



**An aerial view of Talpa (top and bottom) with the cathedral rising above the town and surrounding fields**

countries and globalization has become a political precept. It's a safe bet that Mexico will not soon be joining

old source that is being held together with a rubber band or kite string. Somewhere I have Frommer's *Mexico and Guatemala on \$5.00 a Day*, circa 1971, but the only one I can presently find is the 1975-76 edition, which has bumped the parameters to \$5.00 and \$10.00 a day. Here are some reminders that can be found in the tattered pages from when Gerald Ford was president and many of the Watergate gang were either imprisoned or pardoned:

The peso/dollar conversion rate was fixed at 12 ½ to one – that is, a peso was eight cents US.

The huge hotel zone north of town, including the Marina area hotels, was swampland. All of the hotels listed in the book are in town, which basically started where the Malecon begins.

The hotel I have stayed at for years, Posada de Roger (then called Hospedaje Roger) had 15 rooms, only two with bath. The rest used a communal shower. It was nicknamed the "Y of PV," attracting young travelers from all over the world. At night, everyone would gather in the

lush courtyard passing a bottle of tequila or raicilla, sharing lies and adventures. It was not unusual to end up in a room other than the one you checked into. The price for a double, without bath, was 25 pesos, or \$2.00US.

The "splurge" hotel was listed as the Hotel Oceana, long since converted into shops and

## INTO THE HILLS OF JALISCO – MASCOTA AND TALPA DE ALLENDE

by David Simmonds

*"People travel to faraway places to watch, in fascination, the kind of people they ignore at home."* – Dagobert D. Runes

I have been to Puerto Vallarta, oh, I don't know, maybe 75 times since I first limped into town in an old VW van with a fried generator and four bald tires in 1970. Armed with zero knowledge and little money, I knew that I had found the place that would forever be central to my life. Though the little village has grown enormously and too often insanely, in my heart it remains, in many ways, the same town I discovered then. It is my personal decompression chamber. One that never fails to stabilize my breathing and re-circuit my frayed and aging wiring system. The older you become, the more important it is to embrace a place in that way, much as you do your family members. Especially in today's rapidly shrinking world, where the U.S. now has some 700 military bases in over 100

that group, ever diligent in their correct insistence on independence from their imperial neighbors to the north. Large deserts make good neighbors.

Having seen the gradual morphing of Vallarta over a 34-year span, the vividness of my recollections has become hazy, and possibly inaccurate. Fortunately, I have a thing about not being able to ever throw a book away (I liken them to works of art, much to my wife's dismay), so I can usually find an



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# más o menos

by David Simmonds

I have been busy for the last couple of weeks planning my family's summer vacation, finally taking our kids to Mexico. Tanner is almost 10 and Nicolette is 5, and it seemed like the time was right for them to see the place Dad always tells them about. My wife, Felice, and I have purposely waited until they are old enough to travel the way I like to, and that includes a lot of walking and exploring, in the hot, humid rainy season on Mexico's west coast. I figured that we might as well break them in right, teaching them that travel is a proactive experience and not a catered indulgence.

So we were making arrangements to fly to Puerto Vallarta and stay in the old south end of town that I know so well, then spend a few days in Sayulita, the ideal fishing village 40 miles to the north. Everyone was excited about the trip. There is nothing like seeing your kids experience things for the first time, hoping that they see the same beauty as you do. Hoping that they like taco stands as much as Honey Bunches of Oats. Mariachi's as much as Sponge Bob.

Then, a few days ago I noticed that Tanner was acting a little off and was not talking about the trip, asking the million questions that I love to answer. Tanner is a very introspective kid, very bright and curious, absorbing everything around him. I asked him, "What's up?" He hesitated for a minute, then told me how he saw Tom Ridge, the Homeland Safety Czar, talking about how we're going to get hit again. This summer. Don't know when or where, but its going to happen. One minute we had been watching the news that Kerry had picked Edwards, the next there's Ridge telling us to beware. To a kid of 10 that means to be afraid. To a cynical adult it means political stunt.

