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One Place, Two Ways

Puerto Vallarta

BY BRUCE WALLIN

COUPLE IN THE CITY

Old Hollywood glamour meets a modern Mexican vibe in this beach resort's romantic heart.



Huaracheria Fabiola This family-owned shop has crafted custom sandals for everyone from Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (size 16) to Richard Burton, who put Puerto Vallarta on the tourist map thanks to his well-documented affair with Elizabeth Taylor while filming *The Night of the Iguana* in the then-sleepy fishing village. Choose from a range of leathers and colors to create the perfect huarache, moccasin, or flip-flop for him or her. From \$20; +52.322.222.9154

Tacos to Tasting Menus Al pastor tacos are a local art form; stop into Sonorita to sample some of the city's best. Head to Merida Grill for gourmet Yucatecan cuisine, IK Mixology for Mediterranean fare with beach views, and Tintoque for Vallartanese chef Joel Ornelas' creations in a riverfront setting. sonorita.com.mx; meridagrill.com.mx; theikbar.com; tintoque.com.mx

Rhythms of the Night Created by Cirque du Soleil cofounder Gilles Ste-Croix, this surreal and spectacular show is performed in a remote stretch of jungle-shrouded coast about an hour's cruise from the Puerto Vallarta marina. Catch the early boat and arrive in time for sunset cocktails and dinner before witnessing an extravaganza of acrobatics, pyrotechnics, and mythology. From about \$100; vallarta-adventures.com

Agave Education Escape the city for a day on the tranquil beaches around Punta de Mita (Careyeros is a nice option), followed by an evening tasting of tequila, raicilla, mezcal, and more at the Conrad Punta de Mita resort's Agave Studio in the Árbol restaurant. Sample a range of regional spirits—including a raicilla of the resort's own making—paired with local delicacies. From \$130; conradpuntademita.com

Vallarta Botanical Garden Set high in the Sierra Madres about 45 minutes south of town, this world-class botanical garden comprises 81 rugged acres of manicured collections and wild jungle. Stroll the many hiking trails to view orchids and other native Mexican plants, then cool off with a dip in the river below. From \$10; vbgardens.com

STAY: Casa Kimberly Channel Puerto Vallarta's enduring romance at Casa Kimberly, a nine-suite hideaway set in the former villas of Taylor and Burton. On a hill in Gringo Gulch, the elegant estate looks out to red-tile roofs, the blue Pacific, and the verdant hills of the Sierra Madres from its Iguana Restaurant & Tequila Bar. Book the 2,500-square-foot Elizabeth Taylor Suite to enjoy the view from a private wraparound terrace. From \$375; casakimberly.com

FAMILY ON THE BEACH

Find fun and adventure for all along the Puerto Vallarta and Riviera Nayarit coast.



Whales and Waterfalls Charter a yacht to explore Banderas Bay, stopping at Los Arcos National Marine Park—a cluster of cave-covered islands near Mismaloya—for snorkeling and paddle boarding before continuing south to the accessible-only-by-boat-or-by-foot town of Quimixto. Hike to a local waterfall for swimming and rock jumping before cruising back north and, from December through mid-April, spotting humpback whales along the way. From about \$2,500; vallartayachtcompany.com

Surf Sayulita The bohemian beach town of Sayulita has become overrun with tourists, but it's still the Riviera Nayarit's best spot for learning to surf. Take the clan to Lunazul Surf School to get everyone up and riding on the gentle swells along Sayulita Beach. For more experienced surfers, Lunazul can arrange trips to La Lancha and other top breaks. Lessons from \$45; lunazulsurfing.com

Turtle Release From early summer through fall, olive ridley turtles lumber ashore to lay their eggs in the sand up and down the coast. The ensuing hatching season (roughly July through December) presents an unforgettable experience for visitors, who can participate in the release of the palm-sized babies. Several hotels have turtle conservation and release programs of their own; concierges at other properties can point you to a nearby program.

Stroll the Malecón Spend a day in downtown Puerto Vallarta, walking the famed boardwalk that runs between the city's Los Muertos and Camarones beaches. Visit Tierra Huichol to browse beaded artworks by the indigenous Wixárika people and Galería de Ollas for Mata Ortiz pottery. Refuel with a taco-eating trip around town with Vallarta Food Tours. tierrahuichol.com; galeriadeollas.com; vallartafoodtours.com

Spear Your Supper Search for snapper, triggerfish, and other edible species on a spearfishing expedition in the bay. Three- or four-hour excursions (minimum age 10) will teach you the art of pursuing your prey, safely operating the spear, and, with some luck, bringing up a fresh catch to enjoy as ceviche on the boat ride back or dinner that night. Price upon request; spearmex.com

STAY: Susurros del Corazón Opening this summer, this Auberge Resorts Collection property sits on a sandy beach 45 minutes from the Puerto Vallarta airport in an exclusive stretch of the Riviera Nayarit (Four Seasons, St. Regis, and Conrad are all neighbors). Surfing, snorkeling, fishing, and other pursuits are all readily available from the 59-room retreat, which also includes three beachfront pools, an 11-room spa, a kids' club, and 30 private residences. From \$925; aubegeresorts.com ♦

Courtesy Images, Clockwise From Top Left: Huaracheria Fabiola; Puerto Vallarta Tourism (2); Casa Kimberly; The Agave Studio; Puerto Vallarta Tourism

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