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ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Lisa Andres

## 3 Days in Vallarta with kids

### **Puerto Vallarta, 3 Days**

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# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** You and your kids will enjoy this fun filled vacation.

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - Puerto Vallarta

**DAY NOTE:** Eat well and have fun. Nothing beats whale watching in the Bay of Bandera\*, everyone will love it. Eat breakfa\*t at La\* Paloma\*, the view is amazing and will put you right into vacation mode.



### Palomas Doradas (Las)

Mexican food with a relaxing view



### Open Air Expeditions' Whale Watching Tour

Encountering whales and dolphins



### Karting Internacional Go Karts

Driving fun and excitement for all



### Paradise Burger

American fare



### Chico's Paradise Restaurant, Bar and Grill

A whole lot of fun



### Pipis

Guacamole prepared at your table.

## Day 2 - Puerto Vallarta

**DAY NOTE:** Now that the kids have seen dolphins in the wild, it is time to take them fore a little hands on education and fun. Get up early and hit the park, then hit the park. Then take the kids into town and visit a true gem and popular local taco stand.



### Mariscos 8 Tostadas

Shellfish at its best



### Cafe Frankfurt

Inexpensive German food

## Day 3 - Puerto Vallarta

**DAY NOTE:** The kids will love Memo's and so will you, the price is right and the food is great! A wonderful breakfa\*t will prepare you perfectly for a day of outdoors relaxing and adventures. Hop the bus for a cultural experience or take a cab to the Botanical Gardens. Let the kids run around while you chat with the caretakers about local horticulture or just sit and enjoy the majestic mountain view. Then get your adrenaline pumping with a canopy tour. Vallarta canopy's are very safe and kept up well.

# Day 1 - Puerto Vallarta

QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Eat well and have fun. Nothing beats whale watching in the Bay of Bandera\*, everyone will love it. Eat breakfast at La\* Paloma\*, the view is amazing and will put you right into vacation mode.

**contact:**  
tel: 52 322 1 0470

## 1 Palomas Doradas (Las)

**location:**  
Inside Marina Vallarta  
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48350

**DESCRIPTION:** The little sister of Las Palomas, Las Palomas Doradas, offers another version of the excellently prepared food and ambiance. Located within the Marina, and surrounded by the yachts, the essence of the place is totally different from its downtown counterpart. The seafood, with a touch of French flavor, and a wonderful selection of desserts, make this terrace restaurant an excellent choice. © wcities.com

**hours:**  
8a-11p M-Su

**MY NOTE:** There is a Las Palomas in the Marina and downtown. It is overpriced, but have breakfast here once, the chilaquiles with egg and chicken is the best around.

**contact:**  
tel: +52 322 2 3310  
<http://www.vallartawhales.com/>

## 2 Open Air Expeditions' Whale Watching Tour

**location:**  
Guerrero 339, Col. Centro  
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48300

**DESCRIPTION:** Step upon the beautiful Prince of Whales, Open Air Expeditions' specially designed and equipped whale watching vessel, for an unforgettable learning experience and a whale of a good time. The whale-watching season (from early December through March) drives thousands of visitors each year onto the water. It seems everyone wants to get an up close look at the humpback whales who call the Banderas Bay home every winter. Open Air Expeditions' whale watching tour has earned the respect of the governing bodies that protect marine life for their unerring compliance with laws, as well as for operating the only U.S. Coast Guard-certified whale watching craft in Puerto Vallarta. Your experienced crew will include bi-lingual marine biologists who will teach you about the life and behaviors of the majestic sea mammals who come to the deep waters of Puerto Vallarta each year to mate and calve. If you prefer, Open Expeditions can also arrange dolphin encounters. All tours are designed for small groups and you should plan for up to four hours at sea. Each tour includes fruit, bottled water and snacks © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of Open Air Expeditions' Whale Watching Tour

