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ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Lisa Andres

# One day in Vallarta (Cruise Ship)

## **Puerto Vallarta, 1 Day**

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# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** This is a great trip if you are coming to Vallarta on a cruise and have a limited amount of time.

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - Puerto Vallarta

**DAY NOTE:** Vallarta is a tourist down, that is for certain, but that doesn't mean downtown can't be enjoyable. Escape the cruise s\*\*\* dock a\* quickly a\* possible. Any of the buses that say Centro, Romatic Zone or Tunel will take you to a perfect starting place to start your foot tour. Your cab ride downtown should cost around 70 or 80 pesos, if there are only two of you, offer to share a cab with someone else on the ship. DO NOT fall victim to the timeshare reps, if you get offered a free breakfa\*t, just keep walking.



### Palomas (Las)

Breakfast favorite



### Malecón (El)

Downtown PV's Heart & Soul



### Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Crowned Cathedral



### Museum Rio Cuale

Puerto Vallarta history



### Burros

Be merry



### Galleria Dante

Original and bronze recast statues



### Galerie des Artistes

Art and antiques



### Playa Conchas Chinas

Beautiful Rocky Beach



### Andale!

Bawdy sing-a-longs and cold margaritas



### Barcelona Tapas & Bar

Amazing view of the bay

# Day 1 - Puerto Vallarta

## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Vallarta is a tourist down, that is for certain, but that doesn't mean downtown can't be enjoyable. Escape the cruise s\*\*\* dock a\* quickly a\* possible. Any of the buses that say Centro, Romatic Zone or Tunel will take you to a perfect starting place to start your foot tour. Your cab ride downtown should cost around 70 or 80 pesos, if there are only two of you, offer to share a cab with someone else on the ship. DO NOT fall victim to the timeshare reps, if you get offered a free breakfa\*t, just keep walking.

### contact:

tel: 52 322 222 3675

fax: +52 322 223 0554

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

### location:

Paseo Diaz Ordaz No. 610  
Puerto Vallarta 48300

### hours:

Daily 8a-1a

## 1 Palomas (Las)

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

**MY NOTE:** Take a taxi from the cruise ship. You can also take a bus if you are adventurous :)



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### location:

Paseo Díaz Ordaz  
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48300

### hours:

24 hrs

## 2 Malecón (El)

### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

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

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



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the music begins at 11 pm and can continue to 6 a.m. the next morning © NileGuide

**contact:**  
tel: +52 322 222 1326

**location:**  
Calle Hidalgo  
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48310

### 3 Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe

#### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

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

**DESCRIPTION:** The stunning Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe that dominates the Puerto Vallarta skyline, is the subject of millions of photographs, and Puerto Vallarta's best known and most treasured landmark, is a must-see attraction. Each year it receives thousands of visitors, particularly during the 12-day festival celebrating the Feast of Guadalupe in December. There are guided tours daily. The original church was built over a 12 year period (1929-1941) but it was expanded and modified several times over the next 45 years.. From outside you will be enchanted by the majestic structure that is topped with a crown that is said to be a replica of a tiara once worn by the mistress of the Emperor Maximilian. A little known fact among tourists is that the crown you see today is actually a replica of the replica. The original concrete crown was destroyed by a 7.5 earthquake in 1985. A fiberglass replacement was quickly commissioned but the material could not withstand its own weight and the crown you see today is slightly distorted. On-going fund raising efforts are in the works to restore the crown to its original state. Although you are welcome to tour the church yourself, information about guided tours can be found at the church or at information booths around Vallarta. © NileGuide



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**contact:**  
tel: +52 322 223 2500

**location:**  
La Isla de Rio Cuale  
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 43810

**hours:**  
10a-3p and 4p-7p Tu-Sa,  
10a-2p Su

### 4 Museum Rio Cuale

**DESCRIPTION:** This tiny yet visitor-friendly museum is located in the botanical garden of La Isla de Rio Cuale. It hosts a weekly lecture in English, presented by the Museum Director, Ana Mendizabal. Archaeological finds from the area are displayed, along with general information on Mesoamerican history and art. There is no admission charge. Visitors should note the hours may vary during the rainy season. © wcities.com

**MY NOTE:** Walk down the Rio Cuale. Enjoy the lush scenery and don't get distracted by the tourist traps.

**contact:**  
tel: 52 322 222 0112  
<http://www.mexonline.com/burros.htm>

**location:**  
Los Muertos Beach, Olas Altas #401

### 5 Burros

**DESCRIPTION:** Sit back and relax at the Burros Bar overlooking the Los Muertos beach. The bar has a special range of fresh fruit margaritas, pina coladas and beer. Grab a bite at the restaurant that primarily serves local traditional cuisine and seafood delights. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Burros

Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48380

**contact:**  
tel: +52 322 2 2477  
<http://www.galleriadante.com>

**location:**  
Basilio Badillo 269  
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48380

**hours:**  
10a-5p M-F, 10a-2p Sa

## 6 Galleria Dante

**DESCRIPTION:** Galleria Dante is the love-child an American/ Canadian couple, Joe and Claire Guarriere, who moved to Puerto Vallarta in the 80's to realize their life-long dream of supporting the arts. Their first business venture in Puerto Vallarta was a popular pizza joint on the now trendy shopping and eating street called Basilio Badillo. While the pizza was pretty good, their unique and beautiful personal art collection, brought back from visits to Europe, that adorned the walls was what really caught people's attention. Realizing they had something special to offer, they took out the pizza ovens and opened Galleria Dante, a remarkable juxtaposition of original contemporary sculptures and painting by over a hundred fresh artists (primarily Mexican). Rumors among the locals claim that if an artist can capture the interest of Galleria Dante they will most likely transition from starving artist to being a respected member of Vallarta's elite art community. New artwork comes in on a weekly basis, so even if you have visited this Gallery in the past, it is always worth a second look. Open Mon-Fri, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. © NileGuide

**MY NOTE:** Tough on the pocket book



Photo courtesy of Galleria Dante.

**contact:**  
tel: +52 322 3 0006  
fax: +52 322 2 3227  
<http://www.visitpuertovallarta.com/puertovallarta/entertainment/entertainmenttodo/vallartas-galleries-2.html>

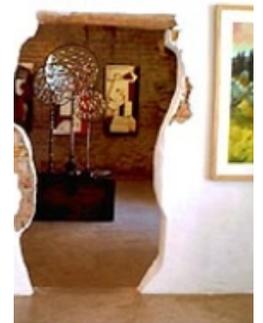
**location:**  
Leona Vicario #248  
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48300

**hours:**  
11a-11p M-Sa

## 7 Galerie des Artistes

**DESCRIPTION:** Galerie des Artistes is the keeper of some of the most beautiful art collections you will find in Puerto Vallarta. The eclectic mix of both modern and traditional artists enchants visitors as they explore from room to room, looking for that perfect treasure to take back home. The displayed art (some of it is not for sale) ranges from small decorative objets d'art to spectacular watercolors, by modern day artist Evelyne Boren, to extraordinary masterpieces by world-famous Mexican artists such as Diego Rivera, Gabriel Orozco and Pedro Coronel. A surprise bonus is a noteworthy collection of Mexican antiques for sale. If all this shopping has worn you out, wander across the street to Café Des Artistes for a dining experience you won't soon forget. © NileGuide

**MY NOTE:** After visiting these galleries walk up Allende and get a taco from Alex.



wcities

**location:**  
Highway 200 Km 3.2  
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48300

**hours:**  
Daily 7a-7p

## 8 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

**MY NOTE:** Take a cab or the bus to this cute little beach just a minute south of town.

**contact:**

tel: 52 322 223 2622 /  
Restaurant & Bar: 52 322 222  
1054  
<http://www.andaes.com>

**location:**

Olas Altas Street 425  
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48380

**hours:**

7 days a week, breakfast,  
lunch and dinner

**9 Andale!**

**DESCRIPTION:** Andale's is a popular bar right in the heart of the Romantic Zone. It's part of the hotel and restaurant, so you can dine, drink and then head right up to your room. The action doesn't really heat up until about 10pm or so, when the revelers will start singing along with the bawdy soundtrack that they play. If you like Jimmy Buffet and similar musicians, you'll be in 7th heaven at Andale's.

Andale's has a full bar and while they specialize in tequila (of course), you can also enjoy frozen concoctions like pina coladas, mango daiquiris and just about anything else you can think of. © NileGuide

**MY NOTE:** Try the Mango Margarita it's wonderful.



editor

**contact:**

tel: +52 (322 )222 - 0510  
<http://www.barcelonatapas.net>

**location:**

Matamoros 31  
Puerto Vallarta Jalisco 48300

**hours:**

Lunch and Dinner

**A Barcelona Tapas & Bar**

**OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:**

Visit their website and print out a coupon for 100 pesos off dinner or a free dessert. This restaurant is not handicapped accessible.

**DESCRIPTION:** Truly one the gems of Puerto Vallarta, Barcelona Tapas is a great restaurant for celebrations or romance. Although the several flights of stairs can be a deterrent for those with limited mobility, the climb is worth it for a stunning view of Banderas Bay. The tapas, or small plates, are delectable. You should not miss the Aioli Potato Salad or Stacked Roasted Beets for veggie dishes or the Angus Beef Brochette and Garlic Shrimp for meat-eaters. They are also well-known for the paella and their sangria. Everything on the menu, from the bread to the ice cream is made in-house in the open kitchen. This is a "don't miss!"

© NileGuide

**MY NOTE:** Plan ahead and try and reserve a table with a view for sunset.



Barcelona Tapas & Bar

# 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.

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## 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 area's best BBQ hands down; be prepared for a wait here regardless of when you arrive.

**The Downtown Area** In the downtown district choices include hip nouveau eateries and small out of the way places. One of the more trendy places to dine is Café des Artistes (on Guadalupe Sanchez). Its combination of French cuisine and original artwork creates a serene atmosphere that is unmatched anywhere else in town. International fare has become quite the trend amongst Puerto Vallarta's restaurant community, and Café 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.

©

## 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>)

## Puerto Vallarta Snapshot continued

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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