

WINTER/SPRING 2020

# WD TRAVEL

WINE DINE + TRAVEL MAGAZINE

224 PAGES  
SPECIAL IBERIAN FOOD EDITION



## DISCOVERING IBERIA

SPECIAL SPAIN & PORTUGAL FOOD EDITION

JALISCO | TERRIFIC TÜBINGEN | BEYOND BARCELONA | A TRIP TO THE HEARTLAND | LONDON CALLING





# 134

## LEGENDARY JALISCO

The exuberant mariachi music essential to all festive occasions originated in Jalisco, as did the swirling, stomping moves of the famed Mexican hat dance, Mexico's national dance. Charrería, the Mexican roping and riding rodeo, began on Jalisco's vast cattle ranches.

# 146

## MY WORLD CHRISTMAS TREE

Years ago, a close friend and fellow travel junkie inspired me to begin collecting ornaments for my holiday tree as I traveled. Those ornaments have become magical transporters that whisk me away to places and faces that continue to enrich my life..

# 152

## PLAYING THE BLUES

The Mellotones, Halifax's most kickass Rhythm & Blues band, are onstage at Bearlie's, a Canadian hotspot for live blues. Much of the audience is dancing but not me. I'm quaking because I know they are about to call me on stage.

# 160

## A TRIP TO THE HEARTLAND

A destination duo in our nation's heartland had me agape amid a current explosion of dining delights, historic immersions and magnificent steeds.



## Alison DaRosa

Alison DaRosa is a six-time winner of the Lowell Thomas Gold Award for travel writing, the most prestigious prize in travel journalism. She served 15 years as Travel Editor of *The San Diego Union-Tribune* and was the award-winning editor of the *San Diego News Network TravelPage*. Alison writes a monthly Travel Deals column for *the San Diego Union-Tribune* and is a regular freelance contributor to the travel sections of the *Los Angeles Times*, *USA Today* and *AOL Travel*. Learn more about Alison on her website, [www.AlisonDaRosa.com](http://www.AlisonDaRosa.com).



## Carl H. Larsen

Carl H. Larsen is a veteran journalist based in San Diego. He now focuses on travel writing, and is summoned to pull out his notebook whenever there's the plaintive cry of a steam locomotive nearby. In San Diego, he is a college-extension instructor who has led courses on the Titanic and the popular TV series "Downton Abbey."



## Jalisco celebrates the soul of Mexico from the city to the sea

Story & Photography Maribeth Mellin

Many Mexican states are defined by their indigenous cultures: the Maya in Yucatán, Aztec in Mexico City, Tarahumara in Chihuahua. Jalisco stands out as the birthplace of Mexico's more modern cultural icons. The exuberant mariachi music essential to all festive occasions originated in Jalisco, as did the swirling, stomping moves of the famed Mexican hat dance, Mexico's national dance. Charrería, the Mexican roping and riding rodeo, began on Jalisco's vast cattle ranches. The national elixir originated in Jalisco's blue agave region, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Sprawling from the craggy Pacific coast inland through valleys and forests, Jalisco is home to the colonial-style resort destination of Puerto Vallarta, the expat retirement magnet of Lake Chapala, and Guadalajara, Mexico's second-largest city. The state's music, dance, architecture and art have influenced creators throughout the country, and its food and drink are legendary. I recently spent a few days exploring two sides of Jalisco in Guadalajara and Careyes, a coastal community south of Puerto Vallarta. Highlights abounded. Here are a few of my favorite experiences.

# JALISCO

## A LEGENDARY STATE





## Mariachi

I arrived in Guadalajara on a Saturday night during the International Mariachi and Charrería Festival, and immediately headed to the neoclassic Teatro Degollado for the fancy Mariachi Gala. The music made familiar at Mexican restaurants around the world began as working-class entertainment, with humbly dressed, roving musicians playing for money. As mariachi gained in popularity, however, an elaborate style evolved. Based on the clothing worn by Jalisco's charros, or horsemen, the mariachi uniform can run into many thousands of dollars for the short bolero jackets, tight pants or long skirts adorned with silver or gold buttons and enormous sombreros covered with elaborate gilt embroidery.

The music evolved as well as musicians gained professional status and established careers. It's not unusual to hear symphonic arrangements for songs from the mariachi playbook. Some of the finest groups from Mexico and the U.S. performed with the Jalisco Philharmonic Orchestra during the gala, filling the ornate theater with beloved favorites that kept the audience cheering. Outside the theater musicians displayed their CDs and mingled with their fans as they refueled with shots of tequila from the theater's cafe.

