

Postcards from Mexico

PANDEMIC EDITION

We're spending our winter staying safe and working remotely in a town on the Pacific coast. Here's a look at what it's like.

BY NECEE REGIS | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

One

Wearing my cozy polka dot sweatshirt, we set off for winter on the Pacific coast of Mexico, taking the risk of two not-very-long flights to escape the cold and dark of New England. Yes, I'm wearing swim goggles with my KN-95 mask, and Jim sports a mask and protective shield. Our families expressed trepidation about our plan but we were undeterred. We will isolate in Mexico with a view of the sea. Can you see we are smiling?



ILLUSTRATIONS BY NECEE REGIS



Four

One of the largest fishing ports in Mexico, Mazatlan is home to enormous tuna fleets and an extensive shrimping industry. Sportfishing, enjoyed by locals and tourists, became popular in the mid-20th century when movie stars such as John Wayne and Gary Cooper angled for marlin after filming Westerns in nearby Durango. Our one sea excursion this season was five-minute ride aboard a small panga to the beach at Stone Island where grilled seafood and mango margaritas are served beneath shady palapas.



Two

With the Sierra Madre Mountains on one side and the Sea of Cortez on the other, Mazatlan's subtropical climate in winter is dry (low humidity/ almost no rain) with temps ranging from mid-seventies in the day to low-sixties at night. By 11 a.m. the offshore winds shift and sea breezes blow till sundown. My office window offers a view of "Tres Islas," a.k.a. Goat, Bird and Deer Islands.



Five

The walk into town along the coastal road takes about seven minutes. We are in the southernmost end of the 14-mile long Malecon, in the historic Centro that is dominated by colorful 19th-century buildings in various stages of rehabilitation. A small scallop of beach at this end of town is called Olas Altas, or high waves, a popular surf spot in summer. Small cafes and bars with outside seating rim the road, and we are pleased to see more people than not wearing masks and social distancing.

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Three

Our third-floor rental this year is in a sprawling and somewhat ramshackle 1970s building designed by a local architect. We happily overlook its flaws (ants! no dryer vent!) for a magnificent sea view where whales and dolphins occasionally cavort. Sunsets are accompanied by a soundtrack of mariachi and ompah banda music blaring from car stereos parked along the coastal road where people stop for sunset-selfies. We rarely need to leave this aerie, and why would we?

A refresher course for travelers

►MUTHER

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wants to talk about sports, or, even worse, politics.

LISTENING TO PEOPLE SCREAM INTO THEIR SPEAKER PHONES AT THE BOARDING GATE.

Waiting for airplanes emboldens people to use their speaker phones in a way that they never would in any other public setting. With the volume set to 10, they give a blow-by-blow of everything happening. "Yeah, we just got to the gate. Before we got here, we stopped at Burger King for onion rings and Oreo pie. The drive-through was busy, but we made it. The lines weren't bad at TSA. So now we just have an hour until we board. Bobby just went to the men's room..."

PAYING \$12 FOR TWO ASPIRIN.

Heaven forbid you forgot something in the dash to get to the airport: ibuprofen, Chap-Stick, a tiny tube of toothpaste. If you did, you'd better be prepared to cut into your vacation slush fund. Airport convenience stores know that you have nowhere else to turn, so get ready to be fleeced. Not only will you need a second mortgage to pay for the ibuprofen and a few snacks, you'll need an advance on your salary for a bottle of water.

THE SEAT LOTTERY

A sense of relief slowly wash-



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Sometimes there are things behind this door you'd rather not see.

es over you as you realize that the seat next to you on the airplane, train, or bus is empty. You hold your breath as the minutes tick away, praying to any deity who will listen that you really, really want the seat to stay empty. Your heart is racing with excitement as the flight attendant announces that the boarding door is about to close. Lo and behold, someone dashes in with seconds to spare, and, naturally they settle into the seat next to yours.

THE FLATULENT SEAT MATE

Thinking that the roar of the engines will hide him from any embarrassment or shame, this gentleman waits until takeoff, and then passes gas with the subtleness of a machine gun. He tinkers away on his laptop, pretending you don't hear what sounds like the opening scene of "Savings Private Ryan" occurring next to you. At several points

during the flight you extract a perfume sampler from your purse and spray a generous amount under your nose.

GETTING THOROUGHLY GROSSED OUT IN THE AIRPLANE OR TRAIN BATHROOM

Let's try to state this as delicately as possible. There are moments when nature calls, but it has already called to everybody else on the flight. You step into the lavatory and the floor is wet, the trash bin is overflowing, and, well, there are other issues. We'll leave it at that.

THE AUTO RENTAL COUNTER RUSH

It's one of the cruelest parts of travel. You sit on a plane for three, four, or 10 hours. After the long procession to get off the plane and the interminable wait at baggage claim, you're ready to get going. Except there's one major hurdle standing between you and your final destination: Getting the rental car. There's a wait for the shuttle. That's followed by the 10 meter dash to be the first person at the rental counter. Otherwise you'll watch your hair turn gray as the woman in front of you in line takes 30 minutes to decide if she wants to pay \$15 for optional deer collision insurance.

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HAPPY RETURNS

A warm winter welcome

Now more than ever, we're committed to making your next stay even better with exceptional experiences, gracious service and the unparalleled amenities you've come to expect from our iconic oceanfront resort. Relax in one of four beachfront pools, enjoy championship golf, our luxurious spa, award-winning dining, shopping and more. Once you stay, you'll understand®

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