a beer and watching from the beach. Rolling in at **Playa Brujas** each morning is a big left that you can set your watch to.

The longest-established surf shop in town is **Mazatlán Surf Center** (Map p115; ☎ 913-18-21; www.mazatlansurfcenter.com; Camarón Sábalo 500-4; board rentals per day/week US\$20/70, lessons US\$35; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, 1-9pm Sun), known for its

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popular surfing lessons and expert advice. **Palm Surf** (Map p115; ☎ 914-06-87; www.palmsurfshop.com.mx; Camarón Sábalo 333; board rentals per day US\$25, lessons US\$35; 🕒 9:30am-8pm Mon-Sat) is also a contender, with plenty of boards for rent and surf excursions to far-flung spots like Patolé, Celestinos and Mármol.

### OTHER WATER SPORTS

The **Aqua Sport Center** (Map p112; ☎ 913-04-51; El Cid Mega Resort) is the place to go for water sports, including scuba diving (US\$60 for a one-tank dive); snorkeling rentals (US\$8 per day); jet-skiing (US\$54 per half hour); parasailing (US\$30); and kayak rentals (US\$15 to US\$25 per hour). Water-sports equipment can also be hired on the beaches in front of most of the other large beachfront hotels.

### HORSEBACK RIDING

If you love to canter on the beach, or dream of doing so, your best bet is with **Ginger's Bi-Lingual Horses** (Map p112; ☎ 988-12-54; Playa Brujas; per hr US\$25; 🕒 10am-4pm Mon-Sat). Unlike at some other Mexican stables, here the horses are healthy, happy and eager to stretch their legs on the trails leading through coconut plantations on to the open beach. Longer rides into the hills are possible. Take a 'Cerritos Juárez' bus from Zona Dorada, or a taxi to Playa Brujas.

Short rides can also be arranged on Isla de la Piedra at Restaurant Puesta de Sol (US\$5), but the horses here are lackluster compared to Ginger's pampered mounts.

### SPORTFISHING

With an excellent location at the confluence of the Sea of Cortez and the Pacific Ocean, Mazatlán is world famous for its sportfishing – especially for marlin, swordfish, sailfish, tuna and *dorado* (dolphinfish). It can be an expensive activity (US\$400 to US\$450 for a day in an 11m cruiser with four people fishing), though small-game fishing from a 7m *super panga* boat is less expensive (US\$200 to US\$240 with up to six people fishing). All operators should offer tag-and-release options. For the winter high season, make fishing reservations far in advance.

Boats leave from the El Cid Resort marina and from Marina Mazatlán, but the best prices are offered by the operators based on the peninsula on Calz Camarena.

**Aries Fleet** (Map p112; ☎ 916-34-68; www.elcid.com; El Cid Marina)

**Flota Bibi** (Map p112; ☎ 981-36-40; www.bibifleet.com; Calz Camarena s/n)

**Flota Saballo** (Map p112; ☎ 981-27-61; Calz Camarena s/n)

**Flota Neptuno** (Map p112; ☎ 982-45-65; Calz Camarena s/n)

**Star Fleet** (Map p112; ☎ 982-26-65; www.starfleet.com.mx; Calz Camarena s/n)

Freshwater large-mouth bass fishing is also caching on, particularly at scenic Lake El Salto, one hour north of town. **iFish Sport Fishing Center** (Map p112; ☎ 913-16-21; www.ifishmexico.com; Camarón Sábalo 1504) runs day trips (per person US\$278) and houses fisher folk in a comfortable lodge (three nights all-inclusive per person costs US\$1074). Prices include transport, equipment and all meals.

### GOLF & TENNIS

There's golf at the **Club de Golf Campestre** (Map p112; ☎ 980-15-70; www.estrelladelmar.com; Hwy 15; green fees 9/18 holes US\$18/25), east of town; the **Estrella del Mar Golf Club** (Map p112; ☎ 982-33-00; Isla de la Piedra; green fees US\$110), south of the airport by the coast; and **El Cid Mega Resort** (Map p112; ☎ 913-33-33; Camarón Sábalo s/n; 9/18 holes US\$60/75), north of the Zona Dorada.

Play tennis at the **Racquet Club Gaviotas** (Map p115; ☎ 913-59-39; cnr Río Ibis & Bravo; per hr US\$12) in the Zona Dorada, at El Cid resort and at most of the large hotels north of the center.

### Courses

**Centro de Idiomas** (Map p114; ☎ 985-56-06; Aurora 203; www.spanishlink.org; 2/4hr classes per week US\$142/170) offers Spanish courses from Monday to Friday with a maximum of six students per class. The curriculum is best suited to beginning or intermediate students. You can begin any Monday and study for as many weeks as you like; registration is every Saturday morning from 9am to noon. Discounts are given on the fourth week. The school also facilitates volunteer work within the community. Homestays (shared/private room US\$155/US\$170 per week) can be arranged with a Mexican family and include three meals a day.

### Mazatlán for Children

Kids love this town, if only for the many opportunities to get wet. One of the most



economical and enjoyable places to accomplish this is at the delightful, all-natural **saltwater pool** (Map p114) below the Carpe Olivera statue on Paseo Olas Altas. Here kids and adults splash around as waves crash over the pool's seaward edge. There are bathrooms and changing rooms (US\$0.30).

Splashing around is also the featured activity at **MazAgua** (Map p112; ☎ 988-00-41; Entronque Habal-Cerritos s/n; admission US\$8.50; 🕒 10am-6pm Mar-Dec), where kids can go hog wild with water toboggans, a wave pool and other amusements. The 'Cerritos-Juárez' bus takes you there from anywhere along the coastal road.

**Acuario Mazatlán** (Map p112; ☎ 981-78-15; www.acuariomazatlan.gob.mx; Av de los Deportes 111; adult/child US\$5/3; 🕒 9:30am-6pm), a block inland from Playa Norte, has 52 tanks with 250 species of freshwater and saltwater fish and other creatures. Sea-lion, diving and bird shows are presented four times daily.

## Quirky Mazatlán

Puerto Vallarta has its high-art sculptures, and Manzanillo its epic Swordfish Memorial. But Mazatlán's audacious collection of kitsch statuary is in a category of its own.

