

# CENTRAL AMERICA MULTI COUNTRY - DAY OF THE DEAD



## TRIP CODE

MXTSDOD

## DEPARTURE

22/10/2017

## DURATION

14 Days

## LOCATIONS

Mexico



## INTRODUCTION

Discover the highlights of Mexico as you travel from the pristine beaches of Cancun to the vast sprawling capital, Mexico City. In between explore the incredible archaeological sites of Chichen Itza, Uxmal, Palenque, Monte Alban and Teotihuacan. Wander the streets of colonial gems such as Merida, Campeche, San Cristobal de las Casas and Oaxaca. Take a boat trip through the Sumidero Canyon and gaze at the turquoise waters of Agua Azul waterfalls. Immerse yourself further into Mexico's fascinating culture as you discover the rituals, symbols and ceremonies of the Day of the Dead festival.

## ITINERARY

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## DAY 1: Arrival Cancun

On arrival in Cancun, you will be met and transferred to your hotel. Cancun was once a small and remote fishing village, not much more than a sand bar clinging to Mexico’s Caribbean coast. In the 1970’s the government saw the appeal of the area’s shimmering clear turquoise waters and pristine white sand, largely untouched since the mysterious decline of the Mayan Empire around the 13th century. Today, Cancun is an exciting beach destination and gateway to the Mundo Maya, or Maya World. Its strategic location makes it 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.



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## DAY 2: Cancun - Free Day

Today is free for you to relax on the beaches or maybe take a tour to the beautiful ruins of Tulum or to nearby Isla Mujeres.



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### DAY 3: Chichen Itza, Merida

Departing Cancun, we travel to Merida via Chichen Itza. The archaeological site of Chichen Itza, one of the New 7 Wonders of the World, is the best restored of Yucatan's Mayan sites. Here we 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. We continue on to Merida where we spend the next 2 nights. 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. It makes a good base from which to explore the Mayan archaeological sites of Chichen-Itza and Uxmal. Pink flamingo sanctuaries and swimmable crystal-clear cenotes (sinkholes) are some of the natural attractions of the Yucatan Peninsula that are easily accessible from Merida.



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## DAY 4: Uxmal Archaeological Site, Merida

Today we explore the archaeological site of Uxmal, followed by a city tour of Merida. Uxmal, a World Heritage Site, is located 80km 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. Returning to Merida, we explore the historic city centre. We will visit the magnificent Cathedral of San Ildefonso, built with the stones of ancient Maya temples. Construction of this cathedral began in 1561, making it the oldest in Latin America. Inside we can find murals depicting the meeting between Francisco de Montejo - founder of Merida - and the Mayan King Tutl Xiu. We will visit Casa Montejo - the grandiose home of Francisco de Montejo, and the Governor's Palace - housing 27 huge murals by Don Fernando Castro Pacheco illustrating the somewhat violent history of Yucatan. From the beautiful tree-shaded Plaza Principal (Main Square) we can take pictures of the Cathedral, the Palacio Municipal (Town Hall), Casa Montejo and the Governor's Palace. Finally, we drive along the historic boulevard Paseo Montejo - fashioned after the Champs Elysees - with its stately European-style mansions, shops and quaint restaurants. Though a bustling city of about 700,000, Merida retains its colonial charm and has a laid-back tempo that delights visitors. There will also be an opportunity to take part in the Day of the Dead activities that are organised by the local council. Please contact Chimu for more information, which will be available nearer to departure.



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## DAY 5: To Campeche

This morning after breakfast, we depart Merida and head to Campeche. Campeche, located on the Gulf of Mexico, was the principal sea port on the Yucatán Peninsula from the 16th to the 18th century, and subsequently a major target of pirates such as Lorenzillo, Diego "The Mulatto" and William Parker. To protect the port from attacks, the Spanish Crown ordered the fortification of the city. Remnants of the original fortress that surrounded the entire town still stand, including ramparts and gates. The ramparts now house museums and the Land Gate is the site of a dramatic light and sound show that relives the pirate era. Today the walled coastal colonial town of Campeche is a captivating port filled with naval history, Baroque Spanish architecture and aging beauty. It was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1999. Again there will be an opportunity to take part in the Day of the Dead activities organised by Campeche’s local council. Please contact Chimu for more information, which will be available nearer to departure.



