

México: Tourism picture is brightening for Mazatlán



Written By Rosemary McClure — June, 2013

Things are looking up for tourism in Mazatlan, Mexico. The Pacific Coast resort, with 20-plus miles of beaches and dozens of high-end resorts, has long been a favorite with American tourists. Mexico's ongoing drug war, however, caused concern on both sides of the border. But recent infrastructure changes, coupled with an overhaul of Mazatlan's police force, have quieted fears.

Now the Mexican Riviera city has just had its best spring season ever and is poised to have a record-breaking summer season, according to tourism bureau statistics. The London Financial Times named it one of the Top 10 American Cities of the Future, rating it as Mexico's top medium-sized city in terms of its future economic expectations and cost effectiveness. Several upcoming improvements may increase Mazatlan's popularity as a tourist destination, including a new highway scheduled to open this fall will provide a high-speed land route between Mazatlan and the southwestern United States.

"The Mazatlan-Durango [Texas] Highway will boost domestic tourism from 30,000 cars per year to around 1 million," said Frank Cordova, secretary of tourism for Sinaloa state, home to Mazatlan. The new road "will provide a direct and safe route for tourists traveling from the southwest United States."

The \$1.2-billion highway, which crosses a region of rugged terrain sometimes called the devil's backbone, will allow increased commerce and international trade between the U.S. and Mexico, and is expected to increase tourism and business activity between the two nations. The highway will cut drive time between Mazatlan and Durango, Mexico, from six hours to three. Travel from the U.S. border will go from about 13 or 14 hours to about 10.

- A new \$3-million tourism corridor between the Port of Mazatlan and the city's historic center; the cobblestone promenade will make it easier, and safer, for cruise visitors to reach the heart of Mazatlan, said Cordova.
- A crime crackdown that includes coordination between local police, state police and army, plus a \$50-million investment in security cameras in the city.
- Additional airline connections to Mazatlan. The city is negotiating agreements with airlines that will increase airlift by 40%.
- Three major cruise lines are returning to the Port of Mazatlan this winter, starting with Holland America in November. Norwegian will resume service in December, and Azamara is to return in January 2014.
- Mazatlan has about 12,000 hotel rooms in about 180 hotels and hopes to double that number in the next five years.

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