Felice and I talked it over. Should we just tell him not to worry, everything will be fine, or should we change our

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## Hills of Jalisco *Continued*



**Aerial view of Talpa**



**Old buildings, Mascota**



**Courtyard view, Mascota**



**Cathedral, Talpa**



**Old structures, Mascota**

Photo credit, this set, by Dan Millington

of town) where a fresh lobster tail would set you back 50 pesos (four bucks) and shrimp 22 pesos (a buck seventy-five).

The two still thriving (and great) restaurants on the Playa de los Muertos on the south-end, La Palapa and El Dorado, were featuring sandwiches for 10 to 20 pesos, entrees at 20-35 pesos, and 7-peso beers. I remember lesser establishments where a bottle of Corona or Carta Blanca were 2 pesos. A shot of tequila was about the same price. Considerable damage could be accomplished for under \$1.50.

restaurants, right where the malecon curves in at Calle Galeana, a couple of blocks north of the Plaza de Armas. A double room at this long lost landmark where John Wayne, Richard Burton and John Huston once threw back shooters cost 150 pesos, or \$12.00US. Meals were in the 30 to 50 peso range.

Other restaurants listed were the Mismaloya Beach at the north end of town (not be confused with THE Mismaloya beach seven miles south

In today's guidebooks, there are pages devoted to things to do in Vallarta from dolphin encounters to jungle tours to art walks. By comparison, the paragraph in the '75-76 book lists "Sunning and Strolling" as the activity guide. I'd say that sums it up better than I can.

But I'm not complaining. To me, PV is still the best town in Mexico. One of the premier features of the town is the location, nestled between the usually placid Banderas Bay (except during hurricane season) and the little-traveled Sierra Cuale mountains. And it is in the villages of these mountains where you can shuffle back in time to catch a glimpse of the Vallarta of 30 or 40 years ago.

This is scheduled to change sometime in 2005, as the government is working on a paved highway running from Vallarta to Mascota, a town I selfishly didn't really want to publicize, as long as it took five hours to get there on a dirt path that few sane people attempted. But if they really do get this road built, I expect some rapid changes. The town is only about 30 miles from PV, making the potential drive-time very short on the new track.

I keep hoping that I'll get word that the project, like so many, gets abandoned for lack of funds or waning interest, but all reports have it moving forward.



**Airport at Mascota**



**Airport terminal, Mascota**

The new road will open up an area of Mexico first settled by the indigenous people who grew crops and pulled a little silver and gold out of the ground. Soon enough the Spaniards decided that the riches belonged to them, establishing a few mining towns and cattle ranches that fairly thrived while

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the profits were substantial. By the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century most of the mining had ceased with the area's inhabitants subsisting on agriculture and horse breeding, which are the mainstays of today's population.



Downtown corner, Mascota

### MASCOTA

As mentioned, local people lived in this area for centuries before the conquistadors arrived in this fertile valley around 1592. I can imagine the sense of good fortune that they must have felt. Having myself seen most of Mexico, this area ranks very near the top of my list of locales not attached to an ocean. It is somewhat similar to San Miguel de Allende, before it became known world-wide as a retirement haven, although not nearly as large and nowhere near the amount of money changes hands on a daily basis. Mascota's population is around 8,000, but you scarcely see a soul as you walk along the cobble-stoned streets, and you are just as likely to see a horse as a car. The staple crops of the region are rice, wheat, oranges, corn, lemons, grapes, avocados, sugarcane, and most importantly, the agave Lechuguilla. It is from this plant that the brain-altering, somewhat illegal, moonshine, raicilla, is made. I say somewhat illegal because it is not against the law to produce it, but it is illegal to serve it in a bar. There are backyard production plants in Mascota where you can buy nicely packaged bottles of raicilla, but the bars in PV will tell you that they can't



Raicilla ovens in Mascota

serve it. I know because I have been told just that many times immediately prior to offering an extra incentive to the bartender who invariably has a bottle stashed away behind the bar. It is suggested that you have a map with you showing directions to where you are sleeping and possibly a name tag before sampling a few shots, not to identify yourself to others, but rather in the event you can't recall your name.

The average daily temperature (not the daily high) is 69 degrees with June having a daily average of 75 degrees and January 62 degrees. The town's elevation lies at 4068 feet above sea level. The average yearly rainfall total measures 36 inches, all adding up to a near-perfect climate. The valley in which the town sits is surrounded by pine and oak covered hills, which can be explored via dirt roads and by horseback, which can be rented in town.