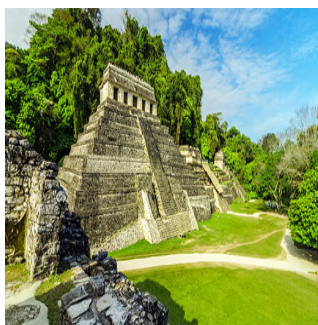
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### DAY 6: To Palenque

From Campeche we drive to Palenque where we explore the World Heritage Listed archaeological site. In the foothills of the Tumbala Mountains, the ancient Maya site of Palenque sits on a ledge overlooking the swampy plains that stretch northward all the way to the Gulf coast. Palenque was at its height between 500 and 700 A.D., when its influence extended throughout the basin of the Usumacinta River. The elegance and craftsmanship of the buildings, as well as the lightness of the sculpted reliefs with their Mayan mythological themes, attest to the creative genius of this civilisation. It was the flood plain of the Usumacinta River that most likely provided Palenque's inhabitants with the resources to construct their extraordinary city. Blessed with the highest average rainfall in Mexico, this fertile alluvial plain could have been successfully farmed with raised beds, and would have produced a harvest that not only could sustain a large workforce but would also have provided an abundance that could be traded along the Usumacinta. It seems that the gods were as enchanted with Palenque as are today's visitors. The archaeological site of Palenque, a World Heritage Site, is located 7km outside of the town of Palenque. The site, surrounded by rainforest where toucans and howler monkeys live, is made up of some 500 buildings spread over 15 sq. km, of which only a few have been excavated. We will explore the magnificent ruins, including the Temple of the Inscriptions - the tallest and stateliest of Palenque's buildings, the Temple of the Sun - crowned with a prominent roof comb, The Palace - with its maze of corridors and rooms, and many other beautiful buildings.



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### DAY 7: Agua Azul, San Cristobal de las Casas

After breakfast at the hotel, we depart for the beautiful town of San Cristobal de las Casas, stopping at Agua Azul waterfalls on the way. Agua Azul is a series of beautiful turquoise blue waterfalls that plunge into natural pools from a stretch of shallow canyons and cliffs. We continue to San Cristobal, a two-hour drive from Tuxtla Gutierrez. As we drive, the tropical heat and plants give way to cooler mountain air and pine forests that surround San Cristobal. San Cristobal de las Casas is a characteristically indigenous Chiapaneca town nestled in the heart of the jungle highlands. This Spanish colonial city is one of Mexico's most enamoured and photographed city centres. It has often been likened to Antigua City in Guatemala or even Cusco in Peru, but there is no doubt that San Cristobal has a flavour of its own. While the centre does have a distinct stately Spanish feel, the indigenous influence is arguably stronger. Amber, the translucent stone derived from fossilized coniferous resin, is plentiful in the region, and attractive shops in town display creative jewellery fashioned out of silver and the ancient rock.



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### DAY 8: San Cristobal de las Casas - Village Tour

Chiapas is home to several indigenous groups descended from the Maya, two of the largest being the Tzotzils and Tzeltals. Today we take a village tour, visiting the Indian villages of Chamula and Zinacantan. 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. We return to San Cristobal and the remainder of the day is free for you to explore at your leisure.



NO IMAGE  
AVAILABLE

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## DAY 9: Sumidero Canyon, Oaxaca

We depart San Cristobal after breakfast and drive to Chiapa de Corzo, located 70 kms west of San Cristobal, on the Grijalva River. Here we board a motorboat that will take us through the magnificent Sumidero Canyon, nearly 1km deep and 14km long, carved out by the Grijalva River over millions of years. As we navigate between towering sheer rock walls and alongside beautiful caves and waterfalls, we can see a variety of unusual plants, as well as many animals and birds, including monkeys, crocodiles, iguanas, herons, and kingfishers. Back in Chiapa de Corzo, we have time to walk through this pleasant colonial town, founded by the conquistador Diego de Mazariegos in 1528 around a giant ceiba tree sacred to the Indians. We can also admire the somewhat curious Moorish-style fountain, La Pila. We then transfer to Tuxtla Gutierrez for the flight to Oaxaca. Oaxaca, located in a valley surrounded by the Sierra Madre del Sur, was once the centre of the Mixtec and Zapotec civilizations. Today's Oaxaca is a combination of pre-conquest, colonial and modern influences. The early Zapotecs developed a great civilisation at nearby Monte Albán centuries before the birth of Christ. Two of Mexico's most famous presidents, Benito Juárez and Porfirio Diaz, were of Zapotec origin. After the Spanish conquered Oaxaca in 1533, the city quickly took on a Spanish flavour, with ornate buildings, churches, elegant archways, balconies, decorative grill work and charming plazas. Yet despite its colonial heritage, the city remains Indian at heart, due to the presence of a large indigenous population, wherein lies its charm. This afternoon we take a city tour of World Heritage Listed Oaxaca including the museum and the markets. We walk through the streets of the colonial city centre, taking in 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 of the Zocalo (Main Square).



