

MEXICO - MEXICO IN DEPTH



INTRODUCTION

Our ultimate Mexican Road Trip! This 14-day itinerary takes in all of Southern Mexico's major highlights - and as the entire trip is done by road it gives you a fantastic perspective of the various changes in the geography and people of the region. You start in Mexico City on the dry desert plateau of AnÁihuac, travelling past volcanoes and over the Sierra Madre Mountain Range. Then you travel into Tuxtla and San Cristobal de Las Casas in the Chiapas, another mountainous area that has the highest proportion of indigenous Mexicans - decedents of the Mayans, many of who continue to keep Mayan beliefs and traditions alive to this day.

Then onwards to Palenque, a once grand Mayan city located in lush tropical rainforest. You continue to the old walled city of Campeche and the colonial city of Merida and finally you reach the rightly famous ruins of Chichen Itza, a highlight of the trip. After such a long journey you will get to enjoy a few days of rest and relaxation in the Caribbean resort town of Cancun.

ITINERARY

DAY 1: Mexico City – Arrive & Transfer to Hotel

On arrival, please make your way through to the Arrivals Hall where our representative will be waiting for you to transfer you to your hotel.



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DAY 1: Mexico City

Mexico City lies in the heart of Central Mexico and is the capital of Mexico and the oldest capital city in the Americas. It is one of the largest cities in the world with over 20 million inhabitants (in the greater metropolitan area) and has a rich history and colourful culture.



DAY 2: Mexico City – Half Day City Tour

This morning we will explore the magnificent Mexico City, built on top of the ruins of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan. You will be collected from your hotel at 8.40am approximately. *Operates only from Sunday to Friday. The tour begins at 9.15am and 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 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.



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DAY 3: Teotihuacan Pyramids and Guadalupe Shrine

This morning you will be collected from your hotel to visit the impressive archaeological site of Teotihuacan, located 50km northeast of Mexico City. On the way, stop at the "Plaza de las Tres Culturas", where three cultures converge: Aztec, Spanish, and contemporary Mexican. Continue to the Shrine 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. There is time to explore the New Basilica de Guadalupe (the Old Basilica, built in 1700, is slowly sinking) and to see Juan Diego's cloak. Drive for another hour to Teotihuacan, one of the most impressive cities of the ancient world, held sacred by the Aztecs. Explore its temples, palaces and pyramids, including the Quetzalpapalotl Palace, the Pyramid of the Moon, and the immense Pyramid of the Sun, ranked among the biggest in the world. Shrine of Guadalupe not available to visit on December 11th and 12th. On completion of your tour, return to Mexico City and you will be taken to your hotel. Please note this is a small group tour.



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DAY 4: Puebla via Cholula and Tonantzintla

We will drive to the World Heritage Site of Puebla, located 130km southeast of Mexico City. On the way we will stop in Tonantzintla, 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 centre, lined with churches and colonial mansions, many adorned with the beautiful hand-painted Talavera tiles (azulejos) for which Puebla is famous. The historic centre of Puebla is a UNESCO World Heritage Centre. The city was built in 1531 at the foot of the Popocatepetl volcano and it has preserved its great religious structures including the 16th/17th century cathedral and many fine buildings including the old archbishop's palace.



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DAY 5: Transfer from hotel to bus station

You will be collected from your hotel in Puebla and transferred to the bus station for your onward journey.



DAY 5: Puebla - Oaxaca Bus

Travel by bus from Puebla to Oaxaca. Arrival in Oaxaca in the afternoon and transfer to hotel.



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DAY 5: Transfer from Bus Station to Hotel

On arrival into Oaxaca, you will be met at the bus station and transferred to your hotel.



DAY 5: Oaxaca

DAY 6: Oaxaca – Half Day City Tour

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 Juarez – where Mexico’s great liberal reformer and president Benito Juarez lived. We will have time to browse the colourful local markets, and soak up the bustling atmosphere on the Zocalo (main square).



DAY 6: Transfer from hotel to bus station

You will be collected from your hotel in Oaxaca and transferred to the bus station.



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DAY 6: Bus Oaxaca to Tuxtla

Overnight bus journey from Oaxaca to Tuxtla.



DAY 6: Tuxtla Gutierrez Transfer Bus Station - Hotel

On arrival into Tuxtla you will be met at the bus station and transferred to your hotel in Tuxtla Gutierrez (room ready on arrival).



DAY 7: Tuxtla to San Cristobal de las Casas via Sumidero

We will pick you up in Tuxtla Gutierrez and drive you to Chiapas de corzo. In due time we will take you for a thrilling motorboat ride down the spectacular Sumidero Canyon, which has towering rock walls reaching up to 1000 metres high. The narrow, deep canyon, created by erosion by the Grijalva River which still runs through it, is surrounded by the Sumidero Canyon National Park. The walls of the canyon contain small caves and rock formations and there are waterfalls and springs in the canyon which is home to endangered and threatened species such as the Central American river turtle and the American crocodile. After this unforgettable experience you will continue on to picturesque San Cristóbal de Las Casas, a colonial town of white stucco walls, red-tile roofs and cobblestone streets.



