

Introduction to Salinas

by Steve Marchant

I've never been to Miami, apart from the airport which I don't much care for, and would actually love to visit that famous city one day. It must be the kind of place you either love or hate because the little town of Salinas, sitting on a peninsula jutting out into the equatorial Pacific Ocean is compared with Miami by those who disdain Miami and those who love it too.



Not surprisingly I didn't quite know what to expect when I first arrived in town in December. As I mentioned, I've never been to Miami, didn't even watch Miami Vice when it was on, but I've flown over it and seen other pictures and the only similarity I

could possibly imagine is the proximity of high rise condo buildings near the beach and of course a lot of Spanish is spoken in both places.



Salinas, at least when I went, has a laid back tranquil feeling to it. It feels extremely safe and is remarkably not humid. This is because it sits on a peninsula and its shores are lapped by waters brought up from the south of South America, namely the cold plankton-rich Humboldt current. That doesn't mean the water is cold to swim in; just that it is a shade cooler when compared to other tropical waters. The Humboldt current brings a nice cooling wind too and so the on shore temperatures feel around 82-84F instead of a sticky 90-95F.



Plankton is what prawns and other shell fish live on right? Not to mention fish of varying sizes and whales too. So no surprise to see an incredible amount of restaurants, cafes, stalls all offering a wide variety of seafood including the famous ceviche – seafood marinated in fresh lemon juice with a bunch of seasoning – what healthier way to enjoy prawns and fish!

Undoubtedly there are high rises here as you can see from the photos, and during specific holiday weekends such as Carnival, the New Year and Easter the two main beaches get incredibly crowded and right through the Season (December to April) the town is humming with activity. The rest of the year it quietens down somewhat but August is another busy month as families from the Ecuadorian highlands come down to the coast with their children on summer holidays.



That said the two times I've been there recently it wasn't too crowded and you could see space on the beach especially early in the morning and late in the afternoon. This is a playground for the rich and famous of Ecuador too so it's not uncommon to see jet-skis, and speed boats towing water skiers ploughing through the water further off shore.





What might it be like to live in Salinas? Property is still relatively cheap compared to prices for a similar condo or house in the USA (dare I say in Miami). The condos are often not to the same design standard as those we are used to and in the worst cases are for the main part just functional rather than showcases of good taste and design.

If you are a beach nut you may not like it when 'your' beach is over-run in the high season but there are other quieter beaches which are not as yet developed just 15 minutes away. How undeveloped they stay remains to be seen as the mayor, who I met, says a master plan is being conceived to transform the whole peninsula – something akin to Cancun in Mexico but on a smaller scale.

At the moment the airport is a quiet provincial airport with a couple of planes a day but as the mayor explained, the runway is already being extended and in 2012 there will be an international airport in place able to accept much larger planes.



In the evening the locals stroll along the very long and beautiful promenade or sit and drink a beer at a café on the promenade. No blaring ghetto blasters when I was there but as I said, Carnival would be very different and extremely lively!



The town itself is as good as joined to Libertad, the provincial capital. Libertad is the workhorse and Salinas the fancy partner. That said Libertad has what you need to 'live' comfortably. There is a large mall with a hyper market, a movie theater with the latest Hollywood films in English (Spanish sub-titles) and across the road is a modern hospital clinic, Hospital Alcivar.





I lost a cell phone in Guayaquil (slipped out of my short pockets while in a taxi) and had no trouble getting a new phone and hooked back up in about 20 minutes while I and my companions were in the mall. To make the wait more palatable they sipped on pure iced coconut juice – made from the flesh of the coconut. I had one too and if I tell you that one juice has stuck in my mind for three weeks now you'll get an idea of just how good it tasted – not bad at \$1,25 a pop.







Maybe you have a yacht and want somewhere to park it? No problem, Salinas Yacht Club is a real yacht club not just a mooring point and has all the associated facilities including a fancy restaurant and an air of exclusivity.



You can also charter fishing boats to go out and fish for Marlin, tuna and Wahoo. Incredible records have been set such as 1000lb plus marlin. This would make an incredible adventure and I'm raring to go with my six year old son – he'll have that memory for life ... assuming we'd catch something as my track record isn't that great up to this point.

We're starting a new and very ambitious project near to Salinas and as we progress there'll be regular updates. I'm excited about spending more time in Salinas and my only regret is that in my seven years in Ecuador I hadn't visited before.



Adios Salinas – hasta pronto!