At the waterfront on the western edge of the historic center you'll find several of the town's seafront monuments. At the north end of Playa Olas Altas is **Carpe Olivera** (Map p114), a statue of a buxom mermaid in pike position, drawing passersby irresistibly down the stairs to the rocks below and a saltwater dipping pool (see opposite). Nearby is the small **Monumento al Venado** (Monument to the Deer; Map p114) – a tribute to the city's Nahuatl name – depicting a rather forlorn-looking deer on a pedestal in the middle of the street. Further north is the kitsch masterpiece **Monumento a la Continuidad de la Vida** (Monument to the Continuity of Life; Map p114), featuring a nude, gesticulating couple with big hair and nine leaping, rusty dolphins.

From a nearby platform **cliff divers** (*clavadistas*; Map p114) cast their bodies into the ocean swells below for your enjoyment. Tip accordingly. They usually perform around lunchtime and in the late afternoon, but they won't risk their necks until a crowd has been assembled. Also here is an unnamed **observation deck** (Map p114) perched atop a stony precipice. You won't want your

kids going anywhere near it. It takes considerable nerve to scale the arching brick stairway – there's no rail and a long drop to open sea on either side – but it's even more unsettling going back down.

Overlooking the southern end of Playa Norte is the **Monumento al Pescador** (Monument to the Fisherman; Map p114). This bully pigeon perch, commissioned in 1958, depicts a nude fisherman with Tin Tin hair and enormous feet. You can tell he's a fisherman, as he's clutching a net (although it looks more like a beach towel). To his side is a tawdry muse splayed on a swoosh, looking more like Miss September than a fisherman's friend.

Elsewhere are statues of a dapper chap on a motorcycle, a mermaid getting directions from a cherub, a leaky copper beer tank commemorating the first century of Pacifico beer, and a memorial to local songbird Lola Beltrán. Take a walk – you can't miss 'em.

## Tours

### BICYCLE TOURS

**Kelly's Bike Rentals** (Map p115; ☎ 914-11-87; www.kellys-bikes.com; Camarón Sábalo 204; tours US\$28, mountain bike rental per day US\$15; 🕒 10am-2pm & 4:30-8pm Mon-Sat) leads wild and woolly four- to six-hour mountain-bike tours into the hills, over dirt roads and challenging single-track trails. They also offers custom trips on some of Sinaloa's most scenic paved routes.

### BOAT TOURS

In addition to trips to **Isla de Venados** (see Islands, p114), several boats do 2½-hour sightseeing tours, mostly leaving from the docks off Calz Camarena, near El Faro, at 11am (US\$15 including hotel transfers). Two-hour sunset cruises, sometimes called 'booze cruises,' include hors d'oeuvres and the requisite booze (US\$15 to US\$25, depending on your thirst). To find out what's going on, look for flyers around town, talk to a tour agent or call the operators of boats such as **Costalegre** (Map p112; ☎ 982-31-30; Calz Camarena s/n) and **Yate Fiesta** (Map p112; ☎ 981-71-54; Calz Camarena s/n).

### LAND TOURS

Several companies offer a variety of tours in and around Mazatlán. Prices are about the same from company to company for the same tours: US\$20 for a three-hour city

tour, US\$38 to US\$48 for a colonial tour to the foothill towns of Concordia and Copala, and US\$35 for a tequila factory tour that includes the village of La Noria. If you make reservations, either by calling or having a travel agent book for you ahead of time, they will pick you up from your hotel. Paying in pesos yields a better deal. Recommended agencies:

**Hudson Tours** (Map p115; ☎ 913-17-64; [www.hudson-tours.com](http://www.hudson-tours.com); Río Ibis 502, Apartamentos Fiesta) Smaller, more personalized tours that include shopping and spearfishing.

**Marlin Tours** (Map p112; ☎ 913-53-01; [www.toursin-mazatlan.com](http://www.toursin-mazatlan.com); Camarón Sábalo 1504) Friendly and long-standing, with tours to Copala, Concordia and Rosario.

**Vista Tours** (Map p115; ☎ 986-83-83; [www.vistatours.com.mx](http://www.vistatours.com.mx); Camarón Sábalo 51) Bigger range to choose from, including Cosalá and the San Ignacio Missions.

**Mazatlán Jungle Tour** (Map p112; ☎ 914-14-44; Calz Camarena s/n) Offers a jungle tour by boat into the mangrove swamps of Isla de la Piedra (US\$45).

## Festivals & Events

Mazatlán has one of Mexico's most flamboyant **Carnaval** celebrations. For the week leading up to Ash Wednesday (the Wednesday 40 days before Easter), the town goes on a nonstop partying spree. People from around Mexico (and beyond) pour in for music, dancing and general revelry. Be sure to reserve a hotel room in advance. The party ends abruptly on the morning of **Ash Wednesday**, when Roman Catholics go to church to receive ash marks on their foreheads for the first day of Lent.

A **torneo de pesca** (fishing tournament) for sailfish, marlin and *dorado* is held in mid-May and mid-November. Golf tournaments and various cultural festivals are held throughout the year; the tourist office has details.

The **Sinaloa Fiesta de los Artes**, featuring local talent and troupes traveling from afar, is staged at the Teatro Angela Peralta and other local venues from late October through mid-November.

On December 12 the day of the **Virgen de Guadalupe** is celebrated at the cathedral. Children come in colorful costumes.

## Sleeping

Visitors have a choice of a luxury package-tour resort, old-style Mexican ambience, or the very basic beach-bum option. The most luxurious hotels front the beaches

north of the Zona Dorada, where the mid-range hotels rule. Most budget options are south of the Zona Dorada and in the center overlooking Playa Olas Altas. The following prices are for high season; lower rates may be available from May through October, or for longer stays. At peak periods, however, prices can rise by as much as 40%.

During nonholiday periods, there are some good deals among the more expensive places along Playa Norte and the Zona Dorada.

## BUDGET

**Hotel Central** (Map p114; ☎ 982-18-66; Domínguez 2; s/d US\$20/23; 📶) Making up in creature comforts what it lacks in architectural charm, the Hotel Central is a well-kept, well-run place in the heart of Old Mazatlán. Enthusiastically air-conditioned, it's popular with Mexican business travelers.

