

Mexico

February 2012



Temple of Kukulcan at Chichen Itza

06 Feb

Mexico City

Depart London Heathrow 12:40

Arrive Mexico City 18:20

Depart London Heathrow and arrive into Mexico City on a direct flight with British Airways in economy class. On arrival, private transfer to the Hotel nH Cento Historico for 3 nights. Located in the heart of Mexico City the nH Centro Historico is within walking distance of the historic Plaza de la Constitución, The National Library and the Mexico City Museum. The hotel has 105 well-equipped modern rooms with free wifi access and 24hr room service. Facilities include *Hotel nH Centro Historico / Standard Room / Breakfast*



07 Feb

Mexico City



Half day shared city tour.

You will explore Mexico City, built on top of the ruins of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan. Your first stop is the Zocalo (main square), one of the biggest public squares in the world. You will visit the Catedral Metropolitana – the biggest church in Latin America, and the Palacio Nacional – which hosts Diego Rivera’s murals depicting the history of Mexico. You will continue to a handicraft market, where you will have time for some browsing, before driving along the famous boulevard Paseo de la Reforma, built during the short-lived reign of

Emperor Maximilian to connect the main square and his castle in Chapultepec. The last stop is the Museum of Anthropology, where you will have some time to explore the treasures of the Aztec culture.

Hotel nH Centro Historico / Standard Room / Breakfast

08 Feb

Mexico City

Full day shared excursion to Teotihuacan pyramids and the Shrine of Guadalupe.

You will drive to the impressive archaeological site of Teotihuacan, 50km northeast of Mexico City. On the way you will stop at the Plaza de las Tres Culturas, where three cultures converge: Aztec, Spanish, and contemporary Mexican. You will continue to the Basilica de Guadalupe, Latin America’s most revered religious shrine. It is here where the Virgin of Guadalupe is said to have appeared before an Indian named Juan Diego in 1531, and an image of her was miraculously emblazoned on his cloak. You will have time to explore the New Basilica de Guadalupe (the Old Basilica, built in 1700, is slowly sinking) and to see Juan Diego’s cloak. You will then drive for another hour to Teotihuacan, one of the most impressive cities of the ancient world, held sacred by the Aztecs. You will explore its temples, palaces and pyramids, including the Quetzalpapalotl Palace Complex, the Temple of the Feathered Conches, the Pyramid of the Moon, and the immense Pyramid of the Sun, ranked among the biggest in the world. Time for lunch (not included) before returning to Mexico City.



Hotel nH Centro Historico / Standard Room / Breakfast

09 Feb

Private transfer to the Monarch Butterfly Sanctuary at El Rosario for a private guided visit. The remarkable El Rosario Monarch Butterfly Reserve lies in the state of Michoacán and is accessed from the town of Angangueo. It is a steep climb from Angangueo into the mountains, up to the sanctuary gates. The view from the approach is hypnotic and the sights in the forest itself are surreal and intoxicating. Butterflies absorb it completely. They coat the fir trees in vast, fiery bunches, weighing down the branches in their numbers. A deep, flaming orange carpet covers the ground. Occasionally, sunlight breaks through and warms a cluster. Hundreds take flight with dramatic flurry. The entire monarch migration cycle spans four generations. They breed once on the journey north, twice during the summer in Canada, then once more on the journey south. Those that arrive in Mexico are the great-grandchildren of those that came the preceding year.

Valle de Bravo



After your visit, continue to the picturesque town of Valle de Bravo and overnight at the Hotel Mision Refugio de Salto. Locate in the beautiful town of Valle de Bravo, the Mision Refugio del Salta is a unique property situated in a peaceful and relaxing spot. There are 58 rooms, 2 restaurants and an outdoor swimming pool. A popular weekend retreat for well-heeled Mexico City residents, 'Valle' is set on a mountain slope beside a beautiful lake. Cobblestone streets, red-tile rooftops, attractive shops, and traditionally dressed Mazahua Indians from surrounding villages who come to sell their handicrafts are all part of its charm.

Lush hills around the lake are considered excellent for paragliding - in fact, you can usually spot gliders floating in the sky above town. For the less action oriented, there are boat rides around the lake. For the ultimate in tranquility, visit Maranatha, a beautiful retreat, likened to an Italian palazzo, run by Carmelite nuns.

Hotel Mision Refugio de Salto / Standard Room / Breakfast

10 Feb

Mexico City

Morning at leisure to explore the beautiful town of Valle de Bravo at your leisure. Visit the local handicraft market, take a walk to the lake's shore or simply relax. In the afternoon, take a private transfer back to Mexico City and overnight at the nh Historico.

