

Connecting to Puerto Escondido with Vivo Resorts



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By **Brandon Schultz**

Puerto Escondido is a rare combination of true Mexican life bustling around a smattering of in-the-know travelers.

Puerto Escondido has a unique flair among most of the most-visited Mexican getaways. Unlike the resort-riddled Cancun and Los Cabos, it's not exclusively for tourists, so it's not exactly the sparkling jet-set destination that spring-breakers and bachelorettes often choose.

Puerto Escondido is a real city in **Oaxaca**, one of Mexico's southernmost states, that just happens to have a handful of stunning surf beaches along its Pacific coastline, giving it that increasingly rare combination of true Mexican life bustling around a smattering of in-the-know travelers.



Courtesy of Vivo Resorts & Residences

Thanks to the attention brought by the now-legendary surf scene, Puerto Escondido does have a small tourist strip known as **Adoquín**, where nightly market vendors hawk their trinkets amid lively restaurants and bars, but most of the region remains less infiltrated by the tourism industry, offering genuine glimpses into Mexican culture. Historically, this atmosphere has attracted more of the backpacking crowd than well-heeled vacationers, but **Vivo Resorts & Residences** has successfully combined the location's authenticity with a luxury lifestyle on a 12-mile stretch of pristine beach just outside of town.



Courtesy of Vivo Resorts & Residences

Offering ownership in the form of private villas and condos, with a fully-managed rental program that opens the resort to the vacation market, Vivo's focus on individual, environmental, and community wellness has helped it attract a discerning, conscientious crowd of both investors and holiday travelers. *UPTOWN* was recently invited to visit Vivo for an immersive Puerto Escondido experience, and here are our recommendations for making the most of the property and the local area it strives to support.

Shop

Mexico is rich in establishments named after former president Benito Juarez (including the ever-chaotic Mexico City airport), and one of the Oaxaca native's best local namesakes is **Mercado Benito Juarez**, the market where you'll find absolutely everything from produce and flowers to cell phone chargers and leather goods. It's a massive market of countless stalls comprising an entire city block and, while there are plenty of tourists shopping for souvenirs and snapping colorful photos, it's a vital market serving the local community. Try a cup of *tejate*, a drink made primarily from toasted maize and fermented cacao beans, and don't miss a sample of *quesillo cremoso*, the famous Oaxacan string cheese that puts American string cheese to shame. **Pro tip:** If you're sensitive to questionable odors, you may want to skip the meat and seafood aisles. We found the fresh flower stalls much more agreeable to the senses!



Surf

Shimmering surf havens are responsible for much of Puerto Escondido's fame, so check out the beautiful beaches for yourself.

If you're not a surfer, laze about on the shore of **Zicatela**, or head to **Playa Carrizalillo** and seek a vantage point high above the action where you can spot surfers and sea turtles alike in the scene below.

We recommend **Restaurante Espadín**, where gourmet Mexican cuisine is served alongside the most sweeping vista in the city. At the very least, grab a margarita on the terrace and gaze down across the idyllic scene far below.

Fit foodies can trek the seemingly endless stairs down the side of the mountain to dip their toes in the sparkling waters, but don't forget you'll have to come back up. We had another margarita instead.



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Laguna

Nearby **Laguna Manialtepec** is most famous for its bioluminescence, giving its nighttime waters a sparkling glow when movement in the water triggers the phosphorescent algae. This phenomenon occurs about four times per year, but the laguna is always teeming with a plethora of impressive birds, active fish, and even lazy alligators sunning along its banks. Take a guided boat tour, or grab a kayak (but don't forget ... gators), to explore the mangrove forests jutting out of the laguna as you spot the varying wildlife for a low-key afternoon. We loved pulling up to **La Palapa de Juanita**, a privately operated campground and backpacking site, and hopping ashore for fresh coconut water in the shade as we stared at the waves on the site's oceanfront shoreline opposite the laguna. When Juanita is cooking in the traditional cooking hut, you can grab a meal here, too.



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Turtles

Nearly as bountiful as tacos, there are scores of **sea turtle release programs** at hotels and resorts across Mexico, but Vivo's program is exceptional.

Nightly custodians patrol the region's shorelines for turtles coming ashore to nest and, when they're found, the turtles are guarded throughout the entire nesting ordeal and the eggs are removed to a protected sanctuary until they hatch.

This process, coupled with the protected release on hatching day, can improve the survival rate from one in 1,000 to one in 10, as nearly all viable eggs reach a point of safe entry into the ocean.

During a release at Vivo, it's not permitted to touch the turtles or help them into the water as they pitifully tumble and float back and forth before reaching success, because they need to imprint on the beach through this first journey in order for the females to return for nesting years later.

During our stay, we participated in a heart-warming release of **Olive Ridleys**, and we were especially fortunate enough to witness the rare event of a **four-foot leatherback** nesting on the beach at night.

We were touched by these moments, and grateful for the work Vivo contributes toward Puerto Escondido's ecological and economic communities.



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