**Hotel Perlamar** (Map p112; ☎ 985-33-66; cnr Av del Mar & Isla Asada; r US\$18-20, with air-con & TV US\$25; 📶) Off the main drag near Playa Norte, this little lemon-yellow hotel is cheaply built and cheaply priced. Rooms are perfectly respectable, tidy and clean, albeit crowded.

**Hotel del Río** (Map p114; ☎ 982-44-30; Juárez 2410; d/q US\$25/50; 📶) This tidy hotel close to the beach in a working-class neighborhood is a long-time traveler favorite. Limited English is spoken and cable TV is available for US\$2 more per day.

**Hotel México** (Map p114; ☎ 981-38-06; México 201; s/d US\$10/15) With colorful tiled floors, dusty curtains and rustic bathrooms, this family-run cheapie still has some colonial charm. Just a block from the beach, it's a good deal.

**Hotel Belmar** (Map p114; ☎ 985-11-12/13; Paseo Olas Altas 166 Sur; r interior/sea view US\$26/33; 📶) Some people love the retro appeal of this totally faded 1960s classic, with its labyrinthine hallways and striking ocean views from private balconies, but others can't look past the rough edges. The pool is permanently murky and other maintenance has clearly been deferred.

Restaurants that may have *very* basic rooms for rent (US\$6 to US\$12 per night) include Casa Zen, Elvira, Florencio's and Doña Chavela. Tent camping is possible under the *palapas* on Isla de Piedra; English-speaking Victor or Chris at Victor's *palapa* restaurant can advise about security. You'll find it front and center on the beach.

The trailer parks are near the beaches toward the north end of the town, though most of them are not especially attractive for tent camping. The following places offer weekly and monthly discounts.

**Mar Rosa Trailer & RV Park** (Map p112; ☎ 913-61-87; [mar\\_rosa@mzt.megared.net.mx](mailto:mar_rosa@mzt.megared.net.mx); Camarón Sábalo 702; tent/trailer US\$15/30) Lacks sufficient shade but the location is hard to beat.

**La Posta Trailer Park** (Map p112; ☎ 983-53-10; Buelna 7; sites US\$18; 📶 🚰 🚿) This place offers more services (broadband Internet, coin-op laundry and a covered party area) than comfort.

**Las Palmas Trailer Park** (Map p115; ☎ 913-53-11; Camarón Sábalo 333; sites US\$16) Tucked between a couple of high-rises, Las Palmas is semishaded.

### MIDRANGE

Not every room in a midrange hotel has air-con, so be sure to ask for it if you want it. The rooms and apartments in this price bracket are a great deal for families.

**Best Western Hotel Posada Freeman** (Map p114; ☎ 985-60-60, in the US 866-638-8806; <http://book.bestwestern.com/bestwestern>; Paseo Olas Altas 79; r US\$75-95, ste US\$120; 📶 🚰 🚿 🛏 🚰) Towering over Old Mazatlán's waterfront, this recently reborn hotel (originally built in 1949) offers character, comfort and grand ocean views. A free daily breakfast buffet, the 'Sky Room' bar and a winning rooftop pool make it an exceptional value. Add tax to rates.

**Apartamentos Fiesta** (Map p115; [www.mazatlanapartments.com](http://www.mazatlanapartments.com); Río Ibis 502; studio/1-/2-bedroom US\$32/46/60; 📶 🚰 🚿) This place has 12 apartments, all different in size and layout. All have kitchens and pleasing decor and are

### AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Royal Dutch B&B** (Map p114; ☎ 981-43-96; [www.royaldutchcasadesantamaria.com](http://www.royaldutchcasadesantamaria.com); Constitución 627; d with/without breakfast US\$75/45; 📶) Near Plazuela Machado, this cozy inn is a true treasure in a world of impersonal hotels. Inhabited by the same family for four generations, the 18th-century house retains many original windows and ceilings. Choose from three lovingly and tastefully decorated rooms offered by Alicia and Wim, a welcoming Mexican-Dutch couple. Prices include a sumptuous full European breakfast and 5pm tea time.

peacefully located in or near the leafy garden area. English is spoken.

**Motel Los Arcos** (Map p115; ☎ 913-50-66; [www.motellosarcos.com](http://www.motellosarcos.com); Playa Gaviotas 214; s/d US\$85/95, ste US\$105-120; 📶 🚰 🚿) This attractive hotel features good-value suites with kitchenettes and commanding sea views. They're very comfortable, spacious and clean, and the beach is right there.

**Los Girasoles** (Map p115; ☎ 913-52-88; fax 913-06-86; Gaviotas 709; apt US\$60-69; 📶 🚰) In a pleasant residential area, these comfortable, spacious and sparkling-clean apartments share a well-tended pool and are worth the somewhat inconvenient location.

**Marley Motel** (Map p115; ☎ 913-55-33; [motmarley@mzt.megared.net.mx](mailto:motmarley@mzt.megared.net.mx); Playa Gaviotas 226; 1/2 beds US\$75/93; 📶 🚰 🚿) This small motel offers pleasant seafront apartments with well-equipped kitchens and – best of all – privileged beach access.

**Hotel La Siesta** (Map p114; ☎ 981-26-40, 800-711-52-29; [www.lasiesta.com.mx](http://www.lasiesta.com.mx) in Spanish; Paseo Olas Altas 11 Sur; r US\$35, with view US\$47; 📶 🚰) La Siesta has a lush courtyard of overgrown plants and creaking stairways covered by worn Astro-Turf. All 51 spacious and tidy rooms have cable TV and a touch of character. Sunset on a private balcony facing the sea is worth the extra bucks.

**Hotel Sands Arenas** (Map p112; ☎ 982-00-00; [www.sandsarenas.com](http://www.sandsarenas.com) in Spanish; Av del Mar 1910; d/tr US\$75/82; 📶 🚰 🚿) If your kids are impressed by swimming pools with a spiraling water slide, they may find happiness here. Rooms are spotless, modern and large and come with satellite TV and refrigerator. Best of all, the beds are firm.

**Hotel de Cima** (Map p112; ☎ 985-74-00, 800-696-06-00; Av del Mar 48; r from US\$34; 📶 🚰 🚿) The paint is peeling in most of the rooms at this wannabe fancy hotel. It's clean and has a tunnel to the beach, but it's only a tiny step up from the budget options. Don't pay a peso more than the semipermanent promotional rate.

