



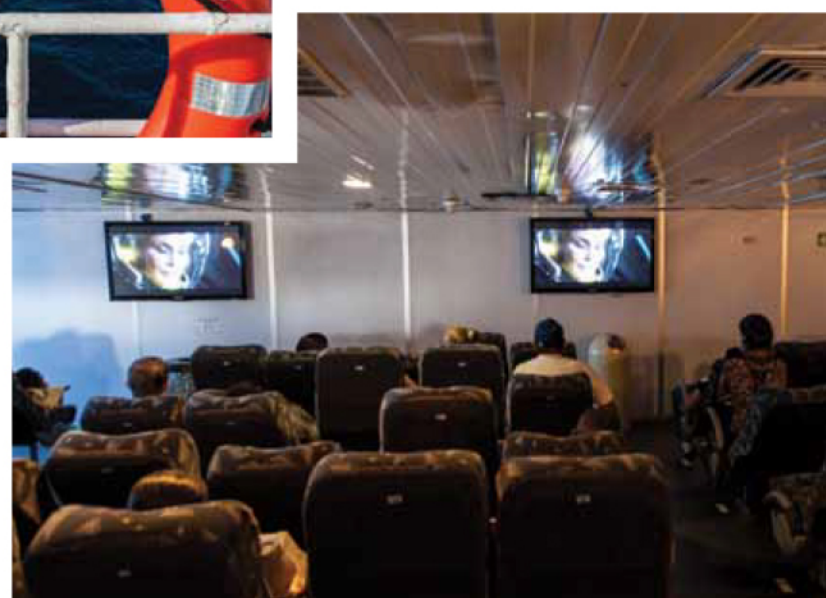
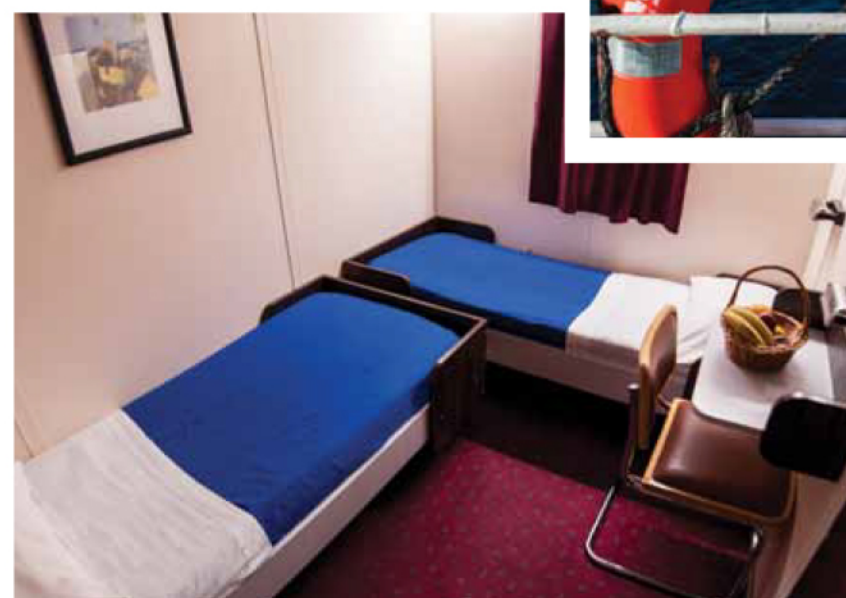
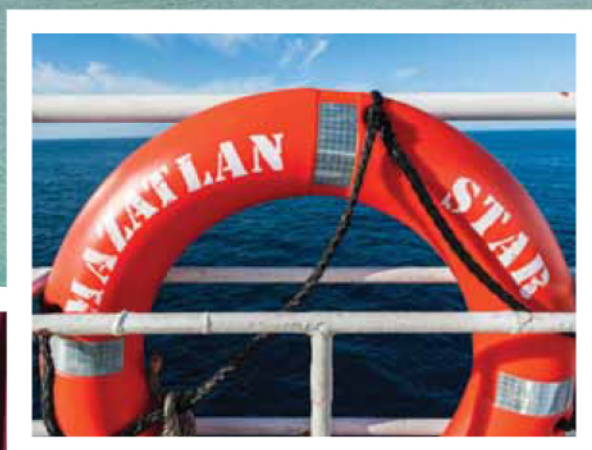
CABO LIVING



-by Joan Tucker & Paul Papanek | photos by Paul Papanek-

There we were, in a darkened theater, watching Ridley Scott's "Prometheus" with Spanish subtitles. The theater was full, and a handful of playful children, oblivious to the science fiction movie on the screen above them, ran in and out and up and down the aisles. No one seemed to care. As the movie ended and the credits rolled, we thought it a good idea to step outside and get a breath of fresh air before the next movie began.

