
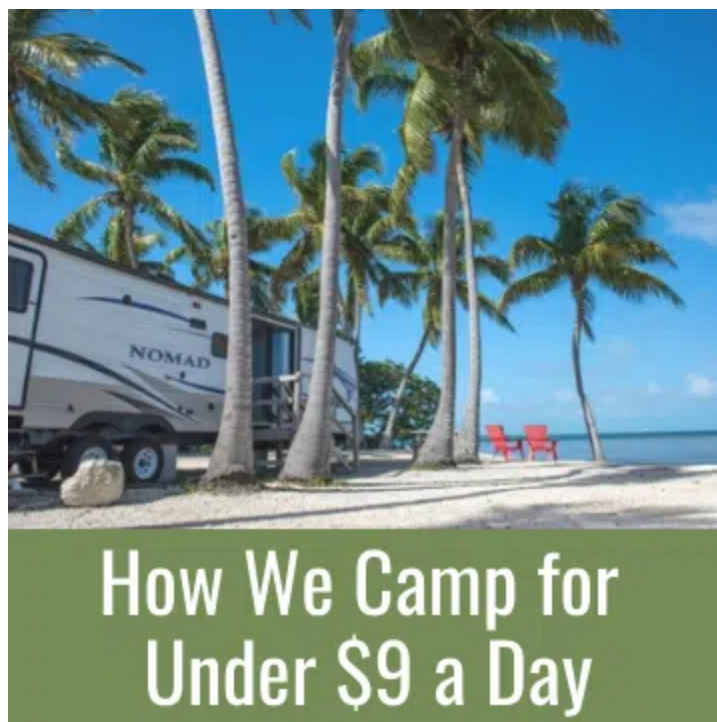


Why RVers Go To Mexico For Dental... And More!

 rvlove.com/rv-lifestyle/why-rvers-go-to-mexico-for-dental/

by Erik Anderson

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Ever heard of medical tourism? Did you know that every day, thousands of Americans and Canadians cross the USA border into Mexico for dental, optical and pharmaceutical? Wondering WHY they do it... and are they crazy!? Let's take a close look at this popular trend among RVers, and answer all your questions.

Inexpensive, Yet Quality Dental for RVers?

Yep, we found it in "Molar City", Mexico! As full time RVers who semi-retired early, fearfully giving up our employer-provided medical and dental insurance plans, Jeanne and I have to be frugal and creative with our healthcare needs on the road. While we do have a BC/BS PPO plan out of our Florida domicile, we don't have dental insurance, opting instead for an annual dental discount program.

So, that's one big reason we decided to stay in Yuma, Arizona during February and March of 2022. We had read many RV-related blog articles and watched several YouTube videos from veteran fulltime RVers who touted the benefits of getting dental work done in nearby Los Algodones, Mexico. Many of our friends thought we were crazy to cross the border into Mexico just to get our teeth worked on! Well, we weren't so sure about it, either. But, those same stories from RVers living the RV lifestyle who had done it, gave us enough confidence to try it!