On a recent trip I saw no evidence of a single gringo living in town, although I'm not sure about that, and I suspect the new road might bring a number of expats looking for the next "place" – the place that all too often eventually starts to resemble the place that they left in the first place. Oh well, that should take a while before the first signs of *necessary services* take hold – chic coffee houses, ATM booths on every corner, AA meetings. I give it five years from the road's completion, then it will be on to another village, which fortunately, is something these hills between Puerto Vallarta and Guadalajara are filled with.

### TALPA DE ALLENDE

Talpa is somewhat larger than Mascota, with about 11,000 people, but seems to be larger than the 3,000 person difference would suggest. It must be the fact that about 1 million people a year visit the town in pilgrimage to its Gothic church that houses the beloved virgin, Rosaria de Talpa, one of the renowned three sister virgins of Jalisco. The small, straw figure is said to have miraculous healing powers, attracting the faithful from all

over western Mexico, many of whom walk for days to reach the town. The supporting businesses create a lively scene as mariachis, souvenir stands and food carts cater to the pilgrims. The festival days in honor of the virgin occur four times per year on February 2, March 10 -19 (the largest gathering), May 10 - 12, and September 10 - 19. The few hotels in town fill up rapidly, and then so do the sidewalks with makeshift tents providing nighttime shelter. For the less committed traveler, at any time during the rest of the year you can find nice lodging options and plenty of areas to explore once the virgin has healed your ailments (hmmm – it might be a good place to visit right after sampling the raicilla in Mascota)

Talpa is a very pretty and colorful town, with the same elevation and climate as Mascota. There are several nearby defunct mining operations that you can visit as well as smaller villages that could be imagined to



Seminary, Mascota

be much as they were 75 years ago. Local guides can take you to a choice of many adventurous day-trips (see [www.mexicofile.com/talpadeallende.htm](http://www.mexicofile.com/talpadeallende.htm) for some ideas as described in a *Mexico File* article from July 2001 by

Georgia Stasi). You can also reference the information on **Hacienda Jacaranda**, a boutique hotel owned by long-time *Mexico File* subscribers Bill Worth and Guy Lawlor.

So I would suggest that you visit this area soon before the master planners get started. A few days in Vallarta followed by a few more in the hill towns is about as good as Mexico gets. Just don't plan to move a Starbucks into Mascota or Talpa. I'll be the guy out front with the picket sign.



Old church grounds in Mascota



## El Castillo de Chapultepec

Lynne Doyle is a longtime **Mexico File** subscriber and contributor from Maine who lived in Cuernavaca as a child and would prefer to be living in Mexico now. Thus, she spends every possible moment studying, exploring and visiting friends there. She teaches courses in *The History of Mexico* and *Popular Arts of Mexico* at the University of Southern Maine in Portland, and is also a published travel photographer. The object of the *Las Joyas de Mexico* feature is to highlight for MF readers some of the lesser-known but most rewarding of Mexico's geographic, human and artistic treasures.

It totally boggles my mind, but all the times I have been to Mexico City, no one ever asks me if I have seen Chapultepec Castle. The Anthropology Museum, yes, the Museum of Modern Art, yes, Belles Artes, oh yes. But not one driver, tour guide or friend has ever suggested that the Castle would be something interesting to see.

Fortunately, on my second trip to the Big City, I found it myself. Standing at the entrance to Chapultepec Park, I noticed the stone structure on the hill peeking through the trees with the Mexican flag flying from it and asked a cop what it was. He explained about the castle being the one-time home of Mexican presidents – and added that it housed the President's throne that Pancho Villa had once sat in and a large Juan O'Gorman mural – and I decided it was worth taking a look.



Because it was late in the day and I was afraid the museum would close, I ran up the hill to get to the entrance, but every ten minutes or so, there is a little open train that takes viewers to the top of the hill and back down again. Since then, I make it a point to go back whenever I can, and I never get tired of it. Once through the large stone gates, the castle lies to the left and to the right are several manicured half-circle gardens designed by the Empress Carlotta overlooking a panoramic view of downtown Mexico City. To be honest, most days the smog is thick and the view is partially obscured, but early this spring, my husband and I went back for maybe the tenth time and we had a sunny and absolutely clear (if you can believe it) day, where everything was shining and clean and you could see all the way to the zocalo and beyond.

