

# TRAVEL + LEISURE

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The Food Issue



# Intelligent Traveler

TIPS AND TRICKS TO HELP YOU TRAVEL SMARTER

Edited by PAUL BRADY



## Hotter Than Ever

No matter how long it's been since your last visit, now's the perfect time for a return to Mexico. **MEAGAN DRILLINGER** reports on the best hotels and resorts to book—and what the country is doing to keep guests safe.

*Mexico's Costalegre is long on Pacific breezes and wide-open spaces.*



PUERTO VALLARTA'S **Casa Kimberly** ([casakimberly.com](http://casakimberly.com); doubles from \$295) has a glamour all its own—it was once Elizabeth Taylor's vacation home, after all. The hacienda-style villa sits on a quiet, cobblestoned street and overlooks red-tiled roofs and the Bay of Banderas. On those evenings when the sky erupts in a vibrant sunset, the hotel is illuminated by soft reflections from the crystals of the chandeliers. But on a recent stay I found it even more enchanting, because just six of the nine guest rooms were available due to COVID-19-related capacity limits. I felt as safe as could be—and often had the pool deck all to myself.

Mexico has long been an escape for Americans, who are drawn by

▲ La Copa del Sol, one of many art pieces at the resort Careyes, on the Pacific coast.

▼ Casa Kimberly, a nine-room hotel in Puerto Vallarta.



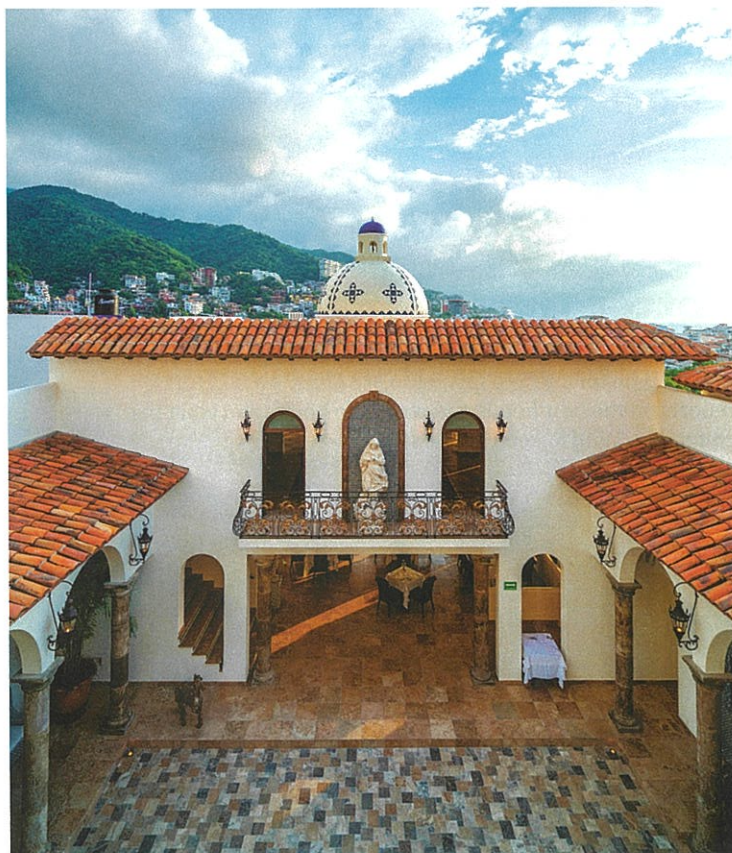
its natural beauty, its huge range of hotels and resorts, and its remarkable food—not to mention its proximity and affordability. While the pandemic curtailed many trips, the country has slowly and steadily reopened. In the first four months of 2021, more than 1.5 million Americans flew to Mexico, though countless others may still be wondering, *Is it really okay to visit?*

"There's no reason to be nervous as long as you know what to expect," says Ben Gritzewsky, a Mexico and Latin America travel specialist at the travel firm Frosch who's based in Mérida, on the Yucatán Peninsula.

Travelers will find familiar health protocols in place across much of the country, even as vaccination rates rise on both sides of the border. Hand-sanitizing stations are ubiquitous; temperature screenings are often required when entering hotels, restaurants, and shops; and hospitality workers continue to wear masks and other PPE. Hotel guests, however, often have the choice of whether or not to wear a mask.

On my numerous reporting trips to Mexico during the past year, I encountered fewer tourists and observed better adherence to safety measures outside major tourist hubs like Cancún and Mexico City.

On the Costalegre, south of Puerto Vallarta, luxury enclaves like **Careyes** ([careyes.com](http://careyes.com); doubles from \$350) and **Cuixmala** ([cuixmala.com](http://cuixmala.com); doubles from \$550) were designed with outdoor living in mind. The **Four Seasons Resort Tamarindo**







▲ The pool at Cuixmala overlooks a two-mile stretch of beach on the Costalegre.

▼ Luna Rooftop Tapas Bar, at the Rosewood San Miguel de Allende.

Biosphere Reserve and Lake Bacalar continue to see far fewer visitors than more popular places like Tulum.

And in the state of Oaxaca, “Huatulco is an up-and-coming destination that has a very different

vibe—it’s super bohemian and a gateway to world-class surf breaks,” says Rabinor, who recommends **Villa Escondida** ([villaescondida.com.mx](http://villaescondida.com.mx); buyouts from \$1,295), a four-suite escape located on secluded Bocana Beach.

Mexico currently has no vaccine requirement for arriving travelers, but upon departure, they must fill out a contact-tracing form. As of this writing, before boarding a flight back to the U.S., passengers must provide the airline proof of a negative COVID test within the previous three days, regardless of vaccination status.

On my visits, pre-flight tests were inexpensive and extremely easy to come by: hotels and resorts across Mexico offer them to guests, and many villa-rental agents and Airbnb hosts provide on-property testing kits. It’s a small price to pay for those stunning sunsets over the rooftops of Puerto Vallarta.

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([fourseasons.com](http://fourseasons.com); doubles from \$1,050) is slated to open there later this year. “I’d also consider beach destinations like Los Cabos, Punta Mita, and Todos Santos,” says **Zach Rabinor** ([zach@journey-mexico.com](mailto:zach@journey-mexico.com)), CEO of Journey Mexico and a member of T+L’s A-List of travel specialists.

In San Miguel de Allende, authorities continue to enforce mask mandates, and visitors have a wide choice of boutique hotels that emphasize privacy, including the 67-room **Rosewood San Miguel de Allende** ([rosewood.com](http://rosewood.com); doubles from \$395), the 14-room **Casa 1810** ([casa1810.com](http://casa1810.com); doubles from \$250), the five-room **Hotel Amparo** ([hotelamparo.com](http://hotelamparo.com); doubles from \$250), and the three-room **Mesón Hidalgo** ([mesonhidalgo.com](http://mesonhidalgo.com); doubles from \$185). On the Caribbean coast, nature-forward areas like Sian Ka’an