**hours:**  
8:30a and 1:30p during whale season

**contact:**  
tel: +52 322 1 2293

## Karting Internacional Go Karts

**location:**  
Carretera Puerto Vallarta -  
Tepic Km. 153  
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48350

**DESCRIPTION:** Kids of all ages love the thrill of going fast and driving in a race. Fun for all and no previous experience necessary! The thousand meter track, featuring super go karts with the ability of braving up to 60 miles per hour, will make the "older" kids' adrenaline rush. And for the smaller "Go Karters," the two hundred meter track with baby karts is sure to be a dynamic hit. So when the sun gets to be too much, cool off with a fast trip around the track! © wcities.com

**hours:**  
9:30a-11p M-Su

**contact:**

tel: 52 322 323 28

<http://www.paradiseburger.com/index1.php>

**location:**

Paseo Diaz Ordaz 740

Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48350

**hours:**

11a-2a

**3 Paradise Burger**

**DESCRIPTION:** Traditional juicy cheeseburgers are the specialty at this casual, American restaurant. Originally founded in Hawaii, the restaurant has made a niche for itself by providing American food in tropical locales. At this location, the eatery also serves a gringo-friendly array of Mexican-style specialties. More sophisticated palates will enjoy the Hawaiian style mahi-mahi and Coconut Breaded Shrimp that are also available. Oceanfront views and nightly live music complement the burgers. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Paradise Burger

# Day 2 - Puerto Vallarta

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## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Now that the kids have seen dolphins in the wild, it is time to take them for a little hands on education and fun. Get up early and hit the park, then hit the park. Then take the kids into town and visit a true gem and popular local taco stand.

**contact:**  
tel: 52 322 221 3124

## 1 Mariscos 8 Tostadas

**location:**  
Proa 28-29  
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48354

**DESCRIPTION:** If you love seafood, you'll love "8 Tostadas." Seafood haters on the other hand, should skip this restaurant as they won't find much to nosh on. You'll find a variety of fresh seafood dishes from ceviche to crab enchiladas. It's a casual family restaurant and it closes early (6pm) so make sure you leave enough time to dine if you're going for dinner.  
© NileGuide



editor

**contact:**  
tel: 52 322 2 3403

## 2 Cafe Frankfurt

**location:**  
Basilio Badillo 300  
Puerto Vallarta 48330

**DESCRIPTION:** This casual garden cafe offers inexpensive, traditionally prepared German dishes including Schnitzel Holstein, served with a fried egg and sausages. Several other tasty Schnitzel and German specialties, such as Bratwursts, add flavor-filled options to the menu. The constantly changing selection of German music playing in the background makes a perfect backdrop for trying one of the many varieties of German and Mexican beers. The dress code is casual, but don't push it; beachwear is not permitted. © wcities.com

**hours:**  
4:30p-11:30p

**MY NOTE:** If you can catch their all you can eat and drink buffet, leave the kids at the hotel and go enjoy!

# Day 3 - Puerto Vallarta

## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** The kids will love Memo's and so will you, the price is right and the food is great! A wonderful breakfast will prepare you perfectly for a day of outdoors relaxing and adventures. Hop the bus for a cultural experience or take a cab to the Botanical Gardens. Let the kids run around while you chat with the caretakers about local horticulture or just sit and enjoy the majestic mountain view. Then get your adrenaline pumping with a canopy tour. Vallarta canopies are very safe and kept up well.

**contact:**  
tel: +52 322 2 0474  
<http://www.chicosparadise.com>

**location:**  
Carretera Vallarta Manzanillo,  
Km. 20  
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48410

**hours:**  
10a-8p M-Su

## 1 Chico's Paradise Restaurant, Bar and Grill

**DESCRIPTION:** Located about thirty minutes from downtown Vallarta, the trip to Chico's takes you through the Sierra Madre Mountains, arriving at a jungle paradise, with a beautiful river with natural pools in which you can relax and enjoy the day. The restaurant has an excellent view of the river and mountains, and the traditional Mexican food, including guacamole, ceviche and spicy shrimp, will make everyone happy. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Chico's Paradise Restaurant, Bar and Grill

