



Community

News

Inland Versus the Coast

Most vacationers who travel to Mexico do so in the winter when the contrast between their home state's or province's weather and Mexico's is at its maximum. Of course, they will head for the beaches where the heat and humidity constantly remind them that they are not suffering through winter at home. If you are planning yearly vacations of one to two weeks duration, Mexico's many beautiful beaches are ideal. However, if you are planning extended stays (one month or longer) or wish to live in Mexico most of the time, there are many reasons to leave the beaches and head inland. Here are just a few:

1. Property Ownership: Inland, a foreign national can own property outright with all of the rights of a Mexican landowner. Within 30 miles of a coastline, non-Mexicans must purchase property through a "beneficial trust" that carries with it a set of limitations and caveats. Further, the Mexican government can amend the restrictions without consultation.

2. Cost of Living: Tourists do not mind paying top dollar for hotels and restaurants when they are on vacation and the prices in Mexico's coastal areas reflect that willingness to pay. In general, at the top five beach areas most frequently visited by foreign tourists, prices for food and other necessities are only slightly lower than they are in Canada or the U.S. Inland and away from the tourist areas, prices for basic commodities drop to roughly one third of those "back home." The same is true for property values.

3. Low Crime Rate: In tourist areas, crime rates tend to be quite a bit higher than elsewhere because there is a concentration of "rich" folks in those areas (most tourists spend the equivalent of an average Mexican's weekly salary every day). Inland, there are fewer tourists and therefore fewer people who prey on those tourists.



Financing

Obtaining mortgages in Canada for property in Mexico or obtaining a Mexican mortgage can be difficult. Los Sabinos now offers prospective community members alternative financing - either long-term or short-term.

Contact our office for information on our financing options and packages. We are sure we can find one that is perfect for you.



Waking Up Here Thoughts from a Canadian resident in Sta. Martha

Waking up here in this colorful, quiet, Mexican valley is a pleasure. Here, I know I can move at a more leisurely pace, taking time for myself, time to enjoy the richness of the area. Tucked away in this mountain valley paradise, I'm able to pursue my photography, work on a new book, compose songs, and read stacks of books. Here I can sit on the verandah and watch gorgeous sunsets, or eat outdoors in the garden, visiting and enjoying the scenes and scents of nature. Three eagles glide overhead daily and we observe one another with fascination.

In my early morning walks I am sure to see the donkey cart man. This gentleman almost bows his hello. He's quaint, tiny and he looks like he belongs in the pages of a storybook. I can tell he's going out to work in his fields and his demeanor tells me this is giving him much pleasure. A young boy accompanies him at times. I imagine grandfather and grandson.

Our tree-lined street was just pasture land when I first saw it, but, in a short time, bushes, vines and trees form an outline and flowers of all colors embellish. I love the flowers here, especially the bougainvillea. Vibrant mauves, pinks and tangerines almost call out for attention, as they do their job, adorn the landscape, beautify everything and soften the hearts of all who view them.

In our quiet village setting, I've often taken walks along a pathway that takes me through an archaeological site. If I but glance down at the earth beneath my feet, I am sure to spot shards of pottery, reminders of another culture from another time. In our

yard, we have come across pottery pieces of unusual shapes and sizes, some with painted markings faintly visible. Each is a puzzle part, a whisper from yesterday.

The moat house is what I call the home of one neighbor, just two blocks away. He has to cross a small bridge to reach his home. I've actually never seen his home as it's

surrounded by tall walls, adorned by vines, and embellished by brightly colored flowers. Across the road from him, a new home is being built and next to it is a humble dwelling with one entire wall constructed of wattle and daub. So as I stand there I can see both the modern of today and the very ancient methods of home building

My walk takes me through a park then back down the street where a man works with three others. He is the master stone builder and he is teaching the others to carve the rock into his famous masterpieces. He offers to do something for our yard and I know my husband wants to commission him for a fountain. The rock being used is from a quarry only four minutes away and when I look up the slopes of the mountain I can see another quarry where onyx is found.

