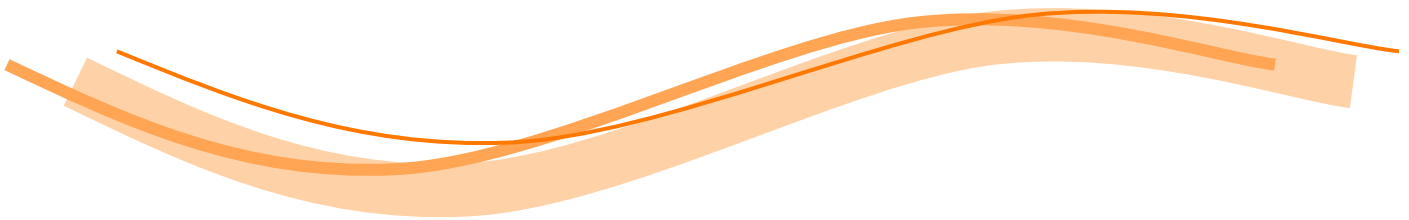




**MEXICO,  
TRANSAT HOLIDAYS  
& NOLITOURS**





<p><b>MEXICO</b></p>	<p><b>Spectacular, diverse Mexico</b> - the most popular vacation spot for Canadians seeking the sun. Discover the Pacific Coast destinations of Manzanillo, Ixtapa, Acapulco, Puerto Vallarta and Riviera Nayarit, and Cancun, Cozumel and the Riviera Maya on the Caribbean side.</p> <p><b>Transat and Nolitours</b> have the widest choice of Mexican vacations with frequent flights and small, cozy hotels to the biggest all-inclusive resorts. Frequent flights mean that some destinations offer you a more flexible choice to go for eg 10 days rather than the regulation 7 or 14 day vacation. Plus Transat's Experience Collection offers unique cultural or ecological adventures and twin centre options.</p> <p>Mexico has <b>ancient cultures</b> including the Maya and Aztec people, and a rich Spanish colonial heritage. The dramatic landscapes span towering mountains, deserts and lush rainforest. Enjoy nature, soft adventure, and sports. Savour the delicious cuisine, shopping and spas. And meet the warm and welcoming people.</p>
<p><b>Location</b></p>	<p>Mexico lies directly south of the US where North America tapers to Central America.</p>
<p><b>Geography</b></p>	<p>Mexico's total area is 1,972,550 km<sup>2</sup>, making it the world's 14th largest country by total area, and includes approximately 6,000 km<sup>2</sup> of islands in the Pacific Ocean (including the remote Guadalupe Island and the Revillagigedo Islands), Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean, and Gulf of California. From its farthest land points, Mexico is a little over 3,200 km in length.</p> <p>On its north, Mexico shares a 3,141 km border with the United States. The meandering Río Bravo del Norte (known as the Rio Grande in the United States) defines the border from Ciudad Juárez east to the Gulf of Mexico. A series of natural and artificial markers delineate the United States-Mexican border west from Ciudad Juárez to the Pacific Ocean. On its south, Mexico shares an 871 km border with Guatemala and a 251 km border with Belize.</p> <p>Mexico is crossed from north to south by two mountain ranges known as Sierra Madre Oriental and Sierra Madre Occidental, which are the extension of the Rocky Mountains from northern North America. From east to west at the centre, the country is crossed by the Trans-Mexican Volcanic Belt also known as the Sierra Nevada. A fourth mountain range, the Sierra Madre del Sur, runs from Michoacán to Oaxaca. The majority of the Mexican central and northern territories are located at high altitudes, and the highest elevations are found at the Trans-Mexican Volcanic Belt: Pico de Orizaba (5,700m or 18,701 ft) and Popocatepetl (5,462m or 17,920 ft).</p>

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<b>Name</b>	<p>Mexico: After New Spain won independence from Spain, it was decided that the new country would be named after its capital, Mexico City, which was founded in 1524 on top of the ancient Aztec capital of México-Tenochtitlan. The name comes from the Nahuatl language, but its meaning is not well known.</p> <p>Mēxihco was the Nahuatl term for the heartland of the Aztec Empire, namely, the Valley of Mexico, and its people, the Mexica, and surrounding territories which became the future State of Mexico</p>
<b>Population</b>	Mexico has a population of around 115 million (2012), making it the most populous Spanish-speaking country in the world.
<b>Language</b>	Spanish – but English is widely spoken in the coastal resort towns. There are 10.1 million Mexicans who speak an indigenous language and claim indigenous heritage, representing 9.8% of the total population
<b>Currency</b>	The Mexican Pesos – although the US Dollar is also widely accepted too. Currently (February 2014) \$1 Cdn = 12.1 Mexican Pesos.
<b>Tipping</b>	The average tip for service is 10-15% and one or two dollars per suitcase carried. Always check your bill first as tips may already be included.
<b>Government</b>	Democracy: Mexico is a Federal presidential constitutional republic.
<b>Documentation</b>	<p>Passports are needed for Canadian citizens, but no Visa is necessary. <b>Unaccompanied minors traveling to Mexico no longer need a notarized letter from their parent or guardian</b> authorizing the trip. The regulation has been suspended for a year by the Ministry of Tourism and National Institute of Migration. Prior to the temporary suspension, anyone under 18 traveling alone or accompanied by a single parent or legal guardian had to carry a notarized letter signed by both parents or by the one not travelling with the minor granting permission to enter/exit the country.</p>
<b>Time zone</b>	Mexico is mostly in the Central Time Zone, one hour behind Toronto and Montreal. The states of Baja California Sur, Chihuahua, Nayarit, Sinaloa, and Sonora fall in the Mountain Time Zone, while Baja California uses Pacific Time.
<b>Health</b>	There are no special health problems here. Many hospitals have walk-in clinics for emergency cases that are not life-threatening; you may not get immediate attention, but you won't pay emergency room prices. The quality varies, but is often quite high, especially in resort towns.
<b>Safety tips</b>	<p>Despite concerns about safety in Mexico which have been largely created by lurid media reporting, Mexican tourist destinations remain as safe as most other major destinations. 80% of all murders take place in just 6% of the country...and a part that Canadians are unlikely to go anywhere near. About <b>50,000 Canadian ex-pats</b> live in Mexico.</p> <p>Mexico's former President Felipe Calderon told the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) summit in Las Vegas in 2011 that the murder</p>

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	<p>rate in Mexico was lower than in much of the US. “The rate of homicide is 15-16 per 1,000 – lower than in Washington DC, in Pittsburgh or in New Orleans,” he said. “It is lower than in Puerto Rico. Yucatan has a rate of less than two per 1,000 – similar to places in Europe.” The president also suggested the US bore a responsibility for the increasing violence. He said: “There are 8,000 gun shops along the US side of the border with Mexico. We seized more than 100,000 guns from criminals and 85% were bought in the US.” A sobering thought...</p> <p>Here is a link to an excellent article on the subject from a travel insider that I know well and respect for her balanced judgment:  <a href="http://travelindustrytoday.com/web/index.php?option=com_k2&amp;view=item&amp;id=14175:mexico-gets-a-bad-rap-time-to-give-it-a-rest&amp;Itemid=64">http://travelindustrytoday.com/web/index.php?option=com_k2&amp;view=item&amp;id=14175:mexico-gets-a-bad-rap-time-to-give-it-a-rest&amp;Itemid=64</a></p> <p>On a more general level – check out my <b>Top Ten Safety Tips</b>:  <a href="http://www.chrisrobisontravelshow.ca/Planning/ChrisTop10Lists/Top10VacationSafetyTips.aspx">http://www.chrisrobisontravelshow.ca/Planning/ChrisTop10Lists/Top10VacationSafetyTips.aspx</a></p>
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<b>CLIMATE</b>	
<b>General climate</b>	The Tropic of Cancer effectively divides the country into temperate and tropical zones. Land north of the twenty-fourth parallel experiences cooler temperatures during the winter months. South of the twenty-fourth parallel, temperatures are fairly constant year round and vary solely as a function of elevation. This gives Mexico one of the world's most diverse weather systems.
<b>Today's weather</b>	Today is 28 Centigrade and mostly sunny in Puerto Vallarta (15 February 2014)
<b>Best time to visit</b>	The winter season between December and April is perfect for Canadians – almost no rains and warm temperatures from its southerly location in Mexico. But don't overlook the summer season too – less Canadian tourists and the weather is generally excellent!

<b>MEXICO DESTINATIONS</b>	
<b>Manzanillo</b>	The city of Manzanillo is famous as the "Sailfish Capital of the World" for its exceptional and abundant deep sea fishing. There are also water sports, diving and two popular golf courses in the area. Manzanillo is a bustling sea port as well as a tranquil and traditional Mexican town. The resort offers wide, curving beaches and a tropical setting with vast groves of tall palm trees, abundant mango trees and lush mountains that rise along the shoreline.
<b>Puerto Vallarta</b>	Founded in 1851, Puerto Vallarta was still a simple hamlet a little over a century later, but has since become a world-renowned beach resort. Despite being a top Mexican holiday destination, the resort town of

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	<p>Puerto Vallarta has preserved the rich culture and traditional architecture of its downtown core. Stroll along the Malecón (Sea Wall), wander inside one of the city's magnificent art galleries or visit a museum. Or laze on one of Puerto Vallarta's magnificent beaches. The sunset is at its most dazzling along The Malecón, which comes to life at sundown.</p> <p>15 minutes north of downtown Puerto Vallarta, Marina Vallarta is Mexico's most sophisticated marina complex with moorings for over five hundred boats, two kilometres of beachfront, aqua sports and dive facilities offering PADI certified training – plus an excellent 18-hole golf course. Marina Vallarta can accommodate yachts of all sizes and it is popular with boaters from all over the world thanks to the depth and shelter offered by the calm Bay of Banderas. The beautifully landscaped Marina Malecon is filled with excellent shops, art galleries and restaurants.</p>
<p><b>Riviera Nayarit</b></p>	<p>Riviera Nayarit, stretches along more than 300 kms of pristine Pacific coast framed by the majestic Sierra Madre Mountains just ten minutes north of accessible Puerto Vallarta International Airport. The region extends along the entire coast of the Pacific state of Nayarit - including the resorts of Nuevo Vallarta, the historic colonial town of San Blas, exclusive Punta Mita, picturesque fishing villages, miles of serene beaches and spectacular Banderas Bay.</p> <p>Famous for its glorious beaches, Riviera Nayarit also offers countless affordable activities. There are PGA golf courses and luxury spas - plus enjoy International and local cuisine. There are countless activities for the adventurous such as whale watching, turtle release, zip lining, surfing, record deep sea fishing and bird watching. And you can also discover the history and culture of the area or shop for local artwork and traditional Huichol handicrafts.</p>
<p><b>Los Cabos</b></p>	<p>The area of Los Cabos is made up of two small and very different towns - San José del Cabo to the northeast, Cabo San Lucas at the southern tip. Between the two cities lies a thirty kilometre seacoast with splendid countryside, breathtaking scenery and a range of elegant hotels. Along with nice beaches, Los Cabos is known for its championship golf courses, whale watching (from January to April) and deep sea fishing.</p>
<p><b>Huatulco</b></p>	<p>Huatulco is still relatively unknown to many vacationers and an area of pristine natural beauty. Visitors can raft the Rio Copalita, or ride on horseback through the jungle. If you are a java junkie you can visit a coffee plantation, such as La Gloria, to meet local farmers and see where the world famous Pluma coffee comes from. Beginners and experts can try diving and snorkelling at one of the over thirty beaches, and if you are a golf enthusiast, enjoy a round at the challenging 18-hole Tangolunda Golf Course.</p> <p>Much of the appeal of Huatulco is that today, despite the fact that many</p>

