

Byroads
Inspiring Escorted Journeys

MEXICO & THE YUCATAN

An enticing blend of Mesoamerican cultures & Spanish traditions

15 DAYS - STARTING MEXICO CITY 1 FEBRUARY 2019





MEXICO & THE YUCATAN

Trip Outline

Long before the Spanish Conquistador Hernan Cortes stepped foot in Mexico in 1519, the region was populated by complex indigenous civilisations including the Olmec, Maya, Teotihuacan, Toltec and Aztec Empires. These Mesoamerican civilisations had developed a form of writing so that Mexico's written history stretches back hundreds of years before the Spanish arrived. Following the conquest of the Aztec Empire in 1521 the area was incorporated into the Empire of Spain, with Mexico City the centre of colonial rule.

Mexico today is a wonderful blend of these ancient pre-Colombian cultures with the more recent Spanish traditions. As you travel this fascinating country you will encounter stunning colonial cities adorned with churches as well as spectacular archaeological sites and their enormous pyramids. There is a rich indigenous culture waiting to be discovered with a lively music, festival and arts scene, a sophisticated cuisine and stunning natural beauty from the dry deserts in the north to deep forested jungles and palm lined beaches in the south.

Starting in Mexico City we tour the colonial sites of this ancient Mexica (Aztec) capital before heading to the giant pyramids at nearby Teotihuacan. On our way to Taxco we stop at a museum dedicated to the artist Frida Kahlo and take a boat ride through the narrow canals at Xochimilco. Taxco and Puebla are two of Mexico's best preserved colonial towns whilst colourful Oaxaca is well known for its handicrafts and the ancient ceremonial Zapotec site of Monte Alban. Flying to Tuxtla we then visit the impressive Sumidero Canyon and continue to San Cristobal de las Casas where we enjoy the rich indigenous culture of the city and its nearby villages.

Next come the great Mayan archaeological sites of Palenque and Uxmal and following a visit to Campeche and Merida we arrive to explore the world famous Mayan archaeological complex at Chichen Itza.

Finally we arrive at the stunning beaches at Playa del Carmen where, having seen the Mayan cliff top ruins at Tulum our holiday in Mexico and the Yucatan Peninsula comes to an end.

Tour Host – Steve Mortimer



Steve Mortimer heads up Byroads Travel and will be your host on this tour. Steve has nearly 30 years in the travel industry and has travelled to well over 100 countries. He has worked with a number of well-known Australian adventure travel companies including 13 years as a Product Manager and Operations Director for Peregrine Adventures.

Most recently he has been involved in researching and developing holidays in several different regions of the world, including Latin America and the Middle East where he has lived.

Steve likes nothing better than getting out and about with like-minded travellers, sharing his knowledge and introducing participants to some of the world's most interesting places, peoples and cultures. He has been a regular visitor to Mexico over many years and the colour and diversity of the Yucatan peninsula in particular keeps him coming back for more.

With our itinerary you can be confident you'll visit all the 'must see' attractions – and much more, however there are some days when you'll have time to wander and make some of your own discoveries. Throughout the tour local guides are employed to provide a wealth of background information and share their extensive local knowledge.





ITINERARY STARTS IN MEXICO CITY

FRI 1 FEB: MEXICO CITY – Upon arrival you are transferred to your hotel and in the evening we will have a short meeting. Pre-tour accommodation is available (see back page for details).

SAT 2 FEB: MEXICO CITY – Today we explore the Zocalo, the largest city square in the Americas which includes the Palacio Nacional, the Cathedral and the Templo Mayor, the outer ruins of the ceremonial centre of the Mexica (Aztec) capital. Following a visit to the Anthropology Museum we end the day with a visit to the museum devoted to Frida Kahlo, Mexico's most celebrated artist. (B)

SUN 3 FEB: TEOTIHUACAN, MEXICO CITY – We travel to the outskirts of the city firstly to visit the Basilica de Guadalupe, the spiritual home to Mexico's patroness, the Virgin of Guadalupe. Next to the magnificent site of Teotihuacan where we walk along the Avenue of the Dead to admire the enormous Pyramids of the Sun and Moon. This was once a city of 220,000 inhabitants. (B)

MON 4 FEB: TAXCO – This morning we visit Xochimilco known as the 'Venice of Mexico' where we take colourful 'trajineras' on the small canals before driving on to Taxco for our overnight stay. Taxco village is beautifully draped over a mountain side at 1800 metres. The narrow, winding, streets with their colourful houses make it a great place to stroll. We explore the town and its fabulous silver shops. (B)

TUE 5 FEB: TONANTZINLA, PUEBLA – We drive on to Puebla passing by the magnificent Popocatepetl Volcano. Along the way we stop off at the 18th century Templo de Santa Prisca, a beautiful 'churrigueresque' style church. Puebla is known as the 'city of angels'. In the afternoon we tour the city with its huge churches and convents and many colonial mansions and you will want to sample some of the city's great gastronomy such as 'mole poblano' a rich dark-red sauce made with dried chillies and chocolate and normally served with poultry. (B)

WED 6 FEB: PUEBLA-MONTE ALBAN-OAXACA – Today we drive through the beautiful Sierra Madre Mountains to Oaxaca, 4 hours away. In the afternoon we visit the Zapotec ruins at nearby Monte Alban where there are wonderful views and then return to Oaxaca for the evening. (B)

THU 7 FEB: OAXACA – Nowadays Oaxaca is a huge open-air museum, with colourful colonial mansions and impressive churches. It's famous for its 'artesanía' and we enjoy its wonderful markets and visit workshops specialising in 'barro negro' pottery and woodcarvings (B)