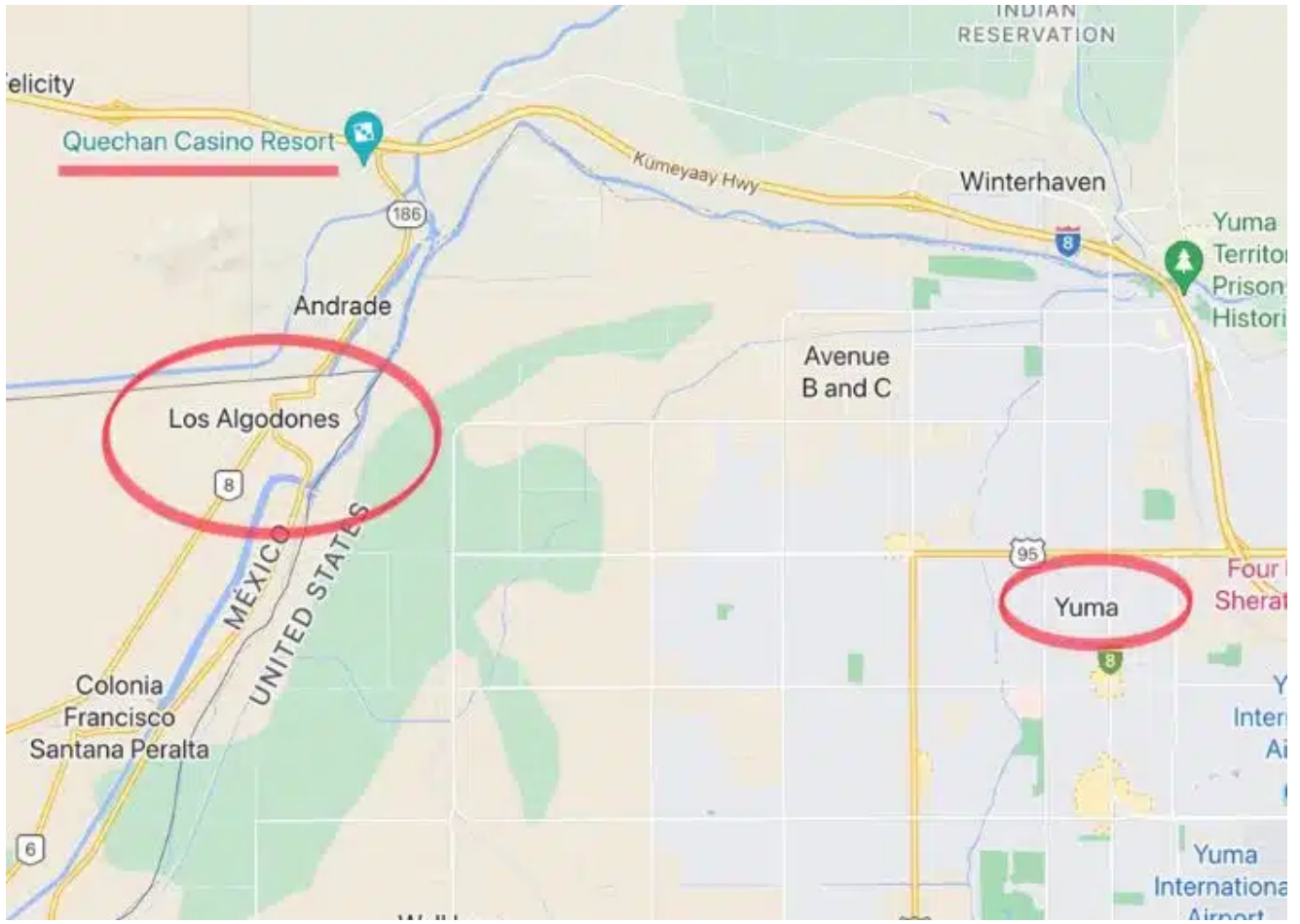


All images (not videos) in this post are by the author, Erik Anderson

"Molar City" – A Capital of Mexico Dental Tourism for RVers

Los Algodones, Mexico is a relatively small town of nearly 6,000 residents nestled right up into the corner where California and Arizona together meet Mexico. It is a mere 15-minute drive from the city of Yuma, AZ. Yuma is a prime winter destination for RVing snowbirds from the U.S. and Canada. RVers flock there (pun intended!) during the winter months for great weather in what The Guinness Book of World Records has awarded the sunniest place on Earth.

But along with that amazing winter climate is the lure of inexpensive and fast dental, optical and pharmaceutical options south of the international border. Many giant billboards along Interstate 8 west of Yuma beckon RVers to head south of the border!





Over the years, Los Algodones has garnered a strong international reputation for its dental, optical and pharmaceutical establishments, offering prices 50%-70% less than those charged in the U.S. and Canada. Los Algodones is perhaps best known for the nearly 400 dental practices in town, thus earning its nickname of “Molar City”. The wide acceptance of U.S. currency, ease of getting quick appointments, generally fast service, and the chance to save thousands of dollars, keeps RVers heading there in droves each winter.

