

HIGHLIGHTS OF COLONIAL MEXICO

High End

Mexico City –Morelia - Patzcuaro - Guanajuato— San Miguel Allende – Queretaro– Puebla - Oaxaca

Central Mexico: an array of majestic cities, jewels of the Spanish colonization era, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, a lively colorful world filled with history and culture.

The ancient capital of the Aztec Empire is omnipresent in today's thriving metropolis of Mexico City. Amid pre-columbian excavations, imposing colonial buildings, and ultramodern skyscrapers, a vibrant mestizo culture integrates the ancient with the modern world.

Rich minerals and Catholicism promoted the establishment of splendid cities dominated by sumptuous baroque churches. Morelia, the aristocrat of the cities built with quarry stones; Guanajuato, an explosion of color perched on hillsides; San Miguel Allende, a picturesque cobblestoned delight; Queretaro, monuments that tell stories; Puebla, treasures housed in tile and stone-covered buildings; Oaxaca, the perfect blend that creates a most captivating city. Archeological sites, a testimony to the origin of Mexican culture.

Reserved indigenous people in colorful dresses living in charming quaint villages maintain a simple lifestyle filled with tradition and produce magnificent crafts known worldwide. Exquisite Mexican cuisine culminates the experience.

ITINERARY

Day 1. (Thursday) Mexico City Independent arrivals

BIENVENIDOS A MEXICO

5:30 PM Gather at the hotel's scenic terrace to meet the Group Leader and fellow participants.

Located on the Zocalo, the terrace restaurant faces the Cathedral, the Presidential Palace and offers a view of the entire plaza.

Hotel Zocalo Central, Mexico City

Meals D

Day 2. (Friday) Mexico City

THE MAJESTIC ZOCALO

As the ancient center of the Aztec Empire and the first and most important of Spanish colonial marvels in the New World, Mexico City offers culture and history in a vibrant atmosphere. Begin to explore this fascinating city with a walking excursion of the historical zocalo, a UNESCO Site. Included in the visit is the Metropolitan Cathedral constructed with the stones of the Aztec's main pyramid, the National Palace with an explanation of the internationally famous Diego Riviera murals, and the recently excavated Templo Mayor archeological site where the base of Tenochtitlan's main pyramid has been unearthed.

Continue the walk along busy folkloric downtown streets lined by sumptuous colonial buildings to reach the Alameda and Bellas Artes, the Palace of Fine Arts. Facing Bellas Artes, is Correo Mayor, an eclectic emblematic Mexico City palace. Enter both sites. Depart the historical center of the city by private transportation to visit Coyoacan, a beautiful quaint colonial neighborhood of narrow streets, small plazas and a zocalo with cafes, museums, bookstores and art centers. Visit the Casa Azul, the home now museum of the famous artist Frida Kahlo. Free time to stroll along the quaint streets and enjoy the lively plaza. Dinner is not included in the program to allow participants to choose from the many available restaurants, from a simple fonda or a taqueria to delightful full service Mexican restaurants.

Hotel Zocalo Central, Zocalo, Mexico City

Meals B / L

Day 3. (Saturday) Mexico City

FLOATING GARDENS, AND WORLD CLASS MUSEUMS IN A VAST PARK

Depart by private transportation for Xocimilco. The Aztec city of Tenochtitlan was located on a lake in which the Mexicas, as the Aztecs called themselves, traveled by canoes and cultivated the land using chinampas, wooden trellises set on the water. Today, a small portion of the lake and of the agricultural system still remains. Known as Xocimilco, colorful “trajineras”, small boats decorated with flowers travel in the canals through the “floating gardens”. Boats with food and flower vendors and with mariachis ride alongside the visitors adding to the folkloric event. Continue to Chapultepec Park stopping on the way in the elegant Polanco neighborhood for lunch. The origin of Chapultepec Park, one of the largest and most beautiful urban parks in the world, dates to the Aztecs who planted the first Ahuehuete trees near a spring and built an aqueduct later destroyed by the Spanish. With its numerable museums, lakes, a zoo, an amusement park, an auditorium and more, the vast park is an important social and cultural destination both for tourists and for local people. Among the many attractions, the park houses Chapultepec Castle, currently the National History Museum, and the world famous Anthropology Museum. Follow the Group Leader through the most important rooms of both museums. Depart Chapultepec Park driving along majestic Reforma Boulevard where every roundabout exhibits a monument. Return to the hotel. Dinner is in a well known restaurant near the hotel.

