

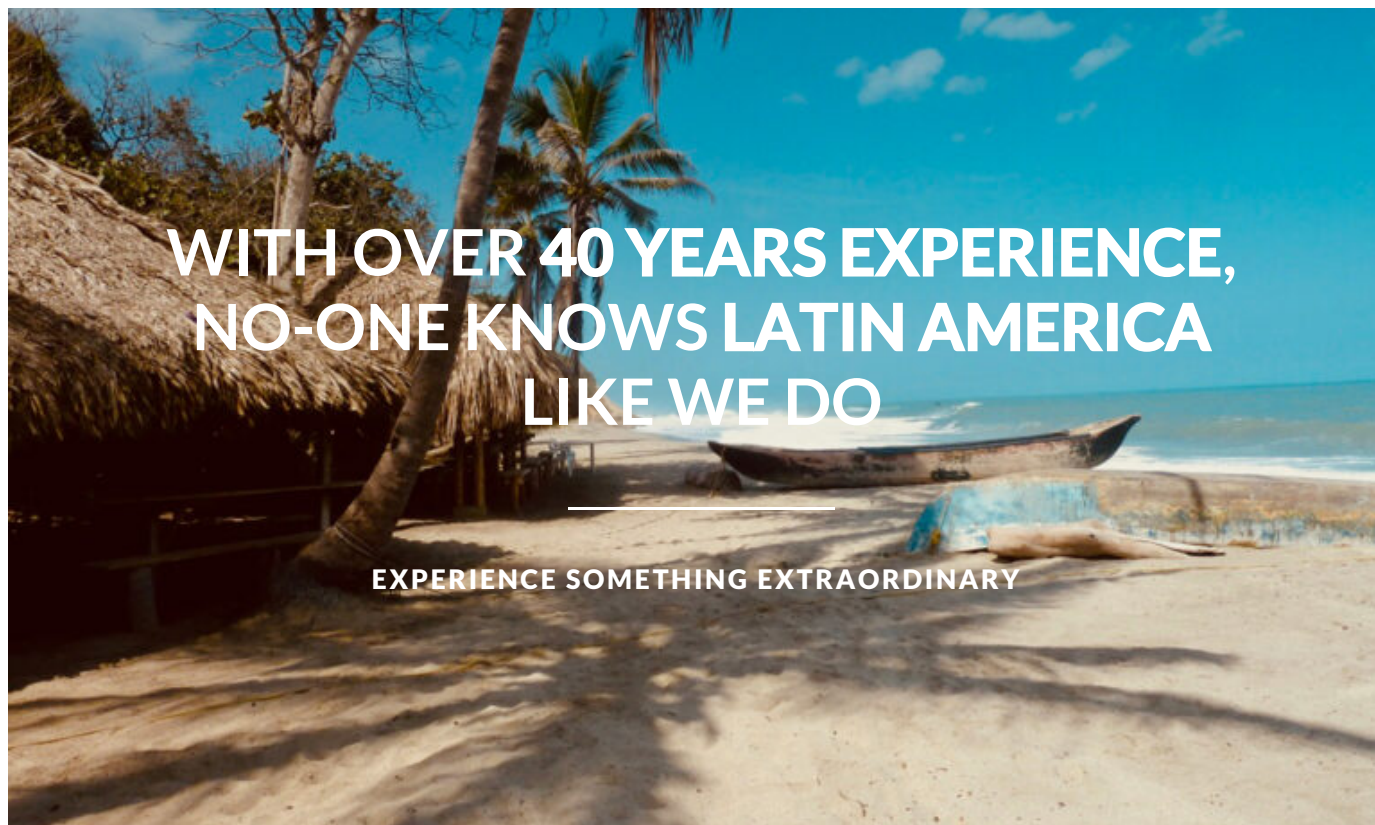


PRIVATE JOURNEYS WITH JOURNEY LATIN

EXPLORE AND RELAX MEXICO: SILVER CITIES TO PACIFIC COAST

12 days from **£3,820pp**

MEXICO / MEXICO CITY / COLONIAL AND SILVER TOWNS / SOUTHERN PACIFIC COAST



WHY US

We are the UK's No.1 specialist in travel to Latin America and have been creating award-winning holidays to every corner of the region for over four decades; we pride ourselves on being the most knowledgeable people there are when it comes to travel to Central and South America and passionate about it too.

