

Mexico

Description

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Day 1

I set off on February 1 with the first dayâ??s goal being Laredo in south west Texas. US 59 goes from Houston so I followed this for the 300 miles required to reach Laredo. Nothing much to say about the ride apart from it being a very windy day with winds from the side and front making for pretty hard work keeping the bike in the right direction. I checked in to a Dayâ??s Inn and unfortunately I did not check the room and location so my room faced the I35 which meant a lot of traffic noise all night.

I had really wanted to do a bike trip to Mexico but when Iâ??m finally on my way I really start thinking, do I really want to do this? Going away from a comfortable life at home for an uncertain time away. Especially when Iâ??m all alone in my motel room, it seems so pointless. Well, letâ??s see how things turns out tomorrow?



Day 2

Today was when I would enter Mexico and I was pretty nervous about this. I hear so much bad about Mexico, the crime and the gun fights between rival drug cartels. And looking at the state departmentâ??s recommendation regarding Mexico â?? itâ??s basically donâ??t go there.

And then the procedure on entering Mexicoâ?¦. Leaving the US was not a problem and neither was entering Mexico on the other side of bridge number 2 in Laredo. However, after crossing the bridge you are supposed to find a building to get immigration and do a temporary importation of your vehicle, I took the wrong turn and got a bit lost but found it in the end. After about an hour me and the bike were legally in Mexico! There were several military and police personnel carrying guns but this is true for a lot of entry points in to any country so I was not worried about that. Apart from that everything seemed peaceful.



I then set off on Mexico 85 towards Monterey which is around 250kms away. The roads are really good and especially the toll â??auto-pistaâ?•. I never went into Monterey but took the Mexico 40 towards Saltillo. I found that there is a long distance between petrol stations so for a while I was worried I didnâ??t have enough fuel to reach the next one, so I was riding fairly slowly at around 100kmh at which speed the fuel consumption is very much lower. In the end it was not a problem and I had plenty of gas when I filled up. I was pretty tired so a short 350kms would have to do for the day so I stopped in Saltillo.

After finding the hotel as recommended in a â??bookâ?• by someone on the Adventure rider site I unpacked and walked around town for some time. Very interesting and so different from US towns, there were a couple of squares in the town and they were full of people and buskers, so full of life. Really nice to see!



A man trimming a tree.





Not sure what this depicts but it looks impressive.



Beautiful cathedral



I saw many old VWs, I think they were produced in Mexico at the time.

For dinner I found a restaurant recommended by google (who else!) that turned out to be great, very nice food and personal service! My waiter who spoke some english was very helpful and gave me good recommendations on what to eat. He convinced me to try Mescal and it was very strong but good. I had an interesting guacamole dish as a starter and fish for mains. A beautiful meal!



Interior from the Saltillo restaurant.



Interesting restaurant exterior

Day 3

I woke up around 7.30 or so and it took me an hour to get ready to go. Packing takes a long time but hopefully when Iâ??m more familiar with it all it will be quicker. Anyway, I rode out of Saltillo and got on the road to Durango which was 500kms along Mexico 40D. A fairly easy and straight forward ride taking it easy. Riding at 100kmh rather than 115kmh reduces fuel consumption by 20% and I was in no rush so 100kmh it was. In younger days I would have ridden at 150kmh so I must be getting older and wiser, yes?

Along the way at a rest stop at a toll station I met a couple of riders from Monterey and we had a chat about bikes and riding in general. They were both on BMWâ??s and were going along at a much higher speed than me. Since itâ??s a three day weekend in Mexico they were making a trip to Mazathlan, then north and back to Monterey for work on Tuesday. I allways enjoy chatting to other bikers, itâ??s something that would never happen if you were driving a carâ?¦

I arrived at Durango fairly early in the afternoon but the recommended hotel was full:-(Fortunately there was another one just across the street and luckily it had a room. Once settled into the room I went for a walk and found a supermarket where I had a bit to eat, I also found an ATM where I got some cash and luckily my US ATM card was accepted without problems.

