

A Cultural Immersion Into Old Mexico

9th to 24th November 2019



Colourful buildings in Ajijic

Our journey will commence in the charming village of Ajijic (pronounced A-hee-heek) nestling in Mexico's Sierra Madre Mountains on the northern shore of Lake Chapala. Only 30 minutes from Guadalajara international airport, Ajijic remains a quaint cobble-stoned village, a rustic reminder of an earlier time but with all the normal services of the 21st Century. This is 'slow travel' at its very best as we are drawn into the rhythms of daily life. We'll visit local artisans and private homes. There's something in the very spirit of this village which lingers long after you leave. From there we'll head to one of the prettiest towns in Mexico, San Miguel de Allende famous for its intense cultural and artistic life. We'll visit the extraordinary tunneled town of Guanajuato before our final destination, Mexico City. En-route we'll explore one of the most remarkable archaeological sites in Mexico -the pyramids

Highlights

- Small group – maximum 12 guests
 - Guided tour of the Artisan Fair
 - Escorted walking tour of Ajijic
 - Full day tour of Tequila and the historic Mundo Cuervo distillery
 - Transfer for day trip to Tlaquepaque
 - Optional special interest activities including photography, painting class, birding, or cooking class
 - Behind the walls tour to private homes and haciendas
 - Unique opportunities to meet ex-pat locals to discover more about life in a Mexican village
 - San Miguel de Allende & Guanajuato
 - Pyramids of Teotihuacan
 - Highlights of Mexico City
- Days 1-8 Ajijic Arrive at Guadalajara international airport. Private transfer provided to our hotel, La Nueva Posada, in Ajijic. Meet your fellow travellers for a welcome cocktail followed by a casual dinner at the hotel.

Day 2: Guided walking tour of Ajijic. And its magnificent murals depicting social and historical scenes created by famous Mexican artists – many of whom are based in Ajijic. Following lunch, the remaining afternoon is at leisure to further explore.

For dinner choose from our selection of local restaurants offering traditional Mexican food or opt for a light supper in the hotel.

Day 3: Today we head into one of Guadalajara's oldest village, Tlaquepaque. It's filled with spectacular one-of-a-kind experiences in every medium from Western and eclectic bronze sculptures, functional and traditional ceramics, breathtaking glass blown creations, fine contemporary jewellery and designer casual wear in silk and leather. Just walking around Tlaquepque is an adventure in discovery. Tonight, is free – dine around options are provided

Day 4: Today is your special personal day where you have an opportunity to explore the local villages and surrounds or join one of a selection of guided activities. Dinner tonight is in the neighbouring village of San Juan Cosala at 'Viva Mexico', owned and run by Agustin, one of the area's local heroes due to his charitable work in the community and a master Mexican Chef

Day 5: Today is market day in Ajijic. It's located approximately 10 minutes' walk from our hotel and is an excellent place to interact with locals. Following the market, we'll go "Behind the Walls" with a visit to some of the privately owned magnificent colonial haciendas.

Day 6: After breakfast, we'll depart for a full day tour to Tequila home to a 300-year-old distillery still producing high quality tequila. We will travel through Maguey plantations where we'll discover how the plant is grown and harvested.



Sunrise over tranquil Lake Chapala



Local artisan at the Maestros del Arte Fair

A private escorted tour through Mundo Cuervo family distillery will be followed by lunch. After which, there will be time to explore the village of Tequila before our return to Ajijic.

Day 7: After breakfast, we'll head to the Maestros del Arte Fair in Chapala which is a unique event and the largest artisan fair in Mexico. Organized by an array of volunteers, artists do not pay fees or percentage of sales to attend. They are hosted by local ex-pat families and their participation forms part of a unique community event. For many artists, it is their first contact with the outside art world. All are masters of their mediums; clay, paper, fabric, print, wood, stone, silver, alpaca wool and other traditional materials. Feria Maestros del Arte brings you an opportunity to meet the artists and witness demonstrations of these ancient crafts. Why not explore the lakeside town of Chapala before heading back to Ajijic. Dinner tonight is in one of Ajijic's finest restaurants.

Day 8: Your last full day to wander the village, sit in the plaza and watch the world go by, do some last-minute shopping or take a local bus to explore one of the other local towns or villages. Tonight, we'll dine together in one of Ajijic's finest restaurants to celebrate the end of a memorable tour and our immersion into the life and spirit of this wonderful community.

◇ *La Nueva Posada, Ajijic*

Days 9-12 San Miguel de Allende

Day 9: Checking out of our hotel we'll depart for our transfer to San Miguel de Allende. After checking into our charming hotel we'll meet for pre-dinner drinks and dinner in one of its finest restaurants.

Day 10: Our day will start with an orientation tour of San Miguel de Allende including its major food market. During your free afternoon we highly recommend a visit to the Toy Museum which showcases a wonderful range of antique and current artisan designed toys.

Day 11: This morning we'll drive to nearby Guanajuato, one of the most unusual and picturesque cities in Mexico. With its unique tunnel system, labyrinth cobblestone alleyways, squares, colourful facades, strange topography, stairways and its lively environment will take you back to a different world. After an orientation walk and lunch you will be free to roam this remarkable city and discover its many treasures.

Day 12: A day at leisure to further explore this fascinating and stunning town.

Days 13 -16 Mexico City

Day 13: After an early breakfast we'll set out for Mexico City with a stop en-route to explore one of the most remarkable archaeological sites in Mexico – the pyramids of Teotihuacan. Late afternoon we'll settle into our boutique hotel on the main plaza of Zocalo. Dinner will be in the hotel restaurant with its spectacular views over this famous square.

Day 14: This morning we'll walk this historic square with our guide and discover its famous buildings, monuments and murals. After lunch we'll visit the Museum of Anthropology, arguable one of the world's finest museums and a fascinating introduction to the richness of Mexico's history and culture.

Day 15: The day is free to further explore independently or join us for a visit to the 'Blue House' home to the Frida Kahlo museum or enjoy a culinary walking tour of the old city. Farewell group dinner tonight in one of the city's finest restaurants.

◇ *Gran Hotel de la Ciudad*

Inclusions

Individual transfers from Guadalajara airport.
8 nights accommodation in Ajijic
4 nights in San Miguel de Allende
3 nights in Mexico City
English speaking guide
15 breakfasts, 7 lunches, 9 dinners including wine, beer, soft drinks
Comfortable air-conditioned transfers
Entry fees for scheduled visits
Tips for drivers and guides
Group transfer to Mexico City airport

Dates & Prices

Tour Price: AUD\$ 6,500 per person
Reductions available for twin-share
Not included: Air fares to and from Mexico
Dates: 9th – 24th November 2019

Mexico-just go & do it with Big Yellow Suitcase Fascinating guides who were knowledgeable & took us to hidden gems. Plenty of diversity from art & craft viewing, history, food & music. A cooking class where we learnt more than cooking, visits to markets, behind the walls tours of homes & the fabulous & unique 'Feria' showcasing the very best of artisans & their skills from around Mexico. You'll need an extra suitcase as the beauty is mesmerizing & irresistible to the pocket.

