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## Mazatlan Golf Scene Keeps it Real Three Courses Enough to Keep the Average Duffer Happy

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In golf - and high diving from lofty cliffs into shallow, rock-peppered waters in the Sea of Cortez - timing is everything. On days when the rhythm is off or the wind is not properly calibrated, the results can be somewhat painful. As we all know, even the most seasoned "players" can be off their game from time to time.

On my recent golf-focused trip to Mazatlan, I certainly was hoping to find my tempo. Fortunately, for me and the daring divers on the famous Malecon - the experience went down with nary a "splat."

Might as well cut to the chase. Mazatlan isn't exactly a golfing mecca. There are only three full-length golf courses to choose from. One of the courses, Golf Marina Mazatlan, is so new you may want to give it a year, or so, to grow in and mature. However, when you consider everything this charming coastal city has to offer, you and your golf ball are bound (provided you stick a few landings) to thoroughly enjoy the "flight."



Mazatlan, located on the Pacific Coast of Mexico in the tomato-rich state of Sinaloa, is known for its authentic aura, endless beaches and relatively inexpensive ways. Mazatlan is real. Mazatlan doesn't put on airs. And, just like the succulent shrimp and mahi mahi that are harvested in these warm Pacific waters, I ate it up. Even though the golf is not what many would consider "world class," I ate that up, too.

Not surprisingly, the golf here isn't a \$400-dollar affair for the country club set. It is not showy or particularly intimidating. All three courses are \$110 or less with rates significantly better when you purchase a golf package (check out the deals available with El Cid Resorts, [www.elcid.com](http://www.elcid.com)).

There should be plenty of pesos left over for trinkets and tequila and to patronize the famous, high-flying divers on the Malecon.

After an enjoyable round of golf on one of the first courses built in Mazatlan, the 27-hole El Cid Country Club, which has hosted the Canadian Tour (the Lee Trevino-designed nine here is by far the best), it was time to explore the downtown area. Thanks to a speedy early morning round (a busy day at any of the courses is about 75 golfers, with the brand new Marina Mazatlan averaging significantly less than that), there was plenty of time to hop on an open-air Pulmonia, the local taxi, and explore.

After a stop at the central market - my trinkets consisted of cheesy T-shirts for the kids and a bottle of the hot-test habanero sauce in Sinaloa - I strolled along the Malecon and stopped where a large group of people were gathered. Within moments a young, skinny kid who looked no more than 15 years old clambered up some steps to a rocky perch high above the sea.

"He's crazy," I heard someone say, "the tide is out and the water is only six feet deep."

Not only that, the wind was up. But he had been paid a healthy tip (let's be honest, it's the reason they jump) and was eager to soar. Thankfully, the divers of Mazatlan - similar to the fearless flyers in Acapulco - are skilled athletes who understand the waves, wind and currents. They are born into it and this is their livelihood. After a quick wave to the energetic gallery, he launched himself from the rocky precipice nearly 15 metres above the sea. It was a perfect dive. And the crowd ate it up.

I didn't exactly eat up the new David Fleming-designed course at Marina Mazatlan the next day. However, my playing partner, former Canadian Tour player and the director of golf, Jorge Corral, did. Al-though the course is still rough around the edges, the open, 6,809-yard layout is beautifully shaped and bunkered with a nice variety of strategic holes. Water comes into play on nine of the 18 and the finisher, a bold par-5 with numerous routes to the green, is an excellent closer. The quality of the holes is impressive and the course will only get better(...)



If you go:

- WestJet offers year-round service to Mazatlan from Calgary. The airport in Mazatlan is located approximately 40-min-utes from the Golden Zone where many of the hotels are located.
- Mazatlan is known for its wide selection of outstanding restaurants that proudly serve fresh local catch. Some of the most popular restaurants include La Pun-tilla, Los Zarapes, and Pedro y Lola.
- A visit to Mazatlan should also include a tour through Old Mazatlan, El Faro Lighthouse, and the famous Plaza Machado, a cultural hot spot which is home to one of the finest opera houses in Mexico.

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