

Find the Dirt First!

6 Questions to Ask Yourself When Looking for a Home at Lake Chapala

What do I mean by find the dirt first?

The land (or *terreno* in Spanish) sets the tone for the types of homes you will find in the various neighborhoods at Lake Chapala.

Begin by asking yourself what is important for you.

Once you know what you want and don't want, you can explore those areas that better fit your lifestyle.

When you have the areas, then focus on finding your perfect home.

Even though this advice is geared towards newcomers to Lake Chapala, it applies to all of us thinking about a change. The more we understand our 'must haves' vs our 'don't wants', the more enjoyable looking for, finding, and living in our new home becomes.

Here are 6 important questions to ask yourself when starting your search...

- **Neighborhood** – what's around you? Do you like privacy or do you want to be part of the action? In the villages the action literally starts the moment you step out of your front door, but you give up some privacy. Go a little bit outside of town and you will find more privacy.
- **Proximity** – do you prefer to walk or drive? Why look for a home outside the village if you don't plan on driving or even owning a car? Maybe you prefer more peace and quiet and are just fine driving into town?
- **Streets** – what are the streets like? Are they paved? Cobblestones? Or just plain dirt? If you plan on walking, are there any sidewalks? If you have a car, will it fit? Is there parking?
- **Security** – security is important to all of us. When looking at homes, start to think like a thief. And let's face it, most of them are lazy. If the house is hard to get to most thieves will pass it by for an easier target. For example, Rivera Alta (above Upper La Floresta) is down a long lane with only one way in and out. This makes it a lot less attractive to thieves than say a home on a through-street at the edge of the village. Keep in mind that there are a lot of things that can be done to make any home secure, and Fenix Real Estate is here to help, but location certainly plays a part.

- **Tranquility** – Mexico will never make the *Top 10 Quietest Countries in the World* list. People love life here and that means fiestas and noise. But you can take steps to find the right amount of tranquility for you. Is the home in a more commercialized area, like you might find in the villages with restaurants, carpenters, and mechanics nearby? Is it near a school? Or is it in a ‘mature view’ area surrounded by only homes? Keep in mind that if there’s a vacant lot next door or several nearby who knows what may come in the future!
- **Space** - how much do you need? Do you have dogs? Like maintenance? Want a garden or just a patio? How about a pool. Are you on a fixed income?

After considering the above factors, let’s compare a couple of non-gated communities in Ajijic.

First, La Floresta, which has wide, tree-lined, cobblestone streets, recessed homes, and minimal walls. Since it lies between Ajijic and Walmart and is predominantly flat, it’s walking distance to most places. But there aren’t many views and most of the homes are single-story.

Now consider Las Salvias (on the mountain side behind Perry’s Pizza). Las Salvias features narrow sloping streets, walled multi-level homes with many gorgeous lake and mountain views. It is still close to town, but being higher up the mountain makes walking more difficult, especially heading uphill with a couple bags of groceries.

A quick disclaimer...

Now believe me when I say there are no right or wrong answers.

For every rule there’s an exception.

And in real estate there are lots of exceptions.

I have had clients who didn’t want stairs end up in a three-story home because they fell in love with the view. Others who wanted something newer then bought an older home with iffy wiring and iffy plumbing because they loved its charm! Instead of whining about what was wrong, they embraced what they loved and set about changing the things they didn’t.

What matters most is what is important to YOU.

The most important question to ask is “does it fit the lifestyle I want at Lake Chapala?”

If the answer is yes, then go for it.

Hasta la próxima. (until next time)

Cheers, Flip

Note: For an image at the end of the article, I'm thinking a map of the area with some of the major neighborhoods indicated, say the size of about half a page. And then a small image at the beginning showing a view of the area overlooking the town.