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(FAR LEFT AND ABOVE) | The Mazatlan Star is one of the primary means of shipping cargo between the Mexican mainland and Baja. The ship can accommodate 200 passengers in a combination of cozy and comfortable cabins and lounges while it transports semi-trucks and passenger vehicles in its cavernous hold below. A movie theater, cafeteria, and bar ensure that everyone is comfortable during the 16-hour trip.

As we walked through the doors, we were dazzled by a magnificent sunset - an uninterrupted paint box of color over the Sea of Cortez. We were on the rear deck of Baja Ferry's Mazatlan Star, a couple of hours into our overnight journey from La Paz to Mazatlán - a trip that we've wanted to take ever since we bought our little casita in La Paz seven years ago - and we couldn't have been happier.

That afternoon, as instructed, we had arrived at the ferry terminal in La Paz an hour before our 5pm departure to join a fascinating mix of families, couples, vacationers, students, backpackers, and truck drivers boarding the ferry. The truckers and people with cars had arrived earlier in the day to stake out their place in line. Standing outside the ramp leading into the massive hold, we were transfixed by the ballet of semi's, cars, and other vehicles being directed by the crew to maneuver and park on one of two levels, sometimes with as little as an inch or two between them. While all of this was going on, we were ushered up the right side of the ramp alongside the moving trucks, and led into an elevator that took us up to the reception desk. After being checked in by the welcoming staff, we were taken up one floor to our cabin. The cozy, air-conditioned

cabin, with its en-suite bathroom with shower and two twin beds arranged in an "L" - each with its own reading light - was surprisingly comfortable and fun. Once we got our luggage stowed under the beds, we decided to snoop around the ship. We passed the open doors of other cabins - some like ours, some with bunk beds, and some with shared baths. Outside, our shipmates were strolling around the decks, playing cards, taking pictures, talking on their cell phones, and enjoying the cool sea breezes on the park benches at the rear of the ship. It all felt like a Sunday afternoon in any Mexican zocalo, and we were happy to be part of it.

It was when we headed back inside that we stumbled into the movie theater and sat down for what we thought would just be a few minutes and...well - that's where we began our story.

At around 7:30, the dinner bell rang, and people from all over the ship began to make their way to the cafeteria. The price of the tickets included meals, and we had a choice of enchiladas, beef stew, pastel de atun, rice, beans, and more - all made on-board in the cavernous galley by an energetic kitchen staff who seemed to never stop moving. The pastry chef proudly showed us an impressive variety of cookies and cakes he had made for the desert tray that night and secretly slipped us a little bag of freshly baked cookies "for later."

