

## Rhythm of the Night... and day!

Puerto Vallarta has long been known for romance. Think Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor building houses with a beautiful pink walkway bridging the two properties in order to hide their illicit love affair, which happened while he was filming *Night of the Iguana* back in 1963. But this Pacific Ocean resort town nestled in Banderas Bay with a backdrop of the majestic Sierra Madre Mountains, is more than just known for romance, it has an adventurous life and unique culture all its own.

[Meeting Place Mexico](#), brain-child of Fernando Compean, held its annual conference and non-traditional “Familiarization” trip in June 2011. The distinguished guest list included 100 travel agents, corporate accommodations staff and meeting planners from all over the United States for a week of fun in the sun, shopping, and culinary delights; along with a meticulously-planned trade show. Beginning with a friendly welcome at Puerto Vallarta International Airport's V.I.P. Lounge hosted by [Tour Vallarta DMC](#), the next few days proved to be fantastic.

A tequila tasting and dinner would lead off the week's festivities and the Marina district's [Casa Magna Puerto Vallarta Hotel](#) wooed guests with its signature private label of Blue Tequila. The hotel is spacious and pristine enough for a conference, wedding or someone's enviable birthday celebration, its most unique feature, however, is the Spa Ohtli or “journey” when translated to English. Performed in a pool of warm water, “rebirth therapy” is designed to guide guests through a series of graceful movements and synchronized breathing in pursuit of complete relaxation. Ever popular for natives who flock to the beach as an escape from Mexico City and other urban areas on weekends; a definite must for any jet-lagged or lethargic visitor.

The pre-conference tour through the city's Romantic Zone was paired with a few intense hours of browsing among the dazzling assortment of blown glass jewelry, pewter figurines, and a tequila inventory with something for every taste regardless of how discerning.

A few from the group ventured up cobblestone streets to catch a glimpse of what was film icon Elizabeth Taylor's house, now being renovated and converted into a villa by its new owners. Just a few steep steps around the corner and up a hill awaited the [Hacienda San Angel](#), a boutique hotel with a bed and breakfast-esque feel. What appears a mere run-down, ordinary home was anything but; so much for first impressions of a property. For behind the large wooden door were luscious courtyards and staircases one after another guiding guests in museum-like fashion through a lavish and uniquely furnished corridor of twenty guest suites. The view from the Celestial Suite, which overlooks the historic Lady of Guadalupe Church and, of course, the azure ocean, defines serenity. Across from the hotel is a quaint, yet romantic, chapel; a perfect setting for a small wedding an astute wedding planner could not but help take notice of.

Next stop the [Fiesta Americana](#), where an elaborate six-course food and wine pairing ensued; precisely blending flavors of traditional Mexican ingredients with contemporary selections impressed even the connoisseurs. But it was the Xiutla Ballet dancer showcase followed by a traditional Mariachi band which commanded the spotlight.

Other tours provided by [Vallarta Adventures](#) included the Sierra Madre Expedition. If you enjoy the adventure and you're looking for some time in touch with nature, as well as, new experiences, this is a great choice for starting amazing walks thru the jungle, mountain terrains and lush tropical environments.

Dolphin Extreme, a new and innovative program, provides swimmers of all levels with the opportunity to meet fellow mammals on their own turf: underwater. Equipped with a mask, snorkel and fins, visitors are instantly immersed in the dolphins' world for a surreal experience, while others swim and exercise in the turquoise above water. An unexpected visit from an overzealous sea lion capped off this remarkable adventure. Additionally, tours such as these and others are just only a slice of activity options in this area; not only are they fun, but promote an eco-friendly experience.

On convention day, envoys from over seventy-four resorts, vacation destinations and vendors from all over Mexico put on quite a show at the Puerto Vallarta International Convention center. From state-of-the-art luxury condos in Guadalupe and the nation's capital to the tranquil Mexican version of California's wine country in the agave plantations of Jalisco to the vast array of beach front destinations, each vendor proudly showcased the country they so passionately love.

Following an inquiry as to violence and civil unrest was best to address the issue at the earliest opportunity. Despite propaganda and a somewhat negative perspective of predominantly American media, the fact remains crime is limited to isolated geographic pockets for the most part. A property owner in attendance commented candidly, "One would not tell someone to avoid Las Vegas because of crime in New Orleans or vice versa." More to the point, a demography study published by Thomas Dale & Associates, a leading global investigative and security firm, revealed a disproportionate number of negative incidents among tourists versus Mexican natives despite the substantial foreign population and millions of tourists to the region each year. Perhaps more reassuring than statistical evidence, the overall the event planner consensus which found Puerto Vallarta a comfortable and highly recommended travel destination.

For the second night adventure, the group arrived at [Palace Hotels](#) in the Nuevo Vallarta region for an evening featuring sophisticated live music and colorful scenery, both overshadowed by a finale of fire performers from the roof of the far tower. Both the locale and the food were delightful and really enhanced the treasure of this up-and-coming region of Mexico.

The closing dinner at [Las Caletas](#) on Puerto Vallarta's Banderas Bay was an experience beyond compare. An hour-long boat ride by way of nothing less than a first-class, amenity-loaded catamaran, led to one of the most beautiful places in Puerto Vallarta. After a delectable buffet dinner, the real show ensued. The heart throbbing drums and fluid dance choreography by "Rhythm of the night" revue rivaled some of Las Vegas' longest running venues. The ornate stage and hard bodied performers blended Bally's Jubilee with the visual effects of Cirque de Soleil at the MGM Grand...only including a sandy beachfront and star-illuminated sky. The location is also the site of a day-long excursion that is certainly more than "a day at the beach" it is a wonderful escape into paradise.

The following day was a metaphoric "lazy Sunday" if one could call it that. The local markets of Yelapa featured enough wares and one-of-a-kind treasures to have spent days being American consumers there. Within minutes to hours, there are many magical excursion locales such as Mayto, San Sebastian and the Marietas Islands.

The final day was, of course, a dazzling one. [Villa Verano](#) and [Puerto Vallarta Beach Club](#) were the sites. Burt, the ever-enthusiastic owner gracefully played tour guide and regaled with backstories of collector-item dishware and furnishings, and tales of dinner parties produced by the property's resident chef. The tour group was often undecided as to swoon over the art exhibit making its home along the villa's hallways or the countless photos of its owner with countless Hollywood legends including John Wayne and Dean Martin to name a few, or the breathtaking ocean as viewed from each of the forty-four suites.

Apparently, Villa Verano enjoys status as the sole destination in the world touted by the likes of "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" host, Robin Leach, as the "a Pure sanctuary" by dubbing it "Hollywood's best kept secret" decades ago. As if this were not enough, amenities here included a private beach equipped with a houseman, maid and gourmet kitchen, all within walking distance of town.

With the real world calling, it was time to ship out and head for the airport. But not before Jorge Nunez of Tour Vallarta DMC could not resist pulling one last surprise from up his sleeve. No ancient artifacts or "jewel of the Nile", luxury bungalows or Liz Taylor with her beloved Richard Burton photos from the 60's; not this time. This time a taco stand; simple, understated and delicious, would be the final locale of choice.

A mere twenty minute stop for the event planners and travel writers to delight in the flavor but enough time to fully take in the beauty and coziness of a magnificent, subtle city. Whether an informal executive retreat, large corporate meeting, incentive award vacation or lavish wedding, Puerto Vallarta truly has a heart and soul beyond expectations.

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