

# Mexican Tour program

## International Holiday Tours



*Temple of Quetzalcóatl*

## TOUR PROGRAM

**Day 1- ARRIVAL** - Upon early evening arrival at Mexico City Airport, limousines are waiting for the participants to transfer them to the hotel selected. (Every limousine for an average of 6 pax each). During transfer from airport to hotel champagne is available at the limos. Arrival to the hotel selected and check in at a private area of the hotel. Luggage was sent directly from the airport, and is already waiting for guests in their rooms. We are welcomed with a cocktail party (including hot and cold canapé), to the accompaniment of a typical *Mariachi* band, playing many of the all-time *ranchero* favourites. After some free time for freshening-up in our rooms, we meet again for a welcome dinner at one of the city's sophisticated eateries. A first encounter with Mexican *nouvelle cuisine*, perhaps with a touch of culinary *fusion*. Then, back to the hotel, as it's bedtime after a long day's journey!

- Hotel Four Seasons Mexico ([www.fourseasons.com](http://www.fourseasons.com))
- Hotel W ([www.whoels.com](http://www.whoels.com))
- Hotel JW Marriott ([www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com))



**Day 2 – MEXICO CITY** – After breakfast at hotel we start a full-day tour that will acquaint us with the multiple aspects of this many-sided town, once the Aztec capital of *Tenochtitlan*, today one of the world's largest cities.

We leave by buses from the hotel to start with the visit at the immense central square, *Zócalo*, flanked by the baroque Metropolitan Cathedral, by National Palace –where the history of the country has been depicted on Diego Rivera's famous murals- which is the seat of the Mexican Government, and by the archaeological vestiges of the old Aztec city's *Templo Mayor*. Our journey continues through the splendidly colonial *Centro Histórico*, in the process of full restoration, past *Santo Domingo* Square with the old Inquisition Palace, and such architectural jewels as the unique *House of Tiles*, the *Palace of Emperor Iturbide* and the Venetian-inspired *Central Post Office*.



We continue through the streets of downtown Mexico by bike taxis (each one for 2 pax) to the white-marble *Palace of Fine Arts*, where invaluable works of art of Mexico's most prominent painters are in exhibition.



Our lunch of today will be at lovely restaurant del Lago located inside Chapultepec Park ([www.lago.com.mx](http://www.lago.com.mx)) or at one of town's colonial *hacienda*-restaurants such as the Hacienda de los Morales ([www.haciendadelosmorales.com](http://www.haciendadelosmorales.com))

After lunch, we leave by buses on a short transfer for a visit to one of the world's best and most extraordinary museums, the *Museo Nacional de Antropología*, with its rich collections of pre-Columbian art. These include the impressive *Sun Stone*, better known as the *Aztec Calendar*, as well as the stone sculpture of the gruesome goddess of Earth and Death, *Coatlicue*, the snake-skirted one. A massive, 168-ton monolith of Aztec rain god Tláloc zealously guards the museum's entrance, while *keeping an eye* on the always very heavy traffic of the stately *Paseo de la Reforma*, the city's proud landmark.



Back to hotel in the late afternoon; the evening is free, after we have sampled a gourmet dinner at one of the fine restaurants in the city.

### Day 3 – CITY OF THE GODS (OPTION 1)

Depart after breakfast via VW Green Taxis in a northerly direction, till reaching the *Basilica de Guadalupe*, the holiest shrine for millions of Mexicans. After the visit, continue via buses to TEOTIHUACAN, *where men become gods*, the great pre-Hispanic site of a great culture predating the arrival of the Aztecs. Upon the arrival the group is welcomed at the entrance of the archaeological zone with a trio playing Mexican and Latinamerican music, and drinks (beers, soft drinks and water) served by local girls with Regional Customs.

