

TRAVEL

Eleana Niehus, 9, picks up a guinea pig at Critter Cabana, Newberg's multifaceted pet store.



KATIE CURRID
THE OREGONIAN

Newberg, Ore., is a charming town with a mix of old and new. It's a great place to visit for a weekend getaway. The town is located on the coast of Lincoln City. There's more than meets the eye in Newberg, often a drive-by blip for Portlanders heading west into Yamhill County wine country, to Spirit Mountain Casino or to the coast at Lincoln City.

Eastbound, Portlanders often put their blinders on even more tightly as they rush home at the end of a weekend away.

Slow down the next time you drive through Newberg on Oregon 99W. You might notice something new in the view on that twin, three-lane artery that handles so

much traffic on Lincoln Street westbound, just eastbound.

Such as:

- Colorful summer wildflowers, planted as a beautification project along 99W and in downtown wine barrel planter boxes.
- Nearly a dozen wine tasting rooms. Yes, in Newberg itself, not in the vineyards surrounding the city.
- Interesting, unique lodging a short walk from downtown. Latest is The Painted Lady Guest Cottage, next door to its restaurant. The

Please see **NEWBERG**, Page T4

Visitor finds Mazatlan welcoming and safe

By ANNE Z. COOKE
McCLATCHY-TRIBUNE

MAZATLAN, Mexico — Mexico might seem a strange place to lose your heart.

But my first encounter with our southern neighbor's warmth and charm — the smell of roasting corn from the sidewalk vendor's grill, the red and pink flowers drooping over adobe walls, vegetables piled high on tarps laid over the ground and women in multicolored shawls carrying jars on their heads — changed my 8-year-old world view forever.

Mexico does that to people. Last year more than 15 million Americans crossed the border. Some were touring Mayan ruins or looking for the perfect beach, others simply were going to work. But with the U.S. State Department's recent travel advisories warning about the drug cartels and the continued violence, even I, an admitted Mexico fan, was worried.

Was Mexico safe? I needed to see for myself, so I booked a week in Mazatlan, in the state of Sinaloa on the Pacific Ocean's golden beaches. The trip was less of a vacation and more of a mis-



PEDRO LUCIO

A stroll along Mazatlan's Malecon — the sea wall — is a must-do and a safe activity for tourists.

sion. Were the headlines coming from Mexico telling the whole story? The only way to find out was to talk to people who live there.

Where is it most dangerous to be, and what can travelers do to stay safe? Can visitors to Mazatlan count on security if they book a hotel in the "Golden Zone" (Zona Rosa), the beachside district with

hotels, restaurants and beach facilities developed specifically to accommodate visitors?

In the airport, I sat next to Kurt Miller, a 50-something man from Oregon who has a house in the El Cid Marina in Mazatlan. He laughed when he heard my safety question. "That's what all my friends want to know," he

Please see **MAZATLAN**, Page T5

Mazatlan

Continued from Page T1

said. "But we don't know anyone who's had any kind of problems. We love our house, and we've got great neighbors."

Broad, clean beaches

I'm glad I came to see for myself. This port city's sandy beaches are broad and clean, the water is warm and the surf rolls slowly up on the sand. Changing into beach wear for a stroll along the Malecon — the sea wall — was near the top of my list. Drifting out to deep water was next.

I spent a day exploring the historic downtown, a square-mile area adjacent to the shore, where Americans and Mexicans have invested both money and time, restoring the colonial structures still standing after 150 years. Newly planted trees and flower gardens shade parks and benches. Artists and artisans have opened studios and set up shop in ground-floor spaces.

After wandering through the Plaza Machado, sneaking looks into private courtyards, I peeked into the recently restored Teatro de Angela Peralta (you may know it as the Opera House), where Handel's "Messiah" was playing. In the ballet studio next door, 21 teenage girls and one boy in toe-shoes were practicing. As the pianist played, the stern and imposing teacher went from one to the next, raising a leg higher there and arching an arm back here. The scene spoke of a tranquil lifestyle. But it didn't mean I had forgotten to stay alert.

Whether I'm traveling in Paris, Buenos Aires or New York City, I don't walk out alone at night or look for fun in seedy joints. I stay in busy, well-lit neighborhoods. And when I investigated the details surrounding some of the recent crimes in Mazatlan, the facts suggested that some victims had been careless.

"It's safe here in the Zona Rosa," said Ruben Salazar, a waiter at the El Cid Marina Hotel, one of a dozen people I interviewed. "But Sinaloa



STEVE HAGGERTY

Papier-mâché skeleton figures in Mazatlan, Mexico, celebrate the Day of the Dead.

Trip planner: Mazatlan

Fly: Alaska Airlines flies direct from the West Coast. Mazatlan's airport is 40 minutes from the historic beach district.

Stay: The El Cid Marina Hotel, one of a half-dozen hotels on coast, is at the north end of the Zona Rosa, near the marina. See [elcid.com/marina\(underscore\)beach/](http://elcid.com/marina(underscore)beach/)

More info: mazatlan.com or gomazatlan.com

is famous for its mountains, where anybody can hide. I wouldn't go there. I live 20 minutes away, and I drive to work at 5 o'clock in the morning. The road is empty, but I've never had trouble."

Signature shrimp

Sticking to the main tourist areas is good advice. One such place is the Fish Market, where Mazatlan's signature shrimp — caught in the early morning and sold before noon — are heaped in ice-filled buckets next to Pacific lobsters and crabs. During the season, from September through January, shrimp dishes top the restaurant menus.

Wandering through the Zocalo (the old-town square) gardens, we walked around the bandstand and snapped photos. After touring the newly painted Cathedral, we crossed the street to the open-air Central Market, still housed in the original 19th century iron arcade. You can buy everything there, from fabrics, straw hats and kitchenware to vegetables, fruits, slabs of beef, and whole chickens hanging by the feet.

Everywhere I went, I asked people if they felt safe. "I have to live," said Salazar, shrugging his shoulders. "I have an 8-year-old son, he plays baseball and I take him two nights a week and to tournaments. We don't worry."

Of the many people I met, it was the Alvaros, a retired Mexican couple from Guadalajara — staying in their own condominium near my room in the El Cid Marina Hotel — who said it best. "Yes, safety is a concern for some," said Jose Alvaro. "But not when you visit a place like this where people are on vacation. The criminals are bad for business, but you shouldn't worry. Gangsters want to avoid the police."