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Mexico's Last Little Secret: Sayulita

By Geno Andrews

"MEXICO!?!?! Are you loco? Haven't you heard what's going on down there?" is how my friends tried to warn me against traveling to Nayarit, Mexico to cover the Second Annual Surf and Paddle Board contest held March 12th and 13th in the little surf town of Sayulita. I'm happy to report there were no bullets. No bombs. No guns. The rumors, as far as I'm concerned, were as accurate as any tabloid headlines you'd read in your local supermarket checkout lines. Dangerous? Ay caramba! This place is paradise!

Fifteen years ago I had the opportunity to stay at a friend's villa in Puerto Vallarta which was famous for being the location of the movie *The Night of the Iguana* (where Richard Burton supposedly fell in love with Liz Taylor.) The villa was as majestic as it was historic. On our way to the hotel, however, my guide informed me that my friend's villa is now abandoned and dilapidated. "But not to worry," he quipped in melodic Spanglish, "I think you'll find your stay at The Four Seasons just as memorable."

Come se dice, "Truer words have never been said?"

About a half an hour north of Puerto Vallarta is the coastal community of Punta Mita. (If you develop real estate, this tip is like knowing the lottery numbers in advance.) You'll have your choice of incredibly beautiful (and family friendly) places to stay, but The Four Seasons was as friendly as a Marin County B&B, and as luxurious as a 5-star Caribbean cruise.

There was no shortage of amenities; everything you'd expect in Paradise. Plenty of white sand beaches, infinity pools, private cabanas and beach huts, spa, golf (you must play the Pacifico Course at Punta Mita—a Jack Nicklaus design with an island green completely surrounded by ocean), as well as child care and game rooms for the kids complete with Wii, pool tables, air hockey, ping pong, movie screens, and a cyber corner for those kids who haven't yet been weaned from the internet.



To help remember the pronunciation of Nayarit, think 'Now You Eat'...and as long as we're on the subject, this trip provided the most mouth watering Mexican cuisine I've ever had. Seafood ceviche so fresh and tasty I felt one with the sea. (I may have even burped a little through my gills.)

On the day of the surf contest we ventured from the beautiful grounds of the Four Seasons

and made our way up the coast to Sayulita. The waves were quite small, despite the tsunami warnings resulting from the tragedy in Japan, but spirits were high and the friendly air of competition and Mexican fiesta was all around.

Surfers came from near and far to compete. When I heard that Jerry Lopez was in the competition, I got butterflies in my stomach. When kids from this planet dream of being a Superhero, they pick marvels like Superman or Spiderman. Where I grew up, in the surf community of Pacific Palisades, California, there was only one superhero—Jerry Lopez. And there he was, a few yards away from me surfing and wowing three or four generations of surfers from Mexico and around the world.

As I was daydreaming and wondering how many other superheroes might be hiding out here in the sleepy village of Sayulita, an American woman's voice snapped me out of my trance. She told me that she and her husband built a place in Sayulita years ago and that they live here six months out of the year to "Get away from it all." She had a dreamy look in her eye when she described the people, the restaurants, the shops, the history, and the fact that 'her' little town of Sayulita may be the last of what is known as the truly authentic Mexico. Beautiful, majestic, spicy and safe. She leaned in close to me and whispered, "Please... don't tell a soul!"

I promised her, between us (and the rest of our readers) it would be nuestro pequeño secreto - "Our little secret."