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	luxury resorts have been developed along its magnificent bays, little has changed. Recognizing the ecological importance of this entire region, it has been designated a national wildlife preserve, and all development has been planned and carried out sensitively. In fact, several of the bays remain wholly undeveloped today and can only be accessed by boat.
<b>Cancun/Riviera Maya</b>	<p>Cancun and the Riviera Maya are one of the most popular tourist destinations in the northern hemisphere. And they are vacation favourites for a good reason. Whether you'd like to dive with sleeping sharks, shop with the local merchants or climb the steps of a Mayan ruin - Cancun and the Mayan Riviera have it all.</p> <p>Cancun is famous for turquoise waters, trendy nightclubs, great restaurants with International and Regional cuisine and world class shopping from street vendors to chic boutiques. There are a spectacular assortment of activities and tours to satisfy even the most seasoned of travellers. There is soft adventure from dolphin swims to ATV rides. And discover the Mayan culture at a traditional village or visit the ancient Mayan ruins at Chichen-Itza, Coba and Tulum.</p> <p>The Riviera Maya is known for white sand beaches and warm tranquil waters, protected by one of the world's largest barrier reefs. Home to ancient Mayan ruins, the destination also offers wonderful snorkeling and scuba diving, an 18 hole championship golf course and endless activities. And the Riviera Maya offers one of the greatest choices of luxury, all inclusive resorts anywhere in the world.</p>
<b>Cozumel</b>	Cozumel is a treasure for travellers in search of sheer relaxation. With an abundance of peaceful beaches, clear waters and multicoloured reefs, Cozumel is rich in natural beauty and steeped in Mayan history. With the Palancar Reef close by, the Island of Cozumel is totally geared up for the needs of divers and snorkellers.

<b>GETTING AROUND</b>	
<b>Getting There</b>	<p>A number of Canadian scheduled and charter airline fly direct from Canada to a range of Mexican destinations.</p> <p><b>Air Transat</b> has direct flights to Cancun, Cozumel, Cabo, Puerto Vallarta, Manzanillo and new for next winter, Huatulco.</p>
<b>Cities</b>	<p><b>Mexico City</b>, Mexico's capital is one of the most populated cities in the world. Approximately 20 million people huddle in this city, set in a high valley 2,240 m above sea level. It's a fascinating place, with many historic and cultural treasures, great vitality and charming districts. Be sure to take in the Aztec heritage, the mariachi bands in the Centro Histórico, the grand colonial architecture and the bold art of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo.</p> <p>The Zócalo is the main plaza or square in the heart of the historic centre of Mexico City. It has been a gathering place for Mexicans since Aztec</p>

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	<p>times. It is bordered by the Cathedral to the north and the National Palace to the east. The Catedral Metropolitana is the largest cathedral in the Americas. Construction of this monumental structure started in the 16th century and continued over the course of 250 years. The Palacio Nacional - built from red tezontle (volcanic rock), has been the seat of the federal government since the late 17th century. After entering this imposing building through a courtyard, you can admire the spectacular revolutionary murals of famous Mexican painter Diego Rivera, which adorn the national palace's grand staircase. And the Palacio de Bellas Artes is a performing arts venue that is worth a visit for its gorgeous Art Deco architecture alone.</p> <p>The Zona Rosa is a favourite tourist district with scores of hotels, restaurants, shops and nightclubs. Mexico City also offers the visitor parks with woods and lakes, a zoo, botanical gardens and museums. The Museo Nacional de Antropología is an absolutely wonderful museum of anthropology and houses a large collection of priceless archaeological treasures uncovered in Mexico.</p>
<b>Distances</b>	<p>Distances in Mexico can be huge – for instance, it's a 15 hour drive from the Texas border to Mexico City – so it's best to focus your trip on one particular region of the country. Which presents a problem: which of the many to choose...?</p>
<b>Boats</b>	<p>Most of the coastal resort destinations have boats and ferries to explore coastal communities. For instance Cozumel Island is linked to the Riviera Maya by a regular car and passenger ferry.</p>
<b>Trains</b>	<p>Passenger train services in Mexico include:</p> <p><b>Expreso Maya</b> (tourist train that runs from Palenque to Mérida, Yucatán)</p> <p><b>Chihuahua al Pacífico</b> (tourist train running through the Copper Canyon)</p> <p><b>Tequila Express</b> (tourist train running from Guadalajara, Jalisco to a tequila distillery in Amatitán)</p> <p>Ferrocarril Suburbano de la Zona Metropolitana de México (commuter rail system in the Mexico City metro area) and the Mexico City metro</p>
<b>Car Rental</b>	<p>Rental cars are readily available at the airports, through travel agencies, and through the most popular U.S. car rental services.</p>
<b>Buses</b>	<p>Mexican buses run frequently, are readily accessible, and can transport you almost anywhere you want to go. Taking the bus is common in Mexico, and the executive and first-class coaches can be as comfortable as business class on an airplane. Buses are often the only way to get from large cities to other nearby cities and small villages. Don't hesitate to ask questions if you're confused about anything, but note that little English is spoken in bus stations.</p> <p>Dozens of Mexican companies operate large, air-conditioned, Greyhound-type (or better) buses between most cities. Classes are</p>

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	<p>segunda (second), primera (first), and ejecutiva (deluxe), which goes by a variety of names. Deluxe buses often have fewer seats than regular buses, show movies, are air-conditioned, and make few stops. Many run express from point to point. They are well worth the few dollars more. In rural areas, buses are often of the school-bus variety, with lots of local color.</p>
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<p><b>ACCOMMODATION TYPES</b></p>	<p>You will find a wide variety of accommodations from rooms for rent, small economy hotels, luxury oceanfront villas, vacation condominiums, bed and breakfasts, along with luxury resorts. For the best of the all inclusive resorts, pick up the Transat Holidays and Nolitours brochures from your local travel agent.</p>
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<p><b>LIFESTYLES</b></p>	
<p><b>Kids</b></p>	<p>Theme parks, museums and bathing resorts welcome all the family. If you're planning your vacation with small children it's best to enjoy the big cities or seek out well-managed sun and sand destinations. The cities good for visiting as a family include, of course, the three largest in the country: Monterrey, Guadalajara and Mexico City. These all offer attractive museums, squares, theme parks and restaurants of all kinds, as well as having pleasant streets with striking architecture. Other urban centres that will keep your family amused are Puebla, Morelia, Oaxaca and Mérida, with a good dose of exoticism and local folklore as well as natural beauty and excellent hotels, whether you come to take it easy or to look for entertainment. If your interest is in showing the little ones the natural world from a new perspective, then states like Quintana Roo, Campeche, Oaxaca, Chiapas, Veracruz and Tabasco, thanks to their environmental programs, will teach kids more about the flora and fauna by getting to know animals up close and understanding the importance of caring for our surroundings. Another fun way of getting to know the country is discovering the ancient cultures of Mexico, with a journey through the central regions of the country, which abounds with archeological sites such as the striking Templo Mayor (Great Temple) in Mexico City, the enigmatic Xochicalco in Morelos or the murals of Cacaxtla, in Tlaxcala. Whatever your preference, Mexico lays on activities in all its destinations where your children can play and learn about a culture full of surprises, while you relax under the palm trees or discover for yourself the historical wealth of the country.</p>
<p><b>Teens</b></p>	<p>The rich natural resources and biodiversity make Mexico an excellent territory to explore with teens. You can do so by train, on foot, on horseback, in a kayak or you can go camping and mountain climbing. Teenagers will totally engage with the unique landscape and indigenous</p>

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	<p>flora and fauna. In the state of Chihuahua, the Copper Canyon offers an amazing experience. As you travel through mountains and narrow passes you can admire the spectacular beauty of the Sierra Madre Occidental.</p> <p>The canyons, plateaus, waterfalls and rivers are ideal for trekking, mountain biking, horseback riding, hunting, rock climbing and rappelling. Explore some of the most fascinating ecosystems in the nation and admire the beautiful landscape inhabited by birds, crocodiles, turtles, fish, reptiles and wide variety of plant life - head to the Mayan Riviera.</p> <p>There you can go scuba diving, kayaking, fishing, camping and horseback riding on the beach or in the jungles. You're also guaranteed a gratifying experience when visiting the Celestun Biosphere Reserve and the Ria Lagartos Sanctuary, in Yucatan and Campeche. There you'll see thousands of pink flamingoes, sea turtles, crocodiles and indigenous plant species that you can capture on film on a photo safari, or you can take a boat tour through the mangroves and wetlands.</p> <p>For those who prefer fishing, whale-watching, scuba diving, windsurfing, and an underwater photo outing, Ensenada, in Baja California, is the ideal place. But if you want to enjoy a walk or hike through a region known for its beautiful clouds and flowers, you should visit Xalapa, in the state of Veracruz, where the Cofre de Perote National Park and the Cerro Macuilteptel invite you to camp and rock climb in an area surrounded by lush vegetation.</p>
<b>Romance</b>	Pamper yourself in the glow of a romantic Mexican sunset on a luxury yacht. There is nothing more peaceful and romantic than sailing across one of the Bays of the Pacific as the crimson sun dips into the deep blue waters of the Pacific.
<b>Honeymoons &amp; Weddings</b>	Many of the larger resorts in Mexico will organize destination weddings – including the featured prize resorts below.
<b>Seniors</b>	Mexico is a favourite retirement destination for many Canadians and is ideal for longer stay vacations in the cold winter months up north.

<b>UNIQUES</b>	
<b>Surprising</b>	<p><b>Mexico's Magical Towns</b> are 54 towns scattered throughout Mexico that epitomize what Mexico is all about. They are grouped by seasons of the year, but any of them are...well...magical...to visit at any time. Go the Mexico website for more information:  <a href="https://www.visitmexico.com/en/magicaltowns">https://www.visitmexico.com/en/magicaltowns</a></p> <p>I have personally visited several including Comala near Manzanillo, and Todos Santos near Cabo – see my Travel Blogs and you will see why these places are very special!</p>
<b>History</b>	In Pre-Columbian Mexico many cultures matured into advanced civilizations such as the <b>Olmec, the Toltec, the Teotihuacan, the</b>

