

## **What Happens When Tourists Cruise to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico?**

*Regardless of what the cruisers do during their short stay in Vallarta, they are all treated with dignity, respect, and friendliness and therefore are eager to return for a longer visit the next time.*

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Puerto Vallarta, Mexico has become one of the most popular tourist resort destinations in the world. Because Vallarta is located along the Mexican Riviera on the Pacific Ocean, a substantial portion of these tourists arrive by boat; the majority in large cruise ships, however many come in their private yachts.

Ten years ago, a cruise ship would arrive in Vallarta every other day. At certain times during the "high season" of November through May when the average temperature is 73°F with virtually no chance of rain, cruise ships would arrive two days in a row.

Five years ago, the popularity of cruising and specifically cruising to the Mexican Riviera, reached a point where you could find a cruise liner at the Puerto Vallarta Marine Terminal almost every day, and sometimes, a second cruise liner anchored in Banderas Bay. Passengers from the anchored ship were then shuttled to shore by small tenders.

Two years ago, you could count on at least one cruise ship every day in Vallarta and often find another one or two ships anchored in the bay. The traffic was so heavy at the Marine Terminal that the authorities in Vallarta started construction on the new Maritime Terminal.

Construction of the new Maritime Terminal in Puerto Vallarta was completed in early 2007, thus tripling the cruise passenger capacity. Today, you'll usually see at least two cruise ships docked at the Maritime Terminal and frequently three. Cruising to Vallarta has become so popular that there are times during the "high season" when a fourth ship has to anchor in the bay! With an average of close to 2,000 passengers per ship, this results in anywhere from 4,000 to 8,000 tourists arriving daily by cruise ship.

(As a side note of interest, the Puerto Vallarta International Airport was recently quadrupled in size in order to accommodate the flights that are arriving and departing all day, everyday.)

Now that we have a feel for the volume of cruising tourists arriving daily in Vallarta by commercial cruise liners, let's consider those arriving by private yachts.

Ten years ago, Puerto Vallarta was the home to a beautiful 400 slip Marina for private yachts ranging in size from 30ft to well over 100ft. There was also a marina in Nuevo Vallarta with 380 slips for smaller boats up to 30ft long.

Due to the recent demand for additional slips, larger slips, and yachting related services, a number of significant new marina construction projects have been undertaken; some of which have been completed, some currently under construction, and some still in the planning stages.

For example, the beautiful Nuevo Vallarta Marina now has nearly 250 slips for yachts ranging from 30ft to 120ft long. The modern \$50 million Marina Riviera Nayarit, located in La Cruz de Huanacastle, is approximately 40% complete with nearly 400 berths for yachts ranging from 30ft to 400ft. Fonatur, Mexico's National Tourism Development Trust, has planned a 150 slip marina in their Phase 1 development program just north of Punta de Mita. These marinas will increase the moorage capacity from 400 to well

over 1,200 private yachts, thereby tripling the total volume of tourists privately cruising to Vallarta.

Okay, now that we have a feel for the growth of the Vallarta area and the volume of tourists cruising to Vallarta, let's explore just what happens to these tourists as they arrive in Paradise.

As the tourists disembark from the commercial cruise liners or their private yachts, they are first greeted by the friendly faces of English speaking Mexicans. Because the local economy is based solely on tourism, almost everyone is now speaking some degree of English and therefore communication is never an obstacle in Vallarta. Friendly faces as revealed in the Conde Nast survey of its readers, where Vallarta was voted the friendliest resort destination in the world.

Of all things, those arriving by cruise ships first see a Sam's Club, a Mega Wal-Mart, and a huge new modern shopping center; probably not what they would expect to see in a sleepy little Mexican fishing village! They soon discover that Vallarta is no longer sleepy or little, in that its population has exploded to 350,000 inhabitants and is projected to reach 600,000 by the year 2015.

Unfortunately, those arriving by cruise ships are generally allowed only about eight hours in town before the ship cruises out on its journey to the next Mexican Riviera port. While in town, they are given many options in the way of city activities and tours. Some opt to play golf on any of the seven magnificent courses; others might want to take a four hour deep sea fishing trip or play tennis on any of the hundreds of tennis courts. Some take jungle safaris, ATV trips through the Sierra Madre Mountains, or go whale watching, snorkeling, or swimming with the dolphins. Those less ambitious tourists take sight seeing bus tours through the city and then into the fine neighborhoods where the multi-million dollar haciendas and villas are nestled among the hillsides overlooking Banderas Bay.

The majority of these cruisers merely catch one of the thousands of taxis and head into town for a day of strolling along the Malecon by the beach, shopping the many boutique stores, or dining in any of the hundreds of fine restaurants.

Regardless of what the cruisers do during their short stay in Vallarta, they are all treated with dignity, respect, and friendliness and therefore are eager to return for a longer visit the next time. The taste of Vallarta is so addictive, that in all probability, their next visit will be by air and will last for a week or longer.

Those that come in their private yachts generally stay for longer periods of time. In fact, the quality of life is so great in Vallarta, that many of those fortunate individuals, who could afford to live anywhere in the world, have just docked their yachts in Vallarta and made this their winter residence. After all, Mexico was recently ranked the top retirement destination in the world by International Living Magazine and Puerto Vallarta is considered by many to be the most desirable city in Mexico for retirement.

To sum it up; what happens when tourists cruise to Vallarta is that they often become so infatuated by the climate, the scenery of mountains and ocean, the people, the cleanliness, the safety, the available activities, and the overall quality of life, that they either return as soon as possible or they just stay, joining the other 50,000 North Americans that have made the tropical Paradise of Puerto Vallarta their retirement home.

Jim Scherrer has owned property in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico for 25 years and resided there for the past eleven years. The mission of his series of 50 articles pertaining to retirement in Puerto Vallarta is to reveal the recent changes that have occurred in Vallarta while dispelling the misconceptions about living conditions in Mexico. For the full series of articles regarding travel to and retirement in Vallarta as well as pertinent Puerto Vallarta links, please visit us at <http://www.PVREBA.com>.

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About PVREBA: A real estate agency in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico acting exclusively as buyers' agents by introducing North Americans to Vallarta, showing them properties that meet their needs and budgets, and assisting them through the foreign buying process, with all payments made by the listing agents.

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