This is a tranquil location yet not without sound. At fiesta time, neighbors came by to ask if we would like to be involved in a special party, one that could involve more than a hundred villagers. This was a welcome opportunity to be a part of the community. Later that night as if on cue, well over 70 villagers arrived. A skit was enacted, then music was played and many danced. After only one tune, everything was packed up and the entire party walked down the road two blocks where we all participated in like fashion at the home of another villager. After one tune, the party moved yet again to another home. After a few stops we soon realized this would be repeated quite a few more times.

A trip to the grocery store here can be as simple as walking one block to the nearest confectionery and buying as little as a single bun. Or we can drive four miles (6 km) into the town of Etla for a whole cooked chicken, or visit the outdoor market spread out adjacent to the church. Here I can have my sandals repaired while I buy a broom and pick out fresh garden vegetables. The prices are too reasonable.

The market is spread out in layers as huge wide steps climb up to the main market building. I found two stunning yet inexpensive water jugs on our last excursion.

Pottery in this area is beautiful. Different towns feature their own designs and types. In one town, San Bartolo, the famous black pottery can be purchased. For a short trip though, we drive over to Santa Maria Atzompa. At one shop, a young man sat and visited with us telling us the miracle story of how he survived a car accident. He got tears in his eyes as he heard our English words. It was at that moment that he began to remember that he could speak English. The tears had been those of gratefulness. Our visit had been a special event for him as our words had triggered his memory. For us we gained a new friend and purchased three huge new pots to decorate the yard. At the outdoor shop of one family we were shown the kiln and working area and visited with the artist. We recognized her work, having seen it at a tourist location earlier.

The architecture of Mexico is breathtaking. Many of the churches have been worked on and rebuilt from the 1600s. A study could be done just of doorways alone. Mixed into these very old structures, newer buildings are rising yet there is promise that the old will be preserved.

As we sit at the park centre in the city, we can see vendors selling their goods just as they did two hundred years ago. We can enjoy a bowl of freshly cut fruit, knowing it was likely on the vine or tree yesterday or as early as this morning. We are entertained at almost every visit to the city by a parade, or walking minstrels, or a concert, or a special play, enacted on the streets. Should we care to take a cab, we can be up at Monte Alban, to explore the pyramids, within a matter of minutes.

We have eaten at a Chinese restaurant and a lovely formal Italian restaurant. We've been treated to most outstandingly tasteful seafood dishes at a garden restaurant where the food and ambiance are so magnificent, it would be easy to waste four hours there. We have taken the steps to the second floor of the crepe restaurant and ordered our favorite fresh strawberries and cream crepes while seated on a balcony overlooking a small park. There we can view the city life below and watch as artists display their latest works.

We can sit on the zocalo (park area) at one of many sidewalk cafes and feel as if time has been pushed back, literally made to slow down and we find ourselves slipping into a pace that is heavenly. People selling their wares may stop to sell or just to visit. We may buy today or not. There is no rush. This is old Mexico where we may see oxen pulling wooden plows, yet on the way home we will pass those two new waterparks!

Breakfast is a treat, often outside on the verandah or in the inner garden and fresh orange juice is apropos since my neighbors have an orange tree. Strangely enough, even the neighbors I don't know, I feel I do. They wave from a distance. Their smiles are genuine. They offer to help before they even know my name.

I remember when we first arrived. I don't think we were here more than a few hours and a gentleman came by selling furniture. Wow, no one has ever done that back home. Within two weeks, we saw a host of door-to-door sales: a man selling fresh beef, a knife sharpener, the propane gas sellers, fresh fruit venders, and a man selling mescal, a locally made alcoholic drink, from a large plastic jerrycan.

When I walk past the school on my walks, the children are arriving. Two children arrive teasing one another. Both own bikes. Another boy arrives on his horse. The children tuck their heads down, look up at me, smile and then dash off. Their parents, less shy, greet me graciously. The schoolyard is plain but well filled with joyful sounds of happy youngsters.

