

Tips and Recommendations from Guests Karen Brown and Melanie Johnson (October 2021)

PHOTO SHARING: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/YnAqVnyRKYgoQy357>

Hi Tom,

We had such an amazing time in Huatulco. It was one of the best vacations and I feel overwhelmed by your generosity. Thank you so much for letting us stay at your condo. I'm attaching some recommendations we have based on the things we did. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Sea Turtles

One of the highlights of our trip was visiting the Escobilla Sea Turtle Sanctuary (Santuario La Escobilla). This is a late afternoon excursion, as sunset is the best time to release newly hatched sea turtles into the ocean. We released about 50 newborn Olive Ridley turtles. It's also common to see adult turtles nesting on the beach. The beach is beautiful and the local people who run the sanctuary are wonderful. It's necessary to make arrangements in advance to visit the sanctuary. We recommend hiring a guide who will make reservations, pick you up from the condo, share the history with you, and act as a translator once you arrive at the sanctuary. The sanctuary is about a 1.5 hour drive from the condo. If you want to stop to taste locally grown coffee and chocolate on the way, that is a common stop on the way to the sea turtles (we opted out). We paid \$150 for the trip.

Pluma Hidalgo, Fila Diamante Coffee Farm, and Finca Don Gabriel

Another highlight was visiting Pluma Hidalgo, a village in the Sierra Madre mountains at about 5000 feet elevation. It's about a 1.5 hour drive from the condo. The drive up the mountain is full of breathtaking views and the vegetation is lush, dense and green. It seems like every family that lives on the mountain grows their own coffee, chocolate, bananas, and other fruits. We stopped at a small house on the road (to use the restroom) and the woman let us taste 6 different kinds of bananas. Once we got to Pluma Hidalgo, it looked like we were at the top of the world. We got to taste freshly roasted coffee from Don Fila, watch him roast coffee, and then he took us down to his coffee farm for an incredible tour. The ride down to the farm is intense (think Indiana Jones). This was one of the most incredible experiences of our trip. The forest is beautiful and the coffee farm is awesome. It is unlike any coffee plantation I've visited in Hawaii. It's a huge farm and a major supplier of coffee for the region, but not commercialized at all. We got to see the entire coffee growing/harvesting process from start to finish. After visiting the farm, the next stop on this excursion is to visit waterfalls (we opted out because we were ready for lunch). For lunch, we drove a little way down the mountain to Finca Don Gabriel. We shared a Oaxacan platter, sampling the local cuisine. The food was great and the cost was about \$10. The views at Finca Don Gabriel are beautiful and you can see all the way to the ocean. They have a few hotel rooms and it would be nice to stay a night there and wake up to a sunrise over the mountains. We paid \$180 for the trip. Recommend wearing pants, tennis shoes and bug spray.

English Speaking Guides

For both of these destinations, we recommend a guide. Our first choice is Tomas Vicente of Amazing Tours. Tomas was recommended by a resident at Cosmo, is very friendly and kind and speaks perfect English. We contacted him through WhatsApp 52-958-106-4779

<https://www.facebook.com/AmazingHuatulco/>

When Tomas wasn't available, he recommended another guide who is also very good. His name is Alejandro (Alex) Morales and his number is 52-958-101-6681. We also contacted him through WhatsApp.

TOMAS' INFO:

Hi, I'm Tomas Vicente from Teotitlan in the Oaxaca Valley. I would love to take you to know my state, full of traditions and culture. I am a certified guide with more than 10 years of experience in the destination and I can speak to you in our Zapotec language, Spanish or English.

Let me tell you that I have a business as a tour operator specializing in excursions called Amazing Oaxaca and I have a national tourist registry that makes me as a certified guide.

I offer to my clients an insider's view of Oaxaca, as a native Zapotec, combine my knowledge of history, culture and local communities with a deep respect for my Zapotec heritage and traditions.

Come with me and I will make you fall in love with my roots, because Oaxaca has it all. We can make an itinerary according to your wishes, so feel free to comment us.

It will be an honor for us to be your host during your visit and share the secrets of Oaxaca together.

There is a local tour guide named Lamberto of Lamby Tours and we do NOT recommend him.

Scuba Diving

We went on a 2-tank dive trip with Huatulco Dive Center and highly recommend diving with this company. The staff, gear, and dive boat were all great. We went to dive sites in two different bays and the diving was awesome. We dove and snorkeled at La Jeringa in Cacaluta Bay and Morros Maguey in Maguey Bay. The coral at Morros Maguey was healthy, colorful and vibrant. Lots of sea life. This company also does snorkeling trips and it's a great way to see the beautiful coastline of Oaxaca.

Playa Arrocito

There is a reef out front at Playa Arrocito (to the left of the buoys when you're facing the beach) with lots of fish. The restaurant to the right, around the trees, rents snorkel gear and has great fish tacos.

Playa San Agustin

Playa Agustin is an hour drive down a dirt road but it's worth it!! The beach is absolutely beautiful, not crowded and has a huge reef full of life. It's very calm and gentle, great for swimming and snorkeling. I swam (alone!) with a manta ray for almost half an hour. The beach is lined with little restaurants that have chaise lounges and umbrellas out front and lots of them rent snorkel gear. We paid a taxi driver \$50 for the day to drive us there, wait until we were done, and take us home.

Las Cascadas Magicas

We heard so much about these waterfalls and really wanted to go, but we didn't have time to visit them this time. You could hire a guide or a taxi to go here. I think we would probably choose a taxi as it would be cheaper. About an hour drive from the condo.

Groceries

We bought our groceries at Chedraui but it's best to buy produce at a market in La Crucecita.

Restaurants

Obviously, the Ocean restaurant at the Cosmo right out front is easy and the food is great and affordable. We preferred to have dinners here after long days out exploring. Salads, burgers, tacos, coconut shrimp, fried oreos with ice cream....all delicious and with an amazing view. We watched an incredible lightning show from here.

We loved El Camaron Borracho (just outside of La Crucecita). Fried shrimp and Camarones a la Diabla.

The best tacos were in La Crucecita at Taquería Los Parados. This is definitely a locals-spot. Seating upstairs looks over the town. 3 tacos for about \$1.