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### DAY 10: Oaxaca - Monte Alban Archaeological Site

Today is spent visiting Monte Alban, another World Heritage Site, spectacularly situated on a mountain 400 metres above the Oaxaca Valley, a few kilometres west of Oaxaca. Monte Alban is the greatest of the Zapotec cities, and it came to dominate the cultural, religious and economic life of the region. It is also a triumph of engineering; the mountain top was levelled to allow for the creation of the ceremonial site. We will explore the Gran Plaza, the Ball Court, the Observatory, the Palace, and other beautiful structures. This evening we visit the Xoxocotlán Cemetery, just outside Oaxaca. In readiness for the Day of the Dead Festival, the graves are being cleaned and decorated with candles, flowers and favourite foods of loved ones. Entire families keep vigil during the night, watching over departed family members.



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### DAY 11: To Mexico City

This morning we take a flight from Oaxaca to Mexico City. One of the world's largest cities, Mexico City has over 20 million inhabitants. Originally called Tenochtitlan, it is the oldest urban centre in the Western Hemisphere, and it is the oldest capital city in the Americas. Spanish conqueror Hernan Cortes and his men were awestruck by the sight of the imposing temples of the Aztecs. Cortes reported back to King Carlos V 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". He also stated that the stone and wood craftsmanship that adorned these monuments "could nowhere be bettered". The central plaza, the Zocalo is surrounded by some of the finest buildings of the colonial era, along with the remnants of one of the Aztecs' principal monuments, the Templo Mayor. Its mysterious shape stands as a haunting tribute to the pre-Hispanic civilisation that flourished here long ago. We visit the Zocalo to see the ofrendas. An ofrenda is a collection of objects placed on a ritual altar during the Day of the Dead (Dia de Muertos) celebrations.



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## DAY 12: La Llorona Show, Xochimilco

This morning we visit the Dolores Olmedo Museum. Located in Xochimilco, in the southern part of Mexico City, the Dolores Olmedo Museum is housed in a rambling stone structure, originally dating back to the 16th century and formerly known as Hacienda La Noria. Born in 1908, socialite Dolores Olmedo Patiño resided here until her death in 2002. She was a patron of Rivera and she donated her art collection to the people of Mexico. The museum owns what is probably the most important Diego Rivera collection, with 144 works including watercolours and oils. The museum is surrounded by lush gardens, shaded by Mexican plant species and inhabited by peacocks and the enigmatic hairless Xoloiztcuintle dogs, a pre-Columbian breed. This evening we take a gondola-style boat to La Llorona Show, performed on Cuemanco Pier in Xochimilco Canal. The show has been running for more than 20 years, but it is only performed during October and November to coincide with the Day of the Dead celebrations. La Llorona is a magical and colourful show comprising contemporary music, pre-Hispanic dance and theatre, Nahuatl songs and fireworks.



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## DAY 13: Teotihuacan Archaeological Site

Today we take a tour of the archaeological site of Teotihuacan. Teotihuacan is one of the most impressive cities of the ancient world, held sacred by the Aztecs. We will explore its temples, palaces and pyramids, including the Quetzalpapalotl Palace Complex, the Temple of the Feathered Conches, the Pyramid of the Moon, and the immense Pyramid of the Sun, ranked among the largest in the world. Lunch is included at Gran Teocalli restaurant.



## DAY 14: Depart Mexico City

After breakfast at the hotel, you are free at leisure until your airport transfer in time for your onward flight.



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## INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation	Standard
Inclusions	<p>Price is based on a minimum of 8 people travelling</p> <p>Domestic flights included</p> <p>Transportation with air-conditioned vehicles</p> <p>Hotel accommodation according to the itinerary</p> <p>Daily breakfasts according to the itinerary</p> <p>All excursions include authorised professional driver guide and all entrance fees to archaeological sites and museums according to the itinerary</p> <p>24/7 telephone assistance</p> <p>Tips to hotel staff (only for groups)</p> <p>Porterage at airports (only for groups)</p> <p>Exclusions:</p> <p>International flights</p> <p>Domestic flights (unless otherwise stated in the quotation and/or the email body)</p> <p>Any transfers, visits, excursions, activities, hotels or services not specifically mentioned in the itinerary</p> <p>Any personal expenses or consumptions</p> <p>International travel insurance</p> <p>Tips to drivers and guides</p>
Difficulty Rating	1 (easy)
Single Surcharge	From US \$610. Please contact us for more details.
Notes	Contact us for more details
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

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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.

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