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Huatulco

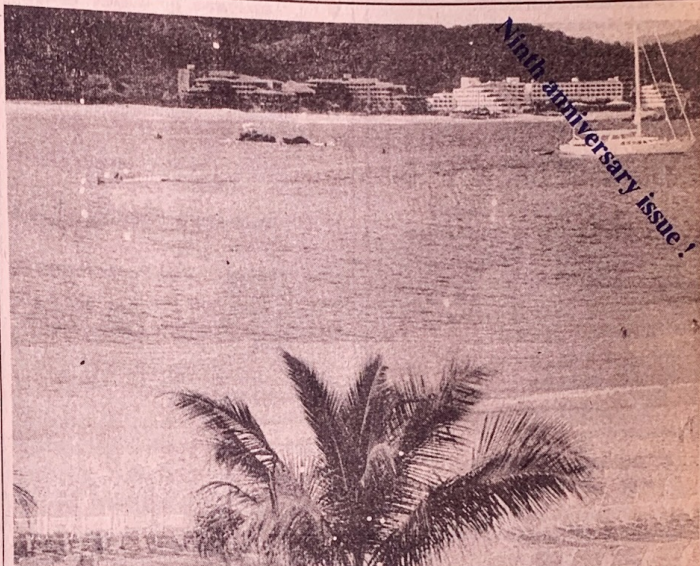
Huatulco is the newest tour-resort destination on the Pacific coast of Mexico. Located in the state of Oaxaca, it lies 420 miles south of Papulco and 150 miles from the city of Oaxaca. Chosen for development by the Mexican government for its numerous beaches of pure white sands and isolated coves, Huatulco is scheduled to become "the next Cancun", but since it is in its initial phase of development, it has the assets of Cancun without the drawbacks.

Huatulco is actually a series of nine picturesque bays: Conejos, Tangolunda, Chahue, Santa Cruz, Laguary, Organo, Cacaluta, Macahua and San Agustin. The sea has a transparent color of blue and green, pleasantly warm and the air is free of contamination, as the area is almost entirely undeveloped. At present, only 2 bays, Tangolunda and Santa Cruz, have any development at all. Tangolunda bay is the location of the deluxe hotels, of which there are 7. Santa Cruz has restaurants and hotels, and there is also an open air market for arts and crafts.

HISTORY

As a result of the development of the Bays of Huatulco, as the area is known, recent archaeological excavations have revealed relics of ancient cultures. Ceramic artifacts from the Chontales indicate that the Huatulco area was inhabited as early as 1000 to 1200 A.D. and some of these artifacts can be found on excursions to the river Copalita.

The name Huatulco is derived from the Zapotec "Cuauhxocho"



Ninth Anniversary Issue!

Tangolunda bay

that means "tree where the eagle stood on." and was founded in 1539. Legend tells us that many years before the Spanish conquest, Huatulco was visited by a bearded, robed white man identified by the natives as Quetzalcoatl who instructed the local Zapotec Indians in Christianity and in worshipping a giant wooden cross that was planted in the sand on Santa Cruz beach. According to that legend, in the late 16th century Huatulco was visited by Francis Drake and other English pirates. Although Drake did no damage, others after him destroyed the town but the cross remained standing. Then, in 1587, Thomas Cavendish tried in vain to hack it down with axes and pull it over with chains. Finally, in 1611, the Bishop Oaxaca, Juan de Cervantes, ordered the miraculous cross to be dug up. On doing so, the base of the cross was revealed to be only a few feet deep, making its resistance to Cavendish's ravages even more miraculous. In Oaxaca the cross was

finally broken up; smaller crosses were made from its wood and sent to the Mexico City Cathedral and the Vatican.

WILDLIFE

The natural beauty of Huatulco is overwhelming. Along the 22 mile coastline, the soft sandy beaches are

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Huatulco

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spoiled and sheltered. With 36 beaches and coves, it is possible to escape the crowds entirely and to enjoy the things that makes Huatulco different from other resorts. Nor are these beaches just barren stretches of white sand; lush vegetation comes right down to the beach, offering welcome shade and interesting animal life.

The variety of marine life and coral reefs makes Huatulco a great spot for snorkeling and scuba diving. It is safe to swim in the ocean. The waters are protected by the large coral reef that runs along the coastline and are further sheltered by the curvature of the bays. The ocean is absolutely clean of "agua negra" as the government, learning from the tragic pollution of Acapulco, constructed a water purifying plant which treats and recycles waste water for irrigation. It does not empty out to the ocean.