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Nice graffiti in the park next to the hotel.

After a nap I went to dinner at a place that was given good ratings by â?¦. Google. It was not as nice as the one in Saltillo but it wasnâ??t too bad. As I was trying to talk to the waitress about what to order a very friendly woman who spoke good english and sitting at another table came across to help with the translation, people here are so friendly and helpful, itâ??s just amazing!



After the meal I went for a walk in the center of town. It was Saturday night and the whole area was in party mode! The streets were blocked off from traffic and there was life and action everywhere you looked. One guy was playing an electric guitar and singing and was sounding very much like Santana in black magic woman â?? great! After Mazathlan I have found that Mexican cities are amazingly lit at night giving a very nice atmosphere and so was certainly Durango. Durango is at an altitude of 1800m so it was quite chilly, perhaps around 10C.



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McDonald's
SUBWAY


HELADERIA
CAFETERIA
HELADERIA



Buskers and entertainers along the street and lots of people about. Real party atmosphere!



Durango center has a very long pedestrian area beautifully lit!



If you havenâ??t figured it yet â?? Iâ??m quite taken in by Mexico!

Day 4

Today Iâ??m riding to Mazatlan a distance of 230kms along the newly constructed Mexico 40D. It took 10 years of construction and 2bln usd to construct it and itâ??s supposed to be spectacular. The road goes across the Sierra Madre from Durango to Mazatlan on the Pacific coast. The first 100kms are on relatively flat ground but at an altitude of between 2200 and 2700m above sea level. The road was pretty straight and so very uneventful riding. However, about halfway the new road was closed, and I later found out itâ??s been closed for several months because the foundations of a huge bridge were moving. This meant I had to ride on the old Mexico 40 which has a really bad reputation for accidents and part of it called the devilâ??s backbone. On a motorcycle, though, it was fantastic! Itâ??s probably the most curvy and interesting road Iâ??ve ridden, better than Stelvio in Italy, Mae Hong song loop in northern Thailand or roads up to the Malaysian Highlands! It was interesting on several other aspects as well, I saw military vehicles, kind of like big pickups, with a soldier on top with a machine gun pointed forward, a few smashed up trucks with one having smashed into the rock wall after a 90 degree turn, and totally flattened the super structure. However, the traffic was very light so there werenâ??t many trucks I had to overtake. There was nowhere to stop apart from a straight area with beautiful views, so I donâ??t have any pictures of the road. I do have some videos, though, not sure how to post those.



Beautiful views along Mexico 40



Nice family I was chatting to and who took my picture.


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The road was only finished in 1960(?)

The old road is 70kms longer because of all the twists and ups and downs so takes a lot longer. After more than 100kms of this I got back on the new road and made good time to Mazatlan.

I took a video on some of the way along Mexico 40. For non-bikers it might be a bit tedious to watch ð???



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Shop in a small village after coming down to less than 500m altitude.

I found a hotel right by the beach, itâ??s very old and dilapidated but good enough to stay in, the bed is ok and the noise from the waves is just magical so sleeping was not a problem apart from the first night when people were partying along the strand-promenade until past midnight.



View from my room after dark.



Streets behind hotel beautifully lit at night.


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Nice restaurant catering for expats. The screens were showing the Superbowl and there were huge chee

Days 5 â?? 6

I decided to stay in Mazatlan for 3 nights and spent the time relaxing and walking around town. I talked to several â??expatsâ?• who frequented the same place for breakfast and coffee. There are a lot of Americans retiring here for at least part of the year and I saw a lot of them going for Spanish classes down the road from where I was having my coffees. I noted a lot of buildings are being repainted and the town in general is being spruced up and is attempting to become the new Acapulco because of the gang violence there have meant not many foreigners go there anymore.




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Brave guy doing an Acapulco style dive into an incoming wave.



An old Harley with a dispatch rider and someone else on it.



Should I be worried or reassured?



Interesting building


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Shirt purveyor â?? bought a nice shirt from this lady.



