Why Nayarit? The Case for Investing in Mexico's Pacific Riviera

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Most people who know Nayarit know it as the quieter, wilder neighbor of Puerto Vallarta: surf towns like Sayulita and San Pancho, the marina village of La Cruz de Huanacaxtle, the resort enclaves of Punta de Mita. But beneath the postcard surface, something bigger is happening. New highways are being poured, a second airport is nearly finished, a national passenger rail network is being drawn onto the map, and some of the world's most selective luxury hotel brands have planted flags on the coast.

This post pulls those threads together into one picture: why many investors see Nayarit as one of the more compelling long-term real estate stories on Mexico's Pacific coast. It leans into the positives, as requested, and closes with a short list of things any serious buyer should verify.

The short version

- **Demand is proven.** Nayarit welcomes more than 10 million visitors a year, and state officials report average hotel occupancy rose from 45% in 2021 to 82% in 2025, with peaks around 94%.
- **Money is arriving.** The state tourism office projects more than US$5.5 billion in tourism investment and over 3,600 new hotel rooms in 2026.
- **Access is improving fast.** A new Tepic–Compostela highway is open, the Las Varas–Platanitos highway is under construction, and the Tepic airport's new terminal is slated to be inaugurated in December 2026.
- **The long game includes rail.** Mexico's 2026–2030 passenger rail program includes a Guadalajara–Tepic corridor and a Tepic–Mazatlán corridor.
- **The macro backdrop is supportive.** Mexico took in record foreign direct investment in 2025 and again in the first half of 2026, and nearshoring is expected to reach its peak impact between 2026 and 2030.

1. A destination that already works

Real estate follows demand, and Nayarit's demand story is concrete. Officials say the state receives over 10 million visitors annually, and that the occupancy climb from 45% to 82% in four years reflects real recovery and growth rather than a one-time spike. Nuevo Nayarit alone posted roughly 83% hotel occupancy in January 2026, placing it among the busiest beach destinations in the country that month.

The visitor mix matters too. The great majority of Nayarit's tourists are international, led by the United States and then Canada. Those are the buyers and renters with dollar and Canadian-dollar purchasing power, which is exactly the demand profile that supports vacation rentals and second-home purchases.

Tourism is also central to the local economy, accounting for a large share of state GDP and employment. That gives government at every level a strong, durable incentive to keep investing in roads, airports, beaches and security around the places visitors go.

The destination is also collecting prestige. Condé Nast Traveler included Riviera Nayarit in its 2026 list of best places to visit in North America and the Caribbean, and its Hot List of new hotels recognized Rosewood Mandarina. Nayarit also holds Blue Flag and Platinum Beach certifications, with more targeted for 2026.

2. The luxury brands have arrived

There is no better signal of long-term confidence than where global hospitality companies put their capital. In late 2025, Siari, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, opened inside the private 920-acre Nauka community on the Nayarit coast. It is one of only nine Ritz-Carlton Reserve properties worldwide. Rosewood Mandarina is operating along the same stretch of coast, and the long-planned Costa Canuva development has been pitched as a multi-resort project of nearly US$2 billion.

State officials also expect more than 15 new tourism developments to open between 2026 and 2027, along with growth of over 15% in longer "workation" and luxury stays. Branded resorts and residences tend to pull surrounding land values, restaurants, services and rental demand upward with them.

3. Highways: the corridor is being completed

For years, the thing that held the northern Riviera Nayarit coast back was the road. The old federal highway was slow and winding. That is changing in stages.

Tepic–Compostela (open). President Sheinbaum inaugurated this 26-kilometer toll highway in November 2025. It includes 10 bridges, two interchanges and a tunnel, cost about MXN 4.2 billion, and was reported to cut roughly 35 minutes from the trip. It links the state capital to the coastal tourism zone and is expected to benefit more than 490,000 residents of Tepic, Xalisco and Compostela.

Las Varas–Platanitos (under construction). Formal construction began in September 2026 on this 26-kilometer highway, with a 24-month schedule pointing to roughly September 2028. Banobras figures put the drive between Las Varas and Platanitos at 14 minutes instead of 33, with around 950 direct jobs during construction. Reported budget figures vary between sources, from roughly MXN 2.5 billion to MXN 4.2 billion. Officials describe it as the next link in a chain that continues toward San Blas.

