

Mazatlan, Mexico

By: DOMINICK A. MERLE

MAZATLAN, Mexico---There really is an upside to everything bad in travel, including a sudden run of the “terrible turistas” on a Mexican holiday.



No, we're not talking about a tourist invasion here, but plain and simply traveler's diarrhea, aka Montezuma's Revenge, the Gringo

Gallop and the Aztec Two-Step. (In Asia it's known as Gandhi's Revenge, Delhi Belly and the Mummy's Tummy).

An estimated 10-million travelers contact the “trots” each year and it usually lingers from three to five days.

So where’s the upside? Well, it gets you up close and personal with your room, which is how I became best friends with the El Cid Marina resort on the Sea of Cortez.

How many times have you checked into one of these all-

inclusive resorts, signed up for a barrage of all-day tours, shuffled back to your room at dusk each night and never got to know what you were paying for?

Actually, I did take a couple of tours before I became a Montezuma alumni, including a daredevil drive through Old Mazatlan on an open-top bus where we were either constantly ducking under live electrical wires strung across the street or dodging



El Cid marina



overhanging palm tree branches. This kept us preoccupied with our own safety rather than the sights.

The second tour was to the charming country town of El Quelite near the Tropic of Cancer in the Sierra Madre foothills. We were greeted on arrival by a typical brass band that paraded us along the main street past century-old churches and buildings colorfully wrapped in bougainvillea.

There were men and young boys

riding horses throughout the village and women selling homemade breads and pastries, shielding themselves from the sun with colorful parasols.

After our honorary parade, we were treated to an exciting performance featuring dancers, rope tricks, horse tricks...all the while sampling the various and tasty cuisines of Mexico.

And that's when "it" happened. In a flash I was at the village Farmacia

just up the street.

Even before I spoke the man behind the counter nodded without emotion as he reached into a drawer and handed me two green (no name) pills wrapped in plastic.

“One now, one six hours,” he said. Then he patted his stomach and half-smiled. “No more turistas.”

The price was right, about \$1.50.

But six hours later, back in my room, I was far from cured. Thus began my close relationship with the El Cid resort which would last the next five days and nights.

After a rough night, I was able to get acquainted with the resort complex, fueled with some complimentary packets of Pepto Bismal from the friendly front desk. I felt a bit like an out-patient, but never straying too far from Room 318.

El Quelite dancers



El Quelite main street



Under the all-inclusive plan, there were about a dozen restaurants and snack bars at my disposal, but food was obviously not high on my bucket list. So while Italian, Mexican, Argentinian, Japanese and international cuisine was being served around the clock, a grilled cheese sandwich and tonic water was just what the doctor ordered.

There were several pools and water taxi service to a private

beach just across the marina; I tried them all but preferred the pool where I had a clear and comforting view of my balcony and room on the third floor, just in case.

A spa and massage was also included, but I was in no condition for that type of pampering.

I quickly became a familiar sight with the staff, shuffling along the resort while most other guests were touring. One of the pool

waiters began serving me tonic water almost on sight.

But by Day 3 the malady lingered and I decided to seek some medical help. There was a shopping area near the water taxi area and a sign on one of the shops suddenly jumped out and almost screamed at me. It said "House Doctor."

The consultant, I'm not even sure if he was a doctor, listened attentively while I explained my

problem and then asked: "Do you wash your hands?" while dry-washing his to drive home his point.

"Of course I do," I replied.

"Good," he said, "and drink only bottled water, no ice, and make sure seal not broke."

The consultation fee was about \$15, including a packet of four Pepto Bismal tablets which were free at the front desk. I later



Old Mazatlan



learned that the “House Doctor” had no connection with the resort but the catchy name made it sound like he did.

By the end of the 5th day I was saying my goodbye and good riddance to Montezuma and it was nearing time to leave. But I had no regrets.

In an odd way, the “terrible turistas” are also part of the charm of Mexico, right up there with the

brass band and, yes, the food.

(Dominick A. Merle is Canadian Director of the International Food & Travel Writers Assn. and is based in Montreal. Email dmerle@videotron.ca)

IF YOU GO

We flew Air Canada (aircanada.com) from Toronto to Mexico City, where regional carriers have frequent shuttle flights to Mazatlan. For further information on El Cid



Happy schoolgirls

Marina, try elcid.com and follow the links.

For Mazatlan info, try: gomazatlan.com



Two-pill Farmacia