**Aguamarina Hotel** (Map p112; ☎ 981-70-80; [www.aguamarina.com](http://www.aguamarina.com); Av del Mar 110; r/ste US\$94/128; 📶 🚰 🚿) This hotel satisfies most picky tourists with very clean, spacious abodes. The rooms aren't fancy but the service is top notch and the pool provides a nice place to sunbathe (in spite of the fact that it fronts busy Av del Mar). Prices drop precipitously during low season.

**TOP END**

Rooms at Mazatlán's top-end hotels can be reserved quite economically as part of a holiday package – see your travel agent or poke around online.

**Hotel Playa Mazatlán** (Map p115; ☎ 989-05-55; [www.playamazatlan.com.mx](http://www.playamazatlan.com.mx); Playa Gaviotas 202; garden view US\$95, ocean view US\$106-120, ste US\$136-196; 🍷 🍷) Run with crisp efficiency, this establishment's 425 well-appointed rooms are popular with organizers of packaged vacations. It's generic but serviceable, and the pools, common areas and sea views are terrific.

**Royal Villas Resort** (Map p115; ☎ 916-61-61, 800-696-70-00; [www.royalvillas.com.mx](http://www.royalvillas.com.mx); Camarón Sábalo 500; ste US\$95-\$450; 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷) The Royal Villas pyramid is better looking on the inside with fabulous rooms that sleep at least four. They all have kitchens and dining rooms, balconies and comfortable set-up. The large terraced sea-view balconies are simply stunning.

**Hotel Faro Mazatlán** (Map p112; ☎ 913-11-11; Punta de Sábalo s/n; r US\$110-195, ste US\$220; 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷) All gussied up following a recent renovation, this appealing luxury hotel at Marina Mazatlán offers peace and tranquility on a dramatic clifftop setting. There's protected swimming in the cove below, two tennis courts, a gym and a heated pool. The rooms are pleasantly bright and welcoming, with full bathrooms and firm mattresses. An all-inclusive plan is available starting at US\$95 per person.

**Pueblo Bonito** (Map p112; ☎ 914-37-00; [www.pueblobonito.com](http://www.pueblobonito.com); Camarón Sábalo 2121; ste US\$135-265; 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷) Overlooking a nearly private stretch of sandy beach, this upscale hotel has an elegant colonial facade, a fantastic pool and all the facilities you'd expect at the top end. Add tax to rates.

**Inn at Mazatlán** (Map p112; ☎ 913-55-00; [www.innatmaz.com](http://www.innatmaz.com); Camarón Sábalo 6291; r US\$105-125, ste US\$150-240, penthouse US\$700; 🍷 🍷 🍷) The 208 bright, cheerful rooms and suites – all with ocean views, private balconies or terraces and decked out with amenities – are agreeable for longer stays. The pricey three-bedroom, eight-person penthouse makes for royal digs if you're traveling with a group. It's right on the beach. Add tax to rates.

**Casa Contenta** (Map p115; ☎ 913-49-76; [www.casacontenta.com.mx](http://www.casacontenta.com.mx); Playa Gaviotas 224; apt/house US\$94/222; 🍷 🍷) Casa Contenta has just a few

intimate apartments, some with partial ocean views. There's a tiny pool and the intimate grounds are nicely tended. An oceanfront six- to eight-person house is also available.

**El Cid Mega Resort** (Map p112; ☎ 913-33-33; [www.elcid.com.mx](http://www.elcid.com.mx); Camarón Sábalo s/n; r US\$160, ste US\$200-530; 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷) Decked out in 1980s-style luxury, this 1068-room, 2.9 sq km minicity has it all – seven pools, several dive shops, restaurants, travel agencies, kids' areas, gyms and more. If you want to get away from it all and keep your vacation easy but entertaining, this is the place. It's best to reserve ahead of time to get the best deal – discounts are abundant.

**Eating**

With all those fishing and shrimping boats heading out to sea every morning, it's no wonder that Mazatlán is famous for fresh seafood. If you love shrimp, you'll be in heaven, but also try *pescado zarandeado*, a delicious charcoal-broiled fish stuffed with onion, tomatoes, peppers and spices. A whole kilo, feeding two people well, usually costs around US\$10.

The restaurants in the Zona Dorada cater mainly to the tourist trade. For something better, head to the heart of Old Mazatlán and Plazuela Machado, a delightful space with old Mexican tropical ambience. It's sublime in the evening when music plays, kids frolic, the plaza is softly lit and cool drinks, snacks and meals at outdoor tables help create a very romantic atmosphere.

The most centrally located supermarket is **Marza Pack** (Map p114; Serdán & Flores), but for serious larder replenishment head to the **Mega** (Map p112; La Gran Plaza) superstore.

**OLD MAZATLÁN & AROUND****Budget**

**Beach Burger** (Map p114; ☎ 981-43-56; Constitución 513; burgers US\$2-4; 🍷 noon-midnight) This southern California-style burger joint is not really on the beach, but on a beautiful night at one of the sidewalk tables you shan't care a whit. The big burgers really stick to the ribs (and they've got those too).

**Cenaduria El Túnel** (Map p114; Carnaval 1207; mains US\$2-5; 🍷 noon-midnight) This atmospheric cheapie has been serving local favorites such as *pozole* (a hearty soup) and smoked marlin enchiladas in a long, narrow dining room for over 50 years.

**AUTHOR'S CHOICE**

**Ambrosia** (Map p114; ☎ 985-03-33; Sixto Osuna 26; mains US\$4-8; 🕒 11am-11pm; 🍴) Never want to see another cheese enchilada? Can't remember what you ever saw in that shrimp? This simple vegetarian mecca has one of the largest and most creative menus in town. Choose from many inventive dishes made with wheat gluten or tofu, or treat yourself to something really special, like *nopales rellenos* (cactus stuffed with goat's cheese and covered with a pumpkin sauce). Delicious, crunchy salads, a good wine selection and superb coffee round out the diverse menu. The lunch special (US\$7, available from noon to 4pm Monday to Friday) promises a big, nutritious meal at a bargain.

