

# Lake Chapala: The Oasis of Mexico's Retirement Destinations

**Lake Chapala is Rated by National Geographic as the 2nd Best Climate in the World**

By Aly Adair

Americans, Canadians, and Europeans have discovered the natural beauty, affordable real estate, and perfect climate of Lake Chapala, Mexico - just 600 miles from Texas. Lake Chapala is a 50-minute drive south of Guadalajara, the 2nd largest city in Mexico and about three and a half hours from the Manzanillo beach. On the Pacific west coast, Lake Chapala is directly east from Puerto Vallarta.

Lake Chapala sits about 5200 feet above sea level and has an average year-round temperature of 74 degrees Fahrenheit. April and May are the hot and dry months with highs in the 80's and 90's, but who will complain with evening low's in the 60's? The trees, flowers, and semi-tropical plants explode with color from the semi-tropical four months of Lake Chapala's rainy season. At Christmas time, it is not unusual to find poinsettia trees, 4 to 6 feet tall, in full bloom.

Don't feel bad about sporting shorts and a T-shirt during the winter months of December and January. You can still sit by a fire on the patio of a café or restaurant during the chilly evenings. No air conditioning, no heating, and no humidity allow people from 31 countries to relish in the outdoors of Lake Chapala.

If you enjoy hiking, you can forge up the mountain trails to the Old Burial Grounds or the Little Chapel. Sports and fitness enthusiasts can enjoy golf, tennis, cycling, walking, volleyball, softball, horseback riding, and swimming year round. Social events like card games, arts and crafts shows, local festivals, garden fiestas, and home entertaining are very popular in Lake Chapala.

Real estate prices range from \$100,000 for a nice condo to \$270,000 for a more executive-style condo. Rentals are available between \$450 and \$1500 per month, depending on the season. May to October has better rates and availability, but be careful about how you search and contract for property. Real estate companies do not often share information, so you may want to visit with more than one company. Some rental contracts include the price of required gardening and cleaning services. Some contracts require those services, but you pay extra for that.

Foreign residents notice after spending a little time in Lake Chapala, that there is a lack of consumerism and materialism on the part of the Mexican hosts and perhaps this is a special part of the Lake Chapala charm. The Mexican people very much value friends and family. People on the street will always greet you with a friendly "*Buenos Dias*" and a big smile. You can walk day or night and enjoy the special warmth of the Mexican people as they invite you to share their culture and history. There are over 5000 festivals registered in Mexico.

For a more at-home comfort zone, there are English newspapers, an English library, English videos and DVD's and even English movies at the Theatre. The variety of restaurants will amaze you - Greek, Italian, French, German, Chinese, International,

Argentinean, English Fish & Chips, and Mexican. Lake Chapala has over 50 English speaking organizations like the American Legion to share social time with others.

A low-stress life and lots of things to do is the way most people describe Lake Chapala, Mexico. If that fits into your Mexico retirement goals, check out the central paradise of Lake Chapala.