How Can Low Cost Dental Services and Quality Coexist?

That was a concern we also had. Let’s face it, healthcare in the U.S. is widely known for being way more expensive than in many countries. In fact, ridiculously more expensive. Mexico is one of the countries where costs are much more reasonable. When it comes to dental tourism, the quality of the services is typically on par with those in the U.S. and Canada.

In fact, we found that the majority of dentists whom we researched were trained and had their degrees from prominent U.S. dental schools. Many also have done their advanced specialty training and continuing education in the U.S. as well. This is something you can check when deciding which dentist or dental group to visit.



We found that the dental practices we looked into offered modern, high-tech, and spotlessly clean facilities. We were impressed as they were as nice as, if not nicer than, any dental practice we've used in the U.S.

Heading into Mexico for Dental. Leave With Clean, Shiny Teeth, And Save \$\$\$

Getting into Los Algodones was easy. While you can drive into Mexico, most RVers find it easiest to simply walk across the border via the international border crossing at the end of Algodones Road in Andrade, CA, just south of Winterhaven, CA. There, you find the huge Andrade Parking Lot (day use, and overnight with prior approval) less than two miles south of I-8, and only steps from the border crossing. This year we paid \$6 (it's cash only) for the entire day to park our toad there. Prices are slightly higher for larger vehicles, RVs/motorhomes, and vehicle/trailer combinations, over 27'. The overnight price was still only \$22.





It takes only about 15 minutes to get there from the City of Yuma, AZ. Another option popular with RVers, especially those just passing through the area, is to dry-camp on the grounds of the Quechan Casino Resort. The casino is right off the I-8 interchange with Algodones Road, less than two miles north of the border. Marc and Julie Bennett of [RVLove](#) did that back in 2015 when they explored the Los Algodones dental tourism phenomenon – see [“The Day We Went to Mexico for Dental”](#).





The Border Crossing: Easy In, Harder Out, and Running the Vendor Gauntlet

Walking across into Mexico was entirely uneventful and there weren't even any Mexico border officers there to greet us or look at our identification. We just walked into Mexico and we were in the heart of Los Algodones! Coming back into the U.S. is another matter. There can be long lines, proper identification is required (passports or "real ID" driver licenses), you must declare certain items, and you and your bags will most likely be inspected.





Running the Gauntlet

Once on the streets of Los Algodones, be prepared for the continual onslaught of street vendors and hawkers. It is like running the gauntlet during your entire visit!

I tried to warn Jeanne of what it would be like, but she was still quickly overwhelmed. Vendors are constantly approaching you to buy their wares, offering deals, and in a few cases even offering shots of Tequila just to get you to stop! The dental, optical and pharmacy businesses also employ street “hawkers” who try to lead you to their respective employers, offering supposedly amazing prices and free rides to their places. Buyers beware! It is better to do your research and choose a dental practice before you arrive in town. More on that below.

We found that we just had to take it all in stride. It’s their way of life there. So, we kept smiles on our faces, and said “no, thank you” a thousand times while keeping moving. Oh, and to soothe Jeanne’s frazzled nerves that first day, I had to get her a 20-minute street massage! The second day that we visited Los Algodones, she was more prepared and handled running the vendor/hawker gauntlet like a pro.





Aside from that part, Los Algodones is a fun place to visit! There are many interesting shops, authentic Mexican crafts amidst the plethora of touristy, kitschy goods, several good restaurants, and the “people-watching” is epic!



Our Mexico Dental Experience with Rubio Dental Group

As mentioned, the blog articles and YouTube videos of several long-time, veteran RVers gave us a great idea of what to expect as we contemplated dental work in Mexico. They allayed most of our concerns and steered us toward dentists and dental practices that seemed reputable, professional, and most reasonably priced.

Based on others' recommendations, we chose the Rubio Dental Group for exams, cleanings, and a quote on a dental implant for Jeanne. Dr. Rubio is one of the more experienced dentists in Molar City. He has a solid reputation, great staff, and very impressive facilities.