**Midrange**

**Altazor Ars Café** (Map p114; ☎ 981-55-59; Constitución 519; mains US\$6-8) This popular, romantically lit cultural spot has great light fare all day: bagels, pancakes and marlin ranchero (cooked with tomatoes, chilies and onion) for breakfast, baguette sandwiches and salads for lunch, and generous seafood cocktails and pasta dishes for dinner. There's live music nightly and movies are screened on Wednesday night.

**Pedro y Lola** (Map p114; ☎ 982-25-89; Carnaval 1303; mains US\$7-12; 🕒 10am-2am) Named after beloved Mexican singers Pedro Infante and Lola Beltrán, this popular sidewalk restaurant-bar serves seafood, burgers and toned-down Mexican favorites. It's good for big groups or romantic couples. Beware: menu prices do not include tax.

**Café Pacífico** (Map p114; ☎ 981-39-72; Constitución 501; mains US\$4-9; 🕒 10am-2am; 🍴) A bar, café or restaurant, depending on your needs, the Pacífico has been a mainstay on Plazuela Machado for years, thanks to its solid food, stiff drinks and friendly service.

**La Tramoya** (Map p114; ☎ 985-50-33; Constitución 509; mains US\$6-15; 🕒 11am-2am) Here hearty Mexican meat dishes are set out on spacious sidewalk tables. Feeling adventurous? Try the *carne azteca*, a steak stuffed with *huitlacoche* (corn truffle, a fungus that grows on maize) served on a bed of nopales cactus.

Around the seafront, along Paseo Claussen and Paseo Olas Altas, assorted restaurant-

bars specialize in seafood and cold drinks. Most have outdoor tables or open-sided seating areas.

**La Copa de Leche** (Map p114; ☎ 982-57-53; Paseo Olas Altas 122; mains US\$6-16) Harking back to a bygone Mazatlán, this old-timer on the waterfront is prized by the local gentry for its authentic menu, which is considerably more interesting than the restaurant's name ('the Cup of Milk') suggests. You'd do well to try the hearty *sopa de mariscos* (soup with squid, shrimp, fish and a wedge of lime).

**Mariscos El Camichín** (Map p114; ☎ 985-01-97; Paseo Claussen 97; mains US\$6-12; 🕒 11am-10pm) Facing Playa Norte, this popular patio restaurant serves delicious seafood and *pescado zarandeado* under a cool *palapa* roof. Suave elderly mariachis are known to play in the back room.

**Restaurant Los Pelicanos** (Map p114; ☎ 982-43-45; cnr Paseo Claussen & Uribe; mains US\$4-7; 🕒 10am-6pm) Basic, fresh and cheap, this small open-air thatched-roof place makes some of the tastiest sevice in Mazatlán. Sea views and breezes make it a grand spot for a sunset beverage.

**Puerto Viejo** (Map p114; ☎ 982-18-86; Paseo Olas Altas 25; mains US\$3-7; 🕒 11am-11pm Sun-Thu, 11am-1am Fri & Sat) This super casual, inexpensive seafood restaurant and watering hole is popular with locals and expats, especially at sunset and in the evening, when the sea breeze comes through the open sides.

**Mariscos La Puntilla** (Map p112; ☎ 982-88-77; Flota Playa Sur s/n; mains US\$6-13; 🕒 8am-7pm) Popular with Mexican families for the weekend breakfast buffet (US\$8 to US\$13), this open-air eatery has a relaxed atmosphere and fantastic *pescado zarandeado*. It's near the Isla de la Piedra ferries, on a small point with a view across the water.

**ZONA DORADA & AROUND****Budget**

**Tomates Verdes** (Map p115; ☎ 913-21-36; Laguna 42; mains US\$3-5 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) This cozy and unpretentious lunch spot serves flavorful soups such as *nopales con chipotle* (spicy cactus). Also try *pechuga rellena* (stuffed chicken breast).

**La Cocina de Ana** (Map p115; ☎ 916-31-19; Laguna 49; mains US\$3-7; 🕒 noon-4pm Mon-Sat) Ana offers buffet lunch fare such as meatball soup, chili con carne and paella in a small and homey dining area. It's a good antidote to all that fancy tourist junk food.

**Pura Vida** (Map p115; ☎ 916-58-15; cnr Bugambilias & Laguna; fresh juice US\$2-3, snacks US\$3-6; 🕒 8am-10:30pm) This healthy mecca squeezes out fresh juices and serves vegetarian fare ranging from buckwheat pancakes and veggie omelets to whole-wheat pizzas and garden burgers. Equipped souls can log on via the wireless network.

**Tacos Luna** (Map p115; Camarón Sábalo 400 block; tacos US\$1; 🕒 noon-midnight) This oversized taco stand is the place to chow down local-style.

### Midrange

**La Casa de Fondue** (Map p115; ☎ 913-29-59; Playa Gaviotas 63; mains US\$8-12; 🕒 1pm-midnight) If you've been hankering to dip raw meat into hot oil – admit it – this recent arrival makes it possible. In addition to classic dishes such as Roquefort and chocolate fondue, they also serve a Mexican variation made from cheese, tequila and cilantro.

**Carlos & Lucia's** (Map p112; ☎ 913-56-77; Camarón Sábalo s/n; mains US\$8-18; 🕒 8am-11pm Tue-Sun) For something different, try this cheerful Cuban-flavored joint with exemplary *mojitos* and toothsome dishes like *picadillo*, a spaghetti dish with island seasoning, raisins and plenty of garlic.

**Miso Sushi** (Map p115; ☎ 913-02-99; Las Gaviotas 17; sushi rolls US\$3-10; 🕒 1-11pm) Mazatlán has several sushi restaurants, but none as cosmopolitan as this trendy newcomer. It's recommended for its stylish urban decor, good music and superfresh, well-presented fare.

**El Olivo** (Map p115; ☎ 916-30-23; Las Gaviotas 205; mains US\$ 2-10; 🍷) This upscale café and deli serves gourmet sandwiches, strong coffee, crêpes, incredible salads, omelets and plenty of vegetarian options.

### Top End

**Casa Loma** (Map p115; ☎ 913-53-98; Las Gaviotas 104; mains US\$8-17; 🕒 1:30-10:30pm; 🍷) Its devoted clientele ranks this secluded restaurant as one of the very best in Mazatlán. Escape the tourist scene and enjoy a sophisticated and high-quality meal in a homey atmosphere.

