

## Downtown

**Casa de Huéspedes Consuelo** C Morelos s/n, at Colonia 10 de Mayo ☎624/142-0643. Shared showers and stiff beds are the rule at San José's only guesthouse and cheapest non-camping option. ②

**Casa Natalia** Blvd Mijares 4 ☎624/142-5100, US☎1-888/277-3814, @casanatalia.com. A rather striking architectural mix of European and Mexican styles, housing a classy, award-winning hotel and restaurant; each room is individually decked out with Mexican artwork and each has glass doors leading to a private balcony. Amenities include an in-room spa service, comfy bathrobes and daily paper delivery. ③

**Colli** C Hidalgo, between C Zaragoza and C Doblado ☎624/142-0725. Comfortable, three-storey, family-run place, though the plain rooms only have fan ventilation. ③

**El Encanto Inn** C Morelos 133 ☎624/142-0388, @elencantoinn.com. Lovely colonial Spanish hotel

with several types of rooms – including some suites – around a quaint, tree-lined courtyard. Rates can be as much as 50 percent less in the low season. ⑤

**Posada San Rafael** C Obregón s/n, north of the plaza ☎624/142-3878. A lot better than it looks from the outside, this is the best bet in its price class. Very clean rooms and operated by a friendly staff. ②

**Posada Señor Mañana** C Obregón 1, at the plaza ☎624/142-0462, @www.srmanana.net. Run by a hospitable Swedish woman, offering spacious, palm-lined surroundings and charming, clean rooms with or without a/c. There's also a pool and large communal kitchen. ④

**Tropicana** Blvd Mijares 30 ☎624/142-2311, @tropicnacabo.com. This two-storey inn has tidy, luxury-style rooms and an attractive pool with a swim-up bar at the centre of a courtyard; price includes breakfast. ⑤

## The town and beaches

Though increasingly hemmed in by shopping centres along Mex 1 to the west, resorts on the coast to the south, and the new Puerto Los Cabos to the east, the old **plaza** and the **Paseo Mijares** are still more or less intact as they were originally built. The **Plaza Antonio Mijares** teems with life in the evenings as children on scooters and balloon sellers mix with their parents and tourists. The town's activity branches out from the park, along Boulevard Mijares and the intersecting side streets. Numerous shops and restaurants line these streets and shady courtyards are interesting enough, the latter offering a good variety of cuisine, though prices are high.

To get to the **beaches** it's a 2km walk down Mijares to Paseo Malecón San José and the **zona hotelera**. If you haven't already seen enough cacti in their natural environment, you can stop along the way at the botanical garden and museum **Cacti Mundo**, Blvd Mijares just north of the Mayan Palace golf course (☎624/146-9191; M\$10, students and seniors get a 50 percent discount). The park exhibits eleven thousand examples of the plant from all over Mexico, arranged into shapes – Mickey Mouse's silhouette, for example – that aren't exactly indigenous. From here it's an additional challenge to wind your way through construction sites and other man-made barriers to find some empty sand: the beaches stretch for miles so keep walking until you find a quiet spot. Bikes, scooters, kayaks and other sporting goods are available for rent at Tio Sports Ocean & Desert, across from the *InterContinental Presidente*. There's also a taxi stand adjacent to Tio.

## La Playita

One of the lesser-known alternatives to Cabo and San José's beaches lies just 2km to the east of the plaza. **Pueblo La Playa (La Playita)** is a hundred-year-old fishing village that offers numerous options for swimming and sport fishing, but will soon be altered to an unknown extent by encroaching development. The waters at the seamount of Gordo Banks here house the highest concentrations of gamefish in the waters of Los Cabos (guides at Gordo Banks Pangas;

☎624/142-1147, @gordobanks.com). The **estuary** between La Playita and San José is home to hundreds of birds and makes for an interesting hour or two; it can be reached by kayak or on foot. The peacefulness of La Playita and the estuary will end soon, as the massive **Puerto Los Cabos** development project – a new marina, golf course, hotel and condo complex – nears completion. The estuary will ostensibly be protected, but with all the building it's doubtful that the avian population will maintain their current numbers.