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	<p><b>Zapotec, the Maya and the Aztec</b> before the first contact with Europeans.</p> <p>In 1521, Spain conquered and colonized the territory from its base in México-Tenochtitlan, which was administered as the Viceroyalty of New Spain. This territory would eventually become Mexico as the colony's independence was recognized in 1821.</p> <p>The post-independence period was characterized by economic instability, the Mexican-American War and territorial cession to the United States, a civil war, two empires and a domestic dictatorship. The latter led to the Mexican Revolution in 1910, which culminated with the 1917 Constitution and the emergence of the country's current political system. Elections held in July 2000 marked the first time that an opposition party won the presidency from the Institutional Revolutionary Party.</p>
<p><b>Books</b></p>	<p><b>Frommer's Mexico</b> is the bible for travellers to Mexico.</p> <p><b>Maya Roads</b> by Mary Jo McConahay provides an insight into the Maya people and is reviewed on my Travel Show website here: <a href="http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/Planning/ChrisBookPicks.aspx#18">http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/Planning/ChrisBookPicks.aspx#18</a></p>
<p><b>1000 Places to See Before You Die</b></p>	<p><b>Patricia Schultz lists many entries for Mexico; my recs are:</b></p> <p><b>El Dia de los Muertos</b> – Mexicans remember and celebrate their departed in this festival which normally takes place at the start of November.</p> <p><b>Oaxaca's Saturday Market</b> – craft shopping in the most Mexican city of the Republic</p> <p><b>Whale watching in Baja</b></p> <p><b>Palenque</b> – beautiful Maya city in the jungle</p> <p><b>Copper Canyon</b> – one of the world's great train journeys</p> <p><b>Teotihuacan</b> – monumental ancient city of the Gods</p> <p><b>Monarch butterfly migration</b> – wintering in Michoacan</p> <p><b>Chichen-Itza</b> – most well known of all Maya sites</p>
<p><b>UNESCO World Heritage Sites</b></p>	<p><b>Mexico has the largest number of UNESCO designated World Heritage Sites of any country in the Americas.</b></p> <p>There are 27 cultural sites and 4 natural sites on the list:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Agave landscape and ancient industrial facilities of Tequila, Jalisco</li> <li>2. Ancient Maya city of Calakmul, Campeche</li> <li>3. Archaeological monuments zone of Xochicalco</li> <li>4. Archeological zone of Paquimé, Casas Grandes, Chihuahua</li> <li>5. Ciudad Universitaria, Mexico City</li> <li>6. Earliest 16th century Monasteries on the Slopes of Popocatepetl</li> <li>7. Franciscan Missions in the Sierra Gorda of Querétaro</li> <li>8. Historic centre of Mexico City and Xochimilco</li> <li>9. Historic centre of Morelia, Michoacán</li> <li>10. Historic centre of Oaxaca, Oaxaca, and archaeological site of</li> </ol>

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	<p>Monte Albán</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. Historic centre of Puebla, Puebla</li> <li>12. Historic centre of Zacatecas, Zacatecas</li> <li>13. Historic fortified town of Campeche, Campeche</li> <li>14. Historic monuments zone of Santiago de Querétaro</li> <li>15. Historic monuments zone of Tlacotalpan</li> <li>16. Historic town of Guanajuato, Guanajuato, and adjacent mines</li> <li>17. Instituto Cultural Cabañas, Guadalajara, Jalisco</li> <li>18. Luis Barragán House and Studio, Mexico City</li> <li>19. Pre-Hispanic city of El Tajín, Veracruz</li> <li>20. Pre-Hispanic city and National Park of Palenque, Chiapas</li> <li>21. Pre-Hispanic city of Chichén Itzá, Yucatán</li> <li>22. Pre-Hispanic city of Teotihuacan, Estado de México</li> <li>23. Pre-Hispanic city of Uxmal, Yucatán</li> <li>24. Protective town of San Miguel and the Sanctuary of Jesús Nazareno de Atotonilco</li> <li>25. Rock Paintings of Sierra de San Francisco</li> <li>26. Camino Real de Tierra Adentro</li> <li>27. Prehistoric Caves of Yagul and Mitla in the Central Valley of Oaxaca</li> <li>28. Islands and Protected Areas of the Gulf of California</li> <li>29. Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve</li> <li>30. Sian Ka'an biosphere reserve, Quintana Roo</li> <li>31. Whale Sanctuary of El Vizcaíno</li> </ol>
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<b>SPORTS ACTIVITIES</b>	
<b>Golf</b>	<p>Along the length and breadth of the country you can find country clubs and exclusive courses that take best advantage of the terrain to create unique surroundings.</p> <p>If you are a golf lover, whether beginner or professional, you shouldn't miss the opportunity to try the sport in Mexico, where you can not only develop your skills on courses designed by the most well-renowned experts in the world, but enjoy the stunning natural surroundings at the same time.</p> <p>On the fairway, you will feel the sea breeze or the fresh forest air as you select your shot. As you do so you can observe impressive desert horizons, mountains, tropical jungles or mangrove swamps as you make the pleasant journey to take your next shot.</p> <p>At the same time you can enjoy the hospitality of the country, where the enjoyment of seeking to complete your round with the least number of strokes blends with the beautiful landscapes and a comfortable ambience, something that has been noted and recommended by some of the world's best players.</p> <p>Acapulco, Pachuca, Cancun, Playa del Carmen, Cozumel, Puerto</p>

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Vallarta, Riviera Nayarit, Loreto, Los Cabos and Mérida are just a few of the destinations where you can encounter modern courses, ideal for living out your passion for this sport to the full. In some of them, prestigious golf tournaments are held periodically, where internationally-renowned pros compete.

**Riviera Nayarit** has six world-class golf courses, each more surprising and challenging

#### **EL NAYAR VIDANTA GOLF COURSE**

Opened in 2001, this Jim Lipe design features a par of 71 and 7000 yards of challenging play. Located on the Grupo Vidanta property in Nuevo Vallarta, it provides impressive views of the Pacific Ocean, the Rio Ameca, and the surrounding Sierra Madre Mountains. Jim Lipe is Jack Nicklaus' head designer and this course reflects that heritage.

#### **EL TIGRE GOLF COURSE**

Opened in March of 2002, the El Tigre is one of the most challenging in the family of excellent golf courses in Riviera Nayarit. This course weighs in at 7,239 yards and par 72 and was created by designer Robert Von Hagge. An absolute must for golfer visiting Riviera Nayarit.

#### **FLAMINGOS GOLF COURSE**

Designed in 1970 by Percy Clifford (creator of some of Mexico's top courses) as a cornerstone of the Nuevo Vallarta & Flamingos resort development. The course today is fully mature and unlike any other in Riviera Nayarit making it one of the most popular due to its beautiful rolling hill terrain, lush tropical forest and natural lagoons and mangroves.

#### **LITIBU GOLF COURSE**

Designed by the legendary golf player Greg Norman, Litibu Golf Course opened in early 2010 hosting the International Canadian Golf Tour Tournament. The unique feature of this par 72, 7,022 yard course is that it was built over a surface of 68.48 hectares, where 7 holes are a "link" style, 8 others are surrounded by virgin jungles, and the last 3 are run along the Pacific Ocean.

#### **PUNTA MITA PACIFICO GOLF COURSE**

Punta Mita Pacífico course was opened in September of 1999 and plays out at par 72 and 7,014 yards of the most breathtaking golf course in Mexico (possibly in the world). A Jack Nicklaus Signature Course that offer extraordinary ocean views and world-play.

#### **PUNTA MITA BAHIA GOLF COURSE**

The newest addition to Punta Mita's golfing achievement; the Punta Mita Bahía Course, opened in late 2009 and is as stunning as its sister course. Featuring six ocean holes and playing between 5,180 and 7,030 yards it's just one more stunning design by Jack Nicklaus.

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<p><b>Fishing</b></p>	<p>Deep sea fishing is popular from both the coastlines of Mexico – the Pacific, the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico.</p> <p><b>Huatulco</b>, for example, is a deep sea fisherman's dream vacation destination. Sailfish, tuna, snapper, dorado and marlin are swimming in the coastal waters just waiting for the right bait. Charter a boat and enjoy a group fishing expedition. Fishing charters cost \$120 per person, for one to eight people; or select from other options where the price varies with the size of the boat; a boat can be rented for 8 hours for \$450.</p> <p><b>Manzanillo</b> is famous for its fishing, particularly sailfish. Marlin and sailfish are abundant year-round. Winter is best for dolphin fish and dorado (mahimahi); in summer, wahoo and rooster fish are in greater supply. The international sailfish competition is held around the November 20 Revolution Day holiday, and the national sailfish competition is in February. You can arrange fishing through travel agencies or directly at the fishermen's cooperative, located downtown where the fishing boats moor. A 5-hour fishing charter costs about 3,000 pesos for up to eight people.</p>
<p><b>Horse riding</b></p>	<p>The horse is an important creature in Mexico and is afforded much respect. Ranches and horseback riding are available throughout much of the country. In the <b>Huatulco</b> area, Guided horseback riding through the jungles and to Conejos and Magueyito beach makes for a wonderful way to see the natural beauty of the area. The ride lasts 3 hours, with departures at 9:45am and 1:45pm, and costs \$35 to \$45. Contact <b>Caballo del Mar Ranch</b></p>
<p><b>Hiking</b></p>	<p>Hiking possibilities are endless in Mexico – from wanderings along endless beaches to rugged multi-day hikes in tough desert scenery. A recommended guide for both hiking and bird-watching in the Huatulco area is Laura Gonzalez, of <b>Nature Tours Huatulco</b>. Choices include a hike around Punta Celeste with views of the river, open sea, and forest, for sightings of terrestrial and aquatic birds. The 3 1/2-hour tour can be made in the early morning or late afternoon, and costs \$45. An 8-hour excursion to the Ventanilla Lagoons takes you by boat through a mangrove to view birds, iguanas, and crocodiles. The cost is \$80, including lunch. Tours include transportation, binoculars, specialized bird guide, and beverages.</p> <p>A personally recommended guide for both hiking and bird-watching in the <b>Manzanillo</b> area is <b>Tlaloc Tours</b> tel (314)334-1160</p>
<p><b>Cycling</b></p>	<p>Cycling is a fun option at many Mexican destinations and the larger resorts have bikes for rental.</p>
<p><b>Canopy Tours</b></p>	<p>A popular adventure activity from most of the coastal resorts in Mexico is canopy tours. You glide from treetop to treetop, getting an up-close-and-personal look at a tropical rainforest canopy and the trails far below. Expert guides assist you to the special platforms, and you</p>

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	<p>move from one to another using pulleys on horizontal traverse cables, while the guides explain the tropical flora surrounding you. They also offer assistance - and moral support - as you rappel back down to the forest floor.</p>
<p><b>Diving</b></p>	<p>Just about all coastal Mexican destinations offer diving excursions and first rate tuition.</p> <p><b>Huatulco</b>  Huatulco has 13 sites available to dive, which are located around marine fauna and coral reefs. Try <b>Hurricane Divers</b> if you are interested in diving and snorkeling. This professional dive center offers tours, courses and great packages for its clients. All levels of the courses are offered in English.</p> <p><b>Cozumel</b>  Cozumel, just off the coast of Riviera Maya, is perhaps the most famous of the Mexican dive destinations due to its proximity to the Meso-American reef just offshore. This is the longest coral reef in the world after the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.</p> <p><b>Puerto Vallarta</b>  The warm, crystal-clear waters of Banderas Bay and the Mexican Pacific are home to a vast array of sea life making Puerto Vallarta one of Mexico's top diving destinations. At Vallarta Adventure's PADI 5 star IDC Dive Center, professional diving instructors combine their expertise with the utmost personal attention in scuba lessons for every level of PADI Certification. You may snorkel or dive at Los Arcos, a company owned site at Caletas Cove (where you'll dive in the company of sea lions), Quimixto Coves, the Marietas Islands, or the offshore La Corbeteña, Morro, and Chimo reefs. The company runs a full range of certification courses up to Instructor.</p>
<p><b>Surfing</b></p>	<p>Many of the destinations on the Pacific Coast of Mexico have great surfing opportunities, including Riviera Nayarit and Manzanillo.</p> <p><b>Manzanillo</b>  One of the best places to surf in Mexico, <b>Cuyutlan</b> is a tranquil and picturesque seaside town located about an hour southeast of the port city of Manzanillo on the southeastern end of the Laguna de Cuyutlán (Cuyutlan Lagoon). Cuyutlan's black-sand beaches are a result of centuries of erosion of the volcanic rock lining this stretch of coastline, and the entire region is dotted with banana and coconut palms. Spend some time on the beach, stroll along the malecon (oceanfront promenade) past restaurants, shops and cafes, and browse the local handicrafts and folk art. In the evenings grab a seat at one of the local seafood restaurants and enjoy the incredible sunsets. The beaches of Cuyutlan are excellent for surfing, especially the beach at Los Pascuales which is known for being one of the best places to surf in all Mexico. Waves at Los Pascuales regularly reach heights of eight to</p>