OUR JOURNEY

As our name suggests, we are single-minded about Latin America. This is what sets us apart from other travel companies – and what allows us to offer you not just a holiday but the opportunity to experience something extraordinary on inspiring journeys throughout Mexico, Central and South America.

WE LOVE LATIN AMERICA

A passion for the region runs through all we do

All our Consultants have lived or travelled extensively in Latin America

Up-to-the-minute knowledge underpinned by 40 years' experience

TRAVEL WITH CONFIDENCE

Fully bonded and licensed

ATOL-protected

On your side when it matters

Book with confidence, knowing every penny is secure

THE REAL LATIN AMERICA

Our insider knowledge helps you go beyond the guidebooks

We hand-pick hotels with character and the most rewarding excursions

Let us show you the Latin America we know and love



OVERVIEW & OUTLINE ITINERARY

Mexico, with its huge landscapes, offers a great road trip, travelling in a car with personal driver round the highland colonial cities. Then hop by air down to the tropical Pacific coast.

DAY 1	Arrive in Mexico City. Transfer to your hotel.
DAY 2	Visit Frida Kahlo's home in arty Coyoacan and join the locals at Xochimilco.
DAY 3	At leisure in Mexico City
DAY 4	By road to San Miguel de Allende via Querétaro.
DAY 5	Walking tour of San Miguel de Allende.
DAY 6	Excursion to Guanajuato
DAY 7	Transfer to Mexico City and fly to Zihuatanejo on the Pacific Coast.
DAYS 8-11	At leisure on the beach. Optional activities and water sports.
DAY 12	Transfer to the airport, fly to Mexico City to connect with international flight home.

ITINERARY

Northwest of Mexico City are crumpled ranges of gnarled, humpy but starkly beautiful hills. Here, and in the bountiful valleys of the Bajío, Spanish colonists built fortunes from the mining of precious metals, especially silver, and a necklace of prosperous towns sprung up which share a heritage of baroque churches, leafy squares and pastel-washed houses.

Each has its own character: the stately university town of Guanajuato, built in a narrow gorge, is a centre for music, theatre and dance, its labyrinth of streets connected by tunnels. The impossibly picturesque cobbled streets of San Miguel de Allende overflow with character as well as galleries, boutiques and cafés. Querétaro is renowned for its impressive colonial aqueduct. These cities rarely feature on a first trip to Mexico, making our holiday ideal if it is your second visit and are keen to scratch a little deeper beneath the surface of this captivating country.

Begin with a couple days in Mexico City before our road trip takes you on the rugged highland colonial-cities loop. Then it's on by air to the tropical Pacific coast for beach time at Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo, established resorts with wonderful beaches and a lower profile than those along the Riviera Maya.

DAY 1

Arrive in Mexico City. Transfer to your hotel.

Your hotel is in the colonial heart, close to the central square. Mexico City, which was built on the site of Tenochtitlan, the capital of the Aztec Empire, and it lies at 2,250m above sea level. Vast, chaotic and vibrant, this sprawling megalopolis of more than 20 million people has a multitude of attractions. If you have time during your stay here, we suggest you visit the world-class Museum of Anthropology, which exhibits remarkable, well-displayed expositions of Aztec artefacts alongside items from other ancient civilisations. It's a fantastic introduction to the superb and sometimes grisly artistic achievements of Mexico's early inhabitants.

DAY 2

Visit Frida Kahlo's home in arty Coyoacan and join the locals at Xochimilco.

Today you have a guided day trip out to the fringes of the city and its most prestigious artist quarter.

Visit Coyoacán, which, before the city expanded to absorb it, was a colonial village. Coyoacán still has its own identity, with narrow streets, plazas, cafés and a lively arty atmosphere. Walk through the main plaza, churches and beautiful old buildings, including the house of conqueror Hernán Cortés. Visit Frida Kahlo's home, where the great artist was born, lived much of her life, and eventually died. The house is a treasure trove, not only of her paintings, but also of innumerable artefacts associated with her and her husband, famous muralist Diego Rivera.

Continue to the floating gardens of Xochimilco, which were once connected to the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán (now Mexico City) by a causeway, and where the Aztecs grew much of their food. Navigate the tranquil tree-lined canals on board a traditional 'trajinera', a flower-decked wooden punt, and will discover a little of how Aztec life was before the conquest. It's great fun on a Sunday, when locals flock here to let their hair down.

DAY 3

At leisure in Mexico City

You could spend a week or more in Mexico City without running out of things to see, do and experience.

