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# GSA

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## Sunquest adds Mazatlan in May

Sunquest will offer Vancouverites and Calgarians a chance to escape to Mazatlan year round, with the start up of summer service on May 30. In November, the service will be extended to Edmonton, Saskatoon, Regina and Winnipeg, as well as Toronto.

Sunquest will feature a variety of resorts in Mazatlan, including the Riu Emerald Bay, which will open on May 29, 2009.

This new 710-room resort, available exclu-

sively from Sunquest, will offer a stunning beach on Emerald Bay, and is just 30 minutes from the shopping, dining and nightlife of Zona Dorada.

Also available from Sunquest are the Pueblo Bonito and the El Cid collection of resorts, which feature El Cid Castilla Beach, El Cid Granada Country Club, El Cid El Moro Beach and El Cid Marina Beach.

## Royal Scenic expands Product and Programs

Royal Scenic has launched its new 2009/10 China & Asia Pacific brochure, and re-launched its new agent loyalty rewards program. It has also developed a new website at royalscenic.com.

The new brochure features some 16 countries, with many offered at prices 20% lower than last year. CEO Ivy Yeung of Toronto said the new line-up offers enhanced programs and "adjusted pricing", with something to suit every taste and budget.

Packages are classified as Prestige Collection, Value Collection, AsiaRibbean Beach Holidays, Royal Cityscapes Stopover, Golf and Spa packages, all of which helps agents find exactly the right program for every client.

Royal Scenic has also expanded the brochure to cover Australia and New Zealand, which explains the brochure name change from Asia, to Asia Pacific. For copies, visit royalscenic.com.

Royal Scenic's re-launched agent loyalty program combines the best of the previous version with a new bonus coupon initiative.

Agents can now earn Royal Scenic Reward Points (RSRP) by booking air only or tour products. Points are accumulated and can be redeemed for a variety of rewards including cash, gift cards and travel certificates.

Details of Royal Scenic's Product Specialists in Western Canada.

877-736-6028

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**Contiki Holidays** has launched a "Scratch n' Win" incentive, providing agents with a chance to win up to \$500 for every Contiki booking from April 1-30. The incentive ranges from \$5 to \$500 and includes ten \$500 grand prizes, GPS devices, \$50 and \$25 gift cards and Contiki merchandise. Agents will receive a "Scratch 'n Win" card in the mail for every Contiki booking within the incentive period.

**Signature Vacations** will continue to offer sun destinations from the west throughout the summer. Cancun and Puerto Vallarta will be offered nonstop from Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver, from May through to October. Edmonton will also get a Varadero service, from May 4 to Oct 26.



**5th Night Free in Hawaii!**  
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Terms & Conditions: sample rates shown are for select May/June 2009 travel. Prices are CAD per person based on double occupancy. Hotel taxes listed are additional. Not included: airfare, transfers or car rental. Rates are subject to change and availability. Call for other dates and durations. Not valid for group bookings. Restrictions apply. BC Reg: 3522-1 | ON Reg: 50014991 | Apr 14, 2009 | 22688

[www.funsunagent.com](http://www.funsunagent.com)  
**800.938.6786**

# Riviera Nayarit, a hub for families

By Mark Sissons

Xanna and Marina can't resist mugging for the camera. Grinning, clapping, and performing aerobatic tricks on cue, these two fun-loving sea lions frolic six times a day in their private pool with groups of delighted tourists. Rescued as infants off the coast of Uruguay along with a dozen dolphins, the sea lions are the most popular attractions at Vallarta Adventures, Riviera Nayarit's premier adventure travel operator.

Renowned for its string of beaches, sea-side villages and luxury resorts ringing the Bay of Banderas just a few minutes north of Puerto Vallarta's International Airport, Riviera Nayarit is a growing centre of family-friendly outdoor adventure.

Along with getting up close and personal with some of the ocean's most fascinating creatures, including whales, visitors can snorkel, kayak, scuba dive, hike, rock climb, ride horses and even zip-line in the mountainous tropical forests strung along the coast.