**Vittore Italian Grill** (Map p115; ☎ 986-24-24; Playa Gaviotas 100; mains US\$8-22; 🕒 noon-midnight) This popular spot is a fine choice for an elegant night out. The service is rather formal and the menu heavy on delicious calorie-rich pasta dishes.

## Drinking

**Edgar's Bar** (Map p114; ☎ 982-72-18; cnr Serdán & Escobedo; 🕒 9am-midnight) For a taste of Old Mazatlán, grab a pint or two at this crusty old bar, a mainstay since 1949. The fan in the corner seems better suited to an airplane hangar, but it really does the trick on a hot day. The bar is adorned with original photographs, has a jukebox, and, according to the sign on the door, welcomes women.

**La Tertulia** (Map p114; ☎ 983-16-44; Constitución 1406; 🕒 closed Sun) This hip and lively spot is decorated exclusively with bullfighting posters and the stuffed heads of vanquished *toros* (bulls).

The following watering holes are ideal for heavy partying and youthful exploits:

**Chief Geronimo's** (Map p112; ☎ 984-24-77; Av del Mar s/n) Popular with college students for its generous drink specials (and shrimp served by the kilo).

**Mangos** (Map p115; ☎ 916-00-44; Playa Gaviotas 404) Dancing and drinking in a tropical-themed atmosphere. Gets wild on weekends.

**Jungle Juice** (Map p115; ☎ 913-33-15; Av de las Garzas 101) A cantina-style place with exotic fruit drinks and a breezy nook upstairs.

## Entertainment

Mazatlán has more to offer than fun in the sun. Choose from a range of nightspots, from pulsing discos to thriving gay venues, or take in some culture at the restored Ángela Peralta theater. For a real Mazatlán experience, head to the beach at Isla de la Piedra on Sunday afternoon for live music and dancing at one or more of the *palapa* restaurants, where you'll engage in some hard drinking and hot dancing with a local crowd.

Entertainment listings can be found in the tourist papers *Pacific Pearl* or *Viejo Mazatlán*, available in hotel lobbies around town.

## THEATER

**Teatro Ángela Peralta** (Map p114; ☎ 982-44-46; www.teatroangelaperalta.com in Spanish; Carnaval 47) A night at the Peralta is a must if you want to feel the pulse of Mazatlán's burgeoning culture scene. The lovingly restored 19th-century theater, saved from dereliction and reopened in 1992, has an intimate auditorium with three narrow, stacked balconies. Events of all kinds – movies, concerts, opera, theater and more – are presented. A kiosk on the walkway out front announces current and upcoming events here and at

other venues around town. The schedule is most interesting during the annual Sinaloa Fiesta de los Artes (p118).

### NIGHTCLUBS

**Fiestaland** (Map p115; ☎ 984-16-66; Av del Mar s/n) That ostentatious white castle on Punta Camarón, at the southern end of the Zona Dorada, is home to two of Mazatlán's most popular nightspots. The scene starts percolating around 9pm, boiling over after midnight. Valentino (cover US\$6 to US\$8) draws well-dressed Mexican and foreign tourists to three throbbing dance floors. If the DJ offends, you can escape to Bora Bora (cover US\$6), popular for its sand volleyball court, swimming pool, beachside dance floor and lax policy on bar-top dancing.

**Joe's Oyster Bar** (Map p115; ☎ 983-53-33; Loaiza 100; cover US\$5) Just 500m north of Fiestaland, behind Hotel Los Sábalo, this popular spot is fine for a quiet drink until early evening, but it goes ballistic after 11pm when it's packed with college kids dancing on tables, chairs and each other.

**El Caracol** (Map p112; ☎ 913-33-33; in El Cid Mega Resort, Camarón Sábalo s/n; ☒ closed Mon; ☒) This after-hours favorite attracts a smartly dressed crowd for techno, hip hop, salsa and *cumbia* (Colombian folk music). On select Saturday nights, they stage a messy event called a 'foam party.'

### LIVE MUSIC

If you get a chance, try to hear a rousing traditional *banda sinaloense* – a boisterous

brass band unique to the state of Sinaloa and especially associated with Mazatlán. Watch for announcements posted around town or broadcast from slow-moving cars with speakers mounted on top. Venues to try:

**Coliseo's Disco Forum** (Map p112; Av del Mar 406; admission US\$6-12; ☒) Big shows at least once a month.

**Mikono's Live Music** (Map p112; ☎ 984-16-66; Fiestaland, Av del Mar s/n; admission US\$6-12; ☒)

### SPORTS

#### Bullfights & Rodeos

**Plaza de Toros** (Map p112; Buelna) Just inland from the Zona Dorada traffic circle, the bullring hosts *corridos de toros* on Sundays at 4pm from mid-December to Easter; the 'Sábalo-Cocos' bus will drop you there. Tickets for bullfights are available from travel agencies, major hotels, the Bora Bora shop beside Valentino disco (in Fiestaland) and the **Salón Bacanora** (☎ 986-91-55), beside Plaza de Toros.

*Charreadas* (rodeos) are infrequently held at the Plaza de Toros. Tickets cost about US\$4.50 and are available through local travel agents and hotel concierge desks.

#### Baseball

Mazatlán's baseball team, **Los Venados** (www.venadosdemazatlan.com) makes its home at the large and modern Estadio Teodoro Mariscal (Map p112); the season starts in early October and continues through March. The box office opens at 10am on game days (US\$1 to US\$9.50 admission).

### GAY & LESBIAN MAZATLÁN

Mazatlán's gay scene isn't nearly as effervescent as that in Puerto Vallarta (p92) or Guadalajara, but as long as your expectations are kept in check a reasonably good time is possible.

Forget cruising in Plaza Principal: you'll do much better operating from one of the sidewalk tables at the restaurants lining gorgeous Plazuela Machado. The beach scene is equally low-key. There's no 'official' gay beach, but extra privacy can be enjoyed at some of the secluded beaches on the islands that line the coast. One reader writes to recommend **Isla de las Chivas**, a tiny island near Isla de la Piedra. You should have no problem negotiating passage via a launch operating from the Playa Sur embarcadero, near the ferry terminal.