I love it here!

EBH



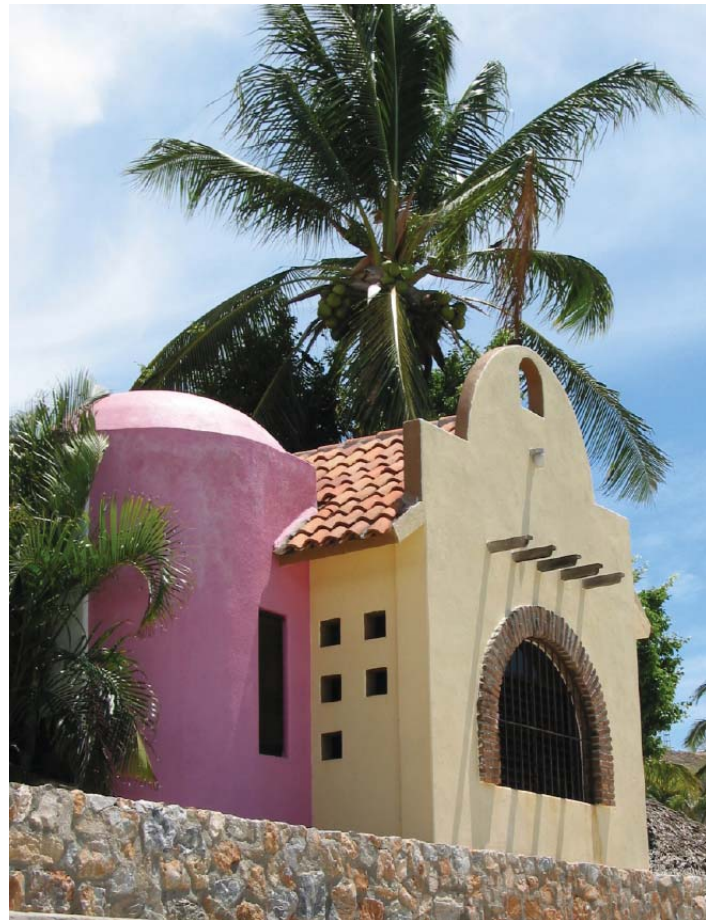
4. **Fewer Crowds:** Mexican beaches during peak tourist seasons are busy and crowded. So are the restaurants and other facilities that cater to those tourists. By going inland, one gets away from the crowds and the noise.

5. **Weather:** The heat and humidity that is a major draw for tourists can become difficult to put up with in the long term. The beaches do not cool off at night and most North Americans have trouble sleeping in the heat. Air conditioning in the bedroom becomes a necessary survival tool. Inland, the daytime and nighttime temperatures vary considerably. For example, in Oaxaca, a typical November day could warm up to about 80°F (26°C) but cool off to 62°F (17°C) at night. Comfortable.

6. **Authenticity:** For those who wish to experience the cultural diversity that Mexico offers, the coastal areas offer little. The need to serve the tourist industry has tended to homogenize the coastal areas with English being heard more often than Spanish and American foods (pizza and hamburgers) appearing on more restaurant menus than traditional Mexican food (tamales and moles). Indeed, many of the items for sale to tourists are made in China. Inland, the tourist influence is not as strong and traditional lifestyles are the norm. It has been argued that if a person has only visited Mexico's beaches, he or she hasn't really visited Mexico at all.

Of course, if you live inland, you can always head for the beaches for a vacation. My wife and I have done that on occasion. One of the newest beach resorts (Huatulco) is six hours by car from our house near Oaxaca city

and we took a weekend trip there just this past spring. Huatulco is a fabulous place and we enjoyed our time there but it was a relief to get back to our home in the interior. Early each evening, we retreated to our air conditioned room to get some respite from the heat and humidity of the coast (and to get away from the crowds). Beaches are great for short-term vacations. Absolutely! Live there? Never!



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