Hotel nH Centro Historico / Standard Room / Breakfast

11 Feb

Oaxaca

After breakfast, private transfer to Oaxaca and the Casa Conzatti for 3 nights. Casa Conzatti Hotel is located two blocks from the Santo Domingo Church. Beautifully converted from the colonial home once occupied by the famous botanist Cassiano Conzatti and has 45 lovely colonial style guest rooms with a good range of amenities.

Casa Conzatti / Standard Room / Breakfast

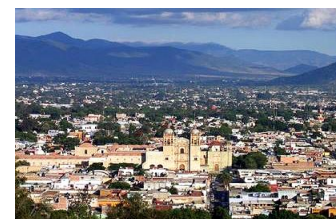
12 Feb

Oaxaca

Half day shared tour of the city.

Oaxaca is a fine colonial city, there are colourful markets, winding cobbled streets, leafy plazas and many ornate churches. The climate is very agreeable and exploring the city on foot is a pleasant way to discover its many charms. The surrounding central valleys have a number of well preserved archaeological sites.

Casa Conzatti / Standard Room / Breakfast



13 Feb

Oaxaca



Full day shared tour of Monte Alban and Mitla.

Settled in around 500 BC, Monte Albán flourished as the capital of the Zapotecs until 700 AD. At its height, up to 10,000 people lived there and many of their temples and pyramids remain today. Its great structures are formed of irregular stones, many decorated with elaborate reliefs. The site soars 400 metres above the plain giving fantastic views across to Oaxaca. An hour to the east of Oaxaca, Mitla is one of Mexico's most fascinating and enigmatic sacred sites. The palaces and buildings are adorned with intricate

and exquisite stone mosaics. Its name in the Nahuatl language translates as 'Place of the Dead', indicating it was an important place of burial for both the Zapotec and Mixtec cultures.

Casa Conzatti / Standard Room / Breakfast

14 Feb

Tehuantepec

After breakfast, private transfer to Tehuantepec and the Hotel Calli for an overnight stay.

Hotel Calli / Standard Room / Breakfast

15 Feb

San Cristobal de las Casas

After breakfast, private transfer to San Cristobal de la Casas with a boat ride in the Sumidero Canyon en-route. 2 nights at the Hotel Posada Real de Chiapas. Located in the historic centre of San Cristobal and only steps from the main square, the hotel features 32 comfortable rooms decorated with regional designs and a permanent display of hand made fabrics throughout the communal areas. Facilities include a piano bar and sun terrace with spectacular views over the city.

Hotel Posada Real de Chiapas / Standard Room / Breakfast



16 Feb

San Cristobal de la Casas



Half day shared tour of the city and the surrounding Indian Villages.

Explore on foot the colonial city centre and visit the cathedral, on the north side of the pretty main square, with its lavish interior and gold-encrusted pulpit, the impressive 16th Century Dominican Church Templo de Santo Domingo, with its intricate pink façade and gilded Baroque interior and the handicraft market in front of the church, where Tzotzil Indians from the surrounding hills come to trade. Then travel by road into the Chiapas Highlands, to the Tzotzil Indian villages of San Juan Chamula and Zinacantan. The Tzotzils descend from the ancient Maya and maintain some

unique customs, costumes and beliefs. Visit the beautiful white church in San Juan Chamula. The candles, incense and chanting worshippers make a powerful impression. Finally travel by road to the nearby village of Zinacantan, with its pretty church and handicraft market.

Hotel Posada Real de Chiapas / Standard Room / Breakfast

17 Feb

Palenque

Private transfer to Palenque with visit to the waterfalls of Agua Azul and Misol-Ha waterfall. Overnight at the Villa Mercedes Hotel. Located only two kilometres from the ruins at Palenque, the Villa Mercedes has 92 well-furnished air-conditioned rooms in 16 thatched roof bungalows surrounded by lush tropical forest. There are lovely gardens with abundant flora and the two large swimming pools with sun decks are ideal spots for relaxing.

Villa Mercedes Hotel / Deluxe Room / Breakfast



18 Feb

After breakfast, private transfer to Campeche with a guided visit to the ruins of Palenque en-route. The exquisite Mayan ruins at Palenque are amongst the best found anywhere in Mexico. The majority of the construction occurred between 600 and 800AD, during which time many grand temples and palaces appeared across the 20sq km site. Abandoned after the 10th century, many of the sites are yet to be excavated. Climb the magnificent Temple of Inscriptions for panoramic views across the site.



Campeche



Overnight in Campeche at the Plaza Campeche. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Campeche was the principal sea port on the Yucatán Peninsula from the 16th-18th centuries and became a major target for pirates. To protect the port from attacks, the Spanish Crown ordered the fortification of the city and remnants of the original fortress still stand, including gates and ramparts which give the city a decidedly romantic, swashbuckling air. The ramparts house museums and the Land Gate is the site of a dramatic light and sound show that relives the pirate era. The facades of all the houses in the historic centre of town have been repaired and painted, all electrical and telephone cables have been buried underground, and the streets have been paved to look cobbled. Yet despite its beauty and colonial charm, it is free of the tourist crowds that flock to other cities in Mexico.