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DAY 8: San Cristobal - Half Day City Tour

We will explore the colonial city centre of San Cristobal de las Casas on foot. 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. There will be 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 are descended 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 picturesque church and handicraft market. After the tour we return to San Cristobal where you will be dropped off at your hotel. Approximate duration: 5 hours.



DAY 9: San Cristobal to Palenque via Agua Azul

After breakfast, 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.



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DAY 10: Yaxchilan and Bonampak Tour

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. The murals depict Mayan life and mythology like no other found 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.



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DAY 11: Palenque Ruins and Transfer to Campeche

Today, you will visit one of the most beautiful and emblematic landmarks of the classical Mayan culture - the ruins of the city of Palenque. The city's highlights include the Temple of the Inscriptions, where an important burial chamber was discovered in the 1950s and the imposing architectural complex of El Palacio, one of the most beautiful constructions to be found in the entire environment of Maya culture. Following the tour of the archaeological site, travel from Palenque to Campeche. On arrival into Campeche you will be transferred to your hotel. The walled coastal colonial town of Campeche is a captivating port filled with naval history, Baroque Spanish architecture and ageing beauty. It was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1999.



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DAY 12: Private Campeche to Merida via Uxmal and Kabah

Discover the magic and beauty of the Mayan world on this excursion to two of Mexico's most beautiful Mayan cities, Uxmal and Kabah. After being collected from your hotel in Campeche, you will be taken to Uxmal and given a guided tour of the site, including a visit to the large pyramid, Del Adivino, which according to legend was built in just one night by a dwarf. Following the visit, you will be transported to the second largest Mayan site in the Puuc Region, Kabah. Here, you will be given a guided tour of the ruins including a visit to the Codz-Pop, which is the most well preserved and restored building of the site. Lunch is included in the tour. In the afternoon, you travel to Merida where you will be transferred to your hotel on arrival. Please note this is a private tour. Merida was founded in 1542, built on the site of the ancient Maya city T'ho, meaning "city of five hills" in reference to its pyramids. After the arrival of the Spanish, the ancient city's five main pyramids were destroyed and the carved stones were used widely in the construction of Merida's cathedral and other colonial buildings. Merida was built as a walled city and several of the old Spanish city gates remain. The city boasts the second-largest historic centre in Mexico, Mexico City's being larger and it gets its nickname, La Ciudad Blanca (The White City), from the predominance of white limestone that was used as a building material. It is the capital and largest city of the Mexican state of Yucatán as well as the largest city of the Yucatán Peninsula.



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DAY 13: Merida to Cancun via Chichen Itza

This morning you will be collected from your hotel for your onward road journey to Cancun with a visit enroute 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. 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. After lunch, continue the road journey to the white sandy beaches of Cancun. This journey will take approximately 2 and half hours. On arrival in Cancun, you will be taken to your hotel. Please note this is a small group tour.



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DAY 14: Free Day in Cancun

Today is a free day for you to enjoy the white sand beaches and pristine waters of Cancun. Cancun was once a small and remote fishing village and part of the ancient Mayan civilization. With its strategic location, it is a major gateway to the Mayan World and the Caribbean. With its miles of pristine white sand beaches and crystal clear turquoise waters and its proximity to legendary archaeological sites such as Tulum and Chichen Itza, Cancun is unequalled in its ability to offer cultural gems, natural beauty and infinite activities.



DAY 15: Transfer to the airport for onward destination

You will be collected from your hotel at the appropriate time and transferred to the airport for your onward flight.




INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation

Hotels

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Inclusions	Airport transfers Accommodation Tours in the itinerary Transport All breakfasts Other meals where stated Exclusions Visa fees (if applicable) Airport tax (if applicable) Personal expenses Optional activities not mentioned in itinerary Gratuities for staff/guides
Difficulty Rating	2 (considerable overland distances)
Single Surcharge	Contact us for more details.
Notes	Contact us for more details
Price Dependent upon	Season and availability

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SUSTAINABILITY

Chimu Adventures undertakes a number of sustainability measures within its operations including:

- 1) Only using local guides and office staff to both maximise local employment opportunities and minimise carbon footprints. Local guides also ensure you benefit from the intimate knowledge, passion and culture of the country you're visiting.
- 2) Where possible, using locally owned and operated boutique hotels to maximise the return to the local community.
- 3) Chimu's "Pass it on" programme has provided funding to hundreds of local community projects in Latin America. Our aim is to empower local communities, helping them to develop their own infrastructure for the future. Since 2006, we have been working with Kiva (a well-known Non-Governmental Organisation), providing hundreds of loans to local businesses all over South America.
- 4) In our pre tour information we provide a range of tips and advice on how to minimise your impact on both local environments and communities.
- 5) Chimu Adventures' offices also take a number of sustainability measures including carbon offsets for company vehicles and most staff travel. Chimu Adventure's internal processes are also structures to create a paperless office and to reduce waste. There are also internal programmes to help staff minimise their carbon footprint such as our staff bike purchase assistance plan which encourages office staff to commute to work via bicycle. Currently almost half of our office based staff commute to work via bicycle.