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Meet Me in PVR



STORY AND PHOTOS BY MEAGAN CAMP

You want beaches, he wants mountains, Puerto Vallarta has both. Tucked into a rocky bay on the Bahía de Banderas at the base of the Sierra Madre mountain range, this Mexican getaway has the best of both worlds.

Has anyone ever asked why most North Texans always opt for the Yucatan instead of venturing across the country? I hopped on a Friday morning flight out of DFW and two hours later I touched down in the beautiful city of Puerto Vallarta and felt transported from the touristy, spring break-ified, duty free shopping of Cancun and Cozumel. Puerto Vallarta has its heart set on showing you amazing views and delicious food.



Puerto Vallarta became the place to be after Richard Burton filmed "The Night of the Iguana" in 1964 and brought his new fiancé Elizabeth Taylor to the small fishing village for the filming. The gossip was widespread during filming about the pair taking over the town that by the time the film's Oscar nominations were announced, American tourists were flocking to see the lush wildlife featured. Burton liked it so much he bought a large estate nearby. Mexico built a well-appointed international airport that is quick to navigate and has routes from all over the US. Added bonus, there's no time change for us Texans!

The city of Puerto Vallarta stretches along the coastline so check where you are staying in relation to the airport to prepare yourself for the length of the taxi ride or your trip to dinner, it can take a little longer

than expected if you are staying further south. That said, we stayed at the fantastically convenient Velas Vallarta which is less than five minutes from the airport and the kind of all-inclusive resort you will actually enjoy. There is an adults only property across the way that may be preferable for couples, but the Velas Vallarta was so comfortable that both families and couples have plenty of room to eat, swim, sleep and repeat. Nestled along the bay, Velas Vallarta has an 18-hole championship golf course, three pools interconnected by canals and walkways and several restaurants for getting dressed up or staying in your bikini. I slipped on my all-inclusive bracelet and immediately found my new favorite drink, a tamarind margarita. Zingy, rich and ice cold, that margarita had a chili rim I've tried to replicate but can't seem to swing. Maybe I just need a beach front view to make it perfect?



Velas Vallarta's guest rooms are where you find the real value. We stayed in a suite with a full kitchen and long terrace perfect for cooking breakfast after a trip to the morning market or for building the perfect happy hour before dinner out. If you are a family looking for a resort that offers more than a buffet, Velas Vallarta's suites can be connected with shared doors to share spaces between families and to share amenities. The property has several options for entertaining kids during the day including the Kids Club and nightly entertainment.

My present to myself this trip was the gift of silence, a massage on the beach. It was serene and everything one needs for a real recharge. The Velas Vallarta Spa offers these decadent beach front massages as well as full esthetician and nail services next to their fitness center.



Where to Eat

La Ribera, Velas Vallarta Resort

It would be so easy to discount the cantina by the beach at Velas Vallarta, but the fresh seafood available in Puerto Vallarta is too good to pass up when its served in a fresh tortilla or an ice cold ceviche. We started our trip with unctuous tamales, a shrimp quesadilla and street-style corn tortilla tacos that were perfectly executed. Did I mention the margaritas are on point? They are also served all over the property at the swim up bar and in the beach side eatery.



Café des Artistes

It definitely caught me off guard when a friend recommended Café des Artistes "isn't that in New York?" I asked. It may be, but this location is stunning compared to the concrete jungle. Stepping out of the taxi on to a small street outside of the main city square, Café des Artistes is almost built into the hillside. A majority of the dining is outdoors with tables tucked in between tree trunks, water features and modern art. The white tablecloth service is exceptional and welcoming. We experienced a special menu of regional Mexican specialties that included a pumpkin soup, deep fried zucchini blossoms and whole fish sautéed and served with beurre blanc. It was a beautiful fusion of French classics and Mexican flavors. Absolutely don't skip dessert which is a spectacle of chocolate work, macarons and cakes served in flower pots.

Puerto Vallarta is definitely a city to explore if you are interested in different cuisines. Dining experiences are not limited to traditional Mexican food. The city has a fantastic food reputation and boasts good Thai, seafood, European cuisines that elevates this food destination to a new level.