The first entrance into the castle leads to an open room that houses the carriage that the ill-fated Emperor Maximilian brought with him when he was sent by Napoleon III to rule Mexico. It is a large baroque carriage that totally reflects the ostentatious character of Maximilian's era, especially when you notice the simple small black vehicle beside it that brought Benito Juarez to the castle when he became Mexico's president. From this room, you round the corner and proceed to a long hall exhibiting objects from Mexico's long and varied history. At the end of the hall, encased in glass, is the large wooden throne upholstered in red velvet that we've all seen in the famous photograph of Pancho Villa with Emiliano Zapata next to him on the sole occasion when they met during the Mexican Revolution.

From there, it's outdoors again to the spacious balconies that overlook the extraordinary green of Chapultepec Park with the lake in the center and the massive amusement park off to the left. Walking along the balconies, one can turn to the right and see into the carefully restored rooms of the castle that housed, in their time, Carlotta and Maximilian, Porfirio Diaz during his 34-year-presidency, and several

**The iron gate at the entrance to Chapultepec Castle with the jacaranda trees in spring bloom.**

presidents after him. Before the advent of Maximilian, the castle was a military school and fort, and in the year 1938, then-President Lazaro Cardenas deeded it to the city as a historical museum and moved to the Governor's Palace fronting the zocalo. As you pass around the front of the castle, you are treated to a breathtaking view of the length of Paseo de la Reforma, constructed by Maximilian to ease his daily trip to work on the zocalo. On a clear day, Alameda Park and Belles Artes gleam in the sun.



**A view of the Paseo de la Reforma and the modern skyline of Mexico City from the balcony outside of Empress Carlotta's bedroom. The pillars in the foreground are part of the Monumento de los Niños Heroes de Chapultepec, commemorating the six cadets of the military college once housed in the Castle who died defending it from General Winfield Scott in 1847. To the left is the 42-story Torre de Latino Americano.**

After you traverse the pristine formal gardens in the center of the castle, you enter the museum rooms that exhibit the clothes, weapons, personal possessions, furnishings, coins and other belongings of all of the former occupants of the building, as well as some of the most important historical art of Mexico. Also, there are rooms that house temporary exhibitions – this last time, a mixed exhibit of Mexico's Mestizo heritage that included a striking Diego Rivera painting that I had never seen before. The last room is home to Juan O'Gorman's interpretation of Mexico's political and social history, a long curving mural with benches placed along its length for comfortable viewing. Upon leaving this room, it is outdoors again to the Garden of the Pergolas, with its fountains, statuary, and, again, striking view of the park.



**One section of Juan O’Gorman’s huge standing mural depicting Mexico’s political history – this room is a definite highlight of the Museo Nacional de Historia.**

This museum is one of the most enjoyable I have visited throughout Mexico, but I rarely encounter another American there. If you go on a weekday, you will most likely be joined by, conservatively, 50,000 Mexican school children, but this is not a problem. They are so well-behaved that it is a pleasure to watch them absorb their own heritage. Occasionally I have met a lost European tourist, and once, two California college girls who had been sent by a Mexican boy they met in a disco. On the weekends, Mexican families by the hundreds tour the rooms and balconies and enjoy picnic lunches in the gardens, as entrance fees to all historical sites in Mexico are free on Sundays.

I will never understand why no one seems to think this site to be of interest to Americans, or why Americans do not seem to visit it. On the top of this historic hill is a remarkable window into a critical period in Mexico’s chaotic modern history, and there is much to be found there that provides important insight into the influences that

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**The Empress Carlotta’s sitting and correspondence room. During the French occupation of Mexico during the 1860’s, Carlotta would sit here in the morning and watch her husband Maximilian’s carriage traverse El Paseo de la Reforma, which he built, on his way to work at the Palacio del Gobierno in the zocalo.**

## Paulino Pérez by C.M. Mayo

*From Miraculous Air: Journey of a Thousand Miles through Baja California, the Other Mexico by C.M. Mayo, University of Utah Press, 2002. This excerpt is found in the chapter, “The Sea Is Cortés.” © 2002 C.M. Mayo. Reprinted by permission of the author.*

“**T**he sharks will all be gone in twenty, maybe thirty years. There are much fewer sharks than there were five years ago. Ask anybody in La Paz, they’ll tell you the same.” Paulino Pérez sighs and looks up at the ceiling of his studio. A green lizard is resting there upside down, its tiny toes splayed in a grip. Over the hum of the floor fan, the night outside his studio crackles with croaks and chirps.