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	<p>fifteen feet or more.</p> <p><b>Riviera Nayarit</b></p> <p><b>Sayulita:</b> There are two main surf spots in Sayulita - the most popular is the break fronting the main beach in the village, which is a right longboard break. A faster, left break is found just north of the river mouth, in front of the campground. Surf instruction and board rentals are available at Lunazul Surf School (<a href="http://www.lunazulsurf.com">www.lunazulsurf.com</a>) located at Marlin #4, where this street ends at the beachfront. The 90-minute surf lessons cost \$40 for individual instruction, or \$30 for group instruction. They also offer 2-day weekend clinics for \$80 or weeklong clinics for \$200. Included in all lessons is the use of a surfboard and rashguard. Board rentals through Lunazul are \$20 for the day, or \$150 for the week. Lunazul also has a surf shop, where you can purchase surf gear ranging from wax to boards.</p>
<p><b>CULTURE</b></p>	<p>The <b>Riviera Nayarit's</b> cultural influences make it a wonderful area in which to indulge in some other popular pastimes. Four ethnic groups survived the Spanish conquest and still exist in the Riviera Nayarit today: the <b>Coras, Mexicaneros, Tepehuanos, and Huichol peoples</b>. The most coveted regional finds in the Riviera Nayarit come from the Huichol. They create colourful glass beads and wooden handicrafts, including jewelry, animal figurines and paintings. Many of their creations are found just as easily in open-air markets as they are in high-end hotel boutiques. San Blas, the northernmost town in the Riviera Nayarit, was the first port in the entire Pacific Coast of Mexico, is also rich in the area's colonial history. Nowadays is known as much for its pristine beaches as for its bird-watching options.</p>
<p><b>Arts</b></p>	<p><b>Palacio de Bellas Artes:</b> The country's premier venue for the performing arts in Mexico City, this fabulous building is the combined work of several masters. The exterior is early-20th-century Art Nouveau covered in marble; the interior is 1930s Art Deco.</p>
<p><b>Music</b></p>	<p><b>Ranchera, Mariachi and Sones</b> are the traditional forms of music that can be heard throughout Mexico.</p>
<p><b>Films</b></p>	<p>Films Starring Mexico –</p> <p>Elia Kazan's 1952 classic, <b>Viva Zapata!</b>, written by John Steinbeck, stars Marlon Brando as revolutionary Emiliano Zapata. Orson Welles's 1958 film noir Touch of Evil looks at drugs and corruption in Tijuana</p> <p>The adaptation of Carlos Fuentes' novel <b>The Old Gringo</b> (1989), a love triangle set during the Mexican Revolution, was filmed with Gregory Peck, Jane Fonda, and a young Jimmy Smits in numerous locations in five Mexican states.</p> <p>HBO's 2003 flick <b>And Starring Pancho Villa as Himself</b>, with Antonio Banderas, is the true story of how revolutionaries allowed Hollywood to film Pancho Villa in battle.</p>

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	<p><b>Man on Fire</b> (2004), with Denzel Washington as a bodyguard hired to protect a little girl, is full of great Mexico City scenes.</p> <p>Stephen Soderbergh's Academy Award-winning <b>Traffic</b> (2000), with Benicio del Toro, has powerful scenes focusing on Tijuana's drug war.</p> <p>Mel Gibson's controversial <b>Apocalypto</b> (2006) cast indigenous Maya to depict the Maya empire's waning days; the rainforests of Veracruz state stand in for the lush jungles that must have covered the Yucatán centuries ago.</p>
<p><b>Museums</b></p>	<p><b>The Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City</b> contains riches representing 3,000 years of the country's past. Also on view are fabulous artifacts of still-thriving indigenous cultures. The award-winning building, designed by architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, is stunning.</p> <p><b>The Museo de la Cultura Maya</b>, Chetumal's modern museum, one of the best in the country, explores Maya archaeology, architecture, history, and mythology. It has interactive exhibits and a glass floor that allows visitors to walk above replicas of Maya sites.</p>
<p><b>Festivals</b></p>	<p><b>Carnival in Mexico</b></p> <p>In Mexico, thanks to the deeply-ingrained religious tradition, there are colorful carnivals taking place all year long for you to join in with, though above all around Easter week, between March and April.</p> <p>For one week each year, the streets of many towns and cities explode with merry-making – those of Veracruz and Mazatlán are particularly famous for their wild celebrations.</p> <p>For the duration of the Carnival, the town or city crowns a king and queen, who lead the festivities. Generally the Carnival queen is a beautiful local lady, or an actress or singer, while the king, who is called the “Ugly king” or “King of joy”, is a representation of Momus, the Greek god of madness and mockery.</p> <p>The Carnivals are full of music, food and drinking. The symbolism is made clear from the start, with many Carnivals commencing with the “burning of the bad mood”, in the form of a figure that is set on fire to declare the party has begun.</p> <p>Apart from Mazatlán and Veracruz, major Carnivals are held in Campeche, Yucatán, Baja California, Morelos, Tlaxcala and Cozumel. Even though strictly speaking it is not a Carnival, the celebration of the Guelaguetza, in Oaxaca, in which the locals pay tribute to their past and their ancient traditions is a colorful event that has been held in July since pre-Hispanic times.</p> <p>Mexico has other kinds of fiestas too: you can witness celebrations that bring the crowds out onto the streets such as the pilgrimage to the Basílica de Guadalupe on December 12 to pay homage to the Virgin of Guadalupe.</p> <p>Then there are the celebrations for the <b>Day of the Dead</b>, in November,</p>

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	where the festival, colorful as it is, also shows signs of the syncretism between the different cultures that give Mexico its identity.
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ATTRACTIONS	
<b>Beaches</b>	<p>The beaches are a star attraction of Mexico as a destination. Here are the highlights from our friends at Frommer's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Puerto Vallarta:</b> Vallarta exemplifies the beauty of Mexico -- a Pacific bay framed by lush mountains, a vibrant colonial town, open-minded culture with an artistic bent, perfect weather, and friendly locals. Spectacularly wide Banderas Bay is graced by 42km of sandy beach. The beaches of Punta Mita, the exclusive development north of Vallarta, offer white-sand, crystalline waters, and coral reefs just offshore. Others around the bay nestle in coves, accessible only by boat.</li> <li>- <b>Sayulita:</b> Less than an hour north of Puerto Vallarta, Sayulita is a longboarder's paradise with a chilled-out beach scene. Although tourists descend in droves on the town during vacation periods, the rest of the year Sayulita clings to a bygone era of total beach simplicity and Mexican tranquillity.</li> <li>- <b>Puerto Escondido:</b> The best overall beach value in Mexico is principally known for its world-class surfing beach, Playa Zicatela. The surrounding beaches and towns all have their own appeal -- be they lined with colourful fishing pangas, delicious seafood restaurants, or shady palms. Puerto Escondido has unique accommodations at excellent prices, with exceptional budget dining and nightlife.</li> <li>- <b>Ixtapa/Zihuatanejo:</b> These side-by-side resorts afford beachgoers the best of both worlds: serene simplicity and resort comforts. For travelers seeking to get back to basics, the best and most beautiful beach is Playa La Ropa, close to Zihuatanejo. The wide beach at Playa Las Gatas, with its restaurants and snorkeling sites, is also a great place to play. The high-rise hotels in Ixtapa, on the next bay over from Zihuatanejo, front Playa Palmar, a fine, wide swath of beach.</li> <li>- <b>Cancún:</b> This man-made resort offers some of the most spectacular beaches anywhere. The powdery white sand is complemented by warm Caribbean waters the color of a Technicolor dream; it's so clear that you can see through to the coral reefs below. You can come here just to relax, but this is also one of the world's most popular entertainment destinations. Cancún offers Mexico's widest selection of beachfront resorts, with more restaurants, nightlife, and activities than any other resort destination in the country.</li> <li>- <b>Isla Mujeres:</b> If uninterrupted relaxation is what you're after, Isla Mujeres offers a quintessential laid-back vacation. Most accommodations are small, inexpensive inns, with a few luxury boutique hotels tempting you for at least a night. Bike -- or take a golf</li> </ul>

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	<p>cart -- around the island to explore rocky coves and sandy beaches, or focus your tanning efforts on the wide beachfront of Playa Norte. Here you'll find calm waters perfect for swimming and snorkeling, and beachfront palapa restaurants beckoning you for a fresh fish lunch.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Playa del Carmen:</b> Stylish and hip, Playa del Carmen has a beautiful beach and a social scene that focuses on the beach by day and the pedestrian-only Quinta Avenida by night, with its assortment of restaurants, clubs, sidewalk cafes, and shops offering all the entertainment you could want. You're also close to the coast's major attractions, including nature parks, ruins, and cenotes (sinkholes or natural wells).</li> <li>- <b>Tulum:</b> Fronting some of the best beaches on the entire coast, Tulum's small palapa hotels offer guests a little slice of paradise far from the crowds and megaresorts. The bustling town lies inland; at the coast, things are quiet, as all these small hotels must generate their own electricity. If you can pull yourself away from the beach, there are ruins to marvel at and a vast nature preserve to explore.</li> <li>- <b>La Paz:</b> This state capital borders a lovely beach, dotted with colorful playgrounds and lively open-air restaurants. Take a cue from the local residents, though, and pass on swimming here in favor of the exquisite beaches just minutes from downtown. La Paz's beaches and the islets just offshore have transformed this tranquil town into a centre for diving, sea kayaking, and other adventure pursuits.</li> <li>- <b>Los Cabos:</b> Dramatic rock formations and crashing waves join forces with wide stretches of soft sand and rolling surf breaks. Start at Playa Palmilla and work your way down the Tourist Corridor to the famed Lover's Beach at Land's End. Some beaches are more appropriate for contemplation than for swimming.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Wildlife</b></p>	<p><b>Mexico is one of the 18 megadiverse countries of the world.</b> With over 200,000 different species, Mexico is home of 10–12% of the world's biodiversity. Mexico ranks first in biodiversity in reptiles with 707 known species, second in mammals with 438 species, fourth in amphibians with 290 species, and fourth in flora, with 26,000 different species.</p> <p>Mexico is also considered the second country in the world in ecosystems and fourth in overall species. Approximately 2,500 species are protected by Mexican legislations.</p> <p>The <b>Sierra Madre Occidental</b> supports some of the richest biodiversity found anywhere in North America, boasting a wide range of wildlife species including white-tailed deer, jaguar, pumas, wild boars, ocelots, jaguarundi, coati mundi, skunks, badgers, coyotes, margays, rabbits, armadillos and iguanas.</p> <p>From mid-December to the end of March, Banderas Bay offers some of the world's most spectacular <b>whale watching</b> opportunities anywhere.</p>