Hotel Zocalo Central, Zocalo, Mexico City

Meals B/L/D

Day 4. (Sunday) Mexico City – Morelia

THE ARISTOCRAT COLONIAL CITY

Leave Mexico City behind with a view of the ultra-modern skyscrapers of Santa Fe neighborhood. Cross forested mountains while trying to sight the snow-covered tips of the volcanos that form the Trans-Mexican Volcano Belt. The city of Morelia, capitol of the state of Michoacan, defined the aristocrat of the colonial cities and declared a UNESCO Site, reflects perfect urban planning. Its wide avenues are lined with over 200 sumptuous palaces, a prominent Cathedral, and stately plazas. All the constructions are uniformly built with pinkish quarry stones further giving the city a formal unified appearance. Morelia is the site of an important music festival and an international film festival. Settle in the beautiful colonial centrally located hotel.

Begin to explore the city on foot. Walk along the stately avenues to admire the beauty of each and every palace, its construction and artwork. Begin the visit with the majestic Cathedral followed by the Government Palace displaying murals by Alfredo Zalce. Continue to the Church of Santa Rosa de Lima whose adjacent convent is today one of Latin America’s most prestigious music conservatory, especially known for its children choir, and admire the perfect symmetry of the central patio of Clavijero Palace, now a cultural center. Other visits may include the Regional Museum to learn the history of the Tarasco Indigenous people who rejected Spanish domination; the Museo del Dulce, the candy museum; and one of the homes of José Maria Morelos, a hero of the War of Independence who gave Morelia its name. After dinner in the charming hotel patio, enjoy a stroll on the main plaza to see the cathedral beautifully illuminated, and join the local people at cafés under the arches.

Hotel Posada La Soledad, Morelia

Meals B/L/D

Driving time 4 hrs

Day 5. (Monday) Morelia – Patzcuaro – Morelia

CHARMING PUREPECHA TOWNS AND VILLAGES

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Described as the “Soul of Mexico”, the state of Michoacan is home to the Purepecha Indigenous people. In pre-hispanic times, the Purepecha, called Tarascos by the Spanish, had developed a powerful culture able to reject Aztec domination. Today their population of over 100,000 still cling to ancient traditions and are responsible for the richness of Michoacan’s crafts, considered some of the finest in Mexico. Spend the day visiting indigenous villages and towns around Lake Patzcuaro. Tzintzuntzan, once the center of the Purepecha empire, houses a 16th Century Franciscan convent and a craft market. Delight on colorful weavings, intricate woodcarvings, original ceramics and more. Founded in the 1320’s by the Purepecha, the small quaint town of Patzcuaro is a colonial gem of simple adobe homes painted in red and white, tiled roofs and ancient churches and convents that reveal its indigenous - colonial mestizo roots. Walk through the plazas, the House of 11 Patios, up and down the cobblestone streets, see the Purepechas trading in the open air markets sometimes using the ancient bartering method, trace the history of the Purepechas in a mural painted by Juan O’ Gorman. Return to Morelia. Dinner is not included; choose from the many available restaurants.

Hotel Posada La Soledad, Morelia

Meals B/L

Driving time 2 hrs

Day 6. (Tuesday) Morelia – Guanajuato

THE QUEEN COLONIAL CITY NESTLED ON A HILL

Continue to explore Morelia in the morning. The city boasts a magnificent aqueduct, one of the world’s best preserved. Built with the pinkish quarry stone, the aqueduct is a mile long supported by 253 arches. Near the aqueduct, enter the brightly decorated Santuario de Guadalupe, an unforgettable Church. Time at leisure to relax or choose a site to visit before meeting for lunch.

Continue the circuit of Mexican colonial jewels to reach the queen city – Guanajuato, a UNESCO Site and the home of one of Mexico’s most important cultural festivals, El Cervantino. The discovery of rich silver veins in the 18th. Century promoted the construction of this magnificent city. The Valenciana mine was one of the richest silver finds in history. Nestled in the mountains, famous for its very narrow winding streets (callejones), stairways, small plazas (plazuelas), subterranean streets, and colorful buildings, Guanajuato reveals a unique charm. Settle in the hotel located in a quiet niche of the main plaza. The life of the city is at your doorstep. Relax on a bench to appreciate the immediate surroundings of the tree-shade plaza sided by the elaborate façade of Teatro Juarez. Just before sunset, walk a short distance to the funicular that climbs the hill to Pipila Statue and a spectacular viewpoint: the city fills a steep hillside, colorful and imposing as if it were a painting. The setting sun that illuminates the buildings gives it a magical appeal. Take the funicular back to the plaza for dinner at a local restaurant.

