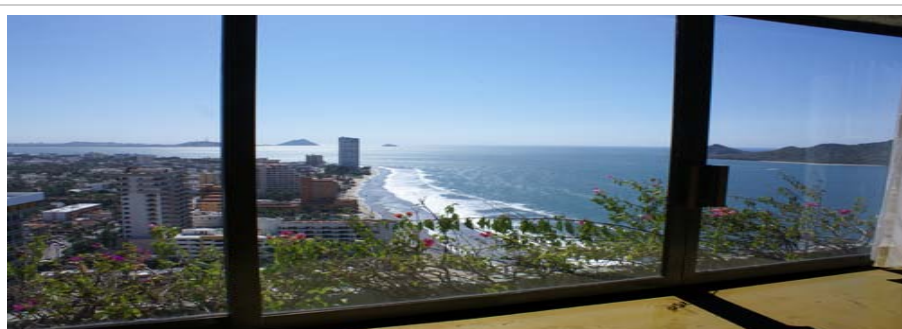




Pulmonias, Banda and Cliff Divers - Mazatlán!

By Jack Tyler



View of Mazatlán from my room in El Cid El Moro

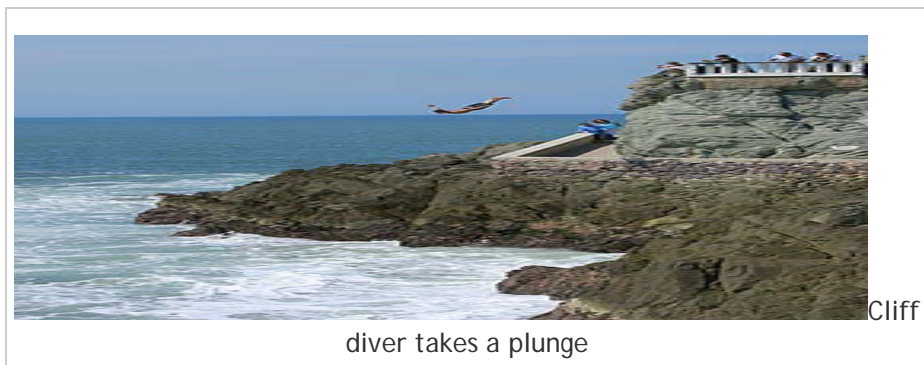
Blogging from the Pacific coast town in the state of Sinaloa, Mazatlan, it occurs to me that this trip will yield at least five future posts (by necessity). Mazatlán has so much to tell you about. So, this is the first of several installments on Mazatlán. There's so much to do here that I keep coming back. I'm struck by the fact that, more than many other Mexican cities, there are some things that are total surprises to many who have never visited Mazatlán. I've been coming here on and off since the 70s and it has grown unbelievably. Riding in a Pulmonia south from El Cid El Moro, the tower of a hotel where I frequently stay, we are traveling along the malecon with the beautiful Pacific on the right. Couples strolling along the malecon (one of the longest in Mexico, stretching from the Golden Zone to beyond Old Town) and taking in the breezes as they pick up snippets of banda music from the passing taxis and pulmonias.



The breezy pulmonia

Oh yes... "**pulmonia**". That's likely to be just one of the three things I'll talk about in this post that you may not have heard about unless you've been here. Mazatlán has its own unique taxis ... and they are, literally, nowhere else. The golf cart-looking vehicles are wide open and breezy and made only for Mazatlán. The name "pulmonia" was given to this taxi vehicle by locals because they are wide open and the standard taxi car drivers say that you will catch pneumonia in them. They are powered by VW bug engines. As far as I am concerned, it's part of the charm here and they are a **MUST** for your transportation around town. Fares can be negotiable, but only before you get in and start your trip.

I mentioned "**banda**" music. Mazatlán and the state of Sinaloa have become famous for banda, a traditional form of music performed with brass (usually a tuba), woodwind and percussion instruments. The instrument most often identified with this type of music is the tambora, a drum covered with animal hide. It sounds sometimes like a cross between Mexican Mariachi music and German oom pah pah music. You see, much of Mazatlán's heritage is steeped in its roots of German immigrants during the gold rush in California. What? Too much to talk about here... more on that when I talk about historic Mazatlán in another post.



OK... the next unique attraction here is not exclusive to Mazatlán, but if I had mentioned "**cliff divers**" to you in a general article about Mexico, your mind would have jumped to Acapulco. Well, think again... since the late 60's, Mazatlán's cliff divers have entertained and thrilled visitors several times a day just off the malecon. This dangerous spectacle is performed by daring young men who wait until the perfect moment as the waves fill a small space in the surf and dive into the foamy Pacific among the rocks. What's more, everyone gets a good view, which is not always the case in Acapulco's spectacle. This is another "**must**" in Mazatlán and every taxi and pulmonia driver will gladly bring you here.

Seafood is king here and I believe that the 50+ year old Bahia restaurant serves the best you can find in Mazatlan. Their very simple Dorado (Mahi Mahi) Ceviche is delicious and a staple of their menu. The recipe follows and the dish in the photo was made by me from that recipe. It is beautiful in its simplicity and is delicious. Enjoy!