On the beach


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Lots of statues along the beach promenade

Tomorrow Iâ??m leaving and going a bit further south to a place called San Blas. So follow me for further adventures! Itâ??s a much smaller town and also located on the coast.

Day 7

Oh noo! I woke up with a sore throat and was immediately afraid I had another bad cold coming. Nevertheless, I got up and went out for a long walk along the seafront to do my 8000 steps a day to get into slightly better shape. Then I went to the favorite coffee place for breakfast. I had a chat with the owner who said they opened last year in February but after a couple of months the town closed all roads around the place to do the town refurbishment so for 7 months they had very bad business because it was so difficult to get there. However, they were doing OK now.

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Owner of the place

Back at the hotel I was told I could not have my valuables that I stashed in the hotel safe until 11am, not too pleased with this but



Hotel interior. Really old place but it had itâ??s quirky charm.

I thought Iâ??m on a holiday and an adventure in Mexico so Iâ??d just have to put up with it. When 11 arrived and I was told, no I couldnâ??t have my stuff until noon I was starting to get annoyed. Itâ??s better to ride in the morning before traffic gets bad and before the worst of the heat hits so I gave the hotel staff an earful of my thoughts about this. In Sweden punctuality is a way of life and I guess this is deeply rooted from when weâ??re bornâ?¦ So there was nothing else to do but go for another walk.



Girls rehearsing a play or speech they were going to be part of

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Waterslide by the beach. Slide was made of concrete and no water in the slide so no one was using it.

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Volvo trucks lined up blocking the street. Workers were building a stage for Carnival that would start tomo

Well, I finally got on my way and did the 250kms to San Blas. First along the toll auto-pista and then on a narrow twisty road for 35kms â?? a great road that I would normally love but today I was tired and not in the mood.

I arrived at the hotel in San Blas around 4pm and immediately went for a rest â?? pretty exhausted. After a while I inspected the bar and later went for a walk into the small town and found a lovely restaurant. After dinner Iâ??m back in my room which this time is A/Ced, a step up from my previous rooms. Mind you the hotel room price has kept increasing for every new hotel Iâ??m staying at in Mexico and itâ??s now more than 4 times the first night in Saltillo. Itâ??s kind of strange though that it was only the first two hotels that had warm water in the shower, maybe Mexicans are hardy and think a hot shower is for weaklings?

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She and her brother owned and ran the restaurant where I was having a great dinner.

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SOLD
HERE

Purveyor of â??junkâ?•?

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Guys hanging out on the main plaza in San Blas

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Church under renovation

Days 8-9

Iâ??m really able to relax here in San Blas! A small charming town where most of the roads are unpaved, a small square with many coffee places around it and a long stretch of beach not far from my hotel. There are a lot of gringos here who come to escape the cold climate further north. At the beach restaurant I ran into two different groups on two different days who were enjoying themselves with a lot of empty beer bottles on the table mid afternoonâ?¦

After staying here for 3 nights, tomorrow Iâ??m off the Puerto Vallarta, a much bigger town, maybe the same size as Mazatlan.

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Beach life in San Blas



Family bringing home the shopping.



Lovely beach in San Blas



Kids playing on the beach after school is out



San Blas is known as a surfing destination. Maybe this is not the season â?? the waves were not very big


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It really is a nice beach



Football is everywhere!


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American contingent is getting their daily dose of muffins

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CERVEZA
PACIFICO
DEPOSITO
YARA
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Pacifico is the local beer and itâ??s quite drinkable

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Mum picking up her daughter for lunch

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Tï¿¼hese kids were learning to march! Their Maestro was really strict in making them march the correct v


NO FIO
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Street vendor bbqing chicken.

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This boy was very upset his mum had left him to wait while she was gossiping with her friend.



There is a convention of Franciscan monks in town (and theyâ??re actually staying at the same hotel as m

Ahhh, after dinner and talking to the missus on WeChat I decided to stay another day, it really is a nice place.