Plaza Campeche / Standard Room / Breakfast

19 Feb

After breakfast, private transfer to Merida with a guided visit to the ruins of Uxmal and Kabah en-route with lunch included. A World Heritage site, Uxmal is one of the best restored and maintained ruins in Yucatan, and certainly one of the most magnificent. Its architecture, some of the most majestic of the Yucatan ruins, is characterized by low horizontal palaces set around courtyards, decorated with rich sculptural elements and details. Rising up from the encroaching jungle, the Pyramid of the Magician is the centrepiece of the ruins and its presence dominates the whole site. There are also many other fantastic Mayan ruins nearby, many with very few visitors. The nearby Mayan ruins of Kabah are an amazing site with very few tourists. Unlike the many Mayan sites near Cancun that are crammed with people, the distance and location makes Kabah a really special experience. Arguably as dramatic as Chichén Itza or Uxmal, it covers a huge area and the views from the top of the temples are simply stunning.



Merida



2 nights in Merida at the Casa del Balam. Conveniently located in the heart of Merida's historic centre, the Casa del Balam is a colonial style hotel elegantly decorated with colonial antiques, carved stone arches, wrought iron accessories and marble floors. The same family has owned it for the past 70 years and have restored it delightfully, preserving the traditional Yucatán home feeling. The 30 rooms have been furnished using locally made furniture with fully renovated modern bathrooms. Facilities include a patio café-bar and a walled garden with a terrace and swimming pool.

Casa del Balam / Standard Room / Breakfast

20 Feb

Merida

Full day shared tour to Celestun including lunch.

A wetland reserve that is the winter home to vast flocks of flamingos, as well as many herons and other bird species. 300 species of birds also pass through on migration, or live here. Celestun's ecosystem is unique because of a combination of fresh water from Celestun "river" and salt water from the Gulf of Mexico. Celestun's flamingos are the pinkest in the world due to the high concentration of carotene in the water. The park also boasts two types of pelicans - large white Canadian and smaller gray Mexican ones. Boat tours of the estuary are available near the bridge that links Celestun with the mainland. The tour includes views of a petrified forest, mangrove swamps, and the "ojos de agua", fresh water springs where you can swim.



Casa del Balam / Standard Room / Breakfast

21 Feb

Chichen Itza



Full day private tour of Chichen Itza including lunch.

The famous Mayan pyramids and temples of Chichén Itzá cover an area of over 4 square miles and are over 1500 years old. The name Chichén Itzá is a Mayan word: CHI (mouth) CHEN (well) and ITZA (of the witch water). Some say this is because people were often thrown into the nearby cenote (sinkhole) as sacrifices, and those who survived were believed to be seers. The site is divided into three sections. The North grouping of structures is distinctly Toltec in style, whilst the central group appears to be from the early period and the southern group is known as "The Old Chichén".

Overnight at the Hacienda Chichen. Built in 1921, the Hacienda Chichen became the Carnegie Institute's Mayan expedition Headquarters in the Yucatán and has recently been re-modelled to serve as a hotel. Stay in one of 12 cottages housing a total of 28 guestrooms, each cottage may have one or up to four rooms uniquely decorated and designed. All guestrooms have patio terraces overlooking the lush gardens. The hotel has a restaurant, swimming pool, poolside patio and terrace gardens.



Hacienda Chichen / Standard Room / Breakfast

22 Feb

Depart

Private transfer to Cancun to meet your direct overnight return flight.

Depart Cancun 16:30 Arrive London Gatwick 07:30 (on the 23rd)

23 Feb

Arrive back into London Gatwick.

The per person cost for the above itinerary based on 2 passengers in 1 x double room would be **£3625.00**

The per person cost for the above itinerary based on 4 passengers in 2 x double room would be **£3075.00**

The above price includes:

- International Flights with British Airways in economy class.
- Internal flights as listed in economy class.
- All pre-payable airport departure taxes.
- Transfers as listed (on a shared basis unless specified as private).
- Meals as listed.
- Excursions as listed (on a shared basis unless specified as private).

The above price does not include:

- Local departure taxes
- Tips and gratuities.
- Any future currency surcharges.
- Any future airline fare, tax or fuel surcharges.*

**In the event of airfare /tax increases you will have the option to pay for your airfare in advance to avoid these increases.*

Please note: This is a quotation valid for 7 days only from 13 July 2011. All flights, accommodation and services are subject to availability at the time of booking.

This itinerary departs from London Heathrow and arrives back into London Gatwick.

Booking Conditions

20% deposit is required to secure this booking. The balance would be due 10 weeks prior to departure.

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