

Canadians discovering charm of Estrella del Mar

BY ALEX FRAZER-HARRISON, FOR THE CALGARY HERALD JUNE 18, 2011

They call it Mexico's best-kept secret.

Estrella del Mar Golf and Beach Resort near Mazatlan is a masterplanned, gated community covering more than 324 hectares (800 acres) overlooking 5.6 kilometres of beach on the Pacific Ocean.

"How close are we to the ocean? I had a visitor say to me, 'I never knew the ocean was so loud,'" says Ralph Destito, senior vice-president and chief marketing officer with Colorado-based Club Acquisition Co., which has been developing Estrella del Mar for seven years.

The property includes the recently expanded 71-room Las Villas Hotel & Spa, with its brand-new restaurant. It joins an acclaimed Robert Trent Jones Jr.-designed 18-hole golf course that has hosted PGA champions from across North America.

Destito says with direct flights to Mazatlan from Canada (the airport is only a 10-minute drive away), Estrella del Mar has become a popular destination for Canadians, whether they're looking for a hotel/spa getaway, or to buy a lot or condo on site.

Destito says they're attracted by the unique activities at Estrella del Mar. For example, he says, "we have the largest privately held turtle sanctuary in Mexico. We put about 100,000 hatchlings back into the ocean last year. It's a magical event to put these baby turtles on the edge of the beach and watch them make it to the ocean."

Estrella del Mar offers vacation packages starting as low as \$59 per person, per night, Destito says. Besides the hotel, the resort also offers beachfront condo rentals, ranging from one to three bedrooms.

For more information, visit estrelladelmar.com.

Fast Facts:

Mazatlan, Mexico

? Population: 438,434 (2010)

? Location: West coast of Mexico, in Sinaloa state

? Attractions: El Faro lighthouse, cliff-diving, sport fishing, beaches, Carnaval International

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