So you might be thinking whatâ??s this guy doing on his own leaving the family back in Houston? Well, ever since we put our little one, now two years old, into daycare Iâ??ve been struggling with my health. Iâ??ve had two episodes of pneumonia and numerous lighter chest infections and I donâ??t know how many courses of antibiotics to fight these infections. So the missus and I decided I needed to get out for a change of environment and I took a 4 week vacation from work. Of course, I immediately came down with another infection so I had to wait for another week and half before setting off on my trip. It seems to have worked, in the last few days Iâ??ve been feeling great and today Iâ??ve walked at least 10km and even jogged along the beach for half a km! Touch wood!



My route so far



There are beautiful church interiors in every town.



Have you seen this man? He was last seen unshaven on the beach at San Blas.


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Beautiful sunset

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Surf class on the beach

Day 11

After 4 nights in lovely San Blas it was time to leave. Of course, I couldâ??ve stayed much longer, it was such a nice low-key, quirky and relaxing place. The small town with surprisingly many nice restaurants and coffee places where I could while the hours away. The long non obstructed beach for long walks in the wavesâ?¦ But it was time to move on and today Iâ??m going to Puerto Vallarta, itâ??s only 160kms but Google says itâ??s going to take 3.5 hours so the road must be pretty twisty.

San Blas to Puerto Vallarta

It ended up taking 3 hours and I was pretty knackered by the time I got to the hotel in Puerto Vallarta. First impressions of PV? Itâ??s a very touristic place somewhat like Cancun with huge hotels lining the beach. Maybe I should have spent a couple of nights more in San Blas? I found a great restaurant, thoughâ?¦ A lot more fancy than restaurants Iâ??ve been to so far on this trip, it had a huge 10m screen where they were showing music acts as different as Motown to Justin Timberlake. I asked if they had any classic rock such as Pink Floyd or Led Zeppelin but it appears acts like those are not much in demand. I guess Iâ??m showing my age?

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Big hotels catering for people on beach bolidays



In between the big hotels the local boys are fishing


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RAMON
TOURS

Locals playing and singing on the beach



I had a chat with two Canadian couples who are staying for 5 weeks. They brought their dogs in strollers. seemed not to worry.


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In order not to leave the bike in the street I rode it through the reception area and parked it by the loos.

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FRITOS

Cool restaurant with huge screen.

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CANTINA DE PUERTO
DonJulio

Good selection of wines and spirits.

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I had fillet with a spinach dish for dinner. Very nice!

Day 12

I took a taxi to the center of town which turns out to be much nicer than the big hotel area where my hotel is located. A nice car-free beach promenade with some arts and performances.

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Promenade along the beach in center of Puerto Vallarta



Pelican convention in town. 10 of them came flying down the promenade in perfect V-formation and it lool



This one is contemplating his next argument in the discussions.


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Statue made of sand. Later on I saw a guy spraying it with something â?? water or glue?

Todayâ??s the last day before starting the trip home and itâ??s a bit sad to leave the nice climate of Mexico pacific. Itâ??s a long trek home and I donâ??t think I can do it in less than 4 days, so letâ??s see what tomorrow brings.

Day 13

Got up early, actually I didnâ??t sleep that well, and was ready to leave at first light. I wasnâ??t sure how far Iâ??d make it today so I had no real goal. The first bit towards Tepic is very twisty as the road winds itself up and down the hills. With big trucks doing 15-20 kmh and not many chances for overtaking I was not making good progress. There were stretches where I could keep a good speed and the road is actually a lot of funâ?¦

So I did get on the Auto-pista and could keep a good speed. It looked like a brand new road and I noticed many trucks full of soldiers and as I went along I saw soldiers standing guard beside the road and on the bridges. Not sure what was going on but I suspect there was some dignitary coming along the road and theyâ??re not taking any chances.

