

TRAVEL+ LEISURE

I Lived in Mexico for 5 Years, and This Is the Most Peaceful Place in the Country

An insider's look at Mexico's most peaceful destination, the Costalegre.

By [Meagan Drilling](#) | Updated on December 7, 2023



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My peaceful Mexico starts where the roads seem to end. It's where the sun melts into the Pacific and palm trees and sea turtles far outnumber the people. It's hidden in craggy, Capri-like caves and floating atop the glassy, blue-green water in secluded coves. For me, the most peaceful place in Mexico is along the quiet yet deeply powerful [Costalegre](#).

The Costalegre is a stretch of coastline that's bookended by its polar opposites — the pulsing tourist beach capital of Puerto Vallarta to the north and the industrial port city of Manzanillo in the south. In between, however, is a single stretch of highway surrounded by the towering Sierra Madre mountain range, impenetrable jungle, and broad bays that are, very rarely, graced with sandy footprints that disappear quickly underneath the lapping waves.



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My home base in [Mexico](#) has always been Puerto Vallarta, and I love this city with all of my heart. But it's a different city than the one I fell in love with a decade ago when it was still very much a small (but growing) beach town. These days, it's a full-fledged city on the sea. One look at the skyline will reveal a field of cranes as luxury condos spring up in every neighborhood. Traffic is a nightmare through the narrow, cobblestone streets. And if you're staying anywhere downtown, good luck getting a good night's sleep. Still, as they say, there's always a price to pay for paradise, and Puerto Vallarta will always be that to me.

And yet, when I need some peace from paradise, I find myself turning to the rugged, rawly beautiful Costalegre.

But the Costalegre is deceptively wild. Yes, it is undeveloped and abundant with wildlife. Villages are peppered all the way down the jungle-shrouded highway. But much of the land is owned by families of developers. This is where the [Four Seasons Resort Tamarindo](#) recently made its buzzy debut. It's where the creative community of [Careyes](#) has quietly existed for decades, and where quirky luxury hotels like [Cuixmala](#), [Las Rosadas](#), and [Las Alamandas](#) continue to bring well-heeled (but decidedly dressed-down) guests for splashy villas, private pools, and a five-star escape.

But what makes the Costalegre different is that the developer families who own the land have tremendous heart. They've made it their mission to protect this part of Mexico from overdevelopment. For all the tens of thousands of acres that each family owns, only a small portion will ever be developed. The rest is protected in preserves, allegedly, forever.

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I keep watching Mexico change. I have mixed feelings about it. Progress is inevitable, and you have to hope that with progress in tourism, the lives of the locals are made better and the environment will stay protected. Sadly, that's not always how it plays out. So, to know that, for now, Costalegre will remain as close to pristine and untouched, that families will be able to stay in their towns and villages, and that the footprint of tourism will be relatively small brings me an overwhelming sense of peace.