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	<p>And as Vallarta Adventures is the only tour company in the Banderas Bay area with a spotter plane, they can get you closer than you ever thought possible to witness these awesome creatures in action. Their light aircraft is in constant radio contact with each boat captain and reports sightings immediately from all over the bay. No matter which of their four exciting tours you choose, they all deliver an exhilarating and life changing insight into whales and their habitat.</p>
<p><b>Parks</b></p>	<p>Mexico has <b>67 National Parks</b> that are protected natural areas administrated by the federal National Commission of Protected Natural Areas. Perhaps the most famous natural attraction is the rugged <b>Copper Canyon</b>: This network of beautiful, remote, and unspoiled canyons is larger than the Grand Canyon in the U.S. It incorporates high waterfalls, vertical canyon walls, mountain forests in the canyon-rim country, and semi-arid desert inside the canyons.</p> <p>This is the land of the <b>Tarahumara Indians</b>, who gained their legendary endurance from adapting to this wilderness. Their ability to run barefoot across vast distances in this wild area is legendary – read <b>“Born to Run” by Christopher McDougall</b> for a fascinating account of their abilities.</p>
<p><b>Waterfalls</b></p>	<p>Ecotours are growing in popularity and number throughout Mexico.</p> <p><b>Huatulco</b> The mountain areas surrounding the Copalita River near <b>Huatulco</b> are also home to other natural treasures worth exploring, including the <b>Copalitilla Cascades</b>. Thirty kilometers north of Tangolunda at 395m (1,296 ft.) above sea level, this group of waterfalls - averaging 20 to 25m in height - form natural whirlpools and clear pools for swimming. The area is also popular for horseback riding and rappelling.</p> <p><b>Manzanillo</b> Flowing, crashing, splashing--the waterfall in <b>El Salto</b> just north of Manzanillo is the principal waterfall in the state. It is more than 100 feet in height, and is formed by the Minatitlán-Marabasco River. The drive from Manzanillo to El Salto takes only about 50 minutes, although you'll feel like you've gone back millions of years in time. Around every turn you expect to see a dinosaur right out of "Jurassic Park." I loved this spot on my recent visit.</p>
<p><b>Historical Sites</b></p>	<p>It's almost impossible to know where to start! Mexico has so many incredible sights to explore from Colonial times to the modern day, but it's the ancient, pre-Spanish sites that perhaps take pride of place. Here are a few recommendations:</p> <p><b>Teotihuacán</b>: It's so close to Mexico City, yet centuries away. You can sense the majesty of the past in a stroll down the pyramid-lined Avenue of the Dead, from the Pyramid of the Sun to the Pyramid of the Moon. Imagine what a fabulous place this must have been when the walls</p>

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	<p>were stuccoed and painted brilliant colours.</p> <p><b>Monte Albán:</b> A grand ceremonial city on a mountaintop overlooking the valley of Oaxaca, Monte Albán affords visitors panoramic vistas; a fascinating view of a society in transition, reflected in the contrasting methods of pyramid construction; and intriguing details in ornamentation.</p> <p><b>Palenque:</b> Like the pharaohs of Egypt, the rulers of Palenque built tombs deep within their pyramids. Imagine the magnificent ceremony in A.D. 683, when King Pacal was entombed in his burial chamber, which lay unspoiled until its discovery in 1952.</p> <p><b>Uxmal:</b> No matter how many times we see Uxmal, the splendour of its stone carvings remains awe-inspiring. A stone rattlesnake undulates across the facade of the Nunnery complex, and 103 masks of Chaac -- the rain god -- project from the Governor's Palace.</p> <p><b>Chichén Itzá:</b> Stand beside the giant serpent head at the foot of El Castillo and marvel at the architects and astronomers who positioned the building so precisely that shadow and sunlight form a serpent's body slithering from peak to earth at each equinox (Mar 21 and Sept 21).</p> <p><b>Ek Balam:</b> In recent years, this is the site where some of Mexico's most astounding archaeological discoveries have been made. Ek Balam's main pyramid is taller than Chichén Itzá's, and it holds a sacred doorway bordered with elaborate stucco figures of priests and kings and rich iconography.</p>
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<p><b>OTHER ACTIVITIES</b></p>	
<p><b>Shopping</b></p>	<p>Silver, crafts, artwork, tequila, coffee and resort wear are all good souvenirs. Black clay pottery and figurines are a speciality and local ceramics are colourful. See my Pinterest photos for some of the colourful souvenirs you can bring back from Mexico:  <a href="http://www.Pinterest.com/TravelShow">www.Pinterest.com/TravelShow</a></p> <p><b>Puerto Vallarta and Riviera Nayarit</b></p> <p>My top recommendation for a memento of your visit here is to purchase a sample of Huichol art. Huichol Art dates back millennia. During spiritual rituals Shaman have visions which are then transcribed into carvings, yarn art, and have evolved into t-shirts, boxed note cards, framed art and downloadable animations. Each image has spiritual meaning. Huichol art is personal and captivating, with intricate designs, vibrant colours and sacred symbols. It is an expression of deeply held spiritual beliefs. In the Huichol culture, art and religion are inextricable.</p>

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	<p>The shaman links the community with the spirit world, from where their creativity pours forth as a gift from their deified ancestors - to be given back as offerings to the gods.</p>
<p><b>Markets</b></p>	<p>Each resort boasts some shopping, plus there are colourful markets all over the country and they are often the best places both to meet the Mexican people and to find the best bargains.</p> <p><b>Puerto Vallarta's</b> municipal market is just north of the Río Cuale, where Libertad and A. Rodríguez meet. The mercado sells clothes, jewelry, serapes, shawls, leather accessories and suitcases, papier-mâché parrots, stuffed frogs and armadillos, and, of course, T-shirts. Be sure to comparison-shop, and definitely bargain before buying. The market is open daily from 9am to 7pm. Upstairs, a food market serves inexpensive Mexican meals - for more adventurous diners, it's probably the best value and most authentic dining experience in Vallarta.</p> <p>In <b>Oaxaca</b>, check out the Benito Juárez market, at the corner of the zocalo, for handicrafts and food items. The Artisans' Market, near the chocolate factories of Mina Street, has better deals than most shops on hammered tin, woodcarvings, weavings, rugs, blouses and wooden toys. The Abastos Market is the main city market, located on the edge of town. Gird yourself for navigating a splendid labyrinth of Oaxacan cheese, clothing, housewares, sugar skulls, homeopathic medicine counters, sweet breads, wooden furniture, baskets, masks and other treasures. Remember to bargain, but bargain gently.</p>
<p><b>Nightlife</b></p>	<p>This country offers countless activities to enjoy during daylight hours, however, when the sun goes down, the moon will guide you to fun, intense, fashionable and popular spots for enjoying the night until dawn. There are places for everyone: the most relaxed offer intimate surroundings where you can dine and converse while you listen to a little jazz. For a pleasant conversation there are few better places than the cafés on the plazas of the colonial cities.</p> <p>Your plans don't always involve conversation, however: when it comes to dancing until dawn Mexico, is not short of bars and discos. Whether tropical rhythms or the ferocious beats of electronic music are your thing, dancing is part of the Mexican experience and opportunities to watch and to participate abound.</p> <p>You will find establishments offering tropical music, salsa, cumbia, ranchera, banda, pop, electronic music, balada, dance hall music, romantic songs and tango, to name but a few, though the traditional end to the night is alongside the mariachis, who sing of love and are a symbol of Mexican history.</p> <p>You can also opt for antros (clubs) and bars where all kinds of drinks are on offer, while you enjoy the music. No matter which state of the country you are in, you will always encounter evening entertainment spots where you can have fun at all hours.</p>

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CUISINE	
<p><b>Food</b></p>	<p>Mexican cuisine is known for its intense and varied flavors, colourful decoration, and variety of spices. Most of today's Mexican food is based on pre-Columbian traditions, including the Aztecs and Maya, combined with culinary trends introduced by Spanish colonists.</p> <p>The conquistadores eventually combined their imported diet of rice, beef, pork, chicken, wine, garlic and onions with the native pre-Columbian food, including maize, tomato, vanilla, avocado, guava, papaya, pineapple, chili pepper, beans, squash, sweet potato, peanut, and turkey.</p> <p>Mexican food varies by region, because of local climate and geography and ethnic differences among the indigenous inhabitants.</p> <p>In modern times, other cuisines of the world have become very popular in Mexico, thus adopting a Mexican fusion. For example, sushi in Mexico is often made with a variety of sauces based on mango or tamarind, and very often served with serrano-chili-blended soy sauce, or complemented with vinegar, habanero and chipotle peppers</p> <p>The most internationally recognized dishes include chocolate, tacos, quesadillas, enchiladas, burritos, tamales and mole among others. Regional dishes include mole poblano, chiles en nogada and chalupas from Puebla; cabrito and machaca from Monterrey, cochinita pibil from Yucatán, Tlayudas from Oaxaca, as well as barbacoa, chilaquiles, milanesas, and many others.</p>
<p><b>Coffee</b></p>	<p>Mexican coffee is well known, especially from the hills behind Huatulco. There are a number of coffee plantations which are still in operation and give tours, including Finca (farm) Las Nieves, Finca Monte Carlos, Finca Margaritas, Finca El Pacífico and Finca La Gloria. Finca El Pacífico is known for the organic coffee it produces called "Pluma Hidalgo," and it is surrounded by waterfalls and ravines. Finca La Gloria is known for the butterfly sanctuary "Mariposario Dain Biguid", where dozens of species of butterflies can be seen and the "Llano Grande Falls".</p>
<p><b>Mescal</b></p>	<p>Mezcal, or mescal, is a distilled alcoholic beverage made from the maguey or agave plant that is native to Mexico. The word "mezcal" comes from Nahuatl "mexcalmetl," which means agave or maguey. This plant grows in many parts of Mexico but most mezcal is made in Oaxaca. There is a saying attributed to Oaxaca regarding the drink: "para todo mal, mezcal y para todo bien también" (for everything bad, mezcal, and for everything good, too.)</p>
<p><b>Restaurants</b></p>	<p>Some of the most memorable meals I have enjoyed on my southbound trips have been in Mexico. Here are some suggestions from the blog of my recent trip to <b>Riviera Nayarit</b>:</p>

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An unexpected surprise for me was the variety of really excellent dining opportunities in this destination. Amongst my favourites were the **Café des Artistes** in Punta de Mita (their ceviche – citrus marinated seafood - is spectacular!); **Don Pedro's** beachfront in Sayulita where I was treated to tequilas in the colours of the Mexican flag; **La Perla del Mar** in San Pancho where you can chill in a hammock and let your toes scrunch the sand on the beach as you eat the catch of the day; **Marisco Tino's La Laguna** in Nuevo Vallarta where the shrimp are eaten whole (including the shells, heads and feelers!) and you can see turtles and crocs swimming by; and an honourable mention, though it is in Puerto Vallarta just south of Nayarit, to **El Arrayan** where I found myself tasting hibiscus and cactus and enjoying them in whole new ways!