Some dental offices in Los Algodones are more like little store fronts and some are tucked away down nondescript alleys. But Dr. Rubio's practice is in its own contemporary professional-looking building. We had made our morning appointments the week before via phone. It was an easy 15-20 minute walk from the border to the dental practice.



What's The Dental Office Like?

The staff welcomed us warmly, checked us in, and we filled out the typical new-patient paperwork. We brought cash for our visit, but could have used a credit card. Some dental offices accept credit cards and some don't. So, you want to ask about that when making an appointment. Our wait times were maybe 10-15 minutes after we completed the new-patient paperwork.

The exam and treatment rooms were impressive. They were brilliantly clean, featured modern, high-tech equipment, and we immediately felt comfortable. Dr. Rubio's staff were very pleasant, fluently English-speaking, and in professional uniform dress. As Jeanne (an R.N.) and I have been in the healthcare industry for many decades, we take notice of good healthcare practices. We were impressed with their infection control and sanitizing practices.



Teeth Cleanings and Dental Implant Quote

Jeanne and I both had panoramic x-rays at a stand-up machine, comprehensive exams, and what felt like very thorough cleanings. Everything was at least on par with any dental services we've received in the U.S.

Jeanne further had them inspect a lost tooth area and work up a quote for a dental implant. Our cleanings, which included the full set of x-rays, were only \$30 each.

Jeanne's quote for an implant was a little more than one third of the price that I paid for the exact same type of implant done the year before in the U.S. We were also able to have our records emailed to us so that we'd have them on our travels. Dr. Rubio and his practice partner personally consulted with us. He even gladly posed for a photo with us and one of his assistants. Great fellow!

It was definitely a positive experience all around and we'll be going back next winter for cleanings and follow up services.



What About Major Work, Like Dental Implants?

If you're interested in learning more about what it's like to get dental implants from Mexico, Erik and Kala McCauley of Livinlite.net did a great two-part video series from their visit to Los Algodones Mexico. In it, they share their experience having dental work, including a dental implant for Erik. After positive experiences on their first two trips, they later did took Erik's dad to Los Algodones for extensive, full mouth dental work.

Watch the videos for a more visual experience. And keep reading our post below, where we also share our Mexico experiences with eye glasses and prescription medications.

Getting A New Pair of Eyeglasses in Los Algodones, Mexico

After our dental appointments, we scouted out the optical places in town. I needed a new pair of progressive lens glasses. We picked one of [Algodones Optical's](#) locations among the many opticians around town that are popular with snowbirding RVers. They had a large selection of frames from which to choose. Checking in without an appointment was a breeze and I waited maybe ten minutes to be seen.

The optician was very friendly and professional, giving me a thorough eye exam. The assistant confirmed that I wanted the progressive “transition” lenses, with scratch resistance. We were told to come back in about an hour and a half, around 2:30pm. Los Algodones is on Yuma, AZ time, by the way.



We had a delicious Mexican lunch and returned at 2:20pm. My glasses were ready! After fitting and testing them, I paid just \$135. Back in the States, my last pair of identical glasses cost more than twice that. I also waited in the office for over an hour, and it took two weeks (!) for me to receive the glasses. Chalk up another one for Los Algodones and living the RV life!



Getting Prescriptions in Mexico. A So-So Experience for These RVers

While we were at it, and knowing of the many pharmacies also in the town, Jeanne and I compared prescription medication prices at a few of them. We weren't so impressed with this aspect of Los Algodones RVer healthcare tourism. Most of the prices were about the same or only a bit less than what we pay in the U.S., using either our BC/BS insurance or the GoodRx discount app. I did pick up one medication for some savings.

Interestingly, you don't need a prescription to purchase most non-narcotic medications over-the-counter there. However, it is advised to have your original U.S. prescription slip (or in our case, we brought our Rx bottles for the label information) when crossing back over into the U.S. The U.S. restrictions for what types and quantities of personal-use medication that you can bring over the border are strict. You should do a little research first, so here are resources for checking the controlled substances that you can't generally bring back with you: [U.S. DOJ Controlled Substance Schedules](#). And quantity limitations: [CDC Prescription Limits](#).



