



HIGHLIGHTS OF MEXICO

16 days from : £2055

**Mexico City – Puebla – Veracruz – Catemaco – San Cristóbal de las Casas –
Palenque – Uxmal – Merida – Chichen-Itzá**

Daily Itinerary

Day 1 (Thursday) LONDON – MEXICO CITY

Depart on scheduled flight to Mexico City. On arrival you will be met and transferred to your hotel.

Day 2 (Friday) MEXICO CITY

Free time for a walk around the city to acquaint yourself with that area of one of world's largest cities. Or you can just simply relax at your hotel before your Mexican adventure begins the next day.

Day 3 (Saturday) MEXICO CITY

Start the day with a drive towards the huge city's southern suburbs, soon reaching the colonial district of Coyoacán. Magnificent residences group around the 16th Century Franciscan cloister of the Saint John the Baptist church, where social life unfolds, enriched by cafés, bars, bookstores and museums, constituting a centre of attraction for Mexican and foreign visitors alike.

Our next stop will be the fabled Casa Azul, the Blue House that was Frida Kahlo's home, intermittently, from her birth to her death. It was here that she lived with her muralist husband Diego Rivera and also here where they hosted Bolshevik leader Trotsky and his wife. The House, of course, is now a remarkable museum, or perhaps we should say it is a real pilgrimage shrine for Frida's innumerable, worldwide fans. Proceed to Coyoacán's famous Mercado, a typical Mexican market that is a true feast to the senses.

On to the neighbouring colonial suburb of San Angel, with its cobble-stoned streets and stately mansions, where we can stroll around picturesque Plaza San Jacinto, with free time to enjoy a spree through the colourful Saturday Bazaar. Built around a courtyard, the bazaar features the work of some of Mexico's finest artisans in silver, enamel, pottery, glass and textiles. At the Bazar del Sábado you can enjoy shopping for Mexican paintings, sculptures, and excellent quality handicrafts. Outside, on the plaza, tour members will enjoy a permanent art exhibition and a colourful bustle of vendors, artisans, and artists. Those with a good eye for art have a unique opportunity to find excellent samples of contemporary Mexican painting.

Free time for a restoring midday bite.

We now drive further south, to the unique floating gardens of Xochimilco, where we embark in a typical trajinera, starting a canal-ride with accompaniment of a Mariachi band sailing alongside, watching Mexican families enjoy their favourite weekend pastime. On our way back, a stop is made at University City, the largest institute of high learning in the Continent, with many interesting buildings, such as the Central Library, completely covered with murals by Juan O'Gorman, executed in natural stone mosaics. The adjoining Olympic Stadium is decorated with a bas-relief mural by Diego Rivera, and many other artists have left their mark in this showcase of modern Mexican architecture. Return to hotel, with remainder of the day free.



Day 4 (Sunday) MEXICO CITY

A comprehensive tour will acquaint us with the multiple aspects of this many-sided town, once the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan, today one of the world's great metropolises. Start with a visit to the immense central square, Zócalo, flanked by the baroque Metropolitan Cathedral, by National Palace –where the history of the country has been depicted on Diego Rivera's famous murals- which is the seat of the Mexican Government, and by the archaeological vestiges of the old Aztec city's Templo Mayor. Our journey continues through the splendidly colonial Centro Histórico, in the process of full restoration, past Santo Domingo Square with the old Inquisition Palace, and such architectural jewels as the unique House of Tiles, the Palace of Emperor Iturbide and the Venetian-inspired Central Post Office. Continue to the white-marble Palace of Fine Arts, where invaluable works of art of Mexico's most prominent painters are in exhibition, and on to Chapultepec Park, for a visit to one of the world's best and most extraordinary museums, the Museo Nacional de Antropología, with its rich collections of pre-Columbian art.



These include the impressive Sun Stone, better known as the Aztec Calendar, as well as the stone sculpture of the gruesome goddess of Earth and Death, Coatlicue, the snake-skirted one. A massive, 168-ton monolith of Aztec rain god Tláloc zealously guards the museum's entrance,

while keeping an eye on the always heavy traffic of the stately Paseo de la Reforma, the city's proud landmark. Return to hotel to enjoy a free afternoon and evening.

Day 5 (Monday) PUEBLA

Depart Mexico City on a morning drive to Teotihuacan, the city of gods, for a visit to the Pyramids of the Sun and Moon, the Temple of Quetzalcoatl and the Palace of Jaguars; this was Middle America's largest and most important city and continues to be one of the Continent's most imposing sights. On to charming, colonial Tlaxcala, driving in near sight of Mexico's snow-capped volcanoes. Our visits include the spectacularly ornamented white stucco Sanctuary of Our Lady of Ocotlán. Proceed to historic Puebla with visits to the Forts of Guadalupe and Loreto, and high-baroque Rosary Chapel. Overnight at Hotel Colonial or similar.



Day 6 (Tuesday) VERACRUZ

Some additional sightseeing in Puebla before continuing to Xalapa, at the foot of snow-covered Pico de Orizaba, for a visit to Mexico's most beautiful Archaeological Museum. On to Veracruz, the country's bustling sea port on the Gulf Coast, guarded by the old Spanish fortress of San Juan de Ulúa. Sample a classical Veracruzian dinner at popular Café de la Parroquia. Afterwards enjoy coffee and cool drinks under the main plaza's arcades, watching the tireless activity of competing street musicians, dancers and vendors: a swirling, never-ending party. Overnight at Hostel de Cortes or similar.

