

ONLY IN DREAMS

Little things make romantic getaway to Nuevo Vallarta resort worth it

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LEFT: The resort's multiple restaurants gave Lorena Hernandez a taste of different international cuisines. ABOVE: Dreams Villamagna is located in the Riviera Nayarit on the Nuevo Vallarta Banderas Bay.

“Sun,” “relaxation” and “adventure” are three words Lorena Hernandez uses to describe her prize-winning trip to the all-inclusive Dreams Villamagna Nuevo Vallarta in Mexico provided by Apple Vacations.

But “romance” is another word that comes to mind when considering the setting where Hernandez, 33, and her fiancé Rolando Varela, 32, spent eight days and seven nights in June at the resort in Riviera Nayarit, 15 minutes north of the Puerto Vallarta International Airport.

“The beach and the sunsets,” she recalls. “When the sun is setting over the ocean it’s really nice. The hotel is definitely romantic.”

Hernandez has traveled often to Mexico, several times to Puerto Vallarta and also to Guanajuato, where her parents are from. But this was her first trip to Nuevo Vallarta, which she notes is “a little distant from the center of the action” in Puerto Vallarta.

But then, her trip was all about relaxation and finding the time

to unwind. Hernandez, a graduate student in human resources at DePaul University in Chicago, also works at the DePaul Law School’s asylum and immigration legal clinic.

So in the spirit of relaxation, Hernandez and Varela spent time hanging out at the pool. “That’s part of the fun,” she says, “to do a little bit of nothing.”

One of the resort’s pools is an infinity pool that overlooks the ocean, a perfect place to relax. But there was more than relaxation on this trip: Hernandez and her fiancé didn’t make it to the resort’s spa, but they did head to the resort’s gym for workouts several times.

“You have the time to do the things you don’t typically have the time to do,” Hernandez says. “It helps with the guilt.”

Guilt? She was talking about working out at the gym to try and make up for all the eating they did at the resort’s restaurants. “The food was very good, which you don’t always expect at an all-inclusive,” she says. “The options are limitless. You can



Lorena Hernandez enjoyed sun, relaxation and adventure as part of her trip to the all-inclusive Dreams Villamagna Nuevo Vallarta provided by Apple Vacations.



A local resident offers visitors fresh, warm tortillas.

order room service from the restaurants whenever you want.”

Dreams Villamagna Nuevo Vallarta has multiple restaurants with international cuisine themes – Italian, Mediterranean, Mexican, seafood, a Sushi Sky Bar Lounge – and drinks and food are available poolside as well. Lounging poolside is just one of the many pleasures of a trip to the Riviera Nayarit, though.

Hernandez and Varela did some exploring of the area as well: a city tour of Puerto Vallarta, a tour of a section of the Sierra Madre mountains and a Marieta Islands boat tour. And it’s the tours that provide some of the adventure on this vacation.

“They take us in the back of an old military truck,” Hernandez says, with wind whipping everywhere as they ride up into the mountains, “so it’s quite the adventure.”

Better than the ride to the small village, however, was the stop at the home of a local woman who allowed the visitors to sample fruit, such as mangos and plantains, from her garden and showed them

how to make fresh tortillas from scratch.

“I think everyone went back for more after their first taste” of the fresh, warm tortillas topped with salsa made from ingredients grown in the garden, Hernandez says.

Later, there was a walking tour with commentary on the natural habitat of the Sierra Madre and lunch at a secluded beach. Not a bad way to end the excursion.

Another secluded beach was part of the Marieta Islands boat tour they took on another day. The nearly hour-long boat ride afforded tourists the opportunity to see dolphins, manta rays and jellyfish. The Marieta Islands are classified as a national wildlife preserve. Some vacationers did scuba diving or snorkeling, but Hernandez and Varela went kayaking before heading to the beach for more time in the sun.

The city tour gave Hernandez another look at Puerto Vallarta and a chance to learn more about its culture and history. Puerto Vallarta has much to offer with the Sierra Madre mountains to the east,

Banderas Bay to the west and a beautiful historic town in the middle. Downtown Puerto Vallarta boasts the services of a modern city while retaining the authenticity of a colonial Mexican village.

Part of the city’s history is the impact that the filming of the 1964 movie “The Night of the Iguana” had on the area and its emergence as a tourist destination. Actor Richard Burton was starring in the film, and his paramour Elizabeth Taylor accompanied him to Puerto Vallarta while he filmed with Ava Gardner. The paparazzi followed and shined a light on the city and, as they say, the rest is history. The tour also included a visit to the iconic Our Lady of Guadalupe church, which adds quite a different kind of star power. There was also a chance to do some shopping: Hernandez has a new silver cuff bracelet, a gift from her fiancé.

So, relaxation, sun and adventure add up to a great vacation.

And given all the romance that also comes along with a trip to Dreams Villamagna Nuevo Vallarta, it’s hard to imagine a honeymoon for Hernandez and Varela that will top this trip. ●