## Eating and drinking

With a few exceptions, San José's **waterfront** isn't much of a dining or drinking destination, but there's a huge variety of upmarket **restaurants** downtown along Mijares. To find places with local prices move west from the square towards Mex 1.

**Buzzards** East Cape Road, 20min drive from San José ☎624/148-2415. If you're spending a day surfing on the eastern cape, this is one of the few places you can get a beer, margarita and a bite to eat. It closes by 9pm, but what surfer stays up that late?

**Cactus Jack's** Blvd Mijares, at C Benito Juárez ☎624/142-5601. Serves inexpensive Mexican breakfasts and seafood dishes off a large international menu, but the karaoke and big-screen TV here are the main draw for the locals.

**Casa del Marisco** C Benito Juárez, at C Miguel Hidalgo ☎624/142-6350. Typical Mexican takes on seafood are augmented by pan-Asian takes like coconut shrimp in mango (M\$180).

**Damiana** Blvd Mijares 8 ☎624/142-0499. The candlelit, bougainvillea-covered courtyard helps take the sting out of pricy takes on Mexican basics like *chiles rellenos* and *enchiladas suizas* (around M\$350 per person). Dinner only.

**La Dolce** Blvd Mijares, at C Miguel Hidalgo ☎624/142-6621. Standard Italian cuisine, including wood-fired pizzas and pastas for relatively good prices (under M\$100). Popular among tourists.

**French Riviera Bakery** C Manuel Doblado, at C Miguel Hidalgo ☎624/142-3350. Its popularity has spawned fancier Corridor and Cabo outposts, but people keep coming to this original location just off the square for coffee, French pastries, cakes and both savoury and sweet crepes (M\$60).


**Jazmín** C Morelos, between Zaragoza and Obregón ☎624/142-1760. The best-value traditional Mexican food in town. Also has excellent breakfasts – perhaps the best *chilaquiles* on the Cape.


**Mi Cocina** Blvd Mijares 4, inside *Casa Natalia* ☎624/142-5100. The torch-lit atmosphere is captivating, and Chef Loïc Tenoux's French-influenced Mexican dishes are inspired. Charred

*poblano chiles* stuffed with lamb share the menu with crayfish over couscous and a grilled Romaine Caesar salad. Dinner for two runs M\$1200.

**La Picazón** C Valerio Gonzalez s/n, next to the bus station ☎624/119-1859. All sorts of great inexpensive Mexican seafood specialties and *antojitos* served outside in a colourful, tropical atmosphere. Try the *tacos del pulpo al mojo de ajo* – soft tacos with octopus cooked in garlic. Closed Sunday.

**La Santa** C Obregón 1732 ☎624/142-6767, @lasanta.com.mx. Wine bar and tapas joint that attracts a large contingent of locals in the hospitality industry and one of the few places in San José that's open past midnight. Closed Sunday.

 **Taquería Rossy** Mex 1 at C Manuel Doblado ☎624/142-6755. This storefront on the west side of Mex 1 just before downtown San José is the lunchspot of choice for budget travellers and big spenders after fish tacos. Battered pieces of fillets, marlin, Dorado and *carne asada* tacos go for less than M\$10 each and cold Pacifico beer is M\$25 a bottle.

 **Tequila** C Manuel Doblado 1011, between Blvd Mijares and C Hidalgo ☎624/142-1155. The top choice in town, with a quaint garden atmosphere and attentive (overly attentive) waiting staff; overpriced wines and cigars.

**Trattoria Chianti** C Obregón at C Morelos. Serves excellent Italian food in a romantic courtyard setting; the pasta dishes and wood-fired pizza oven here make it a local gringo favourite.

**Tropicana** Blvd Mijares 38 ☎624/142-1580. A colonial-style restaurant with an attractive tiled, palapa-covered sitting area that's a popular choice. Serves excellent seafood, often with Cuban dancers providing entertainment.