And here are some recommendations elsewhere in Mexico from the Frommer's team:

- **La Opera** (Mexico City): This legendary cantina, in the style of an opulent European cafe, has attracted illustrious personalities for decades -- Pancho Villa shot a still-visible hole through the roof. In the historic centre, it doubles as a restaurant, but it's best as a late-afternoon watering hole.
- **El Sacromonte** (Guadalajara): Various dishes delight the senses with novel tastes and textures and skillful presentation. The menu describes each dish in Spanish couplets.
- **Adobe Fonda** (Tlaquepaque): Delicious Mexican food is served inside one of those gorgeous decorative arts stores that line Tlaquepaque's Calle Independencia. The point of departure for the food is some uncommon Mexican recipes, which are then given sparkling Italian and Argentine accents.
- **Daiquiri Dick's** (Puerto Vallarta; [www.ddpv.com](http://www.ddpv.com)): A Vallarta institution, this beachfront restaurant combines scrumptious Mediterranean cuisine with excellent service and a lovely setting. Come for fresh fish creatively prepared and wash it down with a daiquiri or two. You'll find this casual restaurant as compelling for a romantic occasion as for a fun night out with friends.
- **Trio** (Puerto Vallarta; [www.triopv.com](http://www.triopv.com)): Most locals will tell you Trio is their favorite restaurant in Vallarta, a modest but stylish cafe where chef-owners Bernhard GÜth and Ulf Henricksson's undeniable passion for food imbues each of the delicious Mexican and Mediterranean dishes.
- **Le Fort** (Bucerías; [www.lefort.com.mx](http://www.lefort.com.mx)): Diners are treated to a culinary show by acclaimed chef Gilles Le Fort followed by the chance to sit down with him and other guests in a communal gourmet dinner. The prix-fixe menu includes three courses and matching wines, and the

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table seats 16.

- **Zibu** (Acapulco): This chic open-air restaurant combines Mexican and Thai architectural and culinary styles to create one of the nation's best dining experiences, including a breathtaking view of the sea.
- **Los Flamigos** (Acapulco): If you're in Acapulco on a Thursday, you can enjoy a bowl of pozole, a traditional hominy-and-meat stew. Although you'll find it served at lunchtime throughout town, the best place to savor it is at Los Flamigos' cliff-top restaurant.
- **Mariscos Villa Rica Mocambo** (Veracruz): Nobody else does seafood the way Veracruz does seafood, and this restaurant is the showcase for the region's cuisine.
- **The Club Grill** (in the Ritz-Carlton Cancún): Two of the only AAA five-diamond restaurants in all of Mexico sit inside the Ritz-Carlton Cancún, which also operates a world-class culinary center. Consider this jazz and supper club for a special occasion; anything you order will be superb.
- **Labná** (Ciudad Cancún; [www.labna.com](http://www.labna.com)): In Cancún's old downtown, this authentic Yucatecan restaurant offers deliciously unusual cuisine from the region like lime soup, poc chuc, and pork pibil. The gracious staff takes good care of diners, ensuring they have an enriching experience.
- **La Pigua** (Campeche): Campeche's regional specialty is seafood, and nowhere else will you find seafood like this. Mexican caviar, coconut-battered shrimp, and chiles stuffed with shark are just a few of the unique specialties, along with the regional trademark pan de cazón, a layered casserole of baby shark. La Pigua's pompano will have you checking flight schedules.
- **Don Emiliano** (San José del Cabo; [www.donemiliano.com.mx](http://www.donemiliano.com.mx)): Don Emiliano wields farm-fresh ingredients laced with Mexican tradition and emerges from the kitchen with modern delights such as stepped-up chile en nogada for Día de Independencia and lemon atole with candied pumpkin for Day of the Dead. Don't miss the regular menu, which combines the likes of locally made cheeses with roasted tomatillos and dried hibiscus flowers with beef tenderloin.
- **Palapa Azul** (La Paz): Almejas (clams) can be found everywhere from roadside shacks to gourmet restaurants in Baja Sur and are prepared raw with lime and salsa or baked inside their shells. The best place to enjoy this local treat is Palapa Azul on La Paz's Tecolote beach. The shells are stuffed with cheese, jalapeños, bacon, butter, tomatoes, and a secret ingredient the chef won't reveal. They are then wrapped in aluminum foil and tossed into an oven. The result is delectable and so is the view of the Sea of Cortez you will enjoy.

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<b>MORE INFO</b>	
<b>Websites</b>	<p>Website: <a href="http://www.visitmexico.com">www.visitmexico.com</a>          Mexico on Facebook: <a href="http://www.facebook.com/WeVisitMexico">http://www.facebook.com/WeVisitMexico</a>          Follow Mexico on Twitter: <a href="https://twitter.com/#%21/WeVisitMexico">https://twitter.com/#%21/WeVisitMexico</a></p> <p>For Mexico vacations: <a href="http://www.TransatHolidays.com">www.TransatHolidays.com</a> <a href="http://www.Nolitours.com">www.Nolitours.com</a></p> <p>For my Pinterest photos on Mexico: <a href="http://pinterest.com/travelshow">http://pinterest.com/travelshow</a>          Riviera Nayarit travel blog:  <a href="http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/Blog/tabid/400/EntryId/52/Riviera-Nayarit-Mexico.aspx">http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/Blog/tabid/400/EntryId/52/Riviera-Nayarit-Mexico.aspx</a>          Manzanillo travel blog:  <a href="http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/Blog/tabid/400/EntryId/78/Manzanillo-Mexico.aspx">http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/Blog/tabid/400/EntryId/78/Manzanillo-Mexico.aspx</a>          Los Cabos travel blog:  <a href="http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/Blog/tabid/400/EntryId/80/Los-Cabos-Mexico.aspx">http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/Blog/tabid/400/EntryId/80/Los-Cabos-Mexico.aspx</a></p>
<b>AIRLINE PRIZE PARTNER</b>	<p><b>Air Transat</b>          Website: <a href="http://www.airtransat.com">www.airtransat.com</a></p>
<b>Flight details</b>	<p>Transat flies to seven destinations in Mexico for winter 2014</p>
<b>PERSONAL EXPERIENCES</b>	<p>I was most recently in Mexico over Xmas and New Year 2013/2014 when I travelled around the Yucatan from a base on Riviera Maya.</p> <p>I have stayed in Manzanillo January 2013 with my family for a week's vacation and can personally recommend this destination.</p> <p>We also took the Travel Show on location to Los Cabos in July 2013: -</p> <p>In the past I have visited:          Oaxaca and Monte Alban,          Mexico City,          Veracruz,          Tampico,          Cancun,          Riviera Maya,          Puerto Vallarta,          Riviera Nayarit,          Acapulco,          Mazatlan and          Los Cabos.</p>

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<p><b>TRANSAT AND NOLITOURS</b></p>	<p>There are <b>25 Sun destinations and 350 Resorts</b> to choose from. New from Toronto are the destinations of <b>Huatulco</b> and <b>Los Cabos</b>.</p> <p>There is a wide variety of fantastic resorts on offer, carefully selected and categorized by the experts from Nolitours and Transat Holidays so you can choose the vacation that is just right for you.</p> <p>The wide range of attractions and possibilities that Mexico has to offer is amazing: fine cuisine, excellent service, family friendly resorts, world class golf, culture, combinations of beach and the interior, luxury at affordable prices, and more!</p> <p>Ask your travel agent for the Transat Holidays Sun Collection 2014 and Nolitours Sun 2014 brochure and go to <a href="http://www.transatholidays.com">www.transatholidays.com</a> and <a href="http://www.Nolitours.com">www.Nolitours.com</a></p>
<p><b>TRANSAT and NOLITOURS in MEXICO</b></p>	<p>Transat and Nolitours have the widest choice of Mexican vacations with frequent flights and small, cozy hotels to the biggest all-inclusive resorts. Frequent flights mean that some destinations offer you a more flexible choice to go for e.g. 10 days rather than the regulation 7 or 14 day vacation. Plus Transat's Experience Collection offers unique cultural or ecological adventures and twin centre options.</p> <p>New from Toronto: Los Cabos and Huatulco.</p>
<p><b>Option Flex</b></p>	<p>For even more peace of mind – consider Option Flex from Transat Holidays and Nolitours. For only \$49 at the time of booking, should anything unexpected happen, Option Flex has you covered. You can change your departure date, destination or hotel up to 3 hours before departure. You can transfer your vacation package to a friend or family member up to 7 days before departure. Or you can cancel your trip and get a full refund.</p>
<p><b>Transat Background</b></p>	<p><b>For over 25 years</b>, Transat Holidays has been offering a large selection of vacation options in Europe, Florida and the south, as well as cruises. In addition to more than 200 south hotels available in the form of all-inclusive packages, Transat also offers a wide range of flights, packages, tours and à la carte products in some 30 European destinations. Their packages are flexible and tailored to stays of varying lengths. Their employees aim to exceed vacationers' expectations in order to maintain their position as a market leader here in Canada. They see their role as turning holiday dreams into reality: making the vacation experience of their guests one of the most memorable ever.</p> <p>Transat offer flights from East to West and all in between, such as Hamilton, Thunder Bay, Ottawa and from the West Coast.</p>
<p><b>Transat Collections</b></p>	<p>Because we all have our own definition of ideal vacation, Transat Holidays has designed exclusive <b>Collections</b> to meet the needs of different travellers. Last winter (2012/2013), the Distinction and Luxury</p>

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collections represented 19% of Transat Holidays' business. Out of 452 hotels offered by Transat Holidays and Nolitours, 61 are exclusive to them, and they accounted for 38% of the 2.7 million room nights sold. Together, Collections product represented 59% of Transat Holidays and Nolitours room nights.

### **Experience Collection**

Beyond its beautiful beaches and fabulous weather, the south offers a wealth of fascinating travel opportunities. So, Transat has put together a collection of out-of-the-ordinary experiences to complement your dream vacation under the sun. You could experience traditional life in a tranquil Mexican village for instance:

**San Sebastian del Oeste escapade.** First Day: Depart Puerto Vallarta in the morning. Enjoy the scenery and observe rural life in Mexico as you wind through the mountain roads on your way to San Sebastian del Oeste, one of Mexico's "magical towns". Nestled in the Sierra Madre, this 17th century mining village of 600 residents has retained its colonial architecture and enchanting essence, and is a living museum untouched by time. You'll see all the local sights, including a museum, a church, an ancient prison, a fort once used for storing gold and a coffee plantation. Stop at a traditional restaurant and savour authentic Mexican cuisine for lunch. Afterwards, you'll have free time to explore this peaceful town and its cobblestone plaza. Take part in a cooking workshop at your hotel and enjoy your creation for dinner.

Overnight in San Sebastian del Oeste. Second Day: After breakfast, tour a tequila and moonshine distillery before returning to your resort in Puerto Vallarta.

**Also: Coffee and Culture from Huatulco.**

### **Duo Collection**

Vacations don't have to come in neat little boxes. Transat Holidays has introduced a line of packages that allows travellers to enjoy a more complete vacation experience by combining two very different destinations. You could spend part of your vacation soaking up the sun on a beautiful beach, and the other half exploring the cultural and historic attractions of an intriguing city or town. Or you could opt for a few days of snorkelling in a gorgeous coral reef, before relaxing to the sounds of the surf in a completely different destination.