Bar action is primarily limited to two spots. In the Zona Dorado, **Pepe Toro** (Map p115; ☎ 914-41-76; www.pepetoro.com; Av de las Garzas 18; ☒ Thu-Sun; ☒) is a colorful and lively club attracting a fun-loving mixed crowd. On Saturday night there's a transvestite strip show at 1am. Staff also spin a good mix of danceable grooves. For something more elegant, try **Vitrola's Bar** (Map p114; www.vitrolasbar.com; Frias 1608; ☒ 5pm-1am Tue-Sun), a new gay bar in a beautifully restored building decorated with antiques. It's romantically lit, the bar is brass-edged and overall it's more button down than mesh muscle shirt.

**FIESTA MEXICANAS**

The Fiesta Mexicana is a corny spectacle providing a reductive view of Mexican culture, but it's all in good fun. For three hours, guests are treated to a floor show of folkloric dance and music, a generous buffet dinner and an open bar. Several of the largest luxury hotels stage these extravaganzas, but the hands-down favorite is the one at **Hotel Playa Mazatlán** (Map p115; ☎ 913-44-44; Playa Gaviotas 202; admission US\$26; 🕒 7pm Tue, Thu & Sat; 🚻). Call the hotel for reservations or reserve at a travel agency.

**CINEMAS**

**Cinemas Gaviotas** (Map p115; ☎ 983-75-45; Camarón Sábalo 218; admission US\$4, Wed US\$2; 🚻) Six screens here show recent releases, including some in English.

**Shopping**

Most of your tourist shopping needs will be met in the Zona Dorada, where plenty of clothes, pottery, jewelry and craft stores are located. Wander along Loaiza and you're sure to find something to bring home.

**Sea Shell City** (Map p115; ☎ 913-13-01; Loaiza 407; 🕒 9am-7pm) Packed with an unbelievable assortment of you know what. For something less common, try the shopping complex at Hotel Playa Mazatlán where several high-end shops sell fine crafts including masks from Guerrero, tinware from Oaxaca, and Talavera pottery.

**Tianguis de Juárez** (Juárez Flea Market; Map p112) Come here for local flavor. Hop on a bus heading east to the, which is held every Sunday starting at 5am; the ride takes 20 minutes. You can't buy snake oil, but you can come close – snakeskins, bootleg CDs, used clothes, housewares, tools, hamsters, taco stands and other Mexican treats are for sale.

**Centro Mercado** (Map p114; cnr Ocampo & Serdán) Here in Old Mazatlán you can enjoy a classic Mexican market experience, complete with vegetable stands, spice dealers, food stalls and shops selling bargain-priced crafts. In the streets surrounding Plazuela Machado, a growing selection of galleries and boutiques give joy to browsers.

**Getting There & Away****AIR**

**Rafael Buelna International Airport** (MZT; Map p112; ☎ 928-04-38), 27km southeast of the Zona Dorada, is served by the following carriers.

**Aero California** (☎ 913-20-42; airport) Direct service to Los Angeles and Tijuana.

**Aeroméxico** (Map p115; ☎ 982-34-44; Camarón Sábalo 310) Service to Atlanta, Los Angeles, Phoenix and Tucson, via Mexico City. Direct service to La Paz, Guadalajara and Mexico City.

**Alaska Airlines** (☎ 913-20-42; airport) Direct service to Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle.

**America West** (☎ 981-11-84; airport) Direct service to Los Angeles and Phoenix.

**Mexicana** (Map p115; ☎ 982-77-22; Camarón Sábalo, near Las Gaviotas) Service to Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, Miami and San Antonio, via Mexico City. Direct service to Guadalajara and Mexico City.

**BOAT**

**Baja Ferries** (Map p112; ☎ 984-04-71; www.bajaferreries.com; adult/child aged 3-11 US\$75/38; 🕒 ticket office 8am-4pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) operates ferries between Mazatlán and La Paz in Baja California Sur (to the port of Pichilingue, 23km from La Paz). The 15-hour ferry to Pichilingue departs at 4pm (you should be there with ticket in hand at 3pm) on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from the terminal at the southern end of town (off Av Barragan, near the Playa Sur embarcadero). Tickets are sold from two days in advance until the morning of departure. Passage for vehicles (US\$120/US\$200/US\$570 for a motorcycle/car/trailer up to 9m) and cabins (US\$25 to US\$75) is available.

**BUS**

The **Central de Autobuses** (main bus station; Map p112; Av de los Deportes, off Ejército Mexicano) is three blocks inland from the northern end of Playa Norte. It's a full service station with a tourist module, phone offices, authorized taxi stands and left-luggage service. All bus lines operate from separate halls in the main terminal. Local buses to small towns nearby (eg Copala, Rosario) operate from a smaller terminal, behind the main terminal. There are several daily long-distance services:

**Culiacan** (US\$13, 2½hr, 24 1st-class)

**Durango** (US\$39, 7hr, 6 1st-class)

**Guadalajara** (US\$31, 9hr, 16 2nd-class; US\$35-45, 8hr, 9 1st-class)

**Manzanillo** (US\$56, 12hr, 1 1st-class)

**Mexico City** (US\$16, 18hr, 13 2nd-class; US\$81-95, 8hr, 12 1st-class) To Terminal Norte.

**Monterrey** (US\$86, 16hr, 3 1st-class)

**Puerto Vallarta** (US\$33, 7hr, 1 1st-class) Or take a bus to Tepic, where buses depart frequently for Puerto Vallarta.



**Tepic** (US\$15, 4½hr, 16 1st-class)

**Tijuana** (US\$76, 28hr, 16 2nd-class; US\$88, 26hr, 3 1st-class)

To get to San Blas (290km), go first to Tepic then get a bus from there.

## Getting Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

*Colectivo* (shared) vans and a bus operate from the airport to town, but not from town to the airport. Taxis are about US\$20 to US\$25.

### BUS

Local buses run daily from 6am to 10:30pm. A trip on the regular white buses costs US\$0.45, while Urban Plus air-con green buses cost US\$0.80. A useful route for visitors is the Sábalo–Centro, which travels from the Centro Mercado (Map p114) in the center to Playa Norte via Juárez, then north on Av del Mar to the Zona Dorada and further north on Camarón Sábalo. Another is Playa Sur, which travels south along Ejército Mexicano near the bus station and through the city center, passing the market, then to the ferry terminal and El Faro.