In addition to the spectacular coastline, Huatulco is interesting because it is located in an ecological zone known as "selva baja" or "low jungle". This is a rare type of jungle which is characterized by the presence of deciduous trees (trees which lose their leaves seasonally) and previous woods such as cedar, mangrove, pine and macuil. The diverse animal life includes deer, iguanas, rabbits and wild boar as well as different birds and tropical blossoms. The climate of this area has average

temperatures of 82° F, ideal for swimming and for exploring the jungle.

HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS

Huatulco has a reputation of being an expensive and exclusive resort. This reputation is only partly deserved. It certainly can offer accommodation which is both expensive and exclusive. The Omni Zaashila Resort leads the pack in this category, with a super - deluxe rating of more than five stars. Some of the suites cost \$ 250 U.S. dollars a night and have their own private swimming pools and marvelous views of the ocean. But Huatulco does not have to cost a fortune. Tangolunda Bay contains the expensive hotels: Club Med, Sheraton, Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza and Royal Maeva. All of these hotels have restaurants serving good but pricey meals. The idea is that you won't leave your hotel. If you do, there is an Argentine grill called La Pampa Argentina near the tourist office and Misión Fa-Sol, located at Paseo de Tangolunda, serves tasty Spanish cuisine in an attractive Spanish courtyard. Try their paella.

In nearby Santa Cruz Bay, the Posada Biniguenda costs N\$ 180.00 (low season) to N\$ 200.00 (high season) for double room. This is the oldest hotel in Huatulco (1986) and it has lovely tropical gardens and a swimming pool with a waterfall. The

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Huatulco

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hotel restaurant serves average Mexican food.

When the staff of the Oaxaca Times visited Huatulco to research this article, we stayed quite inexpensively and comfortably in La Crucecita. Crucecita is located a mile and a half inland from the bay of Santa Cruz. It is a planned city, built by the government in 1985 as the residential area for the resorts. Centered around a grassy Zócalo bordered with cafes and restaurants, it also offers a selection of reasonably priced hotels. Some of the hotels we liked are Posada Michelle and Posada Primavera. Also try Suites Bugambilia on calle Bugambilia; their nice and attractive rooms start at \$ 20.00 U.S. dollars. If you plan to stay for a long period of time you should think on renting an apartment, an air-conditioned apartment with a swimming pool starts at \$ 250.00 U.S. dollars., this pays for all the



Chahué bay

utilities except electricity, and if you don't really care for air-conditioning you could get a \$ 180.00 U.S. dollar apartment with a ventilator and a swimming pool. For more information contact Mision fa-sol Restaurant. Phone: 91-958-10-306 Fax. 91-958-10-306.

In La Crucecita, the restaurants we recommend are: Santa Clara Restaurant offering Oaxacan specialties such as seafood soup and "pollo al barro", a chicken dish in mole sauce which is wrapped in foil and then slowly baked in a clay casserole. Santa Clara Restaurant is located at Calle Carrizal at the corner of Guanacastle. El meloncito located in front of Plaza Principal offers several Mexican cuisine specialties such as sopas and tostadas covered with salad and cream for a reasonable price. Restaurante María Sabina serves grilled meat and seafood right on the zócalo and Carlos'n Charlie's provides dinner and an active, noisy

bar. After dinner, the Bonfy Bar on Plaza Principal is a fun place to listen to live 60's music. There is a cover charge and the music begins at 10.00 p.m. daily.

Although La Crucecita is not on the sea, there is excellent transportation available, and it is cheap. A taxi costs N\$ 5.00 pesos to Santa Cruz Bay, where you can eat fresh seafood on the beach in a "palapa" or seaside restaurant. A colectivo costs N\$ 1.00. From Santa Cruz Bay to Tangolunda Bay, site of the luxury hotels, restaurants, golf course, tourist office and a beautiful public beach, a taxi costs N\$ 8.00 and the bus costs N\$ 2.00. The buses run frequently and Tangolunda Bay is certainly worth a look, as the hotel developments are really quite beautiful.

Daytime activities

Excursions, water sports, deli-

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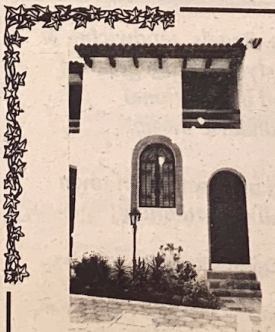
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Huatulco

Times

from Page 4



Santa Cruz bay

us seafood and relaxing in the sun
the principal ingredients of a vacation
in Huatulco. renting a bicycle
another way to explore the area.
cycle or moped rentals can be arranged
in La Cruccecita. Shopping and
nightlife at this moment are very
much limited to the hotel, since
first major shopping centers are
mall. There is only one disco in
Santa Cruz bay called Magic Circus
and a couple of night-clubs with live
music.

