



HIGHLIGHTS OF MEXICO -14 DAYS

Mexico City-Puebla-Oaxaca-Chiapas-Campeche-Yucatán-Cancún



1

Arrival Mexico City

2

We will explore magnificent Mexico City, built on top of the ruins of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan. Our first stop is the Zocalo (main square), one of the biggest public squares in the world. We will visit the Catedral Metropolitana – the biggest church in Latin America, and the Palacio Nacional – which hosts Diego Rivera’s murals depicting the history of Mexico. We continue to a handicraft market, where we will have time for some browsing. We then drive along the famous boulevard Paseo de la Reforma, built during the short-lived reign of Emperor Maximilian to connect the main square and his castle in Chapultepec. Our last stop is the Museum of Anthropology, where we will have some time to explore the treasures of the Aztec culture.



3

We will drive to the impressive archaeological site of Teotihuacan, located 50km northeast of Mexico City. On the way we make a stop at the Plaza de las Tres Culturas, where three cultures converge: Aztec, Spanish, and contemporary Mexican. We continue to the Basílica de Guadalupe, Latin America's most revered religious shrine. It is here where the Virgin of Guadalupe is said to have appeared before an Indian named Juan Diego in 1531, and an image of her was miraculously emblazoned on his cloak. We will have time to explore the New Basílica de Guadalupe (the Old Basílica, built in 1700, is slowly sinking) and to see Juan Diego's cloak. We then drive for another hour to Teotihuacan, one of the most impressive cities of the ancient world, held sacred by the Aztecs. We will explore its temples, palaces and pyramids, including the Quetzalpapalotl Palace Complex, the Temple of the Feathered Conches, the Pyramid of the Moon, and the immense Pyramid of the Sun, ranked among the biggest in the world.

To Puebla

4

We will drive to the World Heritage Site of Puebla, located 130km southeast of Mexico City. On the way we will make a stop in Tonantzinla, where we will visit its exuberant church. Under its dome, the surface is covered with colourful stucco saints, devils, flowers, fruits, birds and more – a great example of indigenous artisanship applied to Christian themes. We continue to Cholula, where we will visit the Great Pyramid of Cholula, its remains measuring 450m along each side of the base and 65m high, making it larger in volume than Egypt's pyramid of Cheops. Now overgrown and topped by a church, it is difficult to recognise this once magnificent pyramid. We arrive in Puebla in time for lunch (not included). Mexico's national dish, the „mole poblano“, originated here! We will explore the colonial center, lined with churches and colonial mansions, many adorned with the beautiful hand-painted Talavera tiles for which Puebla is famous. Time to shop for some Talavera, before driving back to Mexico City.

Half-day Oaxaca City Tour

5

Oaxaca – a World Heritage Site – was once the center of the Mixtec and Zapotec civilizations. After the Spanish conquered Oaxaca in 1533, the city quickly took on a Spanish flavour, with ornate buildings and charming plazas. Yet despite its colonial heritage, the city remains Indian at heart, due to the presence of a large indigenous population. We will walk through the streets of the colonial city center, along the Cathedral – with its attractive baroque facade, the Iglesia de Santo Domingo – a church with a breathtaking interior that dazzles with gold ornaments, and the Casa Juárez – where Mexico's great liberal reformer and president Benito Juárez lived. We will have time to browse the colourful local markets, and soak up the bustling atmosphere on the Zocalo (main square).

To San Cristobal de las Casas

6

Transfer Tuxtla Gutierrez airport - Sumidero Canyon (incl. shared boat) - Chiapa de Corzo - San Cristobal de las Casas (shared service) Incl. bilingual English/Spanish speaking guide. Flight to Tuxtla Gutierrez must arrive at 12.30 hours the latest. Transfer to the dock for touring in a boat through the Sumidero Canyon, one of the most spectacular natural reserves in Mexico. It is a geological failure formed 36 million years ago with walls of calcareous rock elevating to more than 1,000 metres, caves and cascades among which it is the "Christmas Tree", a rocky structure. Before the end of the tour, you visit Chiapa de Corzo, a town that was the first settlement founded by the Spaniards with its Mudejar fountain known as "La Pila", built in the XVI century; it is a sample of the colonial architecture with an Arabic influence.

