



PRIVATE JOURNEYS WITH JOURNEY LATIN

ACTIVE MEXICO: CAMPING AND KAYAKING IN BAJA CALIFORNIA

11 days from £3,400pp

MEXICO / MEXICO CITY / BAJA CALIFORNIA

WITH OVER 40 YEARS EXPERIENCE, NO-ONE KNOWS LATIN AMERICA LIKE WE DO

EXPERIENCE SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY

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

A sea-kayaking holiday in sheltered Gulf of Cortés, Baja California, circumnavigating Espíritu Santo Island. Closely guided, it's a camping-based group trip for beginners and experienced paddlers alike.

DAY 1	Arrive in Mexico City. Transfer to hotel in the city centre.
DAY 2	Full day guided tour of Mexico City and Teotihuacan Pyramids.
DAY 3	Fly to La Paz, Baja California,
DAY 4	Speedboat to Espíritu Santo Island for kayak expedition around the island.
DAYS 5-9	Explore the coastline by kayak: beaches, sea-lion colony, caves.
DAY 10	Return to La Paz.
DAY 11	Transfer to La Paz airport.

ITINERARY

The sea-kayaking group expedition around Espíritu Santo Island in Baja California, the ribbon peninsula of desert running down Mexico's Pacific coast, is one of our favourite Latin American active adventures. The 8-day guided trip circumnavigates the island. You pull in at a series of rocky bays where the beaches are sugar white and the sea varies from cobalt to jade.

It's a desert environment: the sun shines almost all the time, and the uninhabited hinterland is of rugged copper-red canyons, mangroves or scrubby woodland. The kayaking is accessible to most: normally there is no more than 2-3 hours paddling per outing; at landing sites there are also hikes and nature walks. Each afternoon, you beach, and having erected the lightweight tents, you can sit back and relax over a cocktail to watch the sunset: vivid amber, scarlet and purple streaks the sky. All meals are provided and are very good, prepared with fish, meat and fresh salads or vegetables.

DAY 1

Arrive in Mexico City. Transfer to hotel in the city centre.

Transfer to your hotel in the historic centre of the city. Mexico City, known by the local people simply as 'DF' (Distrito Federal), 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.

DAY 2

Full day guided tour of Mexico City and Teotihuacan Pyramids.

Begin with a guided tour of Mexico City in the morning, when the historical centre is at its least frenetic. Your visit includes the area around the main square (zócalo) surrounded by prestigious buildings such as the National Palace (with murals by Diego Rivera) and the sixteenth-century cathedral. Continue to the archaeological site of Teotihuacan, 50km away.

This huge, impressive pre-Columbian city was built on a drained lake floor. Teotihuacan was once one of the largest cities in the world. It 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 3

Fly to La Paz, Baja California,

Transfer to the airport and fly to the port city of La Paz (2hrs), on the coast of the Sea of Cortés, Baja California. Your group meets up at the hotel in La Paz – usually a pleasant mid-range property with pool in a small marina at the end of the malecón (promenade) – for a briefing in the evening.

Most clients are American or Canadian, outdoor types but not extremely so, couples, friends and singles, ages 20s to 70s. The group is usually composed of around 10 participants, there are 2 guides, a cook and an assistant. The kayaking adventure is conducted in English: your guides are fluent.

DAY 4

Speedboat to Espíritu Santo Island for kayak expedition around the island.

It's an early departure by speedboat for the island. You take your own sleeping bag, clothing and toiletries (it can get cold at night, we suggest thermals and 3-season bag), windproof jacket, hat and sun block. Other equipment such as mats and wet suits can be provided. The rest of your gear and your valuables can be stored at the hotel. Cameras and binoculars can be taken safely.

Where you actually land, and the specific itinerary for the next few days depend on the weather. If it is too windy to embark, you do a hike instead, so you have to have a flexible outlook, and realise that conditions dictate what happens.

Before you go out kayaking there is a brief training session on how to use the boat (many participants have little or no experience) and a "wet exit" practice where you throw yourself out into the sea and have to escape from the confines of your craft (ie release the "skirt" which protects you in the kayak).

DAYS 5-9

Explore the coastline by kayak: beaches, sea-lion colony, caves.

Proceed to circumnavigate the beautiful, rugged, uninhabited island. The guides watch over everyone's kayaking progress, though not necessarily at front and back, although the group always waits for the slower kayakers. You aren't allowed too close to the cliffs or to launch out to sea. There are regular breaks in sheltered spots for regrouping. If the wind is behind you it is a fairly easy, Hawaii 5 O experience. Kayaking into the wind is another story!

Every day, there is a stop for lunch at a beach. Once it is clear where you are going to stop (guided by weather and kayaking progress), the launch will go on ahead, set up a kitchen and produce a lovely fresh meal. The same thing happens in the late afternoon: when you arrive at the overnight stop, you put up your tent and have a "happy hour" cocktail, a different mix every day! There are chairs provided where you can sit to enjoy the sunset and chat. Wine is served with dinner. People usually retire by 9pm (it gets dark by 6.30).