Mexico City has evolved over the centuries into a modern day metropolis from its founding as the Aztec city of Tenochtitlán in the 14th century. Today is at leisure to explore as you wish. You're perfectly positioned to do so: your hotel overlooks the vast Zócalo, or main square, with its monumental Metropolitan Cathedral and the original Aztec remains of the Templo Mayor, which lay beneath the modern city before being uncovered during the construction of the Mexico City Metro. You can easily spend a couple of hours in the Zócalo alone.

Alternatively we can prearrange a tour with a local guide, combined with an outing to the megalithic archaeological site of Teotihuacán which dates from the time of Christ and was once one of the largest cities in the world. Teotihuacán is hugely influential in the historic narrative of modern Mexico and, although it had already been abandoned by the time of the Aztecs, even this great empire held it in awe. Soak up the history as you stroll along the imposing Avenue of the Dead, leading to the vast Pyramid of the Sun, and take the opportunity to climb its vertiginous, ancient steps for a panorama of the ruins and the surrounding countryside.

DAY 4

By road to San Miguel de Allende via Querétaro.

Your driver awaits. You'll be collected from your hotel and driven through the city outskirts on the bewildering road network in the busy capital and continue through the mountains to the first of a necklet of glorious colonial cities, each with a character of its own: Querétaro, where you will pause your journey to explore. You'll have your first taste of the graceful Spanish baroque architecture of these locations, with some monumental buildings situated on neat plazas. Later, continue to San Miguel de Allende and get settled in at your hacienda-style hotel, your base for the next 3 nights and ideally situated for wandering the picturesque streets of this baroque colonial jewel of Mexico's Bajío region.

DAY 5

Walking tour of San Miguel de Allende.

The delightful and arty colonial town of San Miguel de Allende is filled with opulent mansions and handsome churches, all connected by narrow, cobbled streets. It was once an important crossroads for mule trains, which carried silver and gold to the capital, Mexico City. You will visit the church La Parroquia, notable for its fantastic neo-gothic exterior; Casa del Mayorazgo, the town's most sumptuous mansion; Casa Allende, a historical museum in what was the birthplace of Independence hero Ignacio Allende; Templo de la Concepcion – a huge dome from 1891 towers over the gilded altar of this church; Oratorio de San Felipe Neri (a series of 33 oil paintings inside this church depict the life of the Florentine St. Philip Neri); and other notable buildings.

DAY 6

Excursion to Guanajuato

You'll be met by your guide at the hotel for the 1½ hr drive to Guanajuato, perhaps the grandest example of Mexico's silver cities. This lively university town with a strong artistic bent – there are several theatres, museums and galleries – is a former silver-mining town set in a narrow arid canyon. Its asymmetric colonial mansions, cobbled lanes and flower-decked plazas are simply delightful. The atmospheric city is built on the sides of the steep ravine: there isn't enough flat land for roads and much of the traffic is channelled along underground roads which follow the routes of the old mine galleries.

Guanajuato also has several interesting museums and some splendid colonial churches. Your hotel is on the edge of town. You have a full day to explore; the centre is best discovered on foot.

DAY 7

Transfer to Mexico City and fly to Zihuatanejo on the Pacific Coast.

Depart in the morning for the return leg to Mexico City from where a one hour flight takes you from the highlands to the tropics, and the resort of Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo on the Pacific coast. The hilly coastline is scalloped by pretty coves, each sheltering a shimmering beach. Settle into your hotel and enjoy the wonderful views.

DAYS 8-11

At leisure on the beach. Optional activities and water sports.

4 full days at leisure on Mexico's Pacific coast. Enjoy the best of both worlds here: whilst Ixtapa is a modern purpose-built resort town, Zihuatenejo next door – just 15 minutes away by taxi – retains lots of Mexican charm with winding cobbled streets to explore and a romantic beach promenade. With glorious white-sand beaches, the Pacific coastline at Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo attracts travellers seeking a slightly lower-key alternative to the Riviera Maya resorts on the Mexican Caribbean, where development has raced ahead since the 1990s.

Please note: _____ Please rest assured we have given full consideration to the FCDO advice when_____

DAY 12

Transfer to the airport, fly to Mexico City to connect with international flight home.

