

EXPLORE!



Tastes of Mexico
14 days
Mexico - Trip code MXF

Tastes of Mexico

This 2-week adventure defies expectations of precarious piles of nachos or bursting burritos, as we dive into Mexico's mouth-watering food scene and taste many of the country's diverse and delicious regional specialities. Sample street tacos in the capital, try traditional 'mole poblano', and tlayudas in Oaxaca. See ceviche being made along the coast, buy food in lively markets and learn how to create tamales in a local's house. Discover the many ways that food plays a huge part in the local traditions of this fascinating country.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Street Tacos** - Sample these mini soft corn tortillas served up in baskets which Mexico City is famous for
- ★ **Caldo de Piedra** - Try this fish soup, only found in Oaxaca, where the ingredients are cooked with the heat from a hot rock immersed in the bowl
- ★ **Making tamales** - Hosted by Antonia and her family in Zinacantan see the traditional methods of creating these corn-based snacks
- ★ **The Yucatan Peninsula** - Learn how to make ceviche in Campeche, - the best place in Mexico to try this marinated fish dish
- ★ **Pibil** - Take the opportunity to savour this chicken or pork dish, which means 'cooked underground', throughout the Yucatan peninsula

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

Our trip today begins in Mexico City. This modern day metropolis 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 Premier (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Explore Mexico City and try street tacos for lunch

On our first day in Mexico City we visit the downtown including the Zocalo (main square). The Cathedral and National Palace, with many of Diego Rivera's remarkable murals on the history of Mexico, are all built on top of Tenochtitlan - the old Aztec capital. After exploring the city we will experience some of Mexico's best and most authentic basket tacos, known as 'tacos de canasta', for lunch. These soft-shelled tacos are normally filled with marinated pork, beef or chicken as well as more unusual ingredients such as cactus leaves and flower petals. We can spice these up with some of the wonderful homemade chilli sauces, of which there are usually several heats to choose from. This afternoon we drive to Coyoacan in the south of Mexico's Federal District, famous for its coffee and cake culture. Founded in the seventh century and later conquered by the Mexica, the "place of coyotes" retains its small-town charm with cobbled streets, colonial churches and colourful markets. Those who wish can visit the house of Frida Kahlo, the pioneering artist and wife of Diego Rivera.



Accommodation: Hotel Premier (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Lunch

DAY 3 - Visit Pyramids of Teotihuacan, continue to Puebla

Leaving this city we will drive north 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'. Following our visit we will continue our short journey east to the city of Puebla passing between three of Mexico's most recognisable volcanoes, Ixtaccihuatl, Popocatepetl and La Malinche.



Accommodation: Hotel Colonial De Puebla (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 4 - Try mole poblano, afternoon drive to Oaxaca

We start our day with a visit to Puebla's Sweet Street - the 'Calle de los Dulces'. Puebla is a great stop for those with a sweet tooth and the city has an entire road dedicated to producing and selling sweets and biscuits. This will then be followed by a visit to the former convent of Santa Rosa, the alleged home of the creation of the 'mole poblano'. Both Oaxaca and Puebla claim to be the creators of mole, which means 'to mix' in Spanish, and it comes in many forms and colours. The most famous is the dark chocolate one from Puebla. A good mole is thought to have over 20 ingredients in its mix including chilli, tomatoes, garlic, cinnamon and many more, and is normally poured over chicken or tacos. We will have the opportunity to sample the local varieties over lunch today, before driving south through cactus country to Oaxaca, one of the most charming colonial cities in Mexico. Arriving in the early evening, our first stop will be to try 'tlayudas', a large crunchy tortilla topped with refried beans, lettuce, avocado and meats of your choice such as grilled steak, chilli pork and cheese.



Accommodation: Oaxaca real (or similar)



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Dinner

DAY 5 - Explore the food markets and taste mezcal

Our day begins early with visit to the markets of Benito Juarez and 20 de Noviembre, thought to be one of the best places to try the traditional food of Oaxaca, such as 'quesadillas con flor de calabaza' - cheese and pumpkin flower stuffed tortillas - and deep fried grasshoppers. As well as sampling food in the market it is a great place to purchase the many ingredients central to Mexican cooking like tomatoes, moles and chillies. We will then visit the Casa del Mezcal to try a little pre-lunch tippie of the local fire water. Mezcal

means 'oven-baked agave cactus' and you will have a chance to see the process of how this is made later today, at our lunch stop. Our lunch today will be at the 'Caldo de Piedra' restaurant, named after a pre-Hispanic dish where raw fish, shrimp and vegetables are cooked when a red hot stone is added to the broth. You may wish to visit the Mixtec-Zapotec site of Mitla, which can be done on a public bus.