Huatulco's strong point. The main attraction in Huatulco is the magnificent coastline, and there are bay cruises which leave Santa Cruz Bay at 11.00 a.m. and visit seven bays, stopping for a lunch of fresh fish and for snorkeling and swimming. The cruise returns at 6.00 p.m. Prices may range from N\$ 65.00 to N\$ 95.00 for the all-day excursion. This is really the only way to see Huatulco's Bays, as few of them are accessible by road. Travel agencies such as Bahia Plus located at Number 5 Boulevard

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Daytime activities are

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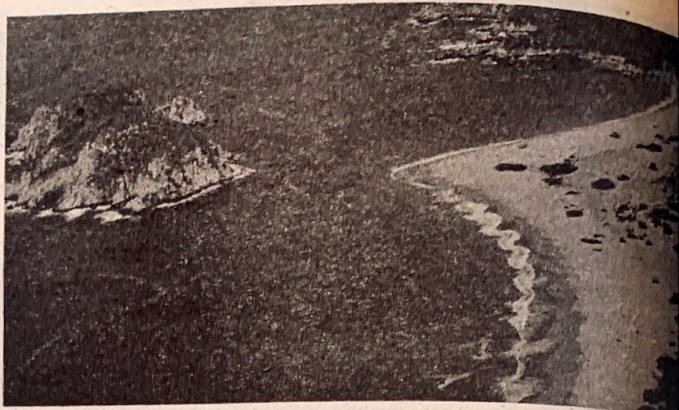
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Benito Juárez, Bahía de Santa Cruz, Huatulco Oaxaca. Phones: 91 (958) 709-32, 702-16, 700-77 (ext. 422). Fax: 702-16 can book this trip. You can negotiate with boat owners in Santa Cruz Bay, and for about \$ 5.00 dollars they will ferry you in a "panga" to La Entrega beach, one bay from Santa Cruz, where you can spend the day snorkeling and eating in the palapa restaurants.

La Entrega beach is a cove coveted for snorkeling and diving because of its turquoise water and colored fish. The shallow clear waters are ideal for swimming.

Equipment can be rented on the beach or at the marina before you leave. There is a dive shop in the Hotel Castillo, Santa Cruz Bay, which rents scuba gear and arranges outings. In front of the big hotels along Tangolunda Bay you can rent aquamotos starting at N\$10.00 and para-sailing is only N\$25.00, a real bargain for the brave of heart. Wind surfing and water-surfing are other options. At the moment, the most complete line of equipment rental and beach services can be found at Tangolunda. But at Chahue trailer park, you can also rent jet skis, wind surf boards and sails, and even an ultra light sport airplane. The park offers snorkel and scuba diving equipment, plus diving lessons and diving trips under guidance of qualified instructor with certificates.

For nature lovers, Posada



Cacaluta bay

Michelle (Phone: 7-05-35) in Crucecita offers Eco-tours exploring jungle flora and fauna and visiting a bird sanctuary. The trip is by boat with some walking involved and takes 6 hours. The price is a \$ 18.00 U.S. dollars.

GETTING THERE

Huatulco is served by an international airport, with flights directly to the U.S. and Europe, as well as to Mexico City. Flights to Oaxaca on AeroMorelos cost N\$ 520.00 round-trip for the 40 minute flight, and during high season there are two flights a day in each direction on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. A new airline, Montes Azules, flies from Huatulco to Tuxtla Gutierrez, the capital of Chiapas, where you can continue on to visit Palenque ruins. From the airport, Transportes Terrestres mini buses cover the 13 mile drive to the Bays of Huatulco for \$ 5.00 U.S. dollars a person, and

a taxi runs \$ 8.00 U.S. dollars.

The trip by bus from Oaxaca is inexpensive but tiring, as the 8 hour journey crosses the winding mountain roads. From Puerto Escondido Estrella Blanca provides hourly bus service and first-class buses link Huatulco with Acapulco.

Even though the government plans to develop Huatulco into a mega-resort rivaling Acapulco and Cancun, you do not see construction everywhere. Plans for the near future are to have thirty six guest rooms available. It is interesting to note that from January to September of the year 90% of the visitors were Mexicans.

However you arrive in Huatulco, the destination is worth the expense and effort.

Written by Jackie Spiegel

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