

La Bufadora

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La Bufadora.... A non-speaker of Spanish might wonder what that is...some low-lidded, throaty lounge singer who's seen better days? Perhaps a shard of Mayan crockery inlaid with an artfully crafted buffalo? No, it's an ocean blowhole on Punta Banda, just south of the Baja California, Mexico seaside town of Ensenada.



The Spanish verb *bufar* means “to snort” and snort it does, with plumes of seawater shooting through rocks, spurting 60-to-70 feet into the air. They're not bluffing, there's plenty of puffing.

And that goes for the street vendors, too. They're the best part of the show. Aggressive, but harmless, they're like a church carnival on steroids. I look at a pair of sunglasses emblazoned with a giant, bejeweled “D” being offered for \$10.00. I walk away and the price drops to \$7.00. I now own a lovely pair of 'name-brand' shades. We continue making our way through the gauntlet of eager hawkers touting jewelry, stained glass, serapes, wood carvings and the inevitable sombrero or two for almost a quarter of a mile.



My husband, the expert, advises me to not make eye contact and keep moving. I drive forward in a determined fashion, like we're heading for the fountain of youth. (Well, I admit I did linger a little bit around the food stands. They were selling hollowed-

out coconuts stuffed with something that must have been delectable judging from the lines of hungry-looking people.)

Finally, we reach the stone balustrade perched over the edge of a 50-foot cliff. The rocky coastline, 70-degree weather, turquoise waters, bluer-than-blue skies – it's hard to believe it's the middle of winter and parts of the Midwest, New Mexico and Colorado are having record snowstorms.

The crowd at La Bufadora reminds me of first-time viewers of the Grand Canyon: Seeing the power of nature displayed so vividly makes you go, "Ah!" We gaze and gasp at the impressive power of the ocean trying to defy gravity. We linger for a full round of family photos – me with the hubster; my daughter with her fiancé, etc. – before we continue to the day's final highlight, lunch at a seaside restaurant with an incredible ocean view. I am bedazzled, despite my new sunglasses.

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