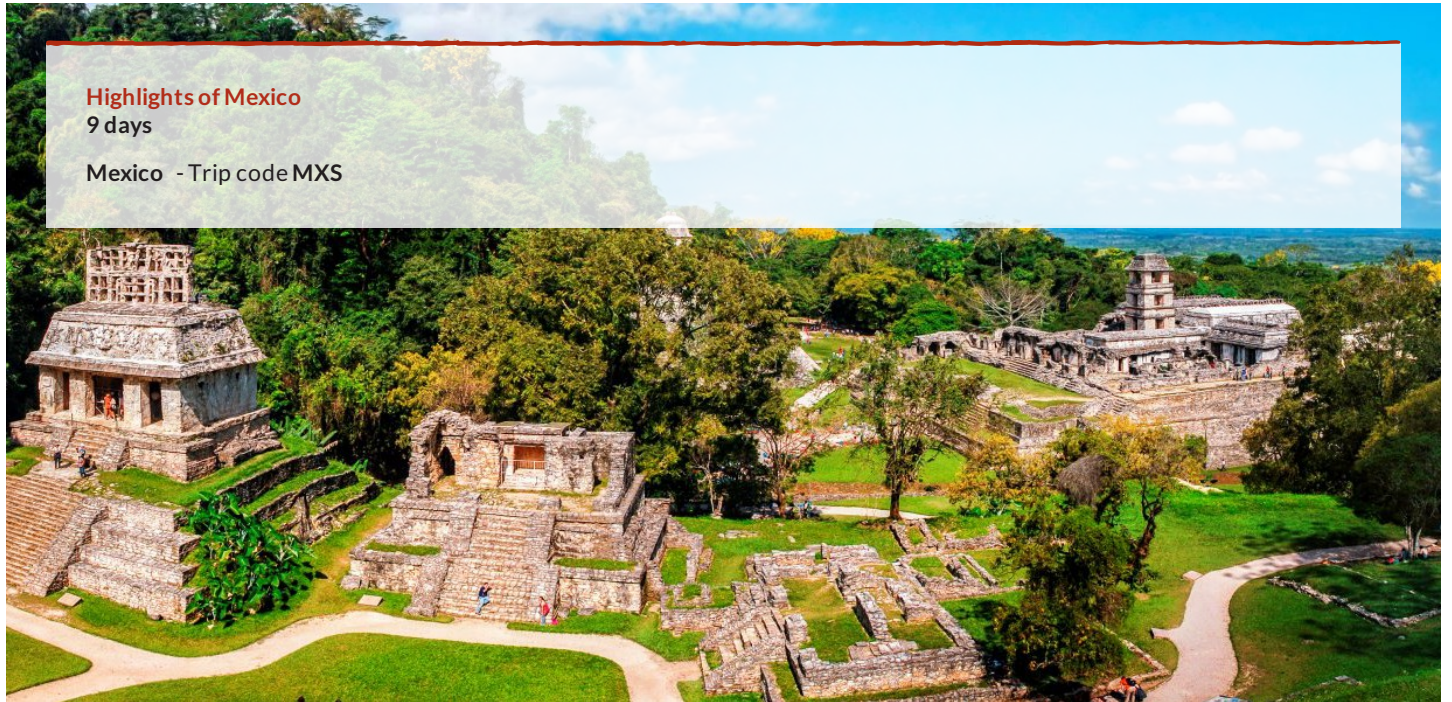


EXPLORE!



Highlights of Mexico

9 days

Mexico - Trip code MXS

Highlights of Mexico

On this exciting introduction to Mexico, travel from the sprawling capital through local indigenous villages and beautifully preserved colonial towns into the Maya heartlands of the Yucatan Peninsula. Discover the pre-Colombian pyramids of Teotihuacan before journeying to three different Maya sites, culminating in the famous ruins at Chichen Itza. Aside from the rich history, Mexico's natural highlights are not to be missed, and we explore the vast Sumidero Canyon by boat, as well as bathing in the cascading blue waters of the Agua Azul Falls.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Palenque** - Arguably the most enchanting of the ancient Maya ruins, set in dense jungle
- ★ **San Cristobal de las Casas** - A beautiful highland colonial market town, surrounded by modern day Maya villages
- ★ **Chichen Itza** - One of the New Seven Wonders of the World, and an astounding display of grand Maya-Toltec architecture
- ★ **Sumidero Canyon** - A towering gorge, snaking through the Chiapas state
- ★ **Misol Ha waterfall** - A perfect bathing spot underneath the 30m high drop

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:**Moderate**

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:**12 - 18**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip in Mexico City

Check-in at our hotel in Mexico City. Modern day Mexico City was built on top of the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan by the Spaniards, after their conquest of the city. Today this busy, lively city boasts a wealth of historical buildings, museums and markets.



