

# TRAVELAGE WEST

## What to Expect When Traveling to Puerto Vallarta Now



Expect enhanced health and safety protocols in Puerto Vallarta hotels, restaurants, attractions and more.  
Credit: 2021 diegograndi/stock.adobe.com

**A favorite Mexico-Pacific playground since the 1964 film *The Night of the Iguana* put it on the map, Puerto Vallarta — like everywhere else — has been plagued by obstacles since the COVID-19 pandemic collided with the world.**

I recently had the opportunity to visit Puerto Vallarta, and I was feeling anxious to return to this city; it has held a spot in my heart since the 1980s when my family had a timeshare there.

Here's what I observed during my trip.

### Safety Measures at Puerto Vallarta International Airport

From the minute I stepped into the airport, it was obvious that the local government was doing everything to provide a safe and sanitary environment by adhering to strict COVID-19 guidelines. Thermal scanners took our temperature as we entered the immigration area, and signs for social distancing and hand sanitizer stands were on display throughout. We also had to submit a health questionnaire and wear masks throughout the airport.

## Hotel Safety Initiatives in Guestrooms, On-Site Offerings and Dining Venues

Then, upon arrival to the luxurious, all-inclusive [Casa Velas](#), my home-away-from-home during my visit, my temperature was taken on arrival and a seal on the door of my suite confirmed that the space had been 100% sanitized. The resort, which closed for seven months due to the pandemic, reopened in November 2020 and was at 10% capacity at the time of my visit last month. Just off the lobby, a console held rotating slides detailing the precautions being taken for guest safety.

Safety measures were evident throughout the property, with sanitizing stations strategically placed at the pool, restaurant, spa and hallways. QR scanners were used for the menu at on-site dining venues, and napkins that cradled utensils were sealed.

The gift shop, labyrinth and meditation pods in the botanical garden weren't open, but the spa offered a full range of relaxing treatments that could be accessed through a QR code and booked at the front desk. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, the steam, sauna and Jacuzzi were closed.

Luckily, throughout the resort, the very attentive staff made up for any missing amenities with their warm and welcoming service.



A suite at Casa Velas  
Credit: 2021 Michelle da Silva Richmond

## Health and Safety Protocols in Popular Restaurants and Tourist Attractions

A lengthy walking tour of the small downtown revealed that COVID-19 safety precautions were adhered to throughout the destination. Both indoors and outside, people wore masks and temperatures were always taken — usually with a wrist

scanner — before allowing patrons to enter shops, bars and restaurants. Throughout Puerto Vallarta, pop-up signs in Spanish and English also emphasized social distancing and mask-wearing.

Dinner at the romantic open-air La Cappella restaurant provided not only delicious Italian fare underscored by a romantic musical trio, but also offered a stunning sunset over Banderas Bay and a mesmerizing view of the Church of Guadalupe with its iconic crown. Tables were strategically separated, hand sanitizer was made available, and temperature checks were completed before entering.

An after-dinner stroll along the Malecon (boardwalk) and Isla Rio Cuale afforded a glimpse into life in Puerto Vallarta as it slowly, but cautiously, reopens after last year.

While the longtime fanciful sculptures still dot the beach boardwalk, new artistic endeavors are appearing in the form of murals, tiled park benches and whimsical rock cairns along the beach.

During my visit, I noticed restaurants, bars and shops had a modest amount of business. The popular Casa Tradicional Cocina Mexicana, in particular, served traditional Mexican food in a colorful setting complete with a vast assortment of tequila and mezcal that they playfully refer to as the “vitamin bar.” Temperatures were checked, tables were placed six feet apart, and masks had to be worn except while dining.

Popular tourism sites such as yoga retreat Xinalani, Las Caletas — movie director John Houston’s former beach hideaway — and others, are all maintaining strict COVID-19 protocols, including limited capacity.

### COVID-19 Vaccination Rollouts in Puerto Vallarta

According to Luis Villasenor, tourism board director general for Puerto Vallarta Tourism Board, Puerto Vallarta was one of the first municipalities to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, resulting in healthy tourism traffic.

“The city’s robust approach to COVID-19 safety, hygiene and testing protocols, which was recognized with a [Safe Travels Stamp](#), (plus) the consistently high standards of its tourism service providers — including resorts, restaurants,

attractions and tour operators — has enabled Puerto Vallarta to remain open to international travelers,” Villasenor said.

“(The state of) Jalisco has had a responsible and effective management in the fight against the pandemic and has been the only state in the country that dictates a plan for the remainder of the year under the premise ‘Adaptation, Coexistence and Social Responsibility’ to continue in the advancement of the reactivation and economic recovery of the state,” he added.

The day before my departure from Puerto Vallarta, Casa Velas arranged for a medical team to administer COVID-19 tests at the resort on departing guests. That evening, I received my results via email, and a printed copy was also provided to me on check-out.

As I boarded my flight, airline staff collected another health form declaring that I was COVID-19-free; that information was transmitted to U.S. authorities at my port of entry.

While this definitely isn’t the Puerto Vallarta from my childhood, one thing was for sure: It slowly — but surely — is making a healthy comeback.

### **The Details**

Casa Velas

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

Puerto Vallarta Tourism Board

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