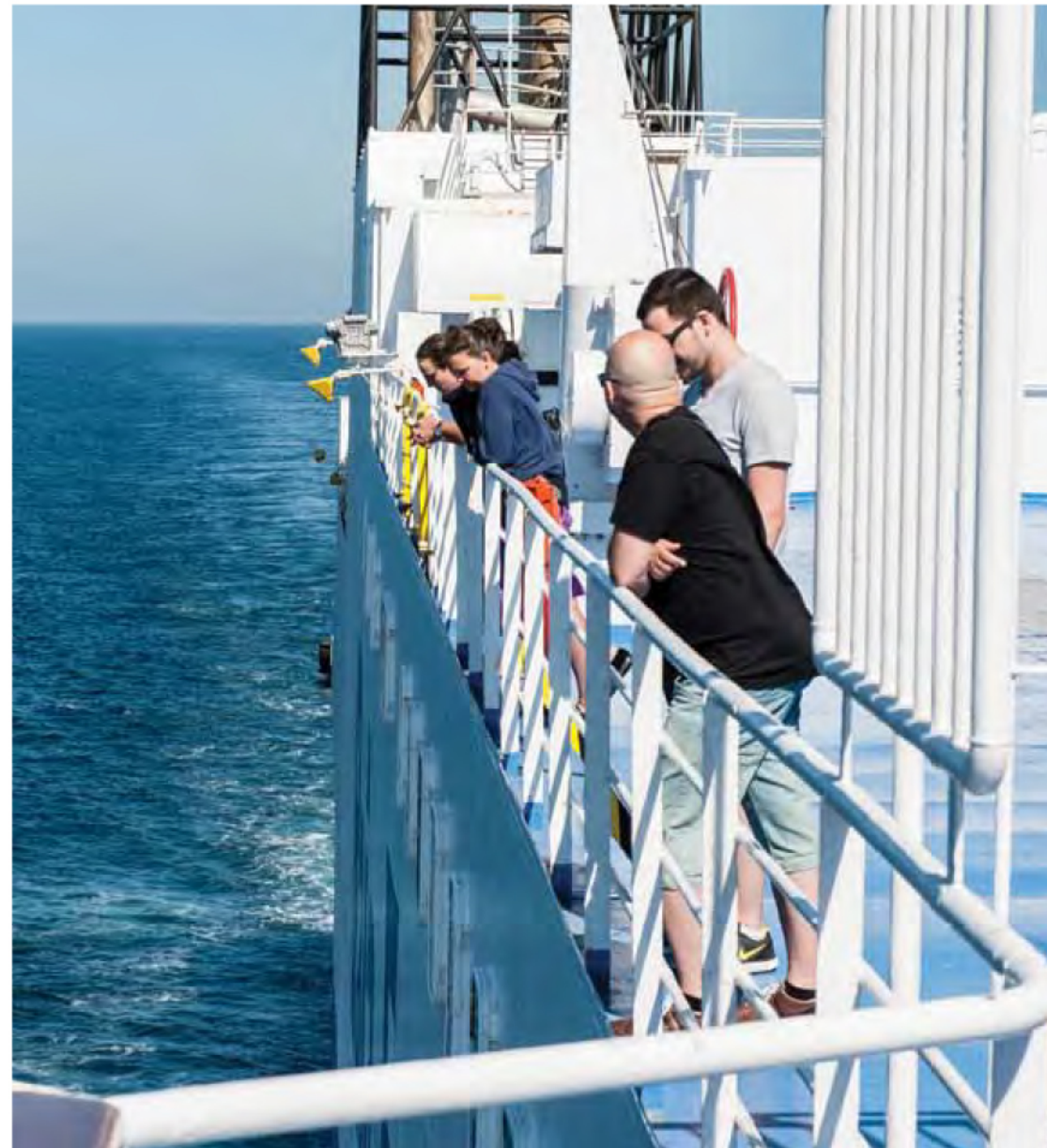
After dinner, we took another stroll around the decks, returning to the theater for "Sweethearts" with Billy Crystal and Julia Roberts - the perfect, if not a little dated and incongruous - late night movie before

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bedtime. We said goodnight to several of our shipmates, leaving them in the theater, as they settled in for the all-night movie marathon, and retired to our cabin. The gentle, almost imperceptible rolling of the ship lulled us to sleep almost immediately. Morning brought us back downstairs for a delicious breakfast of chilequiles, fresh pan dulce, and thick Mexican coffee. Out on deck, the seagulls flying low alongside of the ship signaled that we were getting close to land, and indeed, a couple of hours later, we were pulling into our berth in the Port of Mazatlán. The 16-hour journey had been wonderful and was ending just as we were getting into the groove.

Estándares Producción		
PASTELES		
Sabor/Decorado	Pan	Yema
Fresa con Chocolate	Chocolate	Toqueño
Cajeta con Vanilla	Vanilla	Rompepepe
Fresa-Chocolate	Combinado	3 tochos
Fresa-Vanilla	Combinado	3 tochos
PAN DULCE		
• Cuchitos	• Bollos (naranja)	
• Galletas	• Galletas (naranja & gragea)	
• Babas de (Mama)	• Cartadillos (zanahoria)	
• Leche		

