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## Shoes a great find in Cancun

By TRACY MCLAUGHLIN, SPECIAL TO QMI AGENCY

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Guide Cuauhtema Llinas Aguilar helps reporter Tracy McLaughlin find new shoes during a shopping excursion in Cancun, Mexico. (Tracy McLaughlin/Special to QMI Agency)

CANCUN, Mexico -- As I bury my bare feet in the warm white sand on the beach of the luxury Excellence Playa Mujeres resort, I stare out into endless blue sea and lose myself in a Caribbean dream.

At this moment, I have no care in the world until I look down at my sorry my feet, looking so ridiculously small against the vast sea. Flip flops and bare tootsies are fine during the day, but I have no pretty shoes for fine dining and dancing at the resort tonight.

In my entire adult life I have never been able to find dress shoes in Canada to fit my tiny size three feet, unless I'm willing to wear children's vinyl shoes with silly shiny bows on the toes.

But in Mexico, no problema, says my new best friend Cuauhtema Llinas Aguilar, a fun-loving tour guide with a great sense of humour. Aguilar's services are part of my Transat Holiday package, and he is going to take me on a shopping excursion to all of Cancun's retail hotspots.

"Trust me," Aguilar says. "I will take care of you!"

Lucky for me, he adds, many Mexican women have feet smaller than the average Canadian.

Cancun's shopping zones are just a short drive from the resort. We tour along modern, Miami-ish palm tree-lined streets toward the "Luxury Avenue," designer boutique mall. We pass Senor Frogs, a glitzy night club especially for ladies, where I am told Michael Jackson impersonators and others perform. We stroll along terracotta streets filled with charming outdoor cafes and shops.

Just for fun, I buy an El Tabador mask, some Mexican chocolate from Ah Cacao chocolate cafe and some extra-hot chili sauce from an open-air market. I also enjoy browsing over the cosmetics, imported from Spain or Italy, that can't be found in Canada.

But now my good-natured guide is steering me toward Aros, one of many shoe shops in the downtown Plaza las Americas.

Aguilar and my female travelling companions are as excited as I was when the manager pulls a wide selection of small-size women's shoes off the shelves.

You must understand, amigos, that in my case, locating shoes that actually fit is not just a girl thing it's a necessity.

There are sparkling silver shoes, hot pink satiny shoes, sensible brown leather shoes, all made in Mexico. I am so excited I started salsa dancing with Aguilar right in the store.

I buy three pairs for a total of \$130 including taxes, including a pair of sexy strappy satin Latino sandals.

The next day, we go on another shopping excursion through the adorable streets of Playa Del Carmen, a short drive south of Cancun.

In the places where tourists shop, the shoes are too big for me, but it's fun to browse through the art and trinkets, especially in my new shoes.

Later, back in snowy Canada, I look out the window and think, darn, I should have bought some boots!

Never mind: Next time I am bringing an empty suitcase to Mexico so I can fill it with shoes.

### More information

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