



Northern Central Highlands

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Best Places to Eat

- Cafe Rama (p666)
- Las Mercedes (p652)
- Los Dorados de Villa (p693)
- El México de Frida (p680)
- San Marcos Merendero (p674)

Best Places to Stay

- Posada Corazón (p664)
- Casa Estrella de la Valenciana (p650)
- Hotel Emporio Zacatecas (p691)
- Community lodges (p642)

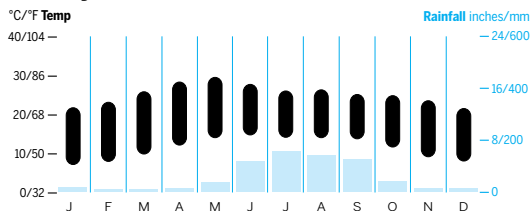
Why Go?

From cobbled lanes to pretty plazas, deserts to cloud forest, the northern central highlands region is as varied as its history, cuisine and cultures. It was here that former mineral wealth created colonial cities and revolutionary activity left ghost towns in its wake. Known as the Cuna de la Independencia (Cradle of Independence), the territory is renowned for its part in the country's fight for autonomy.

Particular jewels include silver-ridden Guanajuato and Zacatecas, plaza-filled San Luis Potosí, arty San Miguel de Allende and nature-filled Sierra Gorda. And as for the cuisine... Travel a few kilometers for another take on a trusty tortilla or regional specialty. Culture vultures can feast on pre-Hispanic sites and art museums, concerts, nightlife, festivals and *callejoneadas* – the northern central highlands continues centuries of pomp and ceremony. It sure knows how to put on a good (if noisy) party.

When to Go

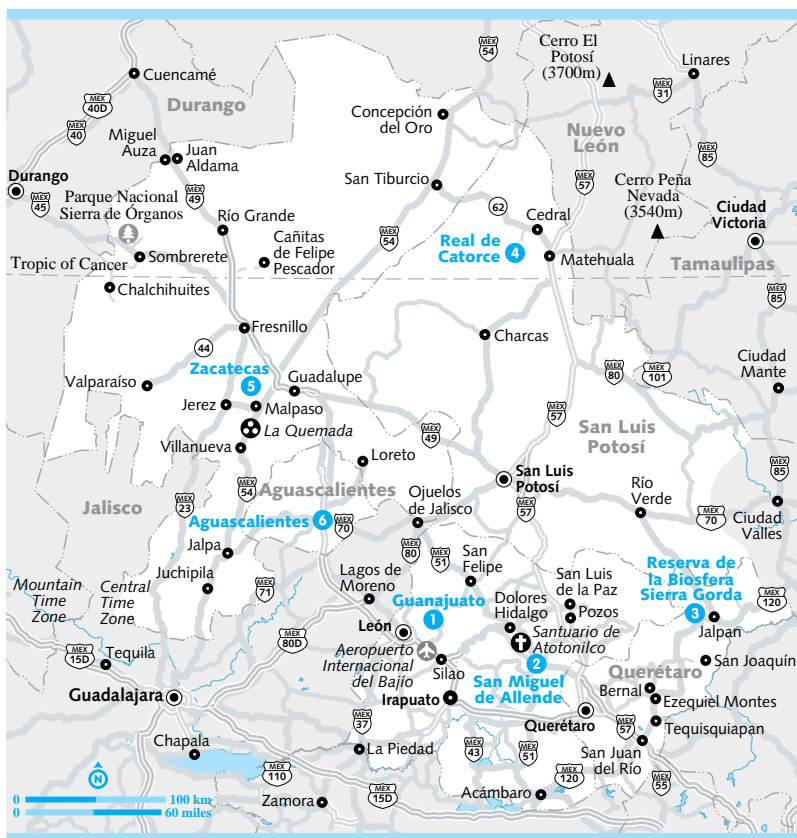
Guanajuato



Jul & Aug Days are mild and wildflowers bloom; it's the perfect time for DIY explorations.

Late Oct Villages are abuzz as they prepare for Day of the Dead celebrations (Nov 1 to 2).

Late Mar or Apr Traditional religious festivities abound during Semana Santa (Holy Week).



Northern Central Highlands Highlights

- 1 Meander through winding cobbled alleys and marvelous museums in **Guanajuato** (p643)
- 2 Feed your soul with art, food and fiestas in popular **San Miguel de Allende** (p657)
- 3 Marvel at the missions and stay in communities within the wilderness jewel, the **Reserva de la Biosfera Sierra Gorda** (p642)
- 4 Sense the spirits of miners in the picturesque, reawakening 'