

The streets of Mazatlán are filled with brilliantly colored buildings. Photo courtesy of the Mexican Tourism Board

# *The Pearl of the Pacific*

MAZATLÁN'S MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR MAKEOVER IS PAYING OFF HANDSOMELY, WITH VISITOR NUMBERS ON THE RISE

by Lydia Gregory



When the seaside city of Mazatlán hosted the 2018 Tianguis Turístico conference in April, it did so fresh from a multimillion-dollar makeover that included enhancements and restorations to the Zona Dorada hotel zone, the Centro Histórico (historic district), a Sister City square, numerous parks and the Malecón, 6.5-miles of which now

feature a newly paved walkway with a protected bike lane extending along a popular stretch of beach.

The city, known as the Pearl of the Pacific, has also put the finishing touches on upgrades to the baseball stadium, raising it to U.S. standards; and it's in the midst of constructing the state-of-the-art Mar de Cortés Aquarium in the Mazatlán Central Park, which is scheduled for completion in 2020.

Mazatlán features an array of beaches to choose from. Photo courtesy of the Mexican Tourism Board



Mazatlán's cruise port. Photo courtesy of the Mazatlán Tourism Board



## RISE IN VISITOR NUMBERS

The investment is paying off handsomely. In 2018, travel demand spiked, with Mazatlán welcoming 3 million visitors, up from 2.7 million in 2017, according to Oscar Pérez, the destination's secretary of tourism.

Cruise-ship calls, meanwhile, are on the rise, with 89 vessels calling at Mazatlán port in 2018, and upward of 130 scheduled for 2019.

Additionally, new flights increased connectivity with



the U.S. and Canada with more than 15,000 additional seats.

## 2 MAZATLÁN'S DRAW

Agents and travelers who have rediscovered the destination point to its wide golden beaches, excellent watersports options – it hosts several international sportfishing tournaments – and the surprising affordability of its luxury accommodations. But equally important, they say, is the city's commitment to culture and the arts, along with a blossoming culinary scene.

The destination boasts a bustling Centro Histórico with brilliantly painted buildings and charming narrow streets. It serves as the city's cultural heart, hosting world-class art exhibits, concerts and theater productions year-round.

## 3 OUTDOOR LIVING

Your clients who love the outdoors will find a seemingly endless number of beaches to choose from, along with horseback riding, snorkeling and banana boat-ride tours on a laid-back stretch of beach on Stone Island. Between December and March, pods of humpback whales swim past Mazatlán on their way to the Sea of Cortez. Tell clients to be on the lookout for wild dolphins and other marine life year-round. Sea turtle hatchling release activities take place August through December just north of town.

## 4 BEYOND THE CITY

Recommend that your customers explore the nearby towns of Malpica, Copala and Concordia. They'll be able to snack on fresh bread baked in wood-burning ovens and browse through souvenir and artisan shops set on cobblestone streets.

For a more full-blown adventure, the Costa-Barrancas route, which ideally suited for travelers vacationing beyond a couple of weeks, makes its way through the beaches of Mazatlán through Chihuahua, Copper Canyon, Los Mochis-El Fuerte and Culiacán.

Airlines serving Mazatlán include United, Sun Country, Alaska Airlines, American Airlines and Delta Airlines from the U.S., and Sunwing and WestJet from Canada.

## TOP TAKEAWAYS

- Mazatlán is a clean, safe city, which implemented security protocols and high-resolution surveillance cameras in 2012, and has an active, bilingual tourist police force.
- The destination welcomed 3 million visitors in 2018, up from 2.7 million in 2017.
- In 2018, 89 cruise-ship calls were made to Mazatlán, and 130 are expected to be made in 2019.

The city's blossoming culinary scene is catching the attention of foodie travelers. Photo courtesy of the Mazatlán Tourism Board