To get into the center of Mazatlán from the bus terminal, go to Ejército Mexicano and catch any bus going south (to your right if the bus terminal is behind you). Alternatively, you can walk 500m from the bus station to the beach and take a ‘Sábalo–Centro’ bus heading south (left) to the center.

### BICYCLE

**Kelly’s Bike Rentals** (Map p115; ☎ 914-11-87; Camarón Sábalo 204; 🕒 10am-2pm & 4:30-8pm Mon- Sat) rents out mountain bikes for US\$3.50/US\$17 per hour/day.

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Shop around for the best rates, which begin at US\$60 per day during the high season. There are several rental agencies in town:

**Alamo** (Map p115; ☎ 913-10-10; Camarón Sábalo 410)

**Budget** (Map p115; ☎ 913-20-00; Camarón Sábalo 402)

**Hertz** (Map p115; ☎ 913-60-60; Camarón Sábalo 314)

Various companies on Camarón Sábalo in the Zona Dorada rent out motor scooters – you’ll see the bikes lined up beside the road. Prices are somewhat negotiable, ranging from US\$12 per hour to US\$50 per day.

You need a driver’s license to hire one; a car license from any country will do.

### PULMONÍA & TAXI

Mazatlán has a special type of taxi called a *pulmonía*, a small open-air vehicle similar to a golf cart – usually a modified VW. There are also regular red-and-white taxis and green-and-white taxis called ‘ecotaxis’ that have rates from US\$2.50 to US\$5 for trips around town. *Pulmonías* can be slightly cheaper (or much more expensive) depending on your bargaining skills, time of day and whether there is a cruise ship in port or not.

## AROUND MAZATLÁN

Several small, picturesque colonial towns in the Sierra Madre foothills make pleasant day trips from Mazatlán. Note that if you visit on a Sunday, many things will be shut down.

### Getting There & Away

Buses to all these places depart from the small bus terminal at the rear of the main bus station in Mazatlán.

**Concordia** (US\$2, 1½hr, every 15min 6am-6pm)

**Copala** (US\$3, 2hr, 3 1st-class)

**Cosalá** (US\$9, 3hr, 2 2nd-class)

**Rosario** (US\$3, 1½hr, hourly 6am-6pm) Take an ‘Escuinapa’ bus, or any heading south on Hwy 15.

Tours to these spots are available as well (see p117).

### CONCORDIA

Founded in 1565, Concordia has an 18th-century church with a baroque facade, elaborately decorated columns, a daily market around it, and hot mineral springs nearby. The village is known for its manufacture of high-quality pottery and hand-carved furniture. It’s about a 45-minute drive east of Mazatlán; head southeast on Hwy 15 for 20km to Villa Unión, turn inland on Hwy 40 (the highway to Durango) and go another 20km.

### COPALA

Also founded in 1565, the charming little town of Copala, 25km past Concordia on Hwy 40, was one of Mexico’s first mining

**DETOUR: TEACAPÁN**

Travelers grown weary of the bright lights of the city are increasingly drawn to this tiny fishing village at the tip of an isolated peninsula, 126km to the south of Mazatlán at the border of Nayarit and Sinaloa. Surrounded by a rich mangrove ecosystem and in close proximity to several pristine beaches, Teacapán is prime territory for escape artists and nature buffs.

The surrounding estuaries are replete with egrets, ducks and herons. Boating excursions into the mangrove swamps can be arranged with local fishermen at Boca de Teacapán, the natural marina. Local guide Mariano Azuela (☎ 954-53-86) offers trips to **Isla de Pajaros** (Map p112), an epic bird-watching spot, and to local archaeological sites. Nearby beaches include La Tambora, with a smattering of *palapa* restaurants and camping opportunities, and the even more secluded spots Las Cabras, Las Lupitas and Los Angeles.

**Villas Maria Fernanda** (☎ 954-53-93; www.villasmariafernanda.com; r/ste/house US\$36-48/65/160; ♻️ 🚰) is an attractive small resort offering spacious, comfortable rooms, suites with kitchens and a house for up to 10 people. Kids love the cheerful pool with water slide.

**Restaurant & Bungalows Señor Wayne** (☎ 954-56-95; r/cabaña US\$20/30; ♻️ 🚰), an immaculate family-run operation, has seven clean rooms and two economical *palapa*-roofed cabanas. Also on the premises is Teacapán's best restaurant (mains US\$6 to US\$12, restaurant open 8am to 8pm), serving big breakfasts, steaks and seafood.

To get there from Mazatlán's 2nd-class bus terminal (adjacent to the Central de Autobuses), catch one of the frequent buses to Escuinapa (US\$4, 2½ hours) and transfer there for Teacapán (US\$3, one hour).

towns. It has a colonial church (1748), red-tiled houses and a tiny museum, and local urchins sell donkey rides while pigs and chickens roam the cobbled streets. There are a couple of hotels; try the quaint **Copala Butter Company** (☎ 985-42-25; r US\$30) if you decide to spend the night, though you can visit both Concordia and Copala in a day – even on public transport. Take an *auriga* (transport pickup), between the two towns (US\$2, 30 minutes).

**ROSARIO**

Another colonial mining town, Rosario (65km southeast of Mazatlán on Hwy 15) was founded in 1655. Its most famous feature is the gold-leaf altar in its church Nuestra Señora del Rosario.

**COSALÁ**

In the mountains north of Mazatlán, Cosalá is a beautiful colonial mining village dating from 1550. It features a 17th-century

church, an even older chapel, a historical and mining museum in a colonial mansion on the leafy plaza, and four hotels. Attractions nearby include **Vado Hondo**, a *balneario* (bathing resort) with a large natural swimming pool and three waterfalls, 15km from town; **La Gruta México**, a large cave 18km from town; and the **Presa El Comedero** reservoir, 20km from town, with hired rowboats for fishing.

To get to Cosalá, head northwest on Hwy 15 for 113km to the turnoff (opposite the turnoff for La Cruz de Elota on the coast) and then go about 45km up into the mountains. If taking the direct bus, consider staying the night, since bus schedules are such that you only get one hour in town before needing to head back the same day (but check and make sure this is still the case). The more adventurous can always visit Cosalá in one day by taking any bus heading to the coast highway, then another back to Mazatlán.

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