7

Half-day City tour and Indian villages (San Juan Chamula & Zinacantan)

We will explore on foot the colonial city center of San Cristobal de las Casas. We will visit the cathedral, on the north side of the pretty main square, with its lavish interior and gold-encrusted pulpit. We then walk a few blocks to the impressive 16th-century Dominican church Templo de Santo Domingo, with its intricate pink facade and gilded Baroque interior. Time to browse the handicraft market in front of the church, where Tzotzil Indians from the surrounding hills come to trade. We then drive 10km into the Chiapas highlands, to the Tzotzil Indian villages of San Juan Chamula and Zinacantan. The Tzotzils descend from the ancient Maya and maintain some unique customs, costumes and beliefs. We will visit the beautiful white church in San Juan Chamula. The candles, incense and chanting worshippers make a powerful impression. We then drive to the nearby village of Zinacantan, with its pretty church and handicraft market. Return to San Cristobal. Approx. duration 5 hours.



8

To Palenque

We will drive to Agua Azul, a place where over 500 cascades create incredible turquoise colored "pools" surrounded by the rainforest. After that, we will continue to Palenque, drop off at your hotel.

9

Full-day Bonampak and Yaxchilan archaeological sites

We will drive to the archaeological site of Bonampak, located 148km southeast of Palenque. Bonampak's setting in a dense jungle hid it from the outside world until 1946. When it was discovered, it initially did not seem to be very significant, until beautiful, vividly coloured murals were found in its temples. They depict Mayan life and mythology like no other find in the Maya world. We have time to explore the temples and view the murals, before driving 25km to the border town Frontera Corozal. From here we continue 22km by boat on the Usumacinta river, its jungle-covered banks forming the Mexico-Guatemala border. We arrive at Yaxchilan, located 20m above the river in the heart of the Lacandon rainforest, and one of the most dramatic Maya sites. Yaxchilan was as powerful as Palenque or Tikal, and it ruled over several surrounding cities including Bonampak. We will explore the temples, before making our way back to Palenque.

10

To Campeche

We will visit the archaeological site of Palenque, a World Heritage Site, located 7km outside of the town of Palenque. Palenque flourished between AD600 and 800, when its influence extended throughout the basin of the Usumacinta river. The site, surrounded by rainforest where toucans and howler monkeys live, is made up of some 500 buildings spread over 15 sq km, of which only a few have been excavated. We will explore the magnificent ruins, including the Temple of the Inscriptions – the tallest and most stately of Palenque's buildings, the Temple of the Sun – crowned with a prominent roof comb, The Palace – with its maze of corridors and rooms, and many other beautiful buildings.

11

To Merida

We will visit the archaeological site of Uxmal, a World Heritage Site, located 80km south of Merida. Its architecture is characterized by low horizontal palaces set around courtyards, decorated with a profusion of symbolic motifs and sculptures depicting the long-nosed rain god Chaac. We will explore the magnificent buildings, including the House of the Magician – which dominates the site, the Nunnery, and the House of Turtles. We continue to Kabah, with its amazing Palace of the Masks, covered in nearly 300 masks of Chaac. Includes lunch. Continue to Merida, drop off at hotel.

12

To Cancun

Full-day Chichen-Itza archaeological site, with drop-off in Cancun, incl. lunch (shared service)

We will drive to the archaeological site of Chichen Itza, located 120km east of Merida. Chichen Itza – one of the New 7 Wonders of the World – is the best restored of Yucatan's Mayan sites. We will explore the magnificent ruins set in a dense jungle, including the Pyramid of Kukulcan – its height and striking geometric design dominating the whole site, the Great Ball Court – the largest and most impressive in Mesoamerica, the Sacred Cenote – a natural well used for human sacrifice, and many other beautiful temples. From Chichen Itza we head to the white sandy beaches of Cancun

13

At Leisure

14

Departure Cancun

Transfer Cancun airport - Cancun hotel or v.v.