After welcome group is divided in three sections to participate alternatively in the following parallel activities:

- Aerostatic balloon flight, with an approximate duration of 50 minutes. The whole archaeological zone of Teotihuacan is flown over, affording magnificent vistas of the main pyramids and temples, and allowing tour members to gain an insight into the layout of this archaeological *tour de force*. Finger food and champagne will be served on board of each balloon. After landing, passengers are *rescued* by vans, which will take them back to base at Teotihuacan.
- An interesting, if brief, guided tour of the zone will be provided by an expert guide. He will inform tour members about the origins of this great Mesoamerican mother-culture, lost in the mist of time. There will be time, for the most courageous ones, to climb the Sun Pyramid, and everybody will also visit the Pyramid of the Moon, then stroll down the Road of the Dead to the Temple of Quetzalcóatl, with its extraordinary stone-sculptured plumed-serpent heads and the symbols of the raingod Tlaloc.
- A third party will be taken to a nearby place, to see and learn all about the elaboration of *pulque*, the intoxicating drink of the ancient gods, extracted from the *maguey* plant, or agave. In the great Indian civilisations of the central highlands, *pulque* –a fermented drink- was served as a ritual intoxicant for priests, and as a medicinal drink. It was also served as liquor reserved to celebrate the feats of the brave and the wise, and was even considered to be an acceptable substitute for blood in some propitiatory ceremonies. Today it is mostly consumed locally by the peasant population, but once distilled, it becomes *mezcal* or *tequila*. Tour members will be informed about the many other uses of the *maguey* plant.

After all tour members have participated in the different activities, we return into town for a great fun experience: luncheon will be served in an authentic Mexican *cantina*, with great vernacular atmosphere and, above all, no tourists in sight! After tasting the many native *hors d'oeuvres*, with a variety of hot *chile* sauces with fresh, hand-made corn *tortillas* and *tostadas*, we're offered a spicy dried-shrimp broth to neutralise the strong tequila *apéritifs*, before ordering our main dish, which may well be a succulent piece of *cabrito* –kid-northern style, or an *entrée* of chicken *tacos* and *enchiladas*, all of it accompanied by large portions of tasty *guacamole*, the exquisite native avocado mousse, and generously washed down with cold *coronas* and other vernacular brews. A native guitar trio will help to liven up the ambience during luncheon, executing many of Mexico's famous songs of yesteryear.

After this late luncheon, we drive back to hotel to enjoy the rest of the afternoon at leisure.

This evening we drive out to **one of the following venues to enjoy a delicious farewell catering gala dinner:**

**CASA DE LA BOLA** - The mansion known as Casa de la Bola, is now a museum that gives visitors a taste of life of the Mexican aristocracy. The structure dates from the 1600's, and over the centuries it was inhabited by some of Mexico's most prominent families. Its most recent occupant was Don Antonio Haghenbeck. In 1942, this debonair man of refined tastes, of German descent, purchased the property and planted the garden with banana and fig trees, ferns and magnolias. He covered the rooms, including his "summer" and "winter" bedrooms, in rich silks, filled them with inlaid furniture, Japanese urns, canopy beds, magnificent crystal chandeliers, and ivory crucifixes, set the dining room table with silver service plates and cut crystal, and lived as a gentleman of the 18th century. At his death don Antonio left the Casa de la Bola to the foundation that bears his name, but he made no provisions for supporting it financially. In fact, he left the bulk of his considerable fortune to "*support Mexico's animal life.*" He inherited his love for animals - and a good deal of money, as well - from his paternal grandfather, Doctor Carlo Haghenbeck, who founded the Stellingen Zoo in the outskirts of Hamburg before migrating to Mexico.

**CHAPULTEPEC CASTLE** – One of Mexico City's most prominent landmarks, the historical Castle, built on top of a hill in the middle of ancient Chapultepec Park, and dominating the city, was once the residence of Spanish viceroys. It was the last military engagement in the Mexican War before American troops entered the city in 1847 and twenty years later it served as the Residence of ill-fated *emperor* Maximilian of Habsburg and of his Belgian *empress* Carlota. Today the seat of the Museum of National History, the Castle is one of the city's icons, and certainly a unique setting for a private dinner party. It commands a magnificent view over town.