Short transfer to the airport at Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo to connect with your onward flight.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

Services of our team of experts in our London office

Services of Journey Latin America local representatives and guides

All land and air transport within Latin America

Accommodation as specified

Meals as specified

Excursions as specified, including entrance fees

INCLUDED EXCURSIONS

Coyoacan, Frida Kahlo's house and Xochimilco canals in Mexico City

Privately guided tours of San Miguel Allende, Queretaro and Guanajuato

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

Tips and gratuities

Meals other than specified

International flights to Latin America

Airport taxes, when not included in the ticket

Optional excursions

ESSENTIALS

TRANSPORT

1 domestic flight (Mexico City-Zihuatanejo). Return road transfers between Mexico City and San Miguel de Allende. Airport transfers as described.

ACCOMMODATION

At all levels, we prefer smaller hotels with some local character, whether one of a local chain or independent. On the odd occasion where we use an international chain, we choose properties with some historic or unique features.

In Mexico City and San Miguel de Allende we have chosen properties oozing with Mexican character and an historic context in keeping with their setting. In Ixtapa, Las Brisas is one of the resort's original hotels and has a wide range of facilities.

MEALS

Breakfast daily.

GUIDES

We carefully select our local partners, some of whom we have worked with for over 35 years. Their English-speaking guides understand the expectations of our clients very well, and are consistently singled out for praise by clients on their return.

SUMMARY OF NIGHTS

12 days, 11 nights: Mexico City 3; San Miguel de Allende 3, Ixtapa 5.

CURRENCY

The unit of currency in Mexico is the Mexican peso.

HOW TO TAKE IT

Cash machines are available in all major cities and towns, and so taking a debit or credit card with a PIN number is the most convenient way of withdrawing money while on your trip, and in most shops and restaurants you can also pay by card. However, since cards can get lost, damaged, withheld or blocked, you should not rely exclusively on a card to access funds. Not all petrol stations accept cards.

We recommend that additionally you take a reasonable quantity of US dollars cash (no more than is covered by your insurance), which you can exchange into local currency. Dollar bills should be in good condition, soiled or torn bills may be refused. You can take sterling, but the exchange rate is not always competitive or even available, restricting the number of places where you can change money.

DAILY SPEND

It is very difficult to give a guideline for essential expenses but a budget of around US\$45 per day should cover the cost of meals not included in the holiday itinerary, drinks and the odd souvenir. Eat at the best restaurants and you will pay considerably more.

TIPPING

Tips are welcomed and local guides often rely on their tip as a significant proportion of their income.

Most service industry workers will expect a tip of some kind and so it is useful to have spare change for hotel porters, taxi drivers and the like. It is common to leave 10 – 12% in restaurants.

Tipping guidelines can be found in our Briefing Dossier.

INSURANCE AND DOCUMENTS

Travel insurance is essential.

Details of our recommended policy can be found on our Travel Insurance page.

AIRPORT TAXES

If you have purchased your flights through Journey Latin America, the international departure tax is usually included in the ticket.

VISAS

Holders of a full British passport do not require a visa, although passports must be valid for at least 6 months after the trip begins. Anyone with a different nationality should enquire with us or check with the relevant consulate.

If flying to the US, or via the US you will need to fill in an online ESTA (visa waiver) application.

TRIP SUITABILITY

There are no long days of uninterrupted travel on this trip. If you have a disability we should be aware of, please contact us.

In the months of June to August the weather is extremely hot and humid. July to November there are chances of tropical storms or hurricanes hitting the region.

CLIMATE

The highland colonial towns have a pleasant sunny climate all year round; with temperatures in the mid 20s°C. Most rain falls from May to August.

CLOTHING AND SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

For day-to-day wear you should take loose-fitting, breathable clothes. Comfortable shoes are important and sandals are useful. A sun hat, sun block and sunglasses are necessary, and you should take a light fleece for cool nights and a breathable/waterproof outer layer, as well as swimwear /beachwear, a towel, insect repellent and a torch. If you plan to go to good restaurants or out for evening entertainment, you might bring something a bit smarter as well (although formal attire will not be required).

Please get in touch with the office before departure if you have any doubts.

VACCINATIONS

Preventative vaccinations are recommended against the following: tetanus; hepatitis A. You should consult your GP for specific requirements, including advice on yellow fever and malaria tablets.

You can also find helpful information on the Masta Travel Health website.

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GET IN TOUCH WITH US...

Our friendly, knowledgeable team of travel experts are always happy to chat about holiday ideas and share helpful advice. Give us a call today and begin planning your perfect trip to Latin America.

GIVE US A CALL

We'd love to chat

0208 747 8315

OPENING HOURS

Monday – Friday: 9am – 6pm

Saturday & Sunday: Closed

SEND US AN EMAIL

tours@journeylatinamerica.com