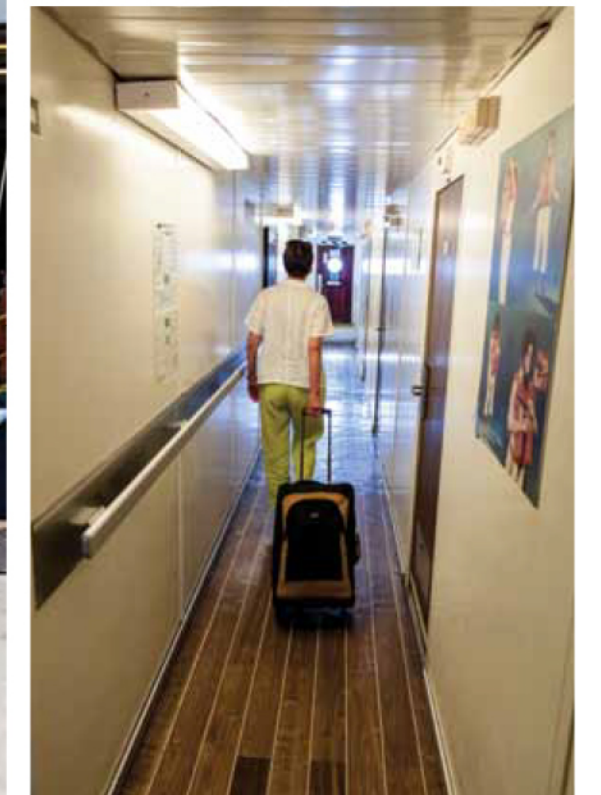


The disembarkation was as crazy as the previous day's maneuver - only in reverse. We watched it all for a little while and then grabbed a taxi. Our destination was the venerable, classic beachfront Pueblo Bonito Mazatlán in the heart of the Zona Dorada area. This would be our base of operations for the next 48 hours. We've stayed at Pueblo Bonito properties before, so we knew that we'd be in good hands. Our frequent trips from La Paz to Cabo often find us at one of their four stunning hotels when we just feel like we need real "beach-front pampering." We're never disappointed. Our third floor room was perfect— one

of the 247 suites at the hotel. It had a fully equipped kitchen, a lovely terrace with a table and two chairs overlooking the ocean and the quieter of the two swimming pools, and a separate sitting area. It was everything anyone could possibly want. After settling in, we made our way down to the hotel's beautiful beach for lunch. As soon as we claimed our chaise lounges and palapa, a waiter appeared and uttered the phrase we've come to love the most: "Algo de beber?" "Por que no?" we replied. "Dos margaritas, por favor!" And there we were for

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(FAR LEFT AND BELOW) | The Mazatlan Star has an onboard cafeteria with a range of options to choose from. Seabirds soon appear as the ferry nears Mazatlán, where guests and vehicles disembark.





the rest of the afternoon, while the beautiful Pacific stretched out before us.

Like all good tourists, we did our research and read a lot about the revitalization of Mazatlán's centro historico – the old heart of the city - and that was where we planned to spend most of our time. With evening upon us, we grabbed a taxi and headed there. The local taxis are called Pulmonias, and are unlike any taxi you'll see anywhere else in Mexico. Imagine the marriage of a VW and a golf cart and you'll be close. On the way into town, our driver told us how the taxis got their name: when they first appeared here almost 50 years ago, the jealous drivers of traditional cabs warned their passengers not to ride in the new open-air taxis because they would get pneumonia. The name pulmonia – Spanish for pneumonia - stuck.



We offered our driver a few pesos more than what we had negotiated back at the hotel to take us on a brief city tour, and he was happy to oblige. As we drove along the malecon – at 13 miles, one of the longest seafront walkways in the world – we enjoyed watching all the people taking advantage of the beautiful evening. He pointed out the many seafood restaurants on the beach below, and Mazatlán's famous lighthouse, El Faro, which has been operating since the late 1800's when it was considered the highest lighthouse in the world. He also showed us the statue dedicated to the pulmonia drivers. Once in the centro historico, we drove past the bright yellow spires of the Cathedral de Mazatlán, that have towered over downtown for more than a century, the Plaza Revolucion – the city's main plaza which

sits in the shadow of the cathedral - and the Mercado Central, built in 1899 – a gigantic Art Nouveau building whose style was influenced by Eiffel, (yes! that Eiffel). Our driver dropped us off at Plazuela Machada, the cultural heart of the centro historico. It's a vibrant, tree-lined colonial plaza that's home to restaurants, sidewalk cafés, bars, a handful of boutique hotels and a lively gallery scene. It's where hipsters, artists and actors share park benches with locals while students from the Institute of Culture, Tourism, and Art eat ice cream and joke with their friends. Music is everywhere.

We had read about a new restaurant in the district called El Presidio, belonging

(FAR LEFT AND ABOVE) | The Pueblo Bonito Hotel is a handsome addition to Mazatlán, as is the 13 mile malecon of the city. El Presidio is an exciting dining spot that features modern Sinaloa cuisine and restaurant design. Mazatlán is also home to a unique form of taxi called the pulmonia. The Cathedral de Mazatlán is yet another gorgeous structure in the city.

