

## KATE DANA

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### All I Wanna is Tijuana

by Kate Dana July 23rd, 2016

Departing from Sacramento on an early Saturday morning, the short flight touched down in sunny San Diego, with travel to beautiful Santa Fe Station made easy by public transportation. After finding the popular trolley to San Ysidro, came the border cross into Tijuana, México by pedestrian entry.

First Stop: Playas de Tijuana for delicious artisan pizza from Horno 320 and a walk along the cliffside malecón. Curious to try the chatarra of Baja-California meant one order of Tostilocos: a wild concoction of Tostitos, peanuts, cubed cheese, onion, jicama, salsa and salty-sweet dried pieces of tamarindo known as chacachaca. Tostilocos are inexplicably not so good for the body, but good for the soul.



A few days later, adventure ensued driving through Baja-California, from Tijuana to Rosarita Beach and popular Ensenada, posing for obligatory photos under the famous giant Mexican *bandera*: a landmark for cruise ships and tourists.

Continuing on from Ensenada to Valle de Guadalupe and finding a fantastic tour of La Chetto winery, one of the oldest and largest in México, was a welcomed treat. After the tour, vineyard guide Rodrigo educated visitors on the varieties of wines available, and poured hefty glasses for tasting. Fine Wine in México? ¡Hijole!

An indulgent lunch at picturesque restaurant Latitud 32 featured Yucatan-inspired ceviche and Mackerel-stuffed *Papadzules* (rolled corn tortillas) plus a beautiful view of the Vinos El Cielo vineyard.

Just before heading back to Tijuana, a quick stop at La Casa Doña Lupe, an environmentally-conscious vineyard, restaurant and farm, meant sampling several cheeses, dips and jellies before settling on a chocolate marmalade and an apple-habanero spread to take as souvenirs.

No visit to Tijuana is complete without a walk along Avenida Revolucion and a glimpse of the Mexican mythological creature, the Zonkey, a zebra-painted burro. While street vendors heckled their wares, waiters hustled in the café of Hotel Caesar's rumored by many to be the home of the first-ever Caesar salad. This wide, centuries-old street lined with restaurants, souvenir shops, and discotecas ends at the Monumental Arch, created in 2000 to welcome visitors to Zona Centro.

Wrapping up this adventure, a visit this reputable Mexican city was an amazing surprise. While it seems possible to find the cliché town depicted in films like *La Bamba*, with tequila-swilling, mustached hombres in giant sombreros, it feels as if the old Tijuana is quickly being usurped by new versatile culture, making it a top contender as the next cosmopolitan mecca.

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