



México City –Monarch Sanctuaries - Morelia - Patzcuaro - Guanajuato— San Miguel Allende – Querétaro  
November 22 to December 3, 2020

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 pink quarry stones; Guanajuato, an explosion of color perched on hillsides; San Miguel Allende, a picturesque cobblestoned delight; Queretaro, monuments that tell stories. Archaeological sites are 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. Mexico City Independent arrivals

### BIENVENIDOS A MEXICO

5:30 PM Gather at the hotel's scenic terrace restaurant to meet your expert local guide and fellow participants. Welcome dinner is at the restaurant. Located on the Zocalo, the terrace restaurant faces the Cathedral and the Presidential Palace offering a view of the entire plaza.

Hotel Zocalo Central, Mexico City

Meals D

Day 2. Mexico City

### THE MAJESTIC ZOCALO / WORLD CLASS MUSEUM IN A VAST PARK

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.

Board private transportation and continue to Chapultepec Park for lunch in a restaurant facing a small lake. 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 the world famous Anthropology Museum. Follow your guide through the most important rooms of the museum. Depart Chapultepec Park driving along majestic Reforma Boulevard where every roundabout exhibits a monument. Return to the hotel to freshen up. Dinner is in a well known restaurant near the hotel.

Hotel Zocalo Central, Mexico City

Meals B/L/D

### Day 3. Mexico City

#### FLOATING GARDENS / COYOACAN NEIGHBORHOOD

Depart by private transportation for Xocmilco. 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 Xocmilco. Colorful “trajineras”, small boats decorated with flowers, travel in the canals through the “floating gardens”. Boats with food and flower vendors and with “mariachis” musical ensembles ride alongside the visitors adding to the folkloric event.

Transfer to Coyoacan, a beautiful quaint colonial neighborhood of narrow streets and plazas filled with cafes, museums, bookstores and art centers. Free time to stroll along the quaint streets and enjoy the lively atmosphere. Lunch 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. Gather again with your guide in the main plaza and walk to Casa Azul, the home and museum of the famous artist Frida Kahlo.

Returning to the hotel, walk the last stretch to stroll in the Alameda Park, admire the imposing Palace of Fine Arts - Bellas Artes, and enter Correo Mayor, an eclectic emblematic Mexico City palace. Continue along busy folkloric streets lined by sumptuous colonial buildings to reach the hotel. Dinner is in a charming restaurant with a view of Templo Mayor.

Hotel Zocalo Central, Zocalo, Mexico City

Meals B/D

### Day 4. Mexico City

#### CITY OF THE GODS ARQUEOLOGICAL SITE /GUADALUPE SHRINE

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 1<sup>st</sup>. century BC up to the 5<sup>th</sup> 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.

After lunch, return to Mexico City with a stop at La Villa where the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe is located. The Virgin of Guadalupe is Mexico’s most venerated image and the Shrine is one of the world’s most important pilgrimage sites of Catholicism. Return to the hotel. The remainder of the afternoon is free to visit whatever you’d like. Dinner is on your own.

Hotel Zocalo Central, Mexico City

Meals B/L

## Day 5. Mexico City – Zitacuaro

### MONARCH BUTTERFLIES

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 Volcanic Belt. Every year Monarch Butterflies migrate 2500 miles from the United States and Canada to the Western Sierra Madre mountains in central Mexico, an amazing journey and a fascinating story of survival. Butterflies settle on oyamel fir trees (*Abies religiosa*) at elevations of 9,000 to 11,000 ft. in a particular ecosystem necessary for their survival. Visit one of the sanctuaries which serve as their winter refuge. Access to these remote areas is only by foot, the overwhelming sight of millions of butterflies filling the sky rewards the hike. Spend the night in a relaxing ranch. Before dinner, accompany the guide on a pleasant walk to see an ancient chapel or enjoy the gardens and the pool of the ranch.

Hotel Rancho San Cayetano, Zitacuaro

Meals B/L/D

Driving time 3 ½ hrs

## Day 6. Zitacuaro - Morelia

### THE ARISTOCRAT COLONIAL CITY

On the way to Morelia, visit the colorful ex - mining village of Angangueo and the magical town of Tlalpujahua perched on a hillside with an imposing church where affluent mining days left a rich heritage. Capital of the state of Michoacan and declared a UNESCO Site, the city of Morelia is defined as the aristocrat of the colonial cities reflecting 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 Regional Museum and to one of the homes of José Maria Morelos, a hero of the War of Independence who gave Morelia its name.

Dinner is not included; choose from the many available restaurants. 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

Driving time 2 ½ hrs

## Day 7. Morelia – Patzcuaro – Morelia

### CHARMING PUREPECHA TOWNS AND VILLAGES

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. Delight on colorful weavings, intricate woodcarvings, original ceramics and more.

Time stood still in the small picturesque Purepecha village of Santa Fe de la Laguna. See the traditionally dressed women draped in the blue-and-black “rebozos” (shawls) trading their goods in the simple market of the town plaza – fish still jumping. Then enter the home of a potter who revived ancient pottery making techniques and have blue corn tortillas right off the grill in a home kitchen.

Tzintzuntzan, once the center of the Purepecha empire, houses a 16<sup>th</sup> Century Franciscan convent and a craft market.

Founded in the 1320's by the Purepecha and eventually dominated by the Spanish, the small quaint town of Patzcuaro combines simple adobe tile- roofed homes painted red and white with ancient churches and convents that reveal the indigenous - colonial mestizo roots of the magical town. Walk through the plazas, the House of 11 Patios, up and down the cobblestone streets, trace the history of the Purepecha in a mural painted by Juan O' Gorman, and perhaps witness traditional Purepecha dances. Return to Morelia. Dinner is in the charming patio of the hotel.

