

Family-friendly Club Med Ixtapa offers the ultimate Mexican getaway

By Joe Almeida, Travel Manager, Crowfoot

THE DESTINATION

Ixtapa is south of Puerto Vallarta, on Mexico's Pacific coast, with the Sierra Madre Mountains as the stunning backdrop. Its sandy beaches stretch for miles, and the area is a picture-perfect destination for scuba diving, deep-sea fishing, golf and more.

Happily, this luxurious sunspot has not been overrun by vacationers, and remains relatively peaceful and unspoiled. It's also ideal for families, with a number of resorts catering to travelers with children. I had the pleasure of investigating the possibilities at Club Med Ixtapa.

THE RESORT

The recently renovated Club Med Ixtapa boasts nearly 300 enlarged rooms, including 15 family suites. There are four restaurants offering varied menus and exquisite cuisine, plus newly designed Children's Club facilities.

A 10-minute drive from Ixtapa, the resort is wonderfully secluded. It has its own long beach in a sheltered bay, and there are only two other hotels in the area.

One of the most pleasant features of the resort is the staff – known as Gracious Organizers -- a friendly international group of people who are always exceptionally helpful and welcoming. When you arrive, a G.O. will brief you on the resort and show you to your room.

At Club Med all inclusive is all your meals buffet or Ala Carte, alcoholic beverages (brand names) are included in your price, all Land Sport i.e sailing, kayaking are included.

You pay for any SPA Treatments.

RESORT ACTIVITIES

Children's Clubs

There are three kid-friendly zones, including Petite Club Med, for two- and three-year-olds; and Mini Club Med, for kids 4 to 11. Your kids will have the time of their life

trying sports and activities that they might not have attempted before. Even the shyest of children will soon be performing on stage and interacting with newly made friends. For kids 11 to 17, there's Club Med Passworld, a place where young people can discover different types of sports, explore the arts or just hang out. Under the supervision of Gracious Organizers, kids are free to do what they wish, from hip-hop dancing to filmmaking.

Spa Services

Adults can pamper themselves with a massage, or enjoy a full day of relaxation and rejuvenation. It's a feast for the senses, with treatments utilizing natural products and often incorporating local traditions.

Land Sports

You have many sporty choices at Club Med, from archery, bocce, darts and mini golf to roller blading and pool activities. You can even give the trapeze a whirl. Staff members are always on hand to show you how to play the game or sport you've selected.

Ocean Sports

Set sail on a catamaran or a single-hull boat, or try kayaking. Resort experts are available to accompany you on your voyage, or show you how to use the equipment.

Fitness Activities

Want to stay in shape? Try yoga, kickboxing, Pilates or water aerobics.

Entertainment

There are different shows in the theatre area every evening. You might see dancers one night, acrobats the following evening, and a circus the next. There are also special performances just for kids. All put on by the talented Gracious Organizers.

ACCOMMODATION

All Standard rooms would have a King or 2 Double beds, the Family Suite would have a King or 2 Double beds plus a separate bedroom for the children. Some of the family suites can accommodate up to 8 people in total.

All rooms have Mini Fridges, flat screen TV, radios and telephones.

DINING

All Club Med properties are all-inclusive, offering gourmet buffet meals and a la carte dining. All alcoholic beverages are name brands; some domestic alcoholic beverages are also served.

The buffet restaurant caters to a full spectrum of tastes, featuring fish or seafood along with a tempting array of chicken, beef and vegetarian dishes. For me, a highlight of the buffet was the different kinds of breads; my favourite was white-chocolate! There are a huge variety of desserts, from ice cream to delicious European pastries. There's also a good selection of cheeses from North America and Europe. International wines are served at lunch and dinner. The dinner menu changes daily, featuring themes such as Mexican, Italian or French cuisine.

The a la carte restaurant serves wonderful five-course meals, complete with wine and exquisite desserts. Kids will enjoy the children's restaurant, which serves healthy lunches made to please young palates.

AREA ATTRACTIONS

Outside of the Club Med area take a trip to Zihuatanejo a bustling city, where you would find a lot of open markets, tourist shopping areas and restaurants.

Golfing is available in the Ixtapa area which has 2 excellent 18 holes Golf Courses.

A Bicycle path is also accessible from Club Med, which is also ideal for runners, roller blading and power walkers.

Take a short Taxi ride into Ixtapa for some shopping for local arts and crafts. In Ixtapa you will find some exclusive boutiques and restaurants.

For those that would like to Scuba Dive or Snorkel, these are available through professional certified instructors.

All of the above can be arranged through your Club Med Tour Desk at the resort.

GETTING AROUND

Club Med representatives will escort you to and from the airport, which is a 40-minute drive from the resort.

The bustling city of Zihuatanejo is about 30 minutes away from Club Med. You can take a local bus (80 cents each way), or catch a cab. Taxis are available outside the resort area.

GETTING THERE

Air Canada offers non-stop flights to Ixtapa; flying time is about 5 hours.

TRAVEL TIPS

- We recommend that all visitors to Mexico travel with their passports, plus medical insurance.
- Tipping is not allowed at Club Med.
- It is safe to drink water from the tap, but bottle water is available in all rooms.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you're planning a family vacation down Mexico way, get all the facts on Ixtapa from Joe Almeida. Call (403) 216-4500 or e-mail jalmeida@calgarycoop.com. Or visit any Calgary Co-op Travel Office; dial our Call Centre (299-4144) for service after hours, Sundays and holidays; or book online 24/7 via www.calgarycoop.com.