He is a painter, but Paulino knows a lot about sharks: he spent three years researching their eating habits for his thesis in marine biology at the Universidad de Baja California Sur. That was why he’d come to La Paz, to study marine biology; he grew up on the mainland, near Guadalajara. He obtained the shark specimens for his thesis research from local fishermen. When he’d finished, he took his data to PESCA, the Mexican fish and game authority.

“They needed it,” he says, “because what they had was a big mess.” PESCA registers catches of *tiburón*, or shark, and *cazón*, which means, roughly, small shark. “But *cazón*,” Paulino explains, “can be shark species as different from one another as elephants and chickens. And not only that, PESCA counts a kilogram of dried shark meat the same as fresh. Age, size, species, none of these are differentiated.”

Paulino put together some conferences, but the PESCA officials were not interested in his data. That was disheartening, as were his prospects as a researcher / professor. The pay was, as they say, *una miseria*. Even worse, as far as the sharks were concerned, more research wouldn’t be of much use anyway. “Everyone will tell you the sharks are disappearing, although there’s no really good data on the trend. To get really good data I’d have to do a ten-year study, but in ten years the subject of my research might not exist! What’s happening is happening, whether I study the sharks or not.”

What the PESCA officials were interested in were his photos and illustrations. Rather than despair, Paulino took that as a signal. “I can make art, I can transmit a feeling. And that, I think, is a contribution.”

The walls of his studio are covered with his paintings, all of them of things submerged under water: a shark, a fish, a hand, two swimmers, the light playing on their bodies like tangles of ropes. Paulino is fascinated by the water, he always has been. When he was small, he would put his head in the wash tub and look back up at the surface, shimmering like a layer of mercury. As a teenager, he took up skin diving. It always attracted him, the way light moves through water.

“It’s very fast. Things appear, disappear. You don’t see anything and then all of a sudden: a whale! You see bubbles, a whole cloud of bubbles, then nothing. And colors — ” he is on the edge of his chair now, waving his hands, his face pinkly glistening in the heat, the harsh bright light of the lamps — “in the sea there are *thousands* of colors.”



## PUERTO VALLARTA - STARS' HIDEAWAYS

by Erika Lorentzen

*We thought it would be interesting for you to read about Puerto Vallarta from a European travel writer's point of view.*

Thanks to film director John Huston's "Night of the Iguana" (1964) with Richard Burton, Puerto Vallarta has transformed itself into one of the most attractive beach getaways on the Pacific side of Mexico. Vallarta's penchant for art is clear from the sculptures that line the Malecon to the *gallerie des artists*. Vallarta has a consciousness for the nuances of finer living that sets it apart from places like Acapulco. In the sixties, there were only 1,000 living in Vallarta. Now, there are more than 350,000 and 3 million visitors a year. It has become the home away from home for celebrities, filmmakers and the Mexican elite. Once I arrived, I was determined to glimpse what all the hoopla was about.

I started by walking around the marina where pelicans flew overhead as crews polished the sterns of yachts. Many yacht owners leave such grandeur docked in the harbor for most of the year, taking them out only occasionally. I passed by one of the boat owners on a pay phone as he said, "Put a million down, then talk to me." Was I on the set of a movie? Then again, many films and TV shows, including the "Love Boat," were shot on location in Vallarta.

Top end resort hotels radiate out along the coastline from the center of town – some literally built on cliffs for the spectacular views. Vallarta also hosts a number of lower priced hotels in the center of the city that are quite reasonable for families. Even a low priced hotel in Vallarta isn't bad, and they can be in Mexico.