Hotel Posada La Soledad, Morelia  
Driving time 2 hrs

Meals B/L/D

## Day 8. 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. Continue to Santa Rosa de Lima ex-convent which is today one of Latin America's most prestigious music conservatory especially known for its children choir, and lastly admire the perfect symmetry of the central patio of Clavijero Palace, now a cultural center. Free time to stroll through the craft market before lunch served in a tree-shaded plaza.

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 the city, particularly the Valenciana mine which 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. Gather with the guide to take a 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, a stunning site. Take the funicular back to the plaza for dinner at an elegant local restaurant.

Hotel Edelmira, Guanajuato  
Driving time 3 hrs

Meals B/L/D

## Day 9. 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 construction of Guanajuato University fronted by a wide, 133 steps staircase, viewed from the bottom! Walk past the Templo de la Compañía to see the Churrigueresque exterior. The striking bright yellow Guanajuato Basilica, one of the city's most notorious constructions, is centrally 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 a museum.

Enjoy free time for lunch and 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. Gather with your guide in the late afternoon for a guided visit of the imposing Teatro Juarez, followed by dinner in a restaurant on the plaza. Traditional in Guanajuato is the “callejoneada”, whereby a group of performers dressed in costumes lead a magical tour through narrow steep alleys and plazas of the city while singing, dancing and narrating local legends. If desired, join in the fun, or remain in the plaza where music groups are always present.

Hotel Edelmira, Guanajuato

Meals B/D

Day 10. Guanajuato - San Miguel Allende

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. On the road to San Miguel, visit the sites known as the Cradle of National Independence. In Atotonilco on September 16, 1810, Father Hidalgo, a priest who became “the father of Mexico”, took a banner depicting the Virgin of Guadalupe as a symbol of the nascent insurgent army, then marched to the Church of Dolores from where he gave the famous cry for freedom, now called the “Grito de Dolores”, that sparked the beginning of the War of Independence from Spain. September 16 is celebrated as Mexico’s Independence Day. Enter 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. Lunch is in a garden restaurant, then join a walking tour through the city center to appreciate the variety of architectural styles represented in its buildings, then continue to stroll on your own and choose a restaurant for dinner. Dinner is on your own.

Hotel Doña Urraca, San Miguel Allende

Meals B/L

Driving time 1 ½ hrs

Day 11. San Miguel Allende – Queretaro

MONUMENTS, AQUEDUCT, DELIGHTFUL AMBIENCE

Depart in the morning for Queretaro. 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 guide leads the walk through the most notorious edifices of the historical center, through manicured plazas and lively pedestrian streets. Near the hotel, enter Santa Cruz monastery, the site of many of the city’s events, from an Otomi legend to Maximilian’s prison cell. The monks also controlled the city’s water supply that reached the monastery from the grand aqueduct. With 75 arches and reaching a height of nearly 100 feet, it is today a symbol of the city. The baroque Temple of Santa Clara is one of the most opulent of New Spain, while the Santa Rosa de Viterbo Church boasts a stunning unique exterior that contrasts with the Baroque Neo-classical interior. Currently the Government Palace, the Casa de la Regidora was the home of Josefa Ortíz de Dominguez, the initiator of Mexican Independence Movement. San Augustin ex-monastery, now an Art Center, displays a magnificent cloister considered the most beautiful in the Americas.

Lunch is on your own. The Otomi Indigenous people of Queretaro are responsible for the creation of the colorful Mexican rag dolls with ribbon-decked hair. Gather at an Otomi Indigenous Craft Center, make your own doll while learning about the lifestyle of these indigenous people who come to the city from remote villages. The remainder of the afternoon is free. Enjoy the life of the city while resting on a bench in any of the plazas, enter a museum, or relax at the hotel by the pool. Farewell dinner is in an ex baroque mansion of a duchess, sumptuously decorated.

Hotel Doña Urraca, Queretaro  
Driving time 1 hrs

Meals B/D

Day 12. Queretaro - Return

## FAREWELL

The program ends in the morning. Breakfast is included. The guide is available to help with transfers to the Queretaro Airport.

Meals B

## SERVICES INCLUDED

- Private land transportation
- 11 nights hotel accommodations in 4, 5 star or boutique hotels
- All breakfasts and most meals
- All visits and excursions described in the itinerary
- Experienced Andiamo guide
- Taxes and tips of included hotels and meals
- Andiamo's personalized attention

DATE November 22 to December 3, 2020

PRICE \$ 2,530.00 USD per person in Double Occupancy  
\$ 1,020.00 USD Single Supplement

*Price based on a minimum of 14 participants.*

*Maximum is 24 participants*

## ENROLLMENTS

For additional information and enrollment please contact Andiamo

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## VALID PASSPORT MANDATORY

Passport must not expire within six months of travel date.

## PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

Participants must be in excellent health and physical condition. Butterfly sanctuaries are at altitudes of 9,000-10,000 ft requiring walks of up to two miles (30 min. to 2 hours) each way on rough paths with some steep climbs and downhill; El Rosario Monarch site has approximately 400 steps to climb. In the cities and archeological sites, walking on uneven cobblestone streets with uphill and high steps.

## PLEASE NOTE

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information featured on this program. Itineraries are based on our best information at this time. Circumstances beyond our control may require us to adjust itineraries or other details. We regret any inconvenience this may cause and appreciate your understanding.