

DEMOGRAPHIA



GUADALAJARA: THE MEXICAN DREAM

SUMMARY INFORMATION		Similar To
Urbanized Area* Population	3,500,000	Sydney, Atlanta, Athens
Urbanized Land Area: Square Miles	210	Porto, Auckland, Toledo (USA), Shanghai
Urbanized Land Area: Square Kilometers	544	
Population per Square Mile	16,700	Manaus, London, Jakarta
Population per Square Kilometer	6,400	
2 nd largest urbanized area in Mexico		
*Continuously built up area		

12 September 2004

Guadalajara is Mexico's second largest urban area, and the capital of the state of Jalisco. Guadalajara is located approximately 300 miles west of Mexico City, but in many ways seems further away than that. And, it's further away than the local road maps suggest. Guia Roji, the principal Mexico map company, leads the traveler to believe that virtually all of the shortest route, through Toluca, and north of Morelia to Guadalajara is a four lane toll road is generally on federally highway 15-D ("D" denotes a toll road in Mexico). It is not. There are at least 30 miles of two lane road (from Atacomulco to Maravatio), though traffic is sparse enough and the road is straight enough that passing is not difficult. Another route goes through Queretaro and then directly west to Guadalajara. There are at least six lanes all the way to Quereatro, 120 miles from Mexico City, and the last 40 miles are on a high-quality, comparatively new concrete roadway that any high income country would be pleased to have as a part of its highway network. But like the Toluca route, there are many miles of two-lane roadway. It is possible to travel from Mexico City to Guadalajara on a four lane roadway, but that requires a detour through Leon and even further north toward Aguascalientes, where a southwestern turn rights to course to Guadalajara.



The Toluca route, however, is an exciting driving experience, largely due to the curving freeway that crosses the mountains between Mexico City and Toluca --- though it is the least challenging of three mountainous routes into the capital (Puebla and Cuernavaca are even more challenging).

After visiting Mexico City, Guadalajara see ms much different. The old colonial and well-to-do neighborhoods are far more obvious than in much larger Mexico City because they are closer to the center. They are not always in the best repair, as it

seems clear deterioration is going on. The street pattern is generally a grid, with some diagonal streets and monumental circles.



The city itself is a worthy second city. The core has old commercial, government and clerical architecture. The cathedral is one of the most attractive in the nation. Wide, straight streets lead to Centro from each direction. There are monuments in circles and diagonal boulevards as well, making one wonder whether L'Enfant might have been moonlighting when he designed Washington, DC.

The expanses of colorless, even ugly (to first worlders) self-built housing are not as overwhelming as in the national capital. Millions of Mexico City residents live in such drab surroundings, especially to the east and north of the Periferico. In Guadalajara, the number is much smaller and it even seems that the percentage is smaller as well. Of course such neighborhoods are to be found in Guadalajara, and they are large. They also stretch north and east from the city, which like Mexico City is ringed by a Periferico whose conditions in any one area seem to reflect to affluence or lack of it in the neighborhood. To the south and the west, Periferico is a high volume roadway, sometimes even a freeway. To the north and east, it is anything but that, often narrowing and filled with challenging potholes.

Also to the north and east is one of the most unusual features to be found in any of the world's major urban areas. The canyon of the Rio Grande de Santiago is there for all to see. The north and east walls can be seen from Periferico, with settlement continuing virtually up to the canyon walls themselves. It is as if Phoenix had been placed on the south rim of the Grand Canyon.

But the city is on the move. The hypermarkets have arrived and are adding to the wealth of the community by lowering prices. Wal-mart is in town, along with its membership affiliate, Sam's Club. And, Costco, another membership chain is there as well. The international hypermarket chain Carrefour will also be found. New, large commercial buildings are to the south and west, and a new technology park is being developed five or more miles west of the present development beyond Periferico.



But the real story is housing. Guadalajara is moving south --- south of the city itself and south of Periferico. It may well be that the most important legacy that will be left by President Vicente Fox, aided by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), is the commercial housing boom. There has never been anything like it before in Mexico, as a new "Mexican Dream" takes hold. In a nation where, according to the *Economist*, one-half of housing is self-built, and that not very well, record numbers of new houses are now being built by developers on greenfield sites. And, it's not just in the largest urban areas. Major developments are underway in smaller areas as well, such as over the

hill from the capital of Michoacan, Morelia.



The southern suburbs and exurbs, especially Tlajomulto of Guadalajara are a principal example. There are, of course, the villas of the wealthy in the hills that rise above the highway that carries traffic south to Colima. But along the highway, and in some places for some distance one side or the other of the highway are new housing developments. Some of them have houses that rival the size of middle income housing developments in Europe, and others are much smaller. The smallest will have two or three bedrooms and perhaps 650 square feet. They are row houses, with side walls shared with the neighbors. As is

typical in Latin America, there are walls, not fences, around the small back yards. They are colorful and attractive, inside and out. Prices are as low as \$20,000 to \$30,000 and people can be seen carrying their household goods in from SUVs and other motor vehicles that must could have cost nearly as much. Middle-class Mexico is on the move.

Guadalajara's new suburbs are, of course, much more dense than their Canadian or American counterparts, but they are far less dense than most of the rest of the community. And, even at the higher density, these are automobile suburbs, just like the new suburbs throughout the high-income world. Quick access is provided, by highway, to the growing commercial and retail areas on the south side of the city.

As in the case of virtually all cities trying to prove their world classness, Guadalajara has built a Metro. Here light rail technology is used, but most of the system is in tunnel. Predictably, it serves virtually only the central city, which now contains less than one-half of the metropolitan area's population. Moreover, the central city has joined the ranks of world cities in which the population is declining. Between 1990 and 2000, the city lost approximately 3,000 residents, while the suburbs gained nearly 800,000. Tlajomulco grew from 6,000 to more than 120,000. It is as if the Leavitt brothers have set up shop in Mexico, and their showcase developments are in Guadalajara. Even in an urban area with a high percentage of households without automobiles,

the metro carries fewer than 15 trips annually per capita. Even Atlanta does better than that. Looking around the community, one gets the impression that the money spent on this extravagance might have found better uses.



But like so many other cities in the world, irrelevance at the core does not prevent the city from continuing to develop on the periphery. People move there, live there and work there, abandoning the policy malpractice that contributes so much to making urban cores so uncompetitive.



New Housing: Tlajomulco



Model Houses: Tlajomulco



New Housing: Tlajomulco



New Housing: Tlajomulco



New Housing Development: Tlajomulco



Guadalajara



Northeast Periferico



West Periferico



By Wendell Cox

www.rentalcartours.net
www.demographia.com
www.publicpurpose.com