Also included is a swimming with sea-lions experience at the north end of the island. Here there is a bay like a mini Galápagos Islands: a cacophony of calls from the sea-lions, gulls, frigate birds, blue footed boobies, cormorants and pelicans. The sea-lions are very playful: you snorkel with them (snorkels and wet suits can be hired) while the jostle with each other but sometimes come up and give you a friendly nibble too. The sea is heaving with fish, massive shoals of sardines, angel fish and many other varieties swim around the live coral. Highly recommended!

DAY 10

Return to La Paz.

After finishing your kayaking in the morning you'll transfer to your accommodation for the evening.

DAY 11

Transfer to La Paz airport.

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

Full-day guided tour of Mexico City and Teotihuacan Pyramids

Kayaking lesson

Full-day kayaking excursion exploring the coastline

Trek up a canyon and then kayak over to Partida Island

Full-day excursion to visit a sea lion sanctuary

Full-day kayaking up the east coast of Espiritu Santo Island

Full-day kayaking along the coastline

Paddle through caves to complete circumnavigation of Espiritu Santo

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

Two flights (2hrs); 2 boat journeys (6hrs).

ACCOMMODATION

The hotel in Mexico City is a well-located and good quality Holiday Inn, with all the facilities you'd expect from this superior chain of no-nonsense business and leisure hotels. In La Paz, the principal hotel used is a small attractive mid-range property located on a small marina. Occasionally a homely Swiss-run guest house in town is used.

6 nights are spent on the island camping. The tents are lightweight and spacious – you can just about stand up in them. Singles and doubles are available. After a demonstration on the first night, you erect your own tent, whilst dinner is being prepared. In the rare instance that they blow over in a gale, the crew carry spare poles.

N.B. Sleeping mats are provided but not sleeping bags – you need to hire one in advance. Our tip: bring an inflatable pillow.

MEALS

Breakfast daily; full board days 3-10.

GUIDES

We carefully select our local partners, some of whom we have worked with for over 25 years. Their English-speaking guides understand the expectations of our clients very well, and are consistently singled out for praise by the latter on their return.

SUMMARY OF NIGHTS

11 days, 10 nights: Mexico City 2; Camping Espíritu Santo Island 6; La Paz 2.

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. 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, and possibly some travellers' cheques (American Express are the most widely accepted), though these are gradually falling out of use. 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\$40 (for the days when you are not on the kayaking trip) will cover food, drinks and the odd souvenir. Eat at the best restaurants and you will pay more.

TIPPING

Tips are expected and local guides often rely on their tip as a significant proportion of their income. We recommend approximately \$10 per person for a half day and \$20 for a full day for guides and half that for drivers. For the guides accompanying you on the kayaking trip we suggest \$50-\$75 per person and \$30 for the guide.

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

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

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 your online ESTA application.

AIRPORT TAXES

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

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Whilst the excursions in Mexico City are suitable for all, the 7-night kayak and camping adventure requires participants to have a good level of fitness. Previous experience is not necessary; a training session is given. The kayaking is not strenuous and slower paddlers are well looked-after, but you should bear in mind there are between 2 and 6 hours of kayaking a day, depending on the weather and abilities of the group. There is no upper age limit. The English-speaking trip mostly attracts outdoor aficionados from Canada, the USA and Britain.

This trip is a great option for singles, as groups are usually very friendly and there is a great atmosphere of bonhomie. Single travellers can opt for their own kayak and tent, or agree to share.

CLIMATE

In Mexico City and the mountains towns the climate is temperate all year round and, because of the altitude it never gets too hot. Temperatures can drop to freezing in Mexico City over the winter months.

Espíritu Santo enjoys 300-360 days of sunshine a year, year round temperatures in the 20's and 30's C tempered by sea breezes, and little rain. The sea is colder on the Pacific side because of cold currents.

It can be windy, especially in December-February. If it is too windy safely to kayak, alternative on-land activities will be programmed such as hikes or nature walks.

CLOTHING AND SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Bring practical, comfortable clothing and a light-weight jumper. If you plan to eat in smart restaurants in Mexico City, although clothing is not formal (no need for jacket and tie), something quite smart would be appropriate.

For the kayaking light and protective clothing, a sun hat and practical sandals (they will get wet) are advised. Remember a sleeping bag, unless you prefer to hire one, and toiletries. For both the evenings and nights, bring warm and comfortable clothing; a light fleece jacket. Trousers, skirt or shorts made from light, quick-drying synthetic materials work well.

Strong, comfortable shoes or trainers are advisable and you should bring insect repellent, sun block, sun glasses, goggles and swim wear.

Please get in touch with the office before departure if you have any doubts. Good equipment is very important and hard to come by in Mexico.

VACCINATIONS

Preventative vaccinations are recommended against the following; typhoid; polio; tetanus; hepatitis A. For specific requirements you must consult your GP.

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

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