By mid day I reached Guadalajara, it was quite warm and I was starting to feel pretty knackered. After passing through the city I had some lunch and felt a bit better and kept going until I reached Aguascalientes. Coming into the city I saw two huge Nissan plants and after looking this up these are the biggest Nissan factories outside of Japan and produce 850,000 cars a year. Thatâ??s more than 2000 a day! Furthermore, the city is the most business friendly in Mexico and is very prosperous.

After a shower I walked around the center of town and itâ??s nice with a huge town-square and adjacent cathedral. But, I donâ??t think it was as nice as the one in Durango.

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mariano pani
verde y verde

This guy was sitting just outside my hotel.

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Obligatory picture of the main cathedral. As always in Mexico â?? there are lots of people about in the tow

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The local government building just off the square was beautiful inside.

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TRANSITO
LOCAL
POLICÍA VIAL
POLICIA VIAL
POLICIA VIAL
P.V. 124

2 wheeled cops seemed very friendly



Progress so far. Houston looks a long way away.

Day 14

Again, I got up early to ride in the morning while it is cooler. Getting out of Aguascalientes proved fairly straight forward by following the GPS. Once out on the highway it was full speed ahead on good 4 lane highways going north on the Mexican highlands. Very little traffic and very far between petrol stations â?? I guess there is not enough business to have more of them. So a bit after midday I was close to Saltillo and could easily have reached Laredo by evening.



The highland has what looks like palm-trees along the road. Beautiful landscape with far away views.

However, I decided to do, what I thought would be a little detour on a nice road that Iâ??d been recommended, going due east to Santiago. Road 20 turned out to be a mountain crossing, perhaps,

being the most technical and difficult road Iâ??ve ever ridden. Incredibly steep switch-backs with turns that felt like I was close to vertical and really nasty speed bumps put on the road in the villages.

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So instead of being nice sweeping turns that would add a short time to the journey it ended up taking 3 hours and at the end I was totally exhausted and decided to find the nearest hotel which was an Ibis at the southern outskirts of Monterrey.

Day 15

I wasnâ??t sure how far Iâ??d reach today, perhaps, I could go all the way home? Setting off at break of day I got through Monterrey without too many problems although I did take a wrong turn at one time. Then on the highway it was very dense fog for some time and when getting close to Nuevo Laredo there was a massive queue of trucks blocking both lanes. Of course, with a motorcycle in a motorcycle friendly place it was expected that Iâ??d wind my way through and one truck-driver actually indicated with arm-waving that I should go on the shoulder of the road â?? which I then did for kms until some car blocked and I had to switch to going between trucks and then to the shoulde again. I finally reached the front of the queue and it must have been a crash involving several big trucks with debris everywhere and diesel on the road. If I hadnâ??t been on a bike I would have been stuck there for hours.

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Crash-site. It looked pretty nasty and it would take hours to clear. They must have put the dirt on the road to absorb diesel spills.

It wasnâ??t long after that I reached Nuevo Lardeo (the Mexican side of Laredo), I now had to find the place where I could get the deposit for the temporary importation of the bike back so I went to the same

place as when I entered Mexico. I did find a small kiosk and without problems my deposit was refunded. After getting out of Mexico the queue to enter the US took about half an hour so by the time I was in the US again it was noon.

And then the ride back to Houston took about 5 hours.

Notes

I very much enjoyed Mexico and never felt unsafe, even when walking alone in dark streets. Of course, the big presence of police and military is a worry.

From one thing to another â?? I recently switched to T-mobile and their plan allows full data and calls from Canada and Mexico at no extra cost and it worked brilliantly throughout my time in Mexico. Often I would use the data over the phone rather than the hotel wifi! Great!

Riding a motorcycle is a great way to discover Mexico and new places in general. You meet a lot more people than when going by carâ?¦

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Total route of my trip:



I only figured out how to set up a blog on this trip and I still have a lot to learn on how to make it more presentable. But, anyway, itâ??s the content thatâ??s important, no?

Thanks to everyone who has been following along and has taken the time to read my ramblings. I very much appreciate the comments and feedback Iâ??ve had!

Thatâ??s it!

Category

1. Uncategorized

Tags

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