There are a few gems in Vallarta that are romantic and off-the-beaten-path. The bed and breakfast, Casa Kimberley, is certainly that. After Elizabeth Taylor and Burton fell in love on the set of Cleopatra in Italy, they worked on Huston's film in Vallarta. The couple purchased a house, Casa Kimberley, on

a winding cobblestone street in Gringo Gulch overlooking the Rio Cuale valley and Alta Vista mountainside.

Similar to the bridge at the house of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo in Mexico City, Taylor and Burton built a "lover's arch" known by the Mexicans as "El Puente de Reconciliacion," which was based on the "Bridge of Sighs" the couple had seen in Venice, Italy.

Burton's alcoholism, drinking sometimes three bottles of vodka a day, five packs of cigarettes and obsessively reading up to five books a day, made him a difficult character to live with. When the couple fought, Taylor would send Burton to the other house, which also served as a poker club, when Peter O'Toole, Huston or John Wayne came to town. Though Taylor sold it after Burton's death, the mysticism surrounding their romance, and their love of Vallarta still resonate at the home.

Huston's former house, which is only accessible by sea, is available for an affordable romantic evening outside of the city. Vallarta Adventure's tour, "Rhythms of the Night," is a one-hour sail in the Bay of Banderas and departs near the marina. Sea birds meander on the evening air currents as you pass into the cove of Las Caletas with the sky illuminated in the fiery reds and oranges of the setting sun. Amid tropical palms, music and dance, a candlelight dinner is served on the torched lit beach.

The best place to admire the view of the Bay of Banderas is from Le Kliff restaurant off the highway leading to Barra de Navidad. Le Kliff was built before the set of the film scene, in which Ava Gardner lusts after Reverend Burton. Situated on a rocky shelf, with a series of terraces protected from the sun by thatched roofs, it is a great place to catch humpback whales mating and giving birth between December and March.

To be less of a tourist, I went out to explore the local culture and ended up in a hip club called Santos. Clubs, cafés, galleries and restaurants are booming despite the stifled Mexican economy.

Santos is a triple decked bar: on the first floor, food and lounging are the order of the day in a chic want-to-be-seen atmosphere. On your way upstairs you pass by a chilly, ambient / techno room with a dance floor. If you are able to make it to the top étage, you can enjoy *mojitos* on the roof among a young, energetic crowd.

The fact that Vallarta is in Mexico sometimes surprises me. There's a Wal-Mart, where families do their shopping on Friday nights. The lines are a bit longer than in the US and there are children everywhere. The Mexican population is exploding, which makes it a very young culture. The average age in Mexico is 26.

I was reminded of the difference between Mexico and the States while strolling along the Malecon, the main drag. I purchased a shawl and struck up a conversation with a local vendor, a small, middle-aged woman with a wide smile. The first thing she did was to offer advice – "Marriage doesn't make things get better." Later, I asked her what her life was like in Mexico. "I make \$9 a week, and my children tell me they want to eat at McDonalds," she replied dryly. "I know that if we eat there they will starve for three days afterwards."

Locals work hard to keep the place a popular tourist destination. New sculptures by Alejandro Colunga will be erected at the Pier Rotunda. It is an effort to restore his lost work, which was blasted by 66-foot waves and swallowed up by the sea in the hurricane on Oct 25, 2002, when winds reached up to 130 miles per hour. Colunga's other projects are in Long Island, where he plans to build a labyrinth measuring 490 feet in diameter, and Havana, where he will erect a series of sculptures devoted to the deities of Cuba.

From the Malecon, you can see the spires of Café des Artists, which rivals restaurants in Paris and New York City. The chef happens to be French. Thierry Blouet's roasted filet mignon wrapped in blue agaves and sautéed in foie gras pasilla sauce with French green

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beans is to die for. Top it off with the “Montezuma” bitter chocolate fondant and a cup of the best espresso in town. The décor inside is inspiring, with glass teardrops hanging from the ceiling accentuated by the white modernist architecture. Ask to sit outside in the backyard terrace – you’ll be glad you did.

A day in the town can easily be exchanged for a day in nature, among one of the more exotic nature preserves. Islas Marietas is known for its variety of birds: penguins, scissortails, ducks, and pelicans. For the more adventurous, snorkeling among the coral reefs of Playa del Amor will take you to the shores of the sparkling white sand beach. To get there you cross a wide rock tunnel hewn out by centuries and then swim the rest of the way.