Accommodation: Oaxaca real (or similar)



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Lunch

DAY 6 - Try making Mexican classics in a morning cooking class, free afternoon to visit Monte Alban

Today we have our first-hand experience in a Mexican kitchen when we join a mother and son team for a cooking class. We start the day by going to the Centro de Abastos market where we will see the enormous selections of fresh ingredients used in Oaxacan cooking. The son, Chef Gerardo, will accompany us to describe all the different ingredients, and help you buy those needed for the meals you will be preparing. With our ingredients in our shopping bags we head back to Chef Gerardo's house to prepare three separate dishes, which we will then eat for lunch. The daily menu may vary, but you will may be learning to prepare a local type of mole, or learning how to stuff chillies. This afternoon has been left free to explore Oaxaca further, or you may wish to head out of town to explore the complex of temples, pyramids and enigmatic rock carvings at Monte Alban, a high spur that looms over the fertile valley. This mystical site was created by Zapotec Indians, who flourished here a thousand years ago.



Accommodation: Oaxaca real (or similar)



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Lunch

DAY 7 - Drive to Chiapa del Corzo

Today is a full day's journey through the mountainous Sierra Madre range, through the hot and windy isthmus of Tehuantepec and on to our hotel in Chiapa del Corzo, the provincial capital of Chiapas state, which we will explore over the next few days. There are plenty of stops to stretch our legs, eat and drink during the 10 hour journey.



Accommodation: Hotel la Ceiba (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 8 - Learn to make tamales en route to San Cristobal

We start the day by driving up the scenic mountain road to San Cristobal de las Casas. On route we will visit San Juan Chamula, where they practice an interesting blend of Catholicism and traditional Maya beliefs, before continuing to Zinacantan and to the house of Antonia. At Antonia's house we will be taught how to make an indigenous dish known as tamales. Tamales are eaten everywhere in Mexico, however each state has its own recipes. They are a corn-based dough, stuffed with either a sweet or savoury filling and steam-cooked in corn husks or banana leaves. Tamales are eaten throughout the year, but particularly as a traditional dish over the Christmas period. Antonia and her family will teach you how to make corn husk tamales stuffed with beans and 'hoja santa' - the sacred leaf. Following this we will head to San Cristobal where you will have some free time to explore this highland town this afternoon.



Accommodation: Hotel Arrecife (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Lunch

DAY 9 - Visit the markets; afternoon free for optional chocolate making workshop

We will start our day with a visit to the food market. In contrast to the markets of Oaxaca, the ingredients differ here in San Cristobal as do the traditional meals. You will see a range of produce such as coffee and cacao and our Explore Leader will explain their use in local food. According to the Popol Vuh, the book on the creation of the Maya, man was created from yellow and white corn. Corn grows throughout the Chiapas highlands and is used today as their main ingredient in traditional indigenous cooking of the Tzotzil and Tzeltal communities. There is a unique atmosphere to this small colonial town, high in the scenic Chiapas range. The indigenous groups from the surrounding hills fill the town and marketplace with their colourful dress including the distinctive Tzotzil Indians 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 bargain for some colourful souvenirs. This afternoon you may wish to visit 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 and take part in a chocolate workshop. This evening we will visit a local restaurant where you will have the opportunity to sample the local firewater known as Pox (or aguardiente in other areas); its name comes from the Mayan Tzotzil language and means sugar cane liquor medicine. Pox is made of corn, sugar cane and wheat, very important in Mayan culture for its ceremonial uses.



Accommodation: Hotel Arrecife (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Dinner

DAY 10 - Drive from highlands to rainforests of Palenque

Leaving the highlands, the road is slow and winding, but there are scenic views as we descend from the cool highlands to the humid, hot jungles of Palenque. On route we will stop by a traditional cacao ranch where you will visit and see how the fruit grows and is processed into chocolate. After exploring the ranch we will try some deep fried mojarra (fresh water bream) for lunch in an ideal setting overlooking the lake Nezahualcoyotl. There is a vegetarian option for non-fish eaters. We will then continue towards the Gulf of Mexico, through the state of Tabasco, on to Palenque.