Guadalajara–Puerto Vallarta access. The newer Jala–Puerto Vallarta highway segment has been reported to save around two hours on the trip from Guadalajara, which matters because Guadalajara, a city of several million, is the closest large metro for weekend and second-home buyers.

The federal government describes these projects as one corridor linking Guadalajara, Puerto Vallarta, Tepic and the Nayarit coast. As each piece opens, formerly remote coastline becomes a practical drive from airports and cities.

4. Airports: two gateways, both expanding

Tepic–Riviera Nayarit International Airport. This is the headline project. A new terminal and control tower, with investment reported above MXN 4.1 billion, was more than 84% complete by late June 2026, and the president said in September that the expansion would be inaugurated in December 2026. The airport is designed for up to 4 million passengers a year, with talk of future capacity of up to 8 million, and is intended to receive larger aircraft with direct flights from the United States, Canada and eventually Europe. Today it has six routes, including Mexico City, Los Angeles, Houston and Calgary. Passenger traffic from January to May 2026 was reported up 44% from the same period in 2025, from a small base. State officials say the goal is to complement, not compete with, other airports.

Puerto Vallarta International Airport (PVR). Although PVR sits in Jalisco, it is the main gateway for Bahía de Banderas, Nuevo Nayarit, La Cruz and Punta de Mita. It handled about 6.9 million passengers in 2025, and operator GAP is building a Terminal 2 for roughly

MXN 9.2 billion that is designed to lift capacity beyond 8 million passengers a year. GAP's broader 2025–2029 master plan commits tens of billions of pesos across its Jalisco airports.

Together, these mean the Nayarit coast is being served by one large, proven airport and one new, purpose-built one, with a growing set of road links between them.

5. Rail: the long-term upside

Mexico is rebuilding passenger rail after decades in which its network carried almost only freight. A constitutional reform in 2024 made both passenger and freight rail national priorities, and the federal government published its 2026–2030 institutional program for the new rail agency in mid-2026. It plans more than 3,000 kilometers of new lines across 13 corridors.

Two of those corridors are directly relevant to Nayarit: **Guadalajara–Tepic** (about 204 kilometers) and **Tepic–Mazatlán** (about 275 kilometers), part of a longer vision connecting Mexico City, Querétaro, Guadalajara, Tepic, Mazatlán and Nogales. The nearest-term piece is Irapuato–Guadalajara, which received more than MXN 12 billion in the 2026 federal budget. Plans for that segment include a station at Guadalajara's airport.

It is fair to say the Tepic segments are later phases without announced construction dates. But they matter for the thesis: if Guadalajara becomes a rail hub linked to Mexico City and the Bajío, the Nayarit coast sits on the extended line toward the Pacific, which would deepen its reach among domestic buyers. Federal officials have also announced a rail bypass project for Tepic and talked about developing a port for Nayarit.

6. Planning for growth, not just letting it happen

In September 2026, President Sheinbaum announced a Master Plan for Riviera Nayarit tourism development, combining growth with land-use planning and protection of biodiversity. For long-horizon investors, that is encouraging. A managed corridor with clear zoning protects the scarcity and natural beauty that make the coast valuable in the first place.

7. Mexico's bigger picture

Nayarit's story sits inside a national one.

- **Record foreign investment.** Mexico recorded about US$40.9 billion of foreign direct investment in 2025, its fifth consecutive record, and about US$35 billion in the first half of 2026. Analysts at Banxico expect the peak impact of nearshoring between 2026 and 2030.
- **Rising tourism.** Mexico received nearly 48 million international visitors in 2025, up about 6% from 2024, and the country's tourism sector is a national priority.
- **A large trading relationship.** Mexico is the largest single supplier of goods to the United States, and bilateral trade runs above US$800 billion a year.
- **Low unemployment and steady policy.** Unemployment sits near 3%, and the central bank has held its benchmark rate at 6.5% through the autumn.

A useful point for real estate investors: Nayarit's value is driven mainly by tourism and lifestyle demand from North American buyers rather than by Mexican manufacturing cycles, so it is somewhat insulated from factory-sector swings.