## Ballet Folklórico

Sunday morning began at Tortas Toños with a typical tapatio (the nickname for Guadalajara's residents and style) breakfast—a torta ahogada, or "drowned sandwich." The sandwich comes on a birote, a crunchy baguette dense enough to absorb the juices spooned over piles of shredded pork (I prefer just a little sauce on the torta, which tastes like a juicy carnitas sandwich). At Toños, ladies in their Sunday best perched on counter stools beside laborers all devouring their tortas with relish.

Stomach satisfied, I moved on to Avenida Chapultepec and the International Mariachi parade. More than 40 bands from 25 countries were in Guadalajara for the festival, and a lineup marched along the avenue proudly waving flags from France Australia, Japan and Peru. Female mariachis, slowly gaining prominence in the profession, marched alongside their male peers, and ages ranged from

the 20s into the 80s. They were too busy smiling, waving and taking selfies to play their instruments.

As trumpets blared and the music picked up volume, folkloric dance troupes joined the parade while celebrating their recent feat. On the previous day, more than 800 dancers gathered to dance the Jarabe Tapatio (the Mexican Hat Dance), setting Guinness World Record for the world's largest folkloric dance.

Jalisco's citizens enjoy competition, it seems. Some currently hold nearly a dozen records, including the largest number of people twirling lassos at the same time and the largest tequila tasting.

## Tequila

Soldierly rows of spiky blue agave corralled our little tour group on the rust-red dirt in the countryside beyond Guadalajara, A Jimador outfitted in leg protec-



Dancers and musicians from Guadalajara and around the world performed for the International Mariachi Festival.





tors and a broad-brimmed hat wielded a sharp hoe, cutting away thick cactus pads to reach the juicy piña at the center of the enormous plant. My fellow on-lookers planted baby agaves beneath billowing white clouds to replenish the harvest. A tour of the Sauza tequila distillery and bottling plant followed as we learned about the aging process while sampling Tres Generaciones, a personal favorite.

I've experienced several tastings, but there was something special about sipping fine tequila at its Jalisco origins in the small town of Tequila. The Sauza family began bottling tequila in this region in 1873 and was the first brand to export the liquor to the United States. Their modern plant sits right in the small town, across the street from a handsome hacienda where we lunched on chamorro (pork shank in a red sauce) and chilled tequila cocktails. I sipped tequila in a smoky cocktail at some of the city's finest restaurants—and enjoyed a local craft beer at my hotel. A bottle of Tres Generaciones accompanied me home.

## Architecture

I devoted one morning to Jalisco-born Luis Barragán, who set the tone for contemporary coastal and urban Mexican architecture in the 20th Century. I'm familiar with his Casa Luis Barragán museum (a UNESCO World Heritage site in Mexico City), which



A visitor plants an agave in Tequila, where the elixir appears in spicy cocktails.





Houses designed by famed architect Luis Barragán are open for tours.

reflects his bold modern style from the 1940s. Barragán was born in Jalisco in 1902 and educated in Guadalajara, where a few of his early works are open to the public. Architect [Jorge Curiel Flores](#) took me around town to a few of the master's compounds.

We started with Casa Cristo, built in 1929 and now operated by the Jalisco College of Architects. Although trained as an engineer, Barragán called himself a landscape architect and emphasized the outdoors, creating tranquil open spaces echoing the rural Mexico's ranches of his childhood. At Casa Cristo, his parabolic arches framed multiple gardens as well as indoor niches and rooms. His focus on angles, planes and the shifting light was evident, though on a smaller stage than his later sprawling estates in Mexico City.

Lines and shadows held my attention at the golden-hued Casa ITESO Clavigero, constructed in 1929 and now operated by the city's Jesuit university. Forest-green glazed tiles edged roofs and the simple, still square fountain within the villa's multiple gardens and terraces. The house is such a perfect example of Guadalajara's Tapatia architecture it was declared a National Monument in 2006. A private homeowner was kind enough to let us see the first floor of her Barragán house near the Parque Revolución, also designed by the architect, and I spotted a few more of his houses while wandering about.

## Art

A pilgrimage to the murals of José Clemente Orozco was also imperative. A contemporary of Diego Rivera and the other artists of the Mexican mural movement, Orozco had a more pessimistic view of the revolution and subsequent government than his peers. His palette was gray, offset by strong bursts of orange and red. His impressive Guadalajara murals are conveniently located in the historic dis-







trict, enabling a visit to the 16th-century cathedral, the lovely Art Nouveau kiosko (bandstand) in the Plaza de Armas and the Mercado San Juan de Dios, largest indoor market in the Americas.