**contact:**  
tel: 52 322 223 2767  
<http://www.pipis.com.mx/>

**location:**  
Guadalupe Sanchez 807  
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48380

**hours:**  
Daily 11am-11pm

## 2 Pipis

**DESCRIPTION:** Pipis is a popular restaurant in the El Centro part of Puerto Vallarta. They are known for their fajitas and for preparing guacamole tableside. The location is within walking distance to the Malecon, back a few streets from the water. While the view isn't much to look at, there's plenty of people watching if you get a table by the windows. The menu has a variety of Mexican favorites and there's a full bar. The margaritas are delicious and a good value. © NileGuide



[http://www.pipis.com.mx/images/main\\_logo.gif](http://www.pipis.com.mx/images/main_logo.gif)

**location:**

Highway 200 Km 3.2  
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48300

**hours:**

Daily 7a-7p

## 1 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

**location:**

Highway 200 Km 17  
Yelapa 48440

## 2 Playa Yelapa

**OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:**

For a few pesos more, buy a whole pie to take back with you and share with your family and friends back in Puerto Vallarta.

**DESCRIPTION:** If you want to get an idea of what Puerto Vallarta was like in the distant past, you can hop a water taxi at Boca de Tomatlan or from the Fisherman's Pier in Puerto Vallarta to Yelapa and find out. Yelapa is only accessible by boat and only in the last few years was it connected to the local power grid. There are no cars, no massive hotel complexes or large groups of tourists here.

If you are staying for the day, hop the taxi in the morning. You can take a hike or horseback ride up to the waterfall, eat at one of few beachfront palapa-style restaurants and then spend the day sunning and swimming in the gentle waters of the cove (albeit among the fishing boats that tie up there). There are a few shops and vendors if you want to take home a souvenir and there are a few hotels/guesthouses too if you want to spend the night. The one thing you cannot miss is a giant slice of pie from the roving pie ladies of Yelapa. It's the best you've ever had. © NileGuide



Photo by Robin Noelle

**location:**

Highway 200 Sur Km 11.5  
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48300

## 3 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

**location:**

Aquiles Serán  
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48300

**hours:**

9a onwards, M-Su

**4 Cuale Waterfalls**

**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

**contact:**

tel: +52 322 222 1982  
<http://www.virtualvallarta.com/vallarta/activities/studiotours.html>

**location:**

Aldama 174  
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48310

**hours:**

10a-2p M

**5 Artist Studio Tours**

**DESCRIPTION:** Puerto Vallarta, rapidly emerging as one of the finest art centers in Mexico, is home to scores of acclaimed local and international artists who display their work locally and worldwide. Each year dozens of these artists open their home and studio doors to tours so art lovers can have the unique experience of seeing an artist hard at work. During the tour, the artists encourage visitors to ask questions about their work and allow you to experience, first hand, the artistic process and methods that goes into each piece. Some of the artists conduct classes in their studios, on a very limited basis. The four-hour guided tours typically include three to five studio visits. The artists for each tour vary but rest assured that they are hand-chosen and organized by your knowledgeable guide, Garry Thompson, owner of the Galeria Pacifica. Garry an avid art enthusiast, and likes nothing more than sharing his passion for art and knowledge of the artists you will meet. The Artists Studio tours are available only on Mondays and run from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Reservations are required as space is limited. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of Artist Studio Tours

**location:**

A top the Sierra Madre  
San Sebastian del Oeste  
46990

**6 San Sebastian Expeditions**

**OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:**

There's not much to do in San Sebastian day to day, especially at night. If you want a little more excitement, check the calendar to find out when they are having a festival or fair in town. Otherwise, prepare for rest and relaxation.

**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



Photo by Robin Noelle

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

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# Puerto Vallarta Snapshot

## Local Info

Wrapping around the Bay of Banderas, Puerto Vallarta is an amphitheater for the natural beauty that is the Pacific Coast making it a premier destination for beach and sun seekers. The large horseshoe-shaped bay hosts four in-town beaches as well as half a dozen beaches to the north and south. The broad variety of locations, accessibility, types of sand and intensity of the water means that there is a beach for every kind of vacation you want whether it's just rocking in a hammock with margarita in hand, snorkeling, swimming or the very popular Puerto Vallarta past time of people watching at one of the more crowded tourist spots. Out on the water, you can scuba, fish, go whale watching or dance the night away on a sunset cruise around the bay.