### **Manzanillo and Guadalajara**

Two unique experiences, one trip: Combine your seaside getaway in Manzanillo with a stay in the modern yet traditional city of Guadalajara. Manzanillo is the perfect venue for life's unhurried pleasures: from world-class golf to deep-sea fishing and scuba diving. Guadalajara: is known as the "Pearl of the West"; this fascinating city boasts charming

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	<p>plazas and impressive architecture. Birthplace of tequila and Mariachi music, Guadalajara is considered the cultural centre of the region. The nearby town of Tlaquepaque is also famous for its pottery and blown glass. Stay one night at Las Hadas Golf Resort &amp; Marina, three nights Hotel de Mendoza in Guadalajara and three more nights at Las Hadas.</p> <p><b>Also: Cancun and Merida</b></p> <p><b>Distinction Collection</b>          Transat Holidays' Distinction Collection was especially designed for travellers looking for an enhanced travel experience. Located on stunning beaches, these resorts offer exclusive privileges, added services and superior comfort. You'll notice the difference the minute you arrive. Beautiful surroundings, attentive service, superb facilities and spacious accommodations serve as the backdrop for that special vacation you've always wanted.</p> <p>Before takeoff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Avoid the wait at the airport with Online check-in service at <a href="http://www.airtransat.ca">www.airtransat.ca</a></li> <li>- Upgrade to Option Plus and enjoy even more privileges</li> </ul> <p>On the plane</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Italian leather ergonomic seats</li> <li>- Welcome champagne glass</li> <li>- Choice of hot meal and complimentary glass of wine</li> </ul> <p>During your stay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Non-stop transfer from the airport to your resort</li> <li>- Exclusive room location</li> <li>- Concierge service</li> <li>- Minimum of three guaranteed reservations for à la carte restaurants</li> <li>- 24-hour room service</li> </ul>
<b>Awards</b>	<b>Agent's Choice Awards:</b> For the fifth consecutive year, Transat Holidays was named Wholesaler of the Year by travel agents in 2012.
<b>New Brochures</b>	<p><b>Transat Holidays Sun 2014 and Nolitours Sun 2014</b> brochures are available at your local travel agent and cover vacations through to October 2014.</p> <p>Also available are:</p> <p><b>Transat Holidays Florida</b>  <b>Transat Holidays Cruise</b>  <b>Transat Discoveries</b></p>
<b>Air Transat's New Comfort Zone</b>	<p>With so many new comfort features, you're on vacation the minute you take your seat. Air Transat is giving their fleet a full makeover. Starting in 2012, one by one, the planes and passengers are soaring to new heights in design and comfort. They are rolling out the new cabins over the next two years. For a glimpse of what it all looks like:</p> <p><a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZBse6WOCd70">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZBse6WOCd70</a></p>

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<p><b>Air Transat Kids Club</b></p>	<p>To ensure that your family vacations are fun and unforgettable from beginning to end, Air Transat has created <b>Kids Club</b> so that young passengers can really enjoy themselves whilst onboard an Air Transat flight. It is designed to make air travel a fun experience for young travellers (and for their parents!). Even before the doors of the plane are closed following boarding, every child receives a small bag containing all sorts of surprises and games. The more fun they have, the easier the flight. Furthermore, children who are members of Air Transat Kids Club enjoy certain exclusive privileges.</p> <p>Members of the Air Transat Kids Club will enjoy several benefits that the whole family can share. You can check in at a special "Air Transat Kids Club Members" counter. Thanks to these special counters located in major Canadian airports where Air Transat flies, checking-in is quicker than before. At check-in, special tags will be placed on your baggage; as a result, your baggage gets priority treatment.</p>
<p><b>Air Transat Upgrades</b></p>	<p>Air Transat has added more legroom on all their aircraft, making the journey to and from your destination even more comfortable. They have also introduced a new Economy Class meal service on sun destination flights. Passengers flying south will now be welcomed onboard with a glass of champagne, while early morning passengers will be greeted with a mimosa.</p> <p>The meal service has also been improved. The airline will now offer passengers a more complete meal tray, including a choice of two hot meals, a complimentary glass of wine and dessert.</p>
<p><b>Best Leisure Airline</b></p>	<p>Air Transat was named <b>World's Best Leisure Airline</b> at the Skytrax annual World Airline Awards, held at the 2012 Farnborough International Airshow, near London in the UK.</p> <p>Distinctions were based on a survey measuring the satisfaction of more than 18 million customers. Conducted over a 10-month period, this survey included over 200 airlines that were rated on 38 different aspects of the passenger experience. The study analyzed customer satisfaction for the Airline Passenger Experience, from check-in to boarding, onboard seat comfort, cabin cleanliness, food and beverages, onboard entertainment, and service of staff.</p> <p>In the past five years, Air Transat has gained other recognitions as a result of its numerous environmental initiatives. In 2011, the Company ranked first worldwide in the Atmosfair Airline Index environmental performance indicator, in the long-haul category. Air Transat also obtained the Platinum LEED-EB (existing building) certification for its headquarters, located within the Montreal–Trudeau airport site.</p> <p>Air Transat was recognized as the Best Charter Airline for the fifth consecutive year at the Agents' Choice Awards, which represents the largest sampling of travel agents in Canada. The airline also received</p>

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	<p>the Family Friendly Airline Award, which acknowledges carriers that provide additional services and extra comfort to children &amp; parents.</p>
<p><b>Transat Compensation Plan</b></p>	<p>Transat has introduced a new compensation plan for clients affected by an advanced flight schedule change on all South, Florida and Europe flights, packages and cruises. This new policy applies to all bookings made with Transat Holidays, for Air Transat or CanJet flights.</p> <p>Applicable to schedule changes within 45 days of departure.</p> <p>Schedule change of 3 to 12 hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transat will offer a \$50 voucher for future travel.</li> </ul> <p>Schedule change of 12 to 24 hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transat will offer a \$75 voucher for future travel.</li> </ul> <p>Schedule change of 24 hours or more and cancelled flights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients can cancel their flight and are entitled to a full refund in the event of a schedule change of 24 hours or more.</li> <li>• Transat will offer a \$50 voucher for future travel to clients who cancel.</li> <li>• Transat will offer a \$100 voucher for future travel to clients who accept the date change.</li> <li>• Clients who choose a product at a lower fare will be refunded the price difference, whereas clients who select a product at a higher fare will be required to pay the balance.</li> </ul> <p>Schedule change of 3 hours or less</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No compensation will be offered to clients experiencing a schedule change that is delayed or advanced by 3 hours or less.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Transat Club Class</b></p>	<p>Enjoy exclusive privileges such as complimentary seat selection, wider, more comfortable leather seats, a choice of gourmet meals and fine wines, priority check-in, baggage service and boarding.</p> <p><b>Club Service</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated Club attendants</li> <li>• Attentive, personalized service</li> <li>• Exclusive, spacious Club cabin</li> </ul> <p><b>Drinks &amp; Snacks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome cocktails</li> <li>• Complimentary non-alcoholic drinks, snacks and bar service</li> </ul> <p><b>Club Privileges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased baggage allowance</li> <li>• 40 kg checked/15 kg carry-on</li> <li>• Exclusive, rapid check-in counter in most airports</li> <li>• Priority boarding</li> <li>• Practical travel items (on Europe flights)</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free headsets</li> <li>• Canadian newspapers</li> </ul> <p><b>Comfort &amp; Refinement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wider, more comfortable leather seats</li> <li>• More leg room</li> <li>• Complimentary Seat Selection: call 1-877-872-6728</li> <li>• Choice of gourmet meals</li> <li>• Choice of wine and more</li> </ul>
<p><b>Option Plus</b></p>	<p>This Economy class option includes many priority privileges and services including priority check-in, priority baggage handling, an extra 10kg baggage allowance and even champagne. Here's what you get:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advance seat selection on roundtrip flights</li> <li>• Priority check-in at a dedicated counter</li> <li>• Priority baggage handling</li> <li>• Priority boarding</li> <li>• Complete Air Transat travel kit on flights to European destinations</li> <li>• Snacks from the On Board Bistro selection</li> <li>• Alcoholic beverages during drinks service 200ml bottle of champagne (Sun and Europe)</li> <li>• Supplementary baggage allowance up to 10 kg per flight segment</li> <li>• Wine or beer with the meal</li> <li>• Headsets</li> </ul> <p>The cost is \$79-\$119 for southbound destinations and \$99-\$209 for European destinations as at September 2013</p>
<p><b>Transat and Sustainable Tourism</b></p>	<p>Transat recognizes the prime importance of the environment, host communities, cultural diversity, and their relationships with their employees, customers and partners. Transat is firmly committed to the responsible development of the tourism industry, and has adopted the following definition of sustainable tourism:</p> <p><i>“Sustainable tourism entails respect for nature, as well as for host communities and their values; it combines positive socio-economic benefits for local populations with an enriching experience for travellers.”</i></p> <p>The issue of the environment, as far as Transat's own facilities are concerned, is a clear and basic target. Their environment committees have implemented concrete initiatives with regard to recycling, conservation of resources, the disposal of obsolete electronic equipment, and raising employee awareness.</p> <p>Air Transat has begun developing an environmental management system that could lead to an ISO 14001 certification in the future. To find out more, consult the Transat and the Environment sections at their website:</p> <p><a href="http://www.airtransat.ca/en/Info/the-environment-its-everyones-business.aspx?ExitID=69&amp;ContentType=voyageur">http://www.airtransat.ca/en/Info/the-environment-its-everyones-business.aspx?ExitID=69&amp;ContentType=voyageur</a></p>

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	<p><b>Eco-responsible certified hotels</b>  Transat urges its hotelier partners to excel in social and environmental responsibility, and formally recognizes the efforts of accommodations that commit to certification in this area. Certified establishments must maintain performance levels to continue using such labels. The indicators used vary depending on the certification scheme, but many certification organizations have begun aligning their benchmarks with the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria.  To help you make an informed choice when you take your next vacation, Transat list six certifications for hotels and beaches. You can also find certified hotels by searching by destination.</p> <p><b>Certifications for hotels</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Biosphere Responsible Tourism</li> <li>2. Green Globe</li> <li>3. Green Key</li> <li>4. ISO 14001</li> <li>5. Travelife</li> </ol> <p><b>Certification for beaches</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Blue Flag</li> </ol>
<b>Gift Certificates</b>	<p>Here's your chance to make a loved one's dream come true. With Transat gift certificates you can offer the gift of travel from packages to car rental. Transat gift certificates are valid on all Air Transat, Nolitours, or Transat Holidays products in their brochures. They can be redeemed at a travel agent's office at the time of reservation. To order your gift certificates call 1-800-322-6649.</p>
<b>Hurricane Policy</b>	<p>Nolitours and Transat Holidays provide you with true peace of mind. Vacationers can travel secure in the knowledge that you will be protected should a hurricane affect your destination city in Florida, Mexico, the Caribbean or Central America. This Nolitours/Transat Holidays policy covers reservations for departures between June 1 and November 30, 2013. If the conditions stipulated in the policy are met, you may choose one of these four options:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Travel at a later date</li> <li>2. Travel to another destination city</li> <li>3. Travel to the booked destination city</li> <li>4. Cancel with a full refund in credit vouchers</li> </ol>
<b>Nolizone</b>	<p><b>Nolitours' lively noliZONE</b> was specifically created for travellers who would like to step outside their resort, meet new people and really get to know their destination. With tons of fun activities throughout the day and night, your biggest dilemma will be deciding what to do next. Introduced in 2011, the It Zone in Puerto Plata was so successful that this concept has been launched in other destinations.  Their noliZONE representative will always keep you informed on upcoming activities and events, and you can also visit</p>