## Outdoor adventure specialists

With a dedicated staff of guides and trainers from around the world, Vallarta Adventures is one of the region's most versatile adventure tour companies.

"I don't know anywhere else in the world where you can choose from the variety of outdoor experiences that we offer," says PR director Gareth Price. "Our trainers try to give interaction with sea lions and dolphins more of a personal touch and make it more of an educational experience."

Among the trainers is Nahako Hayashi from Nagano, Japan, who coaches Xanna and Marina's interactive aquatic performance. "Although I'm an oceanogra-

pher and biologist by training," she explains, "I chose to become a sea lion and dolphin trainer because it allows me to bring people and animals closer together, resulting in greater emotional contact."

I sign up for the Signature Dolphin Swim (USD\$149) – one hour in which I can touch, feed, play, learn and swim with these remarkably intelligent sea mammals. I receive an enthusiastic welcome from the half dozen dolphins in the Olympic sized pool. Among my group is Rod Ogrady, who is visiting PV for the first time with his wife and teenage daughter Halley, from Sudbury, Ontario.

"Hanging onto the dolphin's fins while it raced around the pool was my favourite part," gushes Halley. "I had my own pet boogie board!"

## Rhythms of the night

That evening, the Ogradys plan to take in Rhythms of the Night, Vallarta Adventure's most popular attraction. For US\$89, visitors enjoy a scenic sunset cruise across Banderas Bay to the isolated cove of Las Caletas. Accessible by sea only, this former home of Hollywood director John Huston operates by day as a private beach club and spa.

After sunset, it is transformed into something quite different. Guests are treated to an elaborate dinner lit by thousands of candles and torches, followed by a dance show performed in a pyramid-shaped amphitheater.

## Jungle gym

The next morning, I join a dozen fellow eco-adventurers for a speedboat ride to Boca de Tomatlan, a secluded beach at the edge of the jungle on the southern shores of Banderas

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Bay. There, we board 4x4 Unimogs for the 2000-foot climb to base camp in the heart of the Sierra Madre Mountains.

We then ride mules higher into the subtropical forest, before clipping into a series of thrilling zip lines, rappelling down waterfalls and splashing through streams and natural river pools that form Vallarta Adventures' Outdoor Adventure Circuit. With the highest and longest zip lines in Mexico, this exhilarating experience is often called a canopy tour on steroids.

## Whale of a time

My final Riviera Nayarit adventure is a catamaran cruise to snorkel and kayak through the rocky caverns and archways of the Marietas Islands, a protected marine sanctuary and home to many species of wildlife. En route, we watch giant humpback whales just off shore, as they heave into the air, flicking their enormous tail fins. Each year from mid-December to the end of March, they can be seen in the waters off Riviera Nayarit.

Dolphins also appear, playfully racing alongside our boat, providing us with a rare opportunity to observe these amazing creatures in their natural habitat. I'm tempted to dive into the crystal clear waters and hitch a ride on one of their dorsal fins. It would certainly be a perfect way to end a memorable weekend in Mexico's newest outdoor adventure paradise.

## Getting there

WestJet offers four non-stop flights a week to Puerto Vallarta from Edmonton and Calgary. Air Canada flies daily from Vancouver and Calgary. Mexicana flies daily from Vancouver via Mexico City. And Alaska Airlines runs daily flights from Vancouver via Seattle or LAX.

## Where to stay

I stayed at Villa del Palmar Flamingos Beach Resort and Spa, an all-inclusive oceanfront five-star property 20 minutes north of Puerto Vallarta. For more info, visit [villagroupresorts.com](http://villagroupresorts.com).

## Special agents' rates

Travel agents registered with Vallarta Adventures will receive special rates when booking any of their tours and activities.

888-303-2653

[www.vallarta-adventures.com](http://www.vallarta-adventures.com)

Riviera Nayarit's:

[www.rivieranayarit.com](http://www.rivieranayarit.com).



Family fun is guaranteed with Vallarta Adventures, Riviera Nayarit's premier adventure travel operator.