Even with secluded beaches like the one on Islas Marietas at hand, for some reason people all over the world tend to congregate at crowded beaches, as if to say crowds mean the beach is better. Playa los Muertos is no different, but it is the home of El Dorado – an authentic Mexican restaurant, spacious with a clear view of the amalgam of beachgoers. Children dive into the sea from a nearby pier, and the local jazz singer at the club *le bistro* segues into a spot on the sand as if the sand were an impromptu stage. The owner of El Dorado, who died last year, was responsible for inviting Huston to Vallarta. Open since 1961, El Dorado underwent recently renovations and is usually packed. An older, fit, gay American man announces in Spanish and English that happy hour is about to

begin. Two free drinks show up, and I’m well on my way to a pleasant afternoon in the shade – romantic and happy.

### GETTING THERE

Continental, Delta, Alaska Air, United, Aeromexico all offer direct flights to Vallarta. For more information, go to [www.vallartaonline.com](http://www.vallartaonline.com) and [www.hpermex.com](http://www.hpermex.com).

### Restaurants

**Le Kliff**  
KM 17.5 Can. A  
Manzanillo, South  
Zone  
Tel: 52 (322) 222-3675  
[reserva@lekliff.com](mailto:reserva@lekliff.com)

**El Dorado**  
Playa el Anclote,  
Punta Mita  
Tel: 52 (329) 291-6332

**Café Maximilian**  
Olas Altas 38-B,  
zona romantica (Old  
Vallarta)  
Tel: 52 (322) 223-0760  
[maximilian@pvnet.com.mx](mailto:maximilian@pvnet.com.mx)

**Le Bistro Jazz Café**  
Isla Rio Cuale Local  
16-A  
Tel: 52 (322) 222  
0283,  
52 (322) 223 1084  
[lebistro@lebistro.com.mx](mailto:lebistro@lebistro.com.mx)

### Where to stay

**Casa Magna Marriott Resort**  
Paseo de la Marina 5



**Hotel Meson de Santa Elena**



**Hotel Meson de Santa Elena**



**La Mision Hotel, Talpa**

## Hotels and Transit in Mascota and Talpa

Mascota and Talpa are only about 30 to 35 miles from Puerto Vallarta as the crow flies, but for now, until the new highway is completed, it takes about four hours to drive there. You need a high-clearance vehicle and you probably don’t want to try it in the rainy season, as there are several streams to negotiate. Or you can drive 110 miles from Guadalajara on a paved road that takes a good 5½ hours.

There is a bus service that leaves from Parque Hidalgo in Vallarta daily at 7:00 am and 8:00 am. And Aero Taxis de la Bahia flies from the PV airport, landing in both Talpa and Mascota. The flight is only about 15 to 20 minutes and costs around \$80 round-trip.

The best hotel in Mascota is Hotel Meson de Santa Elena near the main plaza. Housed in a restored colonial building, the hotel has 13 nicely furnished rooms around a traditional courtyard and a small bar and restaurant. Doubles run about \$40US. There are two or three other hotels in Mascota and finding a room should be no problem in this small town.

Talpa has several good hotels, most located right around the main plaza. The Hotel Plaza looked to be a good choice with a location right across from the church. Tel. # 011 52 338-500-86. Doubles are \$18.00 to \$24.00.

Even better is the Hotel la Mision, behind the church in a quieter location. This would be my choice after reviewing both hotels. Tel.# 011 52 338-502-02. Doubles run around \$18.00

Hacienda Jacarandas has five guest rooms, a 55-foot lap pool, two stocked lakes for fishing, a hot tub, and great food. See more in the classified insert accompanying this newsletter. Tel. # 011 52 333-447-7366. Email [guylawlor@hotmail.com](mailto:guylawlor@hotmail.com)

*Continued on page 8*



### THE MEXICO FILE

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# About Mexico

## Fox Wife Won't Run

In an attempt to defuse harsh criticism and speculation, President Fox has said that his wife, Marta Sahagun, has no intention of running for the presidency when his term ends in December 2006. Fox's chief of staff, Alfonso Durazo, recently resigned his post, objecting to the idea that the first lady would be seeking the presidency. This is a sensitive issue in Mexico, which is trying to escape from a legacy of presidents choosing their successors.