Accommodation: Hotel Fontan (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Visit the Teotihuacan Pyramids; city tour of Mexico City

On our first day in Mexico City we will drive out to the mysterious pyramids of Teotihuacan. Although abandoned thirteen centuries ago, they are still an unbelievable sight. Once the largest city in the Americas with perhaps 100,000 inhabitants, its influence continued through Middle America, and Maya craftsmen borrowed its decorative motifs and building designs. Centuries later the Aztecs revered Teotihuacan as 'the Place of the Gods'. Returning to the downtown area, we have time for a city tour of the Zocalo (main square) area, the cathedral and the National Palace. Many of these key sights were build on top of Tenochtitlan, the old Aztec capital.



Accommodation: Hotel Fontan (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 3 - Fly to Tuxtla Airport; boat trip through the Sumidero Canyon en route to San Cristobal

This morning we fly to Tuxtla airport, in the state of Chiapas, and set off for the spectacular Sumidero Canyon, a unique rift 41km long and up to 1000m deep, cut by the Rio Grijalva. This is the spot where, in the 16th century, some 1000 Chiapa Indians committed suicide rather than submit to Spanish rule. We take a trip on a speed boat to fully appreciate the towering gorge, before driving up a scenic mountain road to San Cristobal de las Casas, the small colonial and indigenous town located high in the tree-lined Chiapas range. At 2210m above sea level, it can get quite cold at night!



Accommodation: Hotel Arrecife (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 4 - Visit nearby indigenous villages; free afternoon to explore San Cristobal

Setting out northwest of San Cristobal, we drive to the traditional villages of San Juan Chamula and Zinacantan to discover a completely different side to Mexico. These two villages are strongly indigenous, and practice an interesting blend of Catholicism and traditional religions, which is evident from a visit to the local churches. After exploring the villages we head back to San Cristobal for free time to spend wandering around the shops, squares and markets of the small town. Indigenous groups from the surrounding hills fill the town and marketplace with their colourful dress, including the distinctive Tzotzil people who still retain much of their Maya customs and language. They are noted for their bright textiles and weavings in bold designs, and this is the place to barter for some colourful souvenirs. This afternoon you may wish to visit the Na Bolom, the House of the Jaguar, which is dedicated to the preservation of the Lacandon tribe and displays many of their artefacts, or the Kakaw museum where you can learn about the history and production of chocolate in the area.



Accommodation: Hotel Arrecife (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 5 - Travel to Palenque via the Agua Azul and Misol Ha Waterfalls

Leaving the highlands, the road is slow and winding, but there are beautiful views over forests and mountains as we descend to the jungles of Palenque. We plan to make two stops on our drive, to the waterfalls of Agua Azul and Misol Ha. At Agua Azul the powerful water tumbles over a series of limestone steps, before hitting the water below. The clear waters make this a popular weekend picnic spot for Mexicans and travellers alike. Misol Ha, on the other hand, has a long drop cascade that we can walk behind and into a small cave, an awesome place to witness the power of nature. The stunning 30m high waterfall was featured in the opening credits of the movie 'Predator'. After an afternoon of bathing we continue to our hotel in Palenque.



Accommodation: Hotel Maya Tulipanes (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 6 - Discover the important Maya site of Palenque; continue by bus to Campeche

One of the highlights of our trip is today's guided visit to the famous jungle ruins of Palenque, a fascinating and important Maya site. Once the choking forest was cleared, the ruins revealed the tomb of the high priest Pakal, his body adorned with a marvellous jade death mask - one of the most prized relics of the Maya culture, discovered only in 1952. The entire site, shrouded by the steamy rainforest, has an aura of deep mystery. After our visit we continue to the stunningly well-preserved colonial city of Campeche, which we explore on foot. This UNESCO Heritage city is almost so well maintained that it feels like a storybook town, and we will wander the walled ramparts, narrow cobblestoned roads, boulevard and pastel coloured buildings this afternoon. Beyond the walls of the old city, there is a bustling coastal town, with frenetic market activity, an inviting waterfront and old fishing docks to walk around.



Accommodation: Hotel Mision Campeche (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 7 - Visit the ancient Maya city of Uxmal and drive to Merida

The next stop on our journey is the ancient site of Uxmal. Encircled by hills, Uxmal is expansive in its design with majestic palaces and pyramids. Long geometrical friezes rank among the most splendid examples of ancient American Art. The incredible Pyramid of the Magician and the beautiful Governor's Palace are two of the finest examples of Maya art anywhere. Later in the day we drive to Merida, famed for its beautiful Spanish-Moorish style architecture, where we have time to wander along the narrow streets watching the horse-drawn carriages rattle past. Alternatively there is an option to visit Celestun, the pink flamingo sanctuary or the Mundo Maya Museum, with its interesting displays and artefacts from the Maya culture.



Accommodation: Hotel Colonial (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 8 - Explore Chichen Itza and head to Playa del Carmen

This morning we drive via the colonial backwater of Izamal to Chichen Itza. Founded in AD432, re-founded in 987 and conquered by the Toltecs in the 10th century, the culture of the Maya and the Toltec gradually fused. The pyramids, palaces, temples and ball court (where death was the penalty for defeat) are adorned with astonishing sculptures. Under the pressure of the civil war, the great monuments deteriorated and the Maya civilisation collapsed. Chichen Itza remains one of the most outstanding sites in the Americas. After a lengthy visit we drive to our final hotel in Playa del Carmen.



