

HipCompass

# ESCAPES

Spring 200

24 hours  
in London

Volcanic Spa

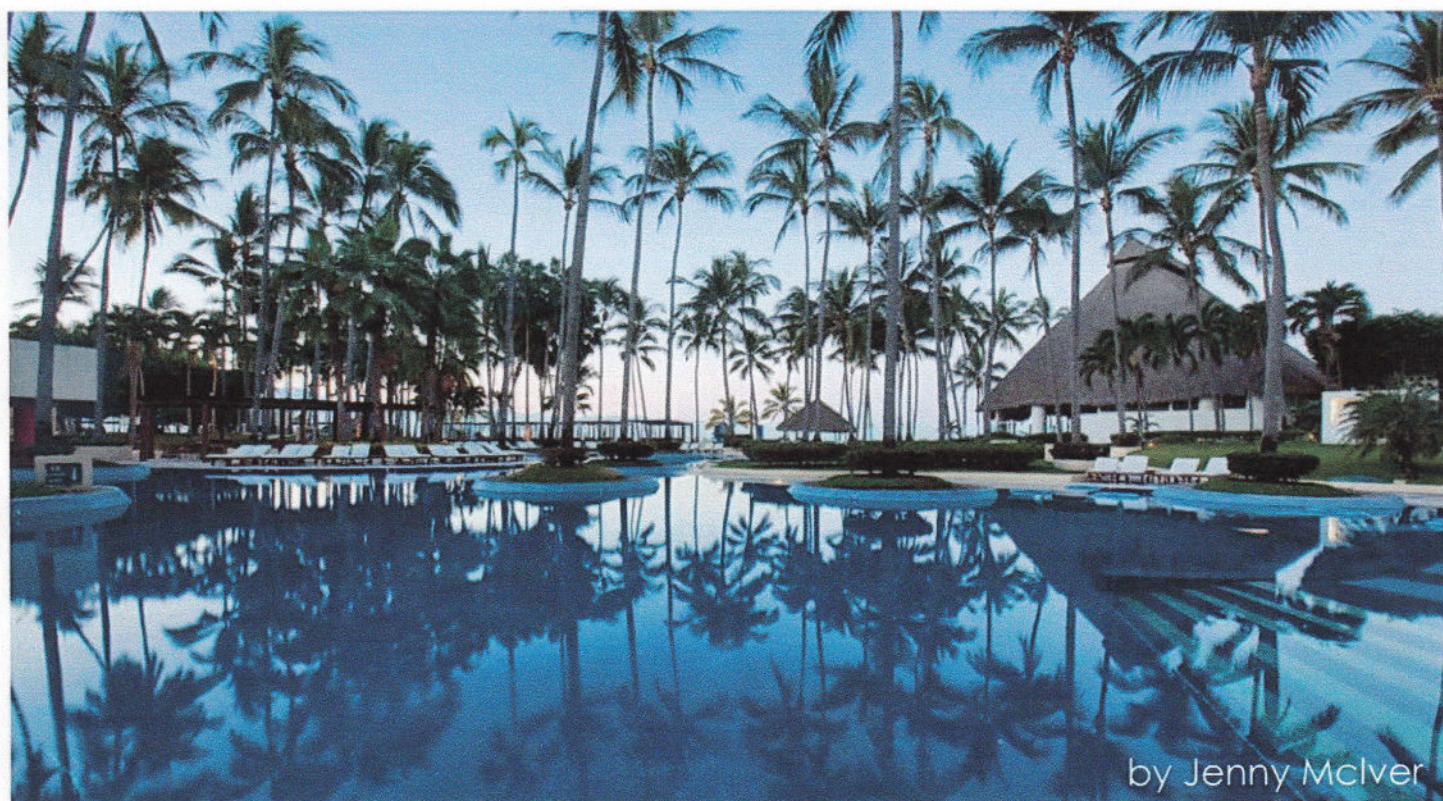
vs.

Volcano Climbing

Unexpected

F... i... W... I...

## Puerto Vallarta resort-ing...solo style



*Like many great inventions, my love for solo travel evolved out of necessity. I had an insatiable desire to see the world, and far more vacation time than most of my friends. But as a long-time business traveler and all-around independent girl, solo vacation travel seemed a natural progression. So, when I recently got the urge for a few days of sun and sand, I didn't hesitate to hop a flight to the sunny Mexican resort town of Puerto Vallarta for a little quality "me" time.*

Once a sleepy fishing village, today's Puerto Vallarta blends old-world Mexico with all the requisite amenities of a modern resort destination. The surrounding Sierra Madre Mountains provide a dramatic backdrop for the deep blue waters of the Pacific Ocean. Just 15 minutes from the quaint cobblestone streets of downtown, my destination awaits - the luxurious Westin Resort & Spa, Puerto Vallarta.

Upon entering the Westin's lobby, I am welcomed by vibrant tropical hues and smiling staff members. In no time, I'm whisked to my Grand Deluxe Room complete with panoramic ocean views and a full-size Jacuzzi on the balcony. The resort site is a former palm tree plantation and more than 600 were preserved

during construction in 1992. The resulting canopy of swaying palm trees provides a natural shady reprieve from the intense Mexican sunshine.

While the resort crowd is, like most, dominated by couples and families, there is also much to offer for the discerning single traveler. Water sports, hiking trails, a Jeep safari into the Sierra Madre - with so many options, where to go first? The spa, of course. Was there ever any doubt?

After perusing the menu, I settle on a massage in a beachfront pergola. There is something about getting a massage as waves lap gently in the distance that soothes the soul. Later, I follow that up with a strenuous afternoon of poolside lounging under the palms before

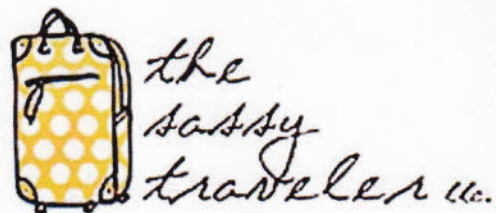
finally deciding it is time for dinner.

Many people find dining alone the hardest part of a solo vacation, and I'll admit, it takes a bit of getting used to. My advice? Attitude is everything; remember this is YOUR vacation. Pay no mind to the canoodling honeymooners at the next table or the screaming toddler at another. Meet the wait staff and learn a little about the locals. Sit back and take in the tropical views with an equally tropical beverage. Before long, you will begin to savor the experience. I do.

Travel with others can have the unintended consequence of isolating you from the culture around you, a focus more on who you're with than where you are. Travelling solo naturally forces you to interact more with your surroundings.

Vacationing on your own is the ultimate self-indulgence; no schedule to keep, no itinerary but your own whims. Total adventure or total relaxation, it's all up to you. After a serene weekend in Mexico, I happily conclude that a solo vacation, at least once in a while, is a rewarding addition to any travel repertoire.

To read more from Jenny McIver visit  
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