An Important Caveat

Another caveat on buying medications in Mexico is that the quality is not guaranteed. There can be counterfeits and some medications may have less, if any, of the primary ingredients. One U.S. university study showed that a high percentage of the medications purchased there significantly lacked the efficacy of their U.S. counterpart medications. So, while Jeanne and I are sold on the dental and eyewear advantages of Los Algodones, we'll skip the pharmaceuticals there.

For more information and tips on getting your prescription medications on the road, you may want to check out my article for the Escapees RV Club: [Getting Your Prescription Medications on The Road – An Rx for RVers](#).

RVer Resources for Planning Your Mexico Dental Trip

One thing we learned was that we were wise to have planned our dental trip in advance. It helped tremendously to have a reputable dental practice already picked out, made appointments, and confirmed the location. Because Los Algodones has so many dental practices, and due to the very active “hawkers” trying to woo customers, it would have been seriously overwhelming to have gone there and then try to find a dentist to visit. And, I bet we wouldn't have made as good a choice.

Along with doing your Google research, asking for recommendations in RVing and travel forums and groups, plus checking out the many YouTube videos and [blog reviews](#), you can utilize one of the online “dental referral hub” sites available. They often have a great deal of information on many dental practices and individual dentists, as well as up-to-date comparison pricing. These sites will have some good FAQ sections and some will even facilitate making the appointments for you. One of these sites, which appears to be quite popular and longstanding, is [DayoDental](#). Also helpful is DayoDental’s “[50 Tips for Awesome Dental in Molar City, Mexico](#)”.

Los Algodones Dentist Prices (Estimate Price Range)