Accommodation: Hacienda Del Caribe (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 9 - Trip ends in Playa del Carmen

The trip ends this morning in Playa del Carmen. For those who wish to stay longer, we can arrange post-tour accommodation in Playa del Carmen at our conveniently located hotel, just 1 block from the golden sands of the beach.



Meals Provided: None

Why book this trip

We have created this trip for travellers who want to discover the major Mexican highlights but are short of time. Including the archaeological sites of Teotihuacan, Palenque and, of course, Chichen Itza, as well as the natural beauty of the Sumidero Canyon, this nine-day adventure will not disappoint.

What's included?



Transport

Bus
Boat



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

8 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

Holidays to Mexico

Climate

Mexico is a country whose weather is very much determined by its geological make-up. Whatever time of year you visit the weather produces a range of diverse contrasts. The summer months (June to October) are generally the wettest, with the areas around Mexico City and Guadalajara averaging some 6 inches of rain in July, whilst the coastal areas like La Paz only get at most an inch. Temperatures at this time of year can also vary greatly, from the mid 70s F in Mexico City, to the high 90s at La Paz. Winter is generally the busiest period, when rainfall is at a minimum and the daytime temperatures average a pleasant 72° across the region. Do bear in mind that at altitude the temperatures can drop considerably at night and sudden changes can occur at anytime.

Time difference to GMT

-6

Plugs

2 Pin Flat

Religion

Roman Catholic, Protestant

Language

Spanish is the official language, but around 50 languages/dialects are also spoken by the indigenous peoples of Mexico.

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Mexico City - Folkloric Ballet US\$80-120; Frida Kahlo Museum US\$12 (plus transport to Coyoacan) San Cristobal - Na Bolom US\$5; Kakaw Museum US\$2 ; Kakaw Chocolate workshop US\$20 Merida - Celestun US\$ 135pp (min 5 pers) ; Mundo Maya Museum US\$9

Clothing

From Nov-Apr warmer clothing is needed in the highlands (San Cristobal and Mexico City), which are mostly mild, but temperatures can drop dramatically at night. Pack a fleece and some long sleeved clothing for protection from sun and insects. Lightweight rainwear is essential. In general, winter is dry and summer wet. Casual clothes are acceptable. Shorts are acceptable everywhere except in churches.

Footwear

Bring walking boots if you have them, otherwise comfortable shoes/trainers with a good grip and sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daysack. Remember - you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

An umbrella is useful for tropical downpours. A torch and waterbottle are recommended. Bring insect repellent, sunscreen and a sunhat.

Tipping

Explore leader

Tour Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Local Crew: Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour

Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour. Accordingly you should allow approx. US\$40 for gratuities for local staff. 10% is expected in restaurants.

Country Information

Holidays to Mexico

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Breakfast price

£5

Lunch price

£7

Dinner price

£13

Beer price

£2

Water price

£0.7

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Mexican New Peso

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Carry all your funds in US cash NOT Sterling or Travellers Cheques which are more difficult to exchange. We recommend to take a minimum of US\$400-\$500 of your total spending money in cash, in mixed denominations. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they might be difficult to exchange.

Where To Exchange

Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

Available in Major towns. Always have some cash as back-up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance

Credit cards are useful and can be used in many places, but may be subject to a 10% service charge

Travellers Cheques

Available in Major towns. Always have some cash as back-up as they are not always reliable

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Boat

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office

advice click here.

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click here

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Mexico: Citizens from UK, New Zealand, Australia, New Zealand, US and Canada require a Mexican Tourist Card to enter. This is obtained from the consular office or at the check-in desk of the airline you are travelling with and will need to be kept until exit. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant Embassy prior to departure. USA: (including those in transit) Citizens of the UK, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and passport holders from several EU countries can enter the United States without a visa under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) - where you apply for an ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation), which applies if you enter the country by sea or by air. This must be done on line - <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> no later than 72 hours prior to travel. Travellers who have not registered before their trip are likely to be refused boarding. You must have an electronic passport with a digital chip containing biometric information about the passport owner. UK passports which are biometric feature a small gold symbol (camera) at the bottom of the front cover. If you have visited Iraq, Syria, Iran or Sudan since 2011 or are dual nationals of these countries, you cannot travel with an ESTA and instead you will need to apply for a visa from the nearest US Embassy or Consulate. If you are unable to provide a valid visa before boarding flights to the US, or entering via another method, you may not be permitted to travel. Please note for your ESTA application you will be required to supply Point of Contact information. Explore's USA contact information will be listed on your final documentation which you will receive approximately 3-4 weeks before departure. If you are leaving for the USA before this, please call the Explore team to get this information. (Not necessary if in transit) For further information please check out the US embassy website. Visa applications -

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer click here

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Holidays to Mexico

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, infectious hepatitis and polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please note many countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean require a yellow fever vaccination certificates if travelling from infected areas. A detailed list of these countries can be found on the NaTHNaC website - <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>. Also on the NaTHNaC site there is a list of Countries (and specific areas within a country) which are at risk of infection and a vaccination is therefore recommended.. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.