Traditional in Guanajuato is the callejoneada, whereby a group of performers dressed in costumes singing, dancing and narrating local legends lead a magical tour through narrow steep alleys and plazas of the city. If desired, join in the fun, or remain in the plaza where music groups are always present.

Hotel Edelmira, Guanajuato

Meals B/L/D

Driving time 3 hrs

Day 7. (Wednesday) Guanajuato

SERPENTINED STREETS, COLORFUL BUILDINGS, LIVELY PLAZAS

Explore the city on foot where every turn holds a new surprise. Facing the central plaza is Teatro Juarez, with a dominant Roman-inspired façade and a flamboyant interior based on an European design. Bright colorful homes and buildings line the streets, alleys and plazas. The alleys can become so narrow that a popular legend tells of a couple kissing from their balconies. Stop to admire the imposing white stone building of Guanajuato University fronted by a wide, 133 steps staircase, viewed from the bottom! Enter the Templo de la Compañía whose Churrigueresque exterior contrasts with the simpler spacious interior. The striking bright yellow Guanajuato Basilica, one of the city’s most notorious constructions, is centrally

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located on a hilltop facing a larger plaza; it is noticeable both in the daytime and is brightly lit at night. Inside, the jewel-incrusted image of Our Lady of Guanajuato had been hidden in Spain for 800 years before it was brought to Guanajuato as a token for the abundant silver that the local mines produced for Spain! The city's turbulent history is revealed in a guided visit to the Alhóndiga de Granaditas, a granary which was the site of the first successful battle in the War of Independence, now an interesting visual museum.

Enjoy free time to continue discovering the city on your own. Wonder through the maze of alleys, plazas, and markets, visit a museum of your choice, or find a café to witness the vibrant city life. Getting slightly lost is a Guanajuato must experience! Museums and shops abound. Diego Rivera was born in Guanajuato. His centrally located native home is now a small museum dedicated to the famous artist. Guanajuato has a large collection of mummified bodies which are exposed in a museum. Choose a restaurant for dinner on your own.

Hotel Edelmira, Guanajuato

Meals B/L

Day 8. (Thursday) Guanajuato - San Miguel Allende – Queretaro

THE ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE, PICTURESQUE CITY

Ex-mining tunnels are now underground roads that ease the traffic and allow sporadic views of the colorful back side of homes. Depart the city in the early morning driving through the tunnels. Several stops are made on the short transfer to Queretaro. Dolores Hidalgo is a historic town known as the cradle of Independence. It was in Dolores Hidalgo where Father Hidalgo, a priest known as "the Father of Mexico", gave the famous "grito", cry for freedom, on September 16, 1810 marking the beginning of the War of Independence from Spain. Continue to the Sanctuary of Atotonilco, a UNESCO Site, known as the Sistine Chapel of the Americas. Declared a national monument in 1926 and recently a UNESCO site, San Miguel Allende is a lovely picturesque town of cobblestone streets, colorful colonial buildings, and an imposing parish church, an icon of gothic revival architecture. Named in honor of General Allende, one of the fathers of Mexican Independence born in the city, San Miguel Allende gained international fame thanks to the establishment of Instituto Allende in the 1950s attracting foreigners to its Art and Spanish courses. Join a walking tour to see the center and to appreciate the variety of architectural styles represented in its buildings. Continue to Queretaro for the overnight.

Hotel Doña Urraca, Queretaro

Meals B/L/D

Driving time 2 ½ hrs

Day 9. (Friday) Queretaro

MONUMENTS, AQUEDUCT, DELIGHTFUL AMBIENCE

Rich in colonial monuments, charming walking streets, lively plazas, and a monumental aqueduct make Queretaro a UNESCO Site. The city played a major role throughout Mexican history since its founding in 1531. Admire the architecture, baroque and neo-classical, that tell the story of the city from the plotting of the Independence, the execution of Maximilian of Austria, the writing of the Mexican constitution and the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe. The Group Leader leads the walk through the most notorious edifices of the historical center, through manicured plazas and lively pedestrian streets. Near the hotel, enter San Augustin Temple and ex-monastery to awe at the magnificent cloister considered the most beautiful in America, while the baroque Temple of Santa Clara is one of the most opulent of New Spain. In contrast, Queretaro's Cathedral, the Temple of San Felipe Neri, displays a fusion of Baroque and Neo-classical. Father Miguel Hidalgo celebrated the first mass in this temple. Walk past the Teatro de la Republica, where in 1876 Maximilian was sentenced to death and in 1917 the present Constitution was signed. Currently the Government Palace, the Casa de la Regidora was the home of Josefa Ortíz de Dominguez, the initiator of Mexican Independence Movement. Free time to enjoy lunch in a restaurant of your choice and to explore on your own: visit a museum, stroll on the pedestrian walks, return to the hotel to rest. In the late afternoon, gather at the hotel lobby for a drive past the magnificent aqueduct, the symbol of the city with

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74 arches reaching a height of 100 ft., and to visit Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa temples and Cerro de la Campana, the famous spot where Maximilian was shot thus ending the French invasion in Mexico. Return to the hotel. Walk to a local restaurant for dinner.

Hotel Doña Urraca, Queretaro

Meals B/D

Day 10. (Saturday) Queretaro - Puebla

CITY OF THE GODS ARQUEOLOGICAL SITE

Today's drive crosses agricultural fields nicely divided by stone walls and rolling hills that encircle Mexico City to reach Puebla, Mexico's fourth largest city, important for its rich history, culture and economy. On the way, detour to Teotihuacan, one of Mexico's most noted archeological sites. Known as the City of the Gods, from the 1st. century BC up to the 5th century, the pre-Columbian city of Teotihuacan was the home of an important culture which influenced the succeeding civilizations of Mesoamerica and reached a population greater than Rome. Visit the site, walk along the Avenue of the Dead, visit the Temple of Quetzalcoatl and, if desired, climb the famous pyramids to the Sun and to the Moon. Continue to Puebla with a stop in Cholula before entering the city. Nuestra Señora de los Remedios Sanctuary was built on top of the remains of the Great Pyramid of Cholula, supposed to be the biggest that ever existed. Little remains of the pyramid, but the view of the many yellow domes of the sanctuary against the Popocatepetl volcano is a classic sight of Mexico. Continue to the beautiful church of Tonantzintla, then enter Puebla. Located near the Cathedral, the hotel was adapted in an ex-hacienda and displays antique furnishings and locally made "Talavera" ceramics. Known for its excellent Mexican food, meals in Puebla are a treat. Walk to a noted Puebla restaurant to dine on the famous mole, a delicious mestizo dish that originated in Puebla.

Hotel Quinta Real, Puebla

Meals B/L/D

Driving time 5 ½ hrs

Day 11. (Sunday) Puebla

TREASURES WITHIN TILES, BRICKS, AND STONE – COVERED BUILDINGS

Declared a UNESCO Site, quarry stone, red bricks and "Talavera" ceramic tiles – original from Puebla- adorn the over 2,000 registered buildings of the city's historical center, of which over 360 are churches and convents! On foot and by hop-on hop-off bus, spend the day exploring some of the most outstanding sites. The monumental Cathedral dominates the Central Plaza. A UNESCO site in itself, the lavishly gold trimmed Capilla del Rosario is considered one of the wonders of the world. And again, declared "Memory of the World" by the UNESCO, the 1646 Palafoxiana Library with over 4,500 antique books and manuscripts is a bibliographic jewel. The recently refurbished all-tiled kitchen of the Santa Rosa convent was the site where the cloistered nuns invented the mole. The Casa del Alfeñique gives an insight of a wealthy 18th century house and lifestyle. While walking, admire the ornate facades of practically all the buildings such as the famed talavera-tiled Casa de los Muñecos. Markets and the fun Candy Street liven the walk.

Step on the bus to get acquainted with highlights away from the city center. See the area of the forts where the Battle of Puebla on Cinco de Mayo was fought against the French. In a modern residential / cultural / business complex, the Museo Internacional del Barroco was recently inaugurated. The minimalist avant-garde building contrasts with the Baroque art which it displays. Video mappings, interactive screens and epoch music are important displays along with actual paintings. Returning to the hotel. Choose a restaurant for dinner on your own.

Hotel Quinta Real, Puebla

Meals B/L

Day 12. (Monday) Puebla – Oaxaca

MEXICO'S EXQUISITE CUISINE

Depart Puebla for an all morning drive crossing a mountainous area with generally sparse low vegetation to reach Oaxaca, the last destination of the journey. Oaxaca, one of Mexico's most captivating cities also

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declared a UNESCO Site, is the home of rich indigenous cultures, of magnificent baroque colonial buildings and churches, of a delicious mestizo cuisine, of excellent crafts, of traditional celebrations, of bustling markets, of archeological sites, of Benito Juarez. Walking along its ample streets and vast zocalo the city transmits peace and joy. Upon arrival, settle in the hotel and meet in the dining room for a Oaxacan lunch. Get acquainted with the city on a brief walk to the zocalo, ample and lively, sided by the baroque Cathedral, the Templo de la Soledad. The gastronomic experience is an important aspect in a visit to Oaxaca, best appreciated in a cooking class. Walk to a school which offers the complete experience beginning with a trip to the market, the preparation of a four-course meal, and the dinner itself. The hotel is located inside a historic colonial palace.