## Woman Wins Historic Vote

Amalia Garcia was recently elected to the office of governor of the state of Zacatecas, becoming the first female governor in Mexico since the end of one-party domination in 2000. Garcia, the daughter of an ex-governor, is a member of the leftist PRD, soundly defeated the PRI and PAN candidates. About 1.5 million voters from Zacatecas live in the U.S. Garcia, who also was the first woman to lead a political party as the president of the PRD, attributed her victory to the large number of female supporters in a state where many men have migrated to work in the United States.

## Actor Asked to Perform Miracles

James Caviezel, who played Jesus in Mel Gibson's movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, has been besieged with requests to perform miracles by Mexican fans who believe he really is Jesus Christ. The 35-year-old actor was on a one-week tour of the east Mexican state of Veracruz where dozens of residents from villages throughout the state, one of the poorest in the country, asked him to heal the sick and perform other miracles as he passed through. The actor, who is himself a strict Catholic, said: "It was a shock for me to see how they came up to me to ask for my help. I had to explain to them that I was only an actor, and wasn't really the son of God." Mexico has the biggest population of Catholics in the world after Brazil and has been visited by the Pope five times.



## Puerto Vallarta *Continued*

Marina Vallarta  
(Special \$125 for deluxe, 2 people)  
Tel: 52 (322) 226-0000

[www.marriotthotels.com/pvrnx](http://www.marriotthotels.com/pvrnx)  
[Marriott@puerto-vallarta.com](mailto:Marriott@puerto-vallarta.com)

### Hotel Westin Regina

Paseo de la Marina Sur 205  
(\$185-\$300 for a single or double)  
Designed by Javier Sordo Madaleno

### Casa Kimberley

445 Calle Zaragosa  
Tel: 52 (322) 222 1336  
[www.casakimberley.com](http://www.casakimberley.com),  
[info@casakimberley.com](mailto:info@casakimberley.com)  
(Nov - May, \$90 per night 1-2 people,  
breakfast included.)

## Not to be Missed

### Café des Artists

Guadalupe Sanchez 74  
(6-11:30pm)  
Tel: 52 (322) 222-3228  
Fax: 52 (322) 222-3227  
[artists@pvnet.com.mx](mailto:artists@pvnet.com.mx)  
[www.cafedesartists.com.mx](http://www.cafedesartists.com.mx)

### Vallarta Adventures

"Rhythms of the Night" tour of John  
Huston's jungle hideout.  
(6:30 from the PV Maritime Terminal,  
\$30)  
[www.vallarta-adventures.com](http://www.vallarta-adventures.com)  
[info@vallarta-adventures.com](mailto:info@vallarta-adventures.com)

### Café Oro Verde

Av Juarez No. 728 Altos  
Centro Puerto Vallarta  
(For reading and partaking in the local  
art scene.)  
Tel: 52 (322) 222- 31 59  
Patricia Maire cell: 044 322 20 503 92

### La Bodeguita des Medio

Paseo Diaz Ordaz 858, Malecon  
(Cuban restaurant with live music)  
Tel: (322) 223 15 84  
Restaurant (322) 223 1585  
[Rogerlozano68@hotmail.com](mailto:Rogerlozano68@hotmail.com)

### De Santos

Morelos 771  
Downtown  
(5pm-4am daily)  
(322) 223-3052



## Más o Menos *Continued*

plans this year. Take a drive, somewhere – away from lots of people, somewhere where a kid feels safe. Mexico can always wait another year, right? Yes, right. In a couple of weeks we'll be packing the van and heading to the Rockies, not thinking about fear, or bombs, or crashing airplanes.

So this political announcement by Ridge has done nothing to, or for, my family except to frighten my kid and, by extension, our travel plans. Thanks, Tom. November will come soon enough.



## Chatapultepec *Continued*

have formed the Mexico we find today in many of the cities we visit the most. For example, looking at the objects in the museum and the furnishings of the rooms helps in great measure to understand the French influence found so often throughout the central and Gulf areas of the country. Next time you're in Mexico City, for about \$4.50 a person, and \$1 for the train, you can peek through this remarkable window into Mexico's history – I know you won't be sorry.



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