If you can pull yourself out of your lounge chair, Puerto Vallarta has much more to offer than sandy feet and ice cold cervezas. In downtown Puerto Vallarta, the malecón (boardwalk) runs along the water's edge and anchors a thriving collection of shops, restaurants, night clubs, art galleries and hotels. On the malecón itself, you'll find art of all shapes and sizes.

Sand sculptors create masterpieces daily. Bronze sculptures that celebrate ocean life, family and romance dot the boardwalk.

Their providence, artists and cultural significance are the subject of weekly walking tours.

At the north end of the malecón, watch the voladores take to the sky with their whirling, twirling aerial dance. At the southern end, every night offers a different show in Los Arcos, the open air theater, that rotates folkloric dancers, jazz concerts, children's magic shows and school talent shows as well as political and community events. Artists often set up to sell their paintings, handicrafts and other work in the periphery of the theater. Across from Los Arcos is the traditionally Mexican Plaza de Armas, complete with shade trees, gazebo and plenty of benches. Settle in with a treat bought from one of the many street vendors, listen to the live music, watch the families gathering in the square and enjoy life passing by all around you. On the opposite side of the plaza (to the east) is the beautiful and picturesque Cathedral of Our Lady Guadalupe. It is the hearth of many religious and cultural events here

in the city including the 12-day pilgrimage each December through the streets that celebrates The Festival of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Traffic is thick on the (primarily) one way streets of downtown Puerto Vallarta but you'll probably want to wander on foot anyhow. Only on foot can you pop into each shop to find the perfect souvenir. You are in no danger of getting dehydrated even on the hottest of days as there are plenty of bars and restaurants to refuel. Many of the restaurants along the malecón have terraces where you can leisurely eat, drink and soak in the stunning panoramic view of the bay splayed out before you.

Keep heading south from the malecón and you'll come to a bridge that crosses the Rio Cuale and enters Zona Romantica. In the center of the river is the Isla Cuale, home to several popular restaurants as well as a quaint artisan's market. Zona Romantica is where you will find cafes, intimate neighborhood bars, specialty art and clothing shops and live performance theaters. This area is also home to a thriving gay community with many hotels, bars and night spots that cater to LGBT visitors. Gay or straight, Zona Romantica is the place to go to get a "small town" vibe where restaurant owners will sit down to have a drink at your table and having a conversation with an entire coffee shop is a normal morning ritual.

Meanwhile, north of downtown Puerto Vallarta is the modern marina and hotel zone. Here you'll find high rises, all-inclusive resort packages, cruise ship docking, international shopping and restaurant chains and, yes, even a Walmart in case you left your toiletry kit at home. If you're looking for modern convenience and luxury, there are hotels and restaurants here that will satisfy your every need.

However, make sure to head into "Old Vallarta" to experience authentic Mexican flavors, sounds and sights.

Just are there are a myriad of beach options-- from the secluded Quimixto which is only accessible by boat to surfers' paradise at Sayulita to the hopping in-town crowds on Playa Los Muertos-- there is a neighborhood, restaurant and hotel choice that will fit just about anyone's "fun in the sun" vacation agenda. A willingness to poke around, test the waters and even get

out of town to explore the beach towns that hug the coastline will reveal which Puerto Vallarta is best for you.

© NileGuide

## 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 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

## Puerto Vallarta Snapshot continued

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 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

## Puerto Vallarta Snapshot continued

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.

**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

## Puerto Vallarta Snapshot continued

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 areas 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.

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### 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 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.

## Puerto Vallarta Snapshot continued

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.

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## 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 *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

## Puerto Vallarta Snapshot continued

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 Encountours.

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 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>)

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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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