8. What this means for property

Pricing in Banderas Bay and Riviera Nayarit varies widely by location. Local brokerages describe condos from roughly US$180,000 to US$500,000 and houses from about US$250,000 to US$600,000 in established areas, with beachfront and luxury villas reaching into the millions. One brokerage cites a median near US$456,000 for the broader Puerto Vallarta–Riviera Nayarit market. These are broker-reported figures, so treat them as a guide to ranges rather than audited statistics.

Brokers also point to annual appreciation potential of around 5% to 9% in prime locations and rental yields in the 5% to 10% range, supported by limited coastal supply, winter occupancy above 65% in established areas, and rising infrastructure. Again, these are marketing-side estimates, and individual results will vary with location, management quality and costs.

Where the infrastructure story may matter most:

- **Nuevo Nayarit, Bucerías and La Cruz de Huanacaxtle:** close to PVR, with condo towers, marina life and strong rental demand.
- **Punta de Mita and Litibú:** resort-anchored, low-density, and drawing luxury second-home buyers.
- **Sayulita and San Pancho:** lifestyle-driven markets with boutique rentals and strong visitor appeal.

- **Costa Canuva, Nauka and the northern coast (Compostela, Las Varas, Platanitos, San Blas):** earlier-stage areas where new highways and the Tepic airport could change accessibility, and where land costs are generally lower than in the established core. Earlier stage also means more risk and more patience.

9. A short, honest due-diligence list

A strong case is more useful when it comes with the checks that protect it.

- **Air traffic has been choppy in 2026.** Puerto Vallarta's airport traffic ran about 12.7% below last year in the first half of 2026, narrowing to about 10% below in August, reflecting airline capacity cuts and softer North American travel budgets. Many expect Terminal 2 and new routes to help recovery, but the winter 2026–2027 season is worth watching.
- **Timelines slip.** Highway and airport dates are government targets. The Tepic airport opening has been moved before, and the rail corridors have no firm Tepic construction dates.
- **Trade policy is a live variable.** In July 2026 the United States declined to renew the USMCA at its joint review, so the agreement stays in force through 2036 but will be reviewed annually. Mexico's growth forecast for 2026 is only around 1% to 1.5%, and much of its record foreign investment is reinvested profit.
- **Safety varies by region.** As of mid-2026, brokerage summaries of the U.S. State Department's advisories put Nayarit at Level 2 and neighboring Jalisco at Level 3. Check the current advisory directly, and remember that conditions differ between resort corridors and inland areas.
- **Ownership rules.** Foreigners can own property in Mexico, but within 50 kilometers of the coast they hold title through a bank trust called a fideicomiso. Use an independent Mexican attorney and a reputable notary, verify the title and zoning, and confirm ejido-land status for any land purchase.
- **Budget for the full picture.** Compare net rental income against purchase costs, property taxes, HOA fees, management and furnishing, not just headline yields.

This post is general information, not legal, tax or financial advice. Speak with licensed professionals in Mexico and in your home country before buying.

The bottom line

The case for Nayarit rests on a rare combination: proven visitor demand, serious global hospitality investment, a coastline that is finally getting modern road access, a new airport about to open, a national rail plan that eventually reaches Tepic, and a federal plan to manage tourism growth. Add Mexico's position as North America's favorite manufacturing neighbor, and you have a region where several long-term trends point in the same direction.

No market goes up in a straight line, and 2026 has shown that. But for investors with a multi-year horizon, Nayarit is one of the more interesting places on the Pacific coast to be early rather than late.

Sources

Reporting and data drawn from: Nayarit Secretaría de Turismo statements as reported by SDP Noticias, Emprefinanzas and Nayarit Noticias (March 2026); El Financiero, Excélsior, Infobae and Heraldo de México on the Tepic airport (June 2026); Presidency of Mexico and La Razón on the September 2026 Tepic announcements; Banobras and Excélsior on the Tepic–Compostela highway; NTV and Vallarta Daily on Las Varas–Platanitos; Expansión and Minerva Multimedios on the ATTRAPI rail program; Informador on the Irapuato–Guadalajara train; Puerto Vallarta Net, Mexico News Daily, Vallarta Daily and PVEverything on Puerto Vallarta airport; Mexico Business News, Rio Times and CSIS on the economy and USMCA; Condé Nast Traveler and hotel press releases on Siari and Rosewood Mandarina; Mexlife, Coldwell Banker La Costa, Tokipa and Galvan Real Estate for broker-reported pricing and return figures (treat as marketing estimates).