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	<a href="http://www.nolizone.nolitours.com">www.nolizone.nolitours.com</a> to get the latest news and updates on what is going on in the noliZONE.
<b>Groups</b>	Group rates are available – as few as 10 adults make up a group. Talk to your travel agent to check the current details of Transat’s group deals.
<b>Transat Discoveries</b>	<p>This is Transat’s program to the exotic destination of your dreams! It features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- international flights on scheduled airlines like Cathay Pacific, Air France, KLM, South African Airways, Air Canada and LAN</li> <li>- 4 star accomodation (some 3 and 5 star) and transfers</li> <li>- Small-group tour with English-speaking guide</li> <li>- Unique experiences with most meals and excursions included</li> </ul> <p>For more information contact your travel agent and view the tour itineraries in the brochure or at <a href="http://www.transatdiscoveries.com">www.transatdiscoveries.com</a></p> <p>Here are some of their destinations they offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Beach stays in Thailand and Vietnam</li> <li>- Health retreats in Tunisia and Morocco</li> <li>- Diving in the Red Sea and Galapagos Islands</li> <li>- Overland safaris in Kenya and Tanzania</li> <li>- More options in over 40 countries.</li> </ul>
<b>Social Media</b>	Stay in touch with Transat and Nolitours at their two Facebook sites: <a href="http://www.facebook.com/airtransat">http://www.facebook.com/airtransat</a> <a href="http://www.facebook.com/nolitours">http://www.facebook.com/nolitours</a>
<b>Special Deals with Transat and Nolitours to Mexico</b>	<p>Transat and Nolitours currently have some very special deals to Mexico this year. As at February 2014 these include:</p> <p><b>\$619 Toronto to Hacienda Buenaventura Hotel Spa And Beach Club in Puerto Vallarta 1 week All Inclusive 27th Feb 2014 + tax \$395 for a total of \$1014</b></p> <p><b>\$989 Montreal to Allegro Cozumel in Cozumel 1 week all-inclusive 21st Feb 2014</b></p> <p>Check out <a href="http://www.TransatHolidays.com">www.TransatHolidays.com</a> and <a href="http://www.Nolitours.com">www.Nolitours.com</a></p>

<b>CJAD 800 Prize Hotel Grand Palladium Vallarta Resort and Spa</b>	<p>For the Pacific coast of Mexico – choose the Grand Palladium Vallarta Resort and Spa in Riviera Nayarit with Transat Holidays.</p> <p>Located in a tropical paradise and surrounded by lush vegetation, the 4 ½ star Grand Palladium Vallarta Resort &amp; Spa overlooks the stunning Bay of Banderas. The hotel is located in front of a private beach approximately 50 kms from downtown Puerto Vallarta.</p> <p>This hotel is part of the <b>Transat Distinction Collection</b> – which means extra inclusions and services for Transat Guests at this hotel such as 5</p>
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	<p>guaranteed à la carte dinners / week at the Resort's 4 restaurants (Asian, Mediterranean, Steakhouse/Grill and Mexican) plus a bottle of tequila, fruit basket, bathrobes, slipper and beach towels in your room upon arrival - and much more!</p> <p>The hotel is also part of the <b>Transat Family Collection</b> – which means it is particularly suitable, and great value, for kids. The transfer time from the airport is less than 1 hour, there are 3 Kids Clubs spanning ages 1 to 17 years and facilities including a wading pool, playground, kids menu, video games and disco. The hotel also has “Kids Stay and Eat free” offers and discounts on kid’s excursions.</p> <p>On top of all this – with Transat Holidays you can book an <b>“Escapades Package”</b> when you choose the Grand Palladium Vallarta Resort and Spa. Escapades are exciting overnight excursions that really allow you to really discover your destination. From this hotel the Escapade takes you through the mountains to one of Mexico’s “Magical Cities”. Eat at an authentic Mexican restaurant; take part in a cooking workshop and overnight at a traditional hacienda.</p>
<p><b>Location</b></p>	<p>Located in a paradisiacal haven, surrounded by lush, tropical vegetation and overlooking the stunning Bay of Banderas in the Riviera Nayarit area. In front of a private beach with 300 meters of fine white sand bathed by the crystalline waters of the Pacific Ocean.</p> <p>Approximately 45 km from the Puerto Vallarta airport and 50 km from downtown Puerto Vallarta.</p>
<p><b>Accommodation</b></p>	<p>There are 422 rooms in two distinct sections with a range of room types. The deluxe rooms have 1 king-size or 2 double beds and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Air-conditioning</li> <li>- Full bathroom with hydro-massage tub</li> <li>- Hairdryer, Coffee-maker, Idock/MP3 dock, Iron and ironing board</li> <li>- Flat-screen satellite TV</li> <li>- In-room safe</li> <li>- Memory foam mattresses</li> <li>- Mini-bar</li> <li>- Balcony or terrace with table and chairs</li> <li>- Occupancy up to 4 persons (max. adults: 4 / max. children: 2)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Dining</b></p>	<p>Buffet restaurants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- El Bosque</li> <li>- Las Terrazas</li> </ul> <p>À la carte restaurants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bambu (Asian)</li> <li>- Portofino (Mediterranean)</li> <li>- Viva Mexico (Mexican)</li> <li>- Ribs &amp; More (Steakhouse)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Services</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Beauty salon</li> <li>- Disco</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gym</li> <li>- Internet and WiFi (in lobby)</li> <li>- Lounge chairs and towels</li> <li>- Scuba diving centre</li> <li>- Spa</li> </ul>
<b>Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Daily activities program and nightly entertainment</li> <li>- Ping-pong</li> <li>- Pool table</li> <li>- A variety of daily sports</li> <li>- Kayaking</li> <li>- Selected non-motorized water sports</li> <li>- Snorkelling</li> <li>- Tennis</li> </ul>
<b>Kids</b>	<p>New for kids for winter 2014: <b>Play at Palladium with Raggs</b> : daily activities with the characters, live musical stage shows and more.</p> <p><b>Baby Club</b> - For kids 1-3 years old</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Babysitting</li> <li>- Wading pool</li> <li>- Open from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm</li> </ul> <p><b>Kids' Club</b> - For children 4-12 years old</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Renovated playground</li> <li>- Playroom</li> <li>- Video games (XBox) with projector</li> <li>- Children's menu</li> <li>- Arts and Crafts gallery</li> <li>- Home Theatre system</li> <li>- Ecological activities</li> <li>- Open every day from 9:00 am to 11:00 pm</li> </ul> <p><b>Junior Club</b> - For children 13-17 years old</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sports &amp; entertainment program</li> <li>- Video game and PC room</li> <li>- Discotheque</li> <li>- Open every day from 11:00 am to 11:00 pm</li> </ul>
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.transatholidays.com/en/Puerto-Vallarta-Riviera-Nayarit/Grand-Palladium-Vallarta-Resort-Spa?code=PVRGRA&amp;tmpl=DOP&amp;theme=VTH">http://www.transatholidays.com/en/Puerto-Vallarta-Riviera-Nayarit/Grand-Palladium-Vallarta-Resort-Spa?code=PVRGRA&amp;tmpl=DOP&amp;theme=VTH</a>
<b>Deals with Transat Holidays for 2014</b>	<p>Free honeymoon package</p> <p>Escapade option offered</p> <p>Wedding package available</p>

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<p><b>Newstalk 1010 Prize Hotel Velas Vallarta Suite Resort in Puerto Vallarta</b></p>	<p>The Velas Vallarta Suite Resort is a 4 star property located 2 kms from the airport and 8 km from down town Puerto Vallarta, close to the trendy marina area. Families will appreciate the short transfer time from the airport - plus the well-equipped suites that include kitchenette and living area. Studio as well as 1, 2 and 3 bedroom suites mean there is lots of room for the whole family - seven adults and two children can share the largest suites. Plus two kids under 5 stay and eat free at this resort! The resort offers two à la carte restaurants (Mexican and Italian) as well as three pools, a gym, spa and nightly entertainment. There is a golf course nearby. And for kids there is a Kids Club (ages 4 to 12). <a href="http://www.velasvallarta.com">www.velasvallarta.com</a></p>
<p><b>Location</b></p>	<p>Nestled on 10 breathtaking acres on Banderas Bay, this beautiful, all-inclusive resort in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico is in a prime location for maximum family enjoyment in the Mexican Riviera. The best attractions and activities in the area are easily reached and the resort is walking distance to the 18-hole Marina Vallarta Golf Course and Marina Vallarta, the most modern marina in Mexico with 500 yacht-sized slips; the charming city centre is just minutes away by car. Kids love visiting Puerto Vallarta's Malecón boardwalk, with its exciting performers, treats and spectacles. Fly in easily, as the resort is just 5 minutes from Puerto Vallarta's International Airport, Gustavo Diaz Ordaz.</p>
<p><b>Accommodation</b></p>	<p>Completely remodeled, all 345 resort suites are beautifully decorated in contemporary Mexican style with ethnic fabrics, inviting colours, and elegant amenities including dining areas, direct-line telephones with voice mail, digital alarm clocks, hair dryers, mini bars, safes, terraces with teak wood furniture , bathrooms with British products, and "Sweet Dreams" beds with plush duvets and goose-down pillows. All suites feature fully-equipped kitchen with microwaves and utensils or kitchenettes.</p>
<p><b>Dining</b></p>	<p>Indulge in a culinary adventure and a feast for your senses at Velas Vallarta, where local flavour and culture blend in delicious harmony. The resort offers excellent restaurants - from gourmet dining to a casual beachside bistro – with gastronomic goodies. Enjoy tantalizing international cuisines at Andrea Restaurant, Alejandra Restaurant (seasonal) and La Ribera Restaurant. Swim up to the Aqua Bar for refreshing tropical drinks or enjoy evening entertainment and elixirs at the Alhambra Lobby Bar.</p>
<p><b>Services</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Two Swimming Pools</li> <li>- Children's Swimming Pool</li> <li>- Lazy River, Fountains And Cascades</li> <li>- 150 Meter Long Beach</li> <li>- Sundeck Over The Beach</li> <li>- Tropical Garden &amp; Terrace</li> <li>- Fitness Centre with Cardiovascular Equipment</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Daily Activities in the Pool Area including</li> <li>- Water Aerobics</li> <li>- Nightly Shows and Entertainment</li> <li>- 3 Lighted Tennis Courts</li> <li>- Basketball Court</li> <li>- Concierge and Guest Services Desk</li> <li>- Transportation to Marina Vallarta Golf Course</li> <li>- Mini Supermarket, Boutique, Art Gallery</li> <li>- Indoor &amp; Beach Spa, Massage Service, Hydrotherapy &amp; Sauna</li> <li>- Beauty Salon</li> <li>- Scuba Diving Lessons Adventures (\$)</li> <li>- Golf Discounts for Marina Vallarta Golf Club &amp; Vista Vallarta Golf Club</li> <li>- High-speed Wireless Internet access</li> </ul>
<b>Activities</b>	Velas Vallarta offers exciting recreational activities, sports and special events to create the perfect resort experience in Puerto Vallarta. Play on the beach, tennis and basketball courts and game tables, and enjoy fun in the sun.
<b>Kids</b>	Children will enjoy a fun-filled vacation with the Velas Vallarta Kids Club, which provides fun activities for kids from ages 4 to 12. The little ones will participate in arts, crafts and activities, including ceramic painting, face-painting where kids transform into super heroes, and a treasure hunt which sends kids racing throughout our Puerto Vallarta resort. Located next to the kid's pool, the Kids Club offers fun water activities, including swim classes, water balloon fights and Marco Polo. Kids can also enjoy tennis clinics and learn the basics from the tennis pro, or play on the Jungle Gym. The Kids Club is open daily from 10:00 am to 9:00 p.m.
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.velasvallarta.com/puerto-vallarta-luxury-resort.aspx">http://www.velasvallarta.com/puerto-vallarta-luxury-resort.aspx</a>
<b>Deals with Nolitours for 2014</b>	Wedding and free honeymoon packages are available. Two children under 5 stay and eat free.

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