**MUNAL** – The Museo Nacional de Arte –Munal- is one of downtown's most massive and impressive buildings. Italian architect Silvio Contri constructed the present building to serve as the new Palace of Communications and Public Works at the beginning of the 20th c. The building's fine ironwork was specially elaborated in Florence. Across from it stands the equally beautiful Mining Palace, belonging to the National University; standing in the middle of the *plaza* one can admire one of the world's finest equestrian statues, that of Charles IV of Spain, endearingly referred to by Mexicans as *El Caballito*, the Little Horse. No doubt this is one of the most beautiful and emblematic corners of the capital's historic centre. Dinner in the MUNAL is served in the *patio* behind the staircase.

### **Day 3 – CITY OF THE GODS (OPTION 2)**

This day we start very early as we need to be at the archaeological site of Teotihuacan before sunrise. Before we live the hotel, the group has coffee, tea and bread and on board buses coffee and cookies will be also available. After almost 1 hour or ride, we arrive to the archaeological zone where the Aerostatic balloons are waiting for the participants for a ride over the archaeological zone exactly at sunrise. After this unforgettable experience group is transferred by vans to the Villas Arqueologicas Hotel for a delicious and abundant buffet breakfast around the pool. Participants have the opportunity, after breakfast, to sleep a little bit at any of the rooms of the hotel. Before noon, we leave to the archaeological zone for welcome with trip music, drinks and girls with Mexican customs and the sightseeing of the archaeological zone and the information of the Pulque elaboration (as mentioned on OPTION 1). Rest of the day (Including lunch and dinner) remains the same as option 1.

**Day 4 – LE PAYS DU TEQUILA** – After breakfast, transfer to airport for departure on an early flight –possibly a charter- to Mexico’s second-largest city, Guadalajara. This is the birth-town of the *mariachi*, and a gala band is waiting to give us a musical welcome with the best of their *repertoire*.

Group is transferred directly to the rail station for departure on the unique *Tequila express*. The train starts rolling through the peaceful Jalisco State landscape, with finger snacks, *tequila* and fresh beer served on board. We pass large plantations of *blue agave*, the extraordinary succulent from which the raw material for the elaboration of *tequila* is extracted, and soon arrive at the colonial town of Amatitán, in the heart of the *Tequila Country*. Group is transferred to *San José del Refugio*, an ancient *hacienda* dating back to colonial days, the seat of a traditional *tequila* distillery, surrounded by its own agave plantations.

Our tour will include a visit not only of the beautiful hacienda, but also an inspection of the distillation plant, where the whole process of the drink’s elaboration will be explained. At the end, we’ll partake of a splendid Mexican buffet, abundantly sprinkled with –of course- the native *tequila* and refreshing *Coronas*. Luncheon will be livened up by the strains of a local village band.

Motor coaches are now waiting to take us back to the city of Guadalajara, for check-in at one of its fancy top hotels; luggage was sent directly from the airport, and is already waiting for guests in their rooms. The remainder of the afternoon is free for relaxation... perhaps some participants will indulge in a refreshing dip into the swimming pool.

This evening we are driven for dinner to a sheer indescribable restaurant, the *Santo Coyote*, Fine Mexican food is the indispensable complement to a place that has created a unique atmosphere, with its hundreds of candle lights, rock gardens and cascades, plus an eclectic interior decor that defies any classification. Indeed, this is the *hot spot* to visit in town!

**Day 5 – GUADALAJARA & THE PACIFIC** – Start the day with a visit of the city, a real stronghold of Mexican culture. It was here that Father Hidalgo abolished slavery in 1810, a feat which is represented in the impressive mural by Clemente Orozco, in the baroque Government Palace. This building flanks the elegant *Plaza de Armas*, the centre of which boasts the beautiful *art nouveau* kiosk, cast in Paris nearly 100 years ago. Our visit further takes us past the Cathedral, with its pyramid-shaped towers, and the neo-classical Degollado Theatre, to the famed *Hospicio Cabañas*, the *Mexican Sistine Chapel*. This is one of the most striking neo-classical constructions in the country; in the early 20th century, the chapel was decorated with a superb series of murals, now considered some of the masterpieces of Mexican art. They are the work of José Clemente Orozco, one of the greatest Mexican muralists of the period. With its 23 interior *patios* and the striking mural work of this artist, UNESCO has declared it a World Heritage site.