Day 7 (Wednesday) CATEMACO

Today we start along the coast, past Alvarado and up the wide Papaloapan River to charming Tlacotalpan, an important fluvial port in the 19th c., today a World Heritage Site that has preserved its colourful, pastel-painted colonial houses. On through the hilly Los Tuxtlas region, with a stop at San Andrés to visit a cigar factory, before continuing to Catemaco, a town of witch doctors and shamans where we spend the night. A highlight of the tour will be a late afternoon sunset boat ride, allowing us to enjoy the lake's incredible wildlife. Overnight at Hotel La Finca or similar.



Day 8 (Thursday) SAN CRISTÓBAL DE LAS CASAS

A long day's journey through Mexico's southeast will take us to Tuxtla Gutiérrez, the sultry capital of Chiapas, the gate to Sumidero Canyon, an imposing wonder of nature. A motor boat ride takes us on the Grijalva River, flowing through the bottom of the Canyon, flanked by 1000 m. high cliffs, offering incomparable views.

Proceed through an imposing mountainous landscape to the unique colonial town of San Cristóbal de las Casas, the Indian capital of Mexico, where the next two nights are spent at the Hotel Diego de Mazriegos or similar.





Day 9 (Friday) SAN CRISTÓBAL and INDIAN VILLAGES

The whole day is dedicated to the visit of San Cristóbal, and of the nearby village of San Juan Chamula, inhabited by the tzotzil Indians who have preserved both their language and their ancestral customs. A visit to the church, where Christian saints and native deities are worshipped alike, is an experience not to be forgotten.

Day 10 (Saturday) PALENQUE

A morning trip through the Chiapas Highlands, with its multi-ethnic population, takes us into the semitropical rainforest region, and to the extraordinary jungle waterfalls of Agua Azul. From here it's a short drive to ancient Palenque, the marvellous capital of Mayan ruler Pakal, whose tomb was discovered in the imposing Temple of the Inscriptions, against the backdrop of the dense green jungle. This and other remarkable monuments are visited before proceeding to Hotel Mision Park, or similar, for an overnight stay.

Day 11 (Sunday) UXMAL

Morning drive through the ever-green landscapes of the states of Chiapas and Tabasco, then north to the fortified colonial city of Campeche, whose wealth spurred the greed of European buccaneers during the 16th and 17th centuries, prompting its Spanish rulers to build an imposing network of protecting bulwarks.

Continue north into the Peninsula of Yucatan, for a visit to the unique Codz' Pop, or Temple of the Masks in pre-Hispanic Kabah, and finally reaching that jewel of Mayan architecture known as Uxmal, where the night is spent at the Hotel Mision Uxmal or similar. Palenque, Campeche and Uxmal, all three form part of UNESCO's World Heritage Sites' list.

Day 12 (Monday) MERIDA

The Governor's Palace, Sorcerer's Pyramid and the exceptional Nunnery Quadrangle are among Uxmal's outstanding monuments which will be visited this morning.

We then continue through the Peninsula's flatlands to the White City, Merida, Yucatan's friendly capital. A thorough visit is included and free time to roam on your own around the busy central square, the Plaza de Armas. Overnight at Hotel Residencial or similar.



Day 13 (Tuesday) CHICHEN-ITZÁ and THE CARIBBEAN

Drive past tiny Mayan villages and through the large sisal plantations to Chichen-Itzá, the largest and most impressive of all Mayan sites in the country, and certainly also on UNESCO's Heritage list. Visits to the Kukulcán Pyramid, Warrior's Temple, Hall of Thousand Columns and the Ball Game Court will help us to round-up our vision of the fascinating Maya culture.

A farewell Yucatecan luncheon in a lovely hacienda will mark the conclusion of this beautiful journey through Mexican lands, as we now continue eastward to country's Caribbean coast,

with its white-sand beaches and transparent, turquoise waters, where you start your beach holiday in the fashionable resort of Cancun.



Day 14 & 15 (Wednesday & Thursday)

Free time at your leisure in Cancun

Day 16 (Friday) CANCUN

Free time until your transfer to Cancun Airport for your flight to the UK, via Mexico City.

Day 17 (Saturday) LONDON

Arrive back in the UK.

NB. Programme details may be subject to change according to local conditions.

Prices from £2055 per person sharing twin/double room

Prices include:

- Return scheduled flights in economy class
- Airport taxes and charges are current prices
- Airport transfer on arrival and departure in Mexico
- 15 nights accommodation with daily breakfast
- All tours and excursions as described in the daily itinerary
- Transportation by air conditioned vehicle during the itinerary
- English speaking guide during the tours and excursions
- Entrance fees as applicable
- Dinner on Day 6
- Lunch on Day 13

Not included:

- Meals, except as specified in the daily itinerary
- Tips to guide, driver, or driver-guide.
- Beverages and extras, such as laundry and telephone calls.

Flight Options :

If you prefer you can obtain your own flights and just take our tour – please contact us for prices.

Booking

Contact us to reserve a place and then download our booking form and forward to us with your deposit.

Contact details

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