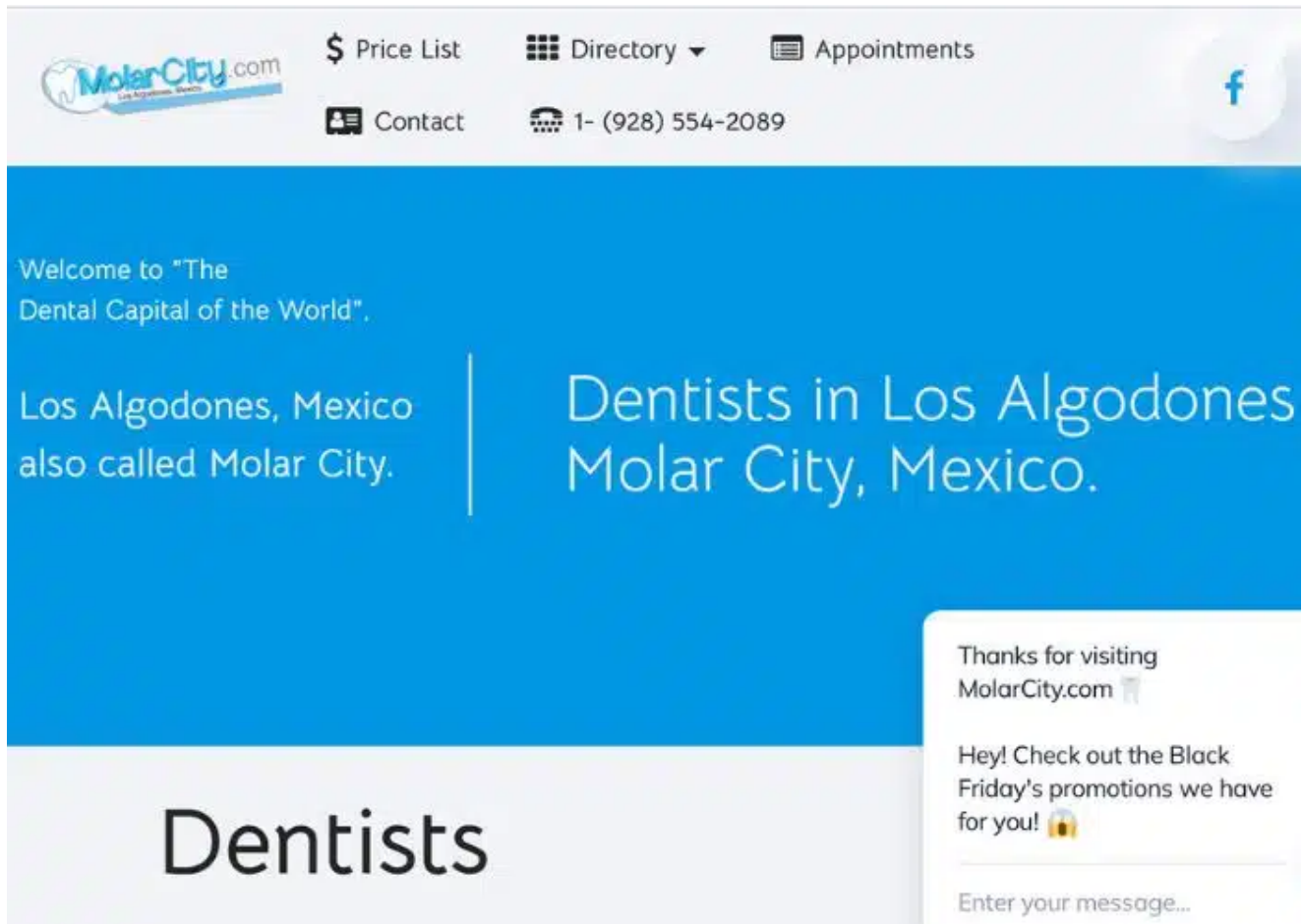
Common Treatments	Los Algodones Dentist Prices	U.S. Dentist Prices
Porcelain Crown Fused Metal (PFM)	\$180 to \$420	\$900 – \$1500
Zirconia Crown	\$400 – \$600	\$1,200 – \$1,700
Porcelain Veneer	\$300 – \$520	\$1,100 – \$1,600
Simple Extractions	\$40 – \$80	\$130 – \$250
White Filling	\$40 – \$100	130 – 380
Root Canal w/ Post	\$280 – \$500	\$1100 – \$1650
Fixed Bridge (3 unit)	\$750 – \$1,440	\$2,850 – \$4,260
Full Denture (Upper or Lower)	\$200 – \$400	\$1,500 – \$2,500
Dental Implant	\$750 to \$1,100	\$1,800 to \$2,600
Dental Implant, Abutment, and Porcelain Crown	\$1,250 to \$1960	\$3,560 to \$5,272
Implant Overdentures (4 Dental Implants)	\$5,300 – \$7,200	\$13,250 to \$17,800
All on 4 Dental Implants (Nobel Biocare)	\$10,000 – \$16,550	\$22,000 to \$35,600

Above: Sample pricing from DayoDental website, November 2022

SaniDental Group is another popular dental practice, arguably the largest. [Their website](#) has helpful information for RVers planning a trip to Los Algodones.

The site “[MolarCity.com](#)” is a compilation of FAQs, information on visiting Los Algodones, advice for finding dentists, and also has several [online directories](#) for dentists, opticians, pharmacies, hotels, and restaurants in Los Algodones.

They also offer a sample procedure price list for comparisons: [MolarCity Price List](#).



Will We Return to Mexico for Dental in the Future?

Will we return to Los Algodones, Mexico, a.k.a. Molar City, on our full time RV travels? Absolutely! We now feel quite comfortable with the availability of inexpensive, yet high quality, dental services there. Along with making for fun day trip outings, "getting our teeth done" south of the border has saved us significant money. Funds that we were able to redirect into our motorhome's gas tank. As we traveled over 12,000 miles around the U.S. and Canada in 2022, having clean, healthy teeth while living the RV life went hand-in-hand!



Author Bio: Erik Anderson

Erik and his wife Jeanne have been traveling full-time around the U.S. in their Class A motorhome since July 2020. They love hiking, biking and kayaking, and adventuring with their beloved Cavalier King Charles spaniel "Hershey pup". Erik also moderates the "Living the RV Life" Facebook group community.

GOT COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS?

We would love to hear from you. Drop us a note in the comments section below.