Hotel Quinta Real, Oaxaca
Driving time 5 hrs.

Meals B/L/D

Day 13. (Tuesday) Oaxaca

THE ZAPOTECAS AND SPLENDOR OF THE BAROQUE

Board the private bus for an excursion to Monte Alban, the social-political-economic center of the Zapotec civilization from 500 B.C. to 800 A.D, one of the earliest and most important of Mesoamerica. Located on a mountain top with grandiose vistas of the Oaxaca Valley, the vast archeological UNESCO site is impressive. Among the many discoveries during the excavations, splendid finely elaborated gold jewelry were found in the famed Tomb #7. Also of particular interest in Monte Alban are "los danzantes", the dancers, a series of over 300 rock carvings depicting figures in playful positions. In the valley below the archeological site, see craftsmen at work making the famedalebrije woodcarvings in San Antonio Arrazola. The colorful imaginative figures, sometimes monstrous, have reached world fame. Return to Oaxaca for lunch in a fonda-type informal restaurant to delight again on Oaxaca cuisine. See the wooden stoves and the clay "comal" where hand-made tortillas are cooked. With the help of the cook, try your skills at tortilla making! The afternoon is dedicated to the appreciation of the Santo Domingo de Guzman Temple and Cultural Center. Founded by the Dominicans in the 16th Century, Santo Domingo is the most splendid of Oaxaca's churches and one of Mexico's grandest. It boasts a finely carved baroque façade and an elaborately decorated interior completely covered with golden figurines and intricate designs carved in relief. The Museum of Oaxacan Cultures is located inside the monumental ex-convent adjacent to the church. The jewels found in Tomb #7 of Monte Alban, considered one of the most important findings in Mesoamerica, are exhibited in the museum. Be ready for the scheduled visit of the recently created beautifully arranged Jardín Etnobotánico which exhibits Oaxaca's local plant life and their importance for the indigenous cultures. Stroll back to the hotel at your own pace stopping for dinner at a restaurant of your choice. One of Mexico's most beautiful folkloric events, the Guelaguetza, takes place in Oaxaca every year in July. Gather at the hotel to walk to a local social hall where the festivity / dance show is re-enacted daily at 8:30 pm.

Hotel Quinta Real, Oaxaca

Meals B/L

Day 14. (Wednesday) Oaxaca

ARQUEOLOGY, CRAFTS AND AGAVE DRINKS

Again, an excursion to the city's outskirts reaches another important archeological site, Mitla. Meaning the place of the dead and of the underworld, Mitla was the religious and ceremonial center of the Zapotecs, contrasting with Monte Alban which was the social-economic center. It is the only pre-Columbian site adorned with fine geometric mosaic designs made with small polished stones fitted together. Traces of the original red plaster are visible. The Spanish built the church of San Pablo located in the site using material from Mitla ruins! Additional stops are made during the drive. In Santa Maria del Tule, see the 2,000 years old Moctezuma cypress; with a 46 ft diameter and a 190 ft circumference, it is said to be the widest tree in the world. In Teotitlan del Valle, see weavers at work. Enter the home of a family dedicated to the spinning

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and dying of the wool which is then used to weave rugs representing pre-Columbian designs or famous paintings!

On the return drive, stop in a Mezcaleria to taste Mezcal, an indigenous agave-based alcoholic beverage original from Oaxaca. Enjoy the ambiance as you learn the process of its production. Return to Oaxaca. Free time to explore and to get ready for the farewell dinner in a suggestive restaurant on the zocalo.

Hotel Quinta Real, Oaxaca

Meals B/L/D

Day 15. (Thursday) Oaxaca – Return

FAREWELL

The program ends in the morning. Breakfast is included. The Group Leader is available to help with transfers to the Oaxaca airport.

Meals B

SERVICES INCLUDED

- Private land transportation
- 14 nights hotel accommodations in 4, 5 star or boutique hotels
- All breakfasts and most meals (1 lunch and 5 dinners are on your own)
- All visits and excursions described in the itinerary
- Experienced Group Leader and local guides when appropriate
- Taxes and tips of included hotels and meals
- Andiamo's personalized attention

DATE Thursday September 19 to Thursday October 3, 2019

PRICE \$ 3,170.00 USD per person in Double Occupancy

\$ 1,350.00 USD Single Supplement

Price based on a minimum of 18 passengers

Maximum capacity is 24 passengers