We now proceed to the suburb of TLAQUEPAQUE, with its great artisan tradition. Here you will find Silver from Taxco, rugs from Oaxaca, copper from Michoacan, hand blown glass, hand painted tiles, huichol clothing from Nayarit and pottery from the states of Guanajuato and Jalisco. Strolling through its streets, browsing through the countless arts-and-craft shops, watching artisans at work at the many workshops, are experiences not easily forgotten.

A native of Tlaquepaque, internationally renowned surrealist sculptor, jeweller, ceramist and painter Sergio Bustamante has his own gallery here, where we'll endeavour to have him organise a special cocktail for our party. His bizarre creations can be seen today in *salons* all over the world, so this is an opportunity not to be missed.

We are now ready for a hearty *farewell Guadalajara* luncheon. We shall sample a tasty *tapatio* meal at *Restaurant Adobe*, creatively decorated, and famous for its dishes typical to the state of Jalisco, served to the accompaniment, one last time, of a gay and resounding *mariachi* band.

Right after luncheon, we start our journey towards the Pacific coast, soon driving through lush tropical vegetation and momentarily entering the tiny state of Nayarit until reaching Banderas Bay, skirted by golden sand beaches, eventually re-entering Jalisco to arrive at Puerto Vallarta, the country's quaintest resort on the West Coast.

A refreshing welcome drink is waiting for us at one of the following three luxurious options we are considering for the group; there will be also time for a relaxing sunset dip into the tepid Pacific waters, before dressing up for dinner:

- Hotel Velas Vallarta ([www.velasvallarta.com](http://www.velasvallarta.com))
- Hotel Presidente Intercontinental ([www.interconti.com](http://www.interconti.com))
- Four Seasons Punta Mita ([www.fourseasons.com](http://www.fourseasons.com))

In the evening, a private dinner will be arranged in the trendy Restaurant El Set, at La Jolla de Mismaloya (*Night of the Iguana* was filmed here), with 'live music for dancing into the wee hours of the morning. This option applies in case group will be staying at one of the hotels in Puerto Vallarta proper.

In case the Four Seasons at Punta Mita has been chosen, a private beach party dinner will be arranged, with torchlight and 'live dancing music.

**Days 6 and 7 – ADVENTURE PROGRAMS** – For group's days in PUERTO VALLARTA, we are suggesting one or more of the following adventurous activities, which we organise in co-operation with our local partners:

- Departure from Puerto Vallarta or from Punta Mita pier by private catamaran to LAS CALETAS island. Fruit, juices, coffee, sweet rolls, coffee and refreshments are served on board.  
Full day spent at Las Caletas, with a variety of beach activities, kayaking, and massage service. Barbecue luncheon on the beach. Afternoon return to Hotel. ([See description of this tour in annex](#))
- Jeep Safari on Mercedes-Benz UNIMOG lorries, across the tropical jungle. Snacks and refreshments are served en-route. At a certain point, tour members transfer to horses, and ride along a river until reaching the jungle-restaurant *El Eden*, with time for a refreshing river swim, and to enjoy sandwiches, beer and refreshments. Return to hotel by vans or on the UNIMOGS.

- **CANOPY JUNGLE ADVENTURE** – See description of this tour in annex.

For the evenings, one of the following activities, or a combination of some of them, would be planned:

- Boat trip to Las Caletas, with an exclusive dinner and show for the group.
- Beach dinner at the chosen hotel.
- Farewell dinner at Restaurant El Set, at La Jolla de Mismaloya (in case this was not done already on the first night). If farewell dinner is selected at El Set transfer from hotels in Puerto Vallarta to El Set is by private catamaran right before sunset with open bar and canapés on board.



*Banderas Bay sunset*

**Day 8 – TOUR ENDS** – Breakfast at hotel, and free morning to enjoy the beach, or to stroll through the cobble-stoned streets of Puerto Vallarta, with its many charming boutiques, art galleries, cafés and bars, and the colourful market just off main street.

In due time in the early afternoon, transfer to airport is provided, for departure on a short flight to Mexico City, to connect with homebound flight. Regretfully we say, not *adiós*, but...

*hasta la vista, México*