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to Chef Diego Becerra, and we walked there, passing many beautifully painted and restored haciendas on the way. Becerra is a native of Mazatlán, but left to study in Mexico City and cook in the US with celebrity chef Richard Sandoval. He recently returned and, with the help of his brothers, tackled the monumental task of reimagining his great grandmother's decayed hacienda – built in 1876 - into what has inarguably become Mazatlán's brightest outpost of modern Sinaloa cuisine and restaurant design. Combining the crumbling walls of the 200 year old hacienda with an elegant

industrial look - all huge panes of tempered glass and steel supports, softened by old family photos, gilt mirrors, exposed wooden beams and pendulum lights - El Presidio is sexy, modern and exciting. And from the moment we walked through the grand colonial entrance, Chef Becerra and his staff made us feel like welcomed friends. And – the food was incredible.
Early the next morning, and curious about Pueblo Bonito's Emerald Bay property,

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(BELOW AND FAR RIGHT) | Mazatlán is no stranger to art and culture, including the centro historico. Here, this corner of the world is a stage, and anyone can sit and enjoy everything as it unfolds.





we decided to drive over to take a tour. Separated from the hustle of the city, it's truly beautiful, and quite different than any of their other properties. It's really like a village spread out across 20 private beach-front acres. Aside from the incredible views, the first thing we noticed was how quiet it was. It's truly an escape. Suites and villas are smartly arranged and ensure that privacy is key. There are six restaurants and four pools throughout the property that cater to every desire. But it's the world-class spa that really made an impression. It's beautiful, and has every service we could ever think of wanting. We were tempted to stay, but the city was beckoning. We hopped in a cab and headed back.

Never ones to pass up a local central market, we arrived at Mercado Central to find it in full swing. We were immediately

elbow to elbow with a lively cross section of Mazatlecos, perusing counters heaped with the day's best produce, meat, seafood, and baked goods. For them, it was a regular day at the market, but for us, it was a great blast of energy, color, and excitement. It's long been said that if you really want to understand a place, go to their central market. We've done this all over Mexico, and can say – as veteran marketistas – that this one is one of the best. We made our way from one end to the other, buying a couple of small mangos, coconut macaroons, queso fresco, chorizo and bollios for an impromptu park bench picnic lunch back at the Plazuela Machado. We were joined there by a large mime troupe getting ready for an afternoon

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(FAR LEFT AND ABOVE) | *The Mercado Central is a great place to get groceries, and to get a feel for the city.*



(ABOVE) | Mazatlán is a fabulous city to explore, and getting there on Baja Ferries' Mazatan Star makes the trip a real adventure.

performance at the historic Angela Peralta Theater, a street violinist serenading a group of young dance students in leotards, and a 12-year old beauty queen resplendent in blue satin with crown, cape and sash. It was, to say the least, a fun-filled lunch.

We wandered through the area, going in and out of art galleries, funky shops and bookstores. Walking up and down the side streets, we were impressed with the sophistication of the newly restored

colonial homes. It was the unrestored homes for sale, however, that really fired up our brains – thinking about the endless possibilities of what a little money and a lot of imagination could create in this newly re-discovered neighborhood.

We returned to the Cathedral, just for a quick peek inside, and then, to our delight, we encountered a raucous celebration for senior citizens with a 10-piece dance band that enticed the seniors to partner up and dance like courting couples in the middle of the Plaza Revolucion. It couldn't have been better. The afternoon came to close with a couple of cold local beers – Pacificos – at a palapa below the malecon. It was the perfect ending to a perfect day.

Back at the hotel and too tired to return to town for dinner, we had fresh fish, perfectly grilled at Cilantro's, the Pueblo Bonito's seaside restaurant.

The next day, we had a little time before our flight to back to LA. We woke up late, walked through the hotel's lush grounds, visited their little flock of flamingos and koi ponds, and made our way back down to the beach for a quick lunch. We weren't there a moment when we heard "Algo de beber?"

"Por que no?"

For more information:

- **Baja Ferries**
01-800-337-7437 (Mexico only)
52-612-128-6711
www.bajaferrries.com
- **Pueblo Bonito Mazatlán**
1-800-990-8250 • 52-669-989-8900
- **Restaurant El Presidio**
669-149-5054
At the corner of Niños Heros
and Mariano Escobedo
(in the Centro Historico)

El Fin!