FRI 8 FEB: SUMIDERO CANYON, SAN CRISTOBAL – To avoid a long drive we fly to Tuxtla Gutierrez where we visit the stunning Sumidero Canyon and take a 2 hours boat ride on the Grijalva River with the canyon walls towering over 750 metres above us. It's a breath-taking sight. We then continue onto the village of San Cristobal de las Casas known for its strong indigenous flavour. (B)

SAT 9 FEB: SAN CRISTOBAL – Today we visit the fascinating indian village of San Juan Chamula where we witness in the local church old Mayan rituals mixed with catholic observances. Returning to San Cristobal we take in the local scene and you can shop for beautiful textiles and handicrafts. We also try out hand at chocolate making at the 'from bean to mouth' Kakaw workshop. (B)

SUN 10 FEB: AGUA AZUL, PALENQUE – Today is an easy travel day stopping en route at the beautiful Agua Azul and Misol-Ha waterfalls before reaching Palenque in the mid-afternoon. (B)

MON 11 FEB: PALENQUE, CAMPECHE – To avoid the heat we start early with our guide to explore the incredible jungle-swathed Mayan ruins of Palenque which flourished in the 7th Century. We then continue our drive to Campeche where we take a short tour of the city's fortified walls. (B)

TUE 12 FEB: UXMAL, CELESTUN, MERIDA – It's a busy day with our first stop at the Mayan ruins of Uxmal to see the Pyramid of the Magician. For lunch we visit a local family in the village of Abala whose specialty is tortillas whilst at the fishing village of Celestun we go by boat to view the greater pink flamingo. Our stop this night is in the city of Merida 1 ½ hours away from Celestun. (BL)

WED 13 FEB: CHICHEN ITZA, PLAYA DEL CARMEN – Chichen Itza is our highlight for today. This was one of the great Mayan-Toltec centres of the Yucatan peninsula. We also visit the ceremonial pool at Cenote Ik Kil where we can enjoy a swim before arriving at beautiful Playa del Carmen. (B)

THU 14 FEB: TULUM, PLAYA DEL CARMEN – Today is an easy day with a visit to the nearby cliff top Mayan ruins of Tulum. We enjoy this beautiful setting before returning to Playa del Carmen. (B)

FRI 15 FEB: PLAYA DEL CARMEN – Our tour ends today. Taxis can be easily arranged at the hotel to take you out to the airport. Extra nights are also available (see back page for details). (B)

This trip combines perfectly with our 14 Days 'Rhythms of Cuba' trip.

Prices & Inclusions

15 Days Mexico & the Yucatan

Price in US Dollars: USD 3990 (p/p twin-share)

Single Supplement: USD 790

Price includes: Steve Mortimer as Tour Escort, local tour guide, arrival transfer, all local transportation, flight Oaxaca to Tuxtla, 14 nights accommodation and meals as indicated.

Not Included: Visa fees, travel insurance (compulsory), international flights, additional meals, drinks, departure transfer, optional tours, spending of a personal nature, laundry and tips.

Transportation: Transport by comfortable air-conditioned minibus or coach. Flight from Oaxaca to Tuxtla Gutierrez.

Accommodation: We have selected some great hotels for this trip. Mostly they are charming 3 and 4 star colonial style hotels in great locations. In Mexico City we stay right next to the Zocalo Square whilst in San Cristobal our hotel is in the historical centre close to the main church. Many of our hotels have a swimming pool to cool off in at the end of the day and our hotel in Playa del Carmen is only a 3 minute walk to the beach.



Colonial 4* hotel in Mexico City



Charming rooms in San Cristobal



Hotel terrace in Taxco



Historical hotel in Campeche



Hacienda Real – Playa del Carmen



Comfortable rooms in Merida

Food and drink: Breakfast is included each day. Elsewhere, we enjoy the great variety of local food on offer. Beer, wine, spirits, soft drinks, tea, coffee and bottled water is all widely available.

Group size: Maximum 16

Additional Expenses: Food can be expensive in Mexico depending on where and what you eat. As a guideline allow US\$7-\$10 for a light lunch and between US\$15-\$25 for dinner. In addition you should budget for any personal shopping you may want. Please also allow extra funds to tip your local tour guide, driver and porters (full details will be provided in the pre-trip Field Guide).

Bookings: Travel on Q (Sydney) is the sole booking agent for this tour. Please register your interest ASAP in order to secure your place and note there are a limited number of single rooms available. A non-refundable deposit of AUD 750 per person is required with final payment due 60 days prior to tour commencement.

Travel on Q (Carole Grassby and Tina Briggs)

Tel: (02) 9357 6800

Email: travel@travelonq.com.au

Currency: Due to the volatility of global currencies the tour price has been quoted in United States Dollars (USD) however you will pay for your tour in Australian dollars based on the buying rate set by Westpac Banking Corporation on the due date of your final balance.

Flights and Transfers: Most flights to Mexico travel via the USA. Qantas, United, American and Delta all fly from Australia. Both Mexico City and Cancun are gateway airports. An arrival transfer is included; however the departure transfer is not and can be arranged on request. Travel on Q will be able to assist you with your flights and advise you on your best options.

Extra Nights in Mexico City & Playa del Carmen: Extra nights can be booked pre and post tour but you must advise Travel on Q well in advance to ensure availability.

Visas: Mexican visas are not required by Australian citizens however if transiting through the USA they must apply on-line for a US Travel Authorisation (ESTA).

Documentation: Upon receipt of final payment, a comprehensive field guide will be mailed and you will be sent the relevant tour and accommodation vouchers prior to departure.

What Next? Contact Travel on Q to discuss your travel plans and to make your booking. Further information is also available at www.byroads.com.au.

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