At the Spanish-Moorish Palacio de Gobierno, I studied Orozco's grim depiction of the Mexican Revolution rising above the steep marble stairway. In Father Hidalgo, he portrays the priest who encouraged indigenous people to revolt against their oppressors, as a fierce, foreboding figure surrounded by fire. Other artists have a more heroic take on Hidalgo, considered the father of Mexican independence. At the Instituto Cultural Cabañas, an early 19th-century orphanage, the muralist covered the long nave's walls, ceiling and domes with his interpretation of indigenous and European interactions filled with anguish. The frescoes are so overwhelming in size and drama the institute is sometimes called the "Sistine Chapel of the Americas."

### Coastal Style

A tour of Jalisco isn't complete without a few days by the sea. Puerto Vallarta and its environs dominate the state's coastline and tourism business. I wanted a more secluded getaway, and chose to stay in the Costalegre, the "Happy Coast." This largely undevel-

José Clemente Orozco's murals cover walls and ceilings in historic buildings. Baby turtles scramble to the sea at Careyes.



oped, rugged shore south of Puerto Vallarta has been a hideaway for the rich and famous for decades, with expansive private communities and exclusive resorts surrounded by bird-filled nature reserves. I decided to check out Costa Careyes, a standard-bearer in the area. I'd long heard about celebs, models and artists gathering at this reclusive enclave. As it celebrated its 50th anniversary, I figured it was time for a visit.

Visionary Italian banker Gian Franco Brignone conjured a vision of an idyllic community while soaring over the coast in a private Cessna in 1968, at a time when wealthy Europeans were enamored with Mexico. He spotted the ideal combination of jungle and beach and hired architect Diego Villaseñor to help design his dream home. Artists, writers and creative types followed his lead, drawn by the natural beauty



and inspirational ambience of Brignone's Careyes. Over time, owners from some 42 nationalities succumbed to his vision.

I've been fascinated with Careyes for many years. The 20,000-acre property edges one of the most dramatic coastlines on the Pacific in an area that's remained blessedly free of development. After a two-hour drive from the Puerto Vallarta airport I was relieved to find a low-key, unobtrusive resort backing five glossy swimming pools and a curving beach. Multi-colored casitas faced the sea from a hillside. Lavish, yet minimalist, vacation homes designed by famed architects, including Luis Barragán, perched on cliffs above the Pacific.

Careyes dwellings take full advantage of their sea views with open living areas under soaring palapas beside free-form pools edging rocky points. I toured a few outstanding examples, including Brignone's home, called Mi Ojo (My Eye), with its fearsome suspension bridge to a wild island. Tours away from those five splendid pools led down dirt roads etching coastal cliffs to a polo field in one area and a turtle camp on the beach where thousands of eggs were buried in guarded nests. I helped release buckets full of baby turtles at sunset and cheered them on their awkward trip to the sea.

Befitting his esoteric interests, Brignone has commissioned art throughout the property, including a giant gray cement bowl called La Copa on a hill above the windswept Pacific. The installation, commissioned for Brignone's 80th birthday, is a striking sight from the sea and land. A shaman performs sound baths inside the bowl—I had to check it out. The music from singing bowls, rain sticks and other



Handsome villas overlook the sleek pools at Careyes.

implements swirled around me as I stretched out on a mat and watched clouds drift in the evening sky, soaking up the Careyes vibe.

## Where to Stay

The resort area of Costa Careyes has gone through many incarnations over the decades. These days it's called El Careyes Club & Residences ([www.careyes.com/accommodations/elcareyes](http://www.careyes.com/accommodations/elcareyes)). The hotel building, originally designed in 1976, has been totally remodeled to house luxury condominiums and suites. It frames the aforementioned pools, an open-air restaurant (with fabulous ceviche) and a peaceful beach. Residents and guests from the casitas, villas and spectacular homes dubbed "ocean castles" scattered around Costa Careyes mingle at a couple of rustic chic restaurants where everyone looks utterly fascinating.

My Guadalajara journey began at Hotel Deme-tria (<http://www.hoteldemetria.com>) in the fashionable Colonia Lafayette. A study in gray, black and white, with sleek glass walls and a sprinkling of art, the boutique hotel is a favorite haunt for director Guillermo del Toro and other celebs. There's a Luis Barragán house next door, and loads of eateries in the neighborhood along with an excellent in-house restaurant.

I moved to the Presidente Intercontinental Guadalajara ([www.presidenteicguadalajara.com](http://www.presidenteicguadalajara.com)) on the outskirts of downtown for my final nights. It's a comfortable, business-oriented member of one of my favorite Mexican hotel chains. Rooms are always sensibly designed with good desks, cushy beds and space to spread out. The rooftop pool was perfect for laps and the Club Level lounge's light meals were outstanding and satisfying. Presidente hotels always