

MEXICO - CLASSIC MEXICO



INTRODUCTION

This tour is a suggested itinerary designed by our specialist team! Choose this itinerary or alter it to design your own Journey.

Explore the wonderful and fascinating country of Mexico with this 13 day highlights tour. Start in the thriving capital, visiting the surrounding pyramids and ruins before making your way South to Oaxaca. Continue to the famous sites of Palenque and Uxmal, where you will get a real taste of the Mayan culture, before ending in the famous beach 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 - Arrival

One of the world's largest metropolis, Mexico City is also the oldest urban centre in the Western Hemisphere, when it was called Tenochtitlan. Spanish conqueror Hernan Cortes and his men were awestruck by the sight of the imposing temples of the Aztecs. Reporting back to King Carlos V, Cortes was struggling to convey the majesty of what he saw. Imagine the King's surprise at learning that "one of the plazas is twice the size of that of Salamanca", and "the principal pyramid is taller than the tower of the cathedral at Seville", or that the stone and wood craftsmanship that adorned these monuments "could nowhere be bettered". Nowhere is Mexico's explosive past better depicted than at its central plaza, the Zocalo. Surrounded by some of the finest buildings of the colonial era, lie the remnants of one of the Aztecs' principal monuments, the Templo Mayor. Its mysterious shapes stand as a haunting tribute to the pre-Hispanic civilization that flourished here long ago.



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DAY 2: Half Day Mexico City Tour

This morning you will be collected from your hotel to 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. Visit the Metropolitan Cathedral, the biggest church in Latin America, and the Palacio Nacional (closed on Mondays), 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. On completion of your tour, you will be taken to your hotel. Please note this is a small group tour and only operates daily except Mondays.



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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.



DAY 4: 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.



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DAY 4: 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 5: 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.



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DAY 6: 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.



DAY 7: 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.



DAY 8: Palenque Ruins and Villahermosa

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 visit, you will be transferred to Villahermosa.



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DAY 9: Villahermosa City Tour & Transfer to Airport

We will drive along the wide boulevards and pleasant parks of the friendly, bustling city of Villahermosa, located on the Grijalva River. But the city's main attractions are its exceptional museums. We will visit the archaeological open-air museum Parque-Museo de La Venta. The Olmecs, often called the cultura madre (mother culture) because of their influence on later civilizations including the Maya, had their main site at La Venta, 117km outside of Villahermosa. When petroleum excavation threatened the La Venta site, the most significant finds, including three large stone Olmec heads, were moved to Villahermosa to found the Parque-Museo de La Venta. We continue to the Museo Regional de Antropologia, with fascinating exhibits from the Olmec, Maya, and other Mesoamerican cultures, including pottery, clay figurines, and jade carvings. We then visit the Museo de Historia, housed in a neo-Baroque blue-tiled building, which deals with the history of the state of Tabasco. We will then be transferred to Villahermosa airport.



DAY 9: Merida Transfer - Airport 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. He/she will be holding a sign with your name on it. Should you not be able to locate them, please refer to the front of your itinerary for emergency contact details of our representative office.



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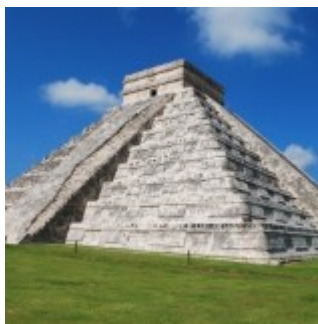
DAY 10: Uxmal and Kabah & the Puuc route

This morning you will be collected from your hotel to visit the archaeological site of Uxmal, a World Heritage Site, and located 80 km 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. We continue driving along the Puuc Route, a road that winds past the Mayan ruins of Labna, Xlapak and Sayil. These sites give us a great insight into the Puuc (Mayan name for ‘hills’) civilization. Our first stop is Labna, once a city inhabited by some 3000 Mayas. To support such numbers in these arid hills, water was collected in ‘chultunes’ (water cisterns), some of the original 60 chultunes still visible. We then drive to Xlapak. This site of 14 structures and 3 pyramids is less restored, so we can see what the sites looked like when they were first discovered. Our last stop is Sayil, home to the beautiful El Palacio, a huge three-tiered building which is a splendid example of the rich Puuc style of intricate stone mosaics. Enjoy lunch before returning to Merida. On completion of your tour, you will be taken to your hotel. Please note this is a private tour.



DAY 11: 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 12: 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 13: Transfer to the airport for onward destination

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INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation	Standard
Inclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guided Tours Airport transfers Accommodation Internal flights Transport All breakfasts Other meals where stated <p>Exclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visa fees (if applicable) Airport tax (if applicable) Personal expenses Optional activities not mentioned in itinerary Gratuities for staff/guides
Difficulty Rating	2 (high altitude)
Single Surcharge	Available upon request
Notes	Contact us for more details

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Price Dependent upon Season and availability

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 structured 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.

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