Accommodation: Hotel Maya Tulipanes (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Lunch

DAY 11 - Visit Mayan Palenque; try ceviche en route to Campeche in the Yucatan

This morning we will start early with a guided visit to the famous jungle ruins of Palenque, a fascinating and important Mayan 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. In the early afternoon we drive along the Gulf coastline to the pleasant colonial city of Campeche, the state capital and once one of Spain's main ports in Mexico. On route we will stop for a ceviche lunch at the fishing village of Champoton. We will first have a demonstration on how the ceviche is prepared. Meaning 'meat cooked in vinegar', ceviche is made up of raw fish or seafood marinated in lime juice, onions, peppers and other spices. Peru is famous for its ceviche, but it is actually found throughout Central America, and this Mexican version is equally as delicious. We will then continue to Campeche; the afternoon is left to wander around the old port where defensive walls and fortresses are still in evidence. Campeche, although less visited than many parts of the Yucatan, boasts one of the most elegant and well-maintained colonial quarters with 18th and 19th century houses painted in soft pastel colours.



Accommodation: Hotel Mision Campeche (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Lunch

DAY 12 - Drive into the Yucatan to Merida via the temples of Uxmal

We start with a short drive to Uxmal. Encircled by hills, Uxmal is expansive in its design, with majestic palaces, temples, pyramids and long geometrical friezes that rank amongst the most splendid examples of ancient American art anywhere. The incredible Pyramid of the Magician and the beautiful Governor's Palace must also rate as two of the finest examples of Mayan art on the entire continent. Today we will visit this extraordinary site, spending some time exploring what for many is considered the crowning glory of Puuc architectural style, with its classical lines and abstract designs. Leaving Uxmal behind we will continue to the village of Abala, where we will be invited to enjoy a pibil lunch in a local villager's house. Pibil means 'cooked underground', and it is a technique where the meat is wrapped in a banana leaf, marinated in a sour orange and annatto sauce and baked in a barbeque pit for several hours. Following lunch we continue on to Merida, a city famed for its beautiful Spanish-Moorish style architecture. Known as the 'White City', Merida is the capital of the state of Yucatan and its centre reflects its colonial heritage, with a church or mansion on every street and its plazas alive with markets, entertainment and visitors.



Accommodation: Hotel Colonial (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Lunch

DAY 13 - Visit Izamal; afternoon visit to food markets

After a later start we drive to the colonial backwater of Izamal. Here we will have lunch at restaurant Kinich - situated in one of the great houses of Izamal this is reputed to be one of the best restaurants on the Peninsula to enjoy the Yucatecan specialities such as lime soup, stuffed cheese, pork or chicken pibil style and 'relleno negro', black turkey stew. You are free to wander through the kitchen to the tortilla and grill room and watch the meals being prepared. This afternoon we will return to Merida, where we will spend the afternoon sampling more street food and wandering the markets where you can try the local 'marquesitas' - an unusual sweet wafer, stuffed with melted cheese and sprinkled with optional caramel sauce. We will also have the opportunity to visit the Colon ice cream parlour, which has been making ice cream and cakes for over 100 years; there will be lots to choose from!



Accommodation: Hotel Colonial (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Lunch

DAY 14 - Trip ends in Merida

Our trip ends this morning in Merida.



Meals Provided: None

Why book this trip

This trip is especially geared towards savouring authentic dishes that have been handed down through generations, from families who are happy to share their secrets and recipes with us. As well as an immersion into the flavours of Mexico, it is also a journey through the country's history, visiting the ancient ruins of Teotihuacan, Palenque, Uxmal and discovering where many of these recipes and ingredients originated from.

What's included?



Included meals

Lunch: 8
Dinner: 2



Transport

Bus



Trip staff

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



Accommodation

10 nights standard hotel
3 nights 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 - Ballet Folklorico - US\$100-120; Frida Kahlo Museum US\$12 Anthropological Museum US\$5 + transportation
Oaxaca - Regional Museum US\$ 5; Folkloric dancing US\$25; Milta ents. US\$ 5 + transportation; Monte Alban ents. US\$5 + transportation
San Cristobal - Kakaw Chocolate workshop US\$20; Jade museum US\$5; Na Bolom Museum US\$5 Transportation costs vary on whether you chose to go on Public transport or Private Taxi - your tour leader will brief you accordingly.

Clothing

From November-April 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

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 water bottle is recommended. Bring insect repellent, sunscreen and a sunhat. You could also think about bringing a notebook to write down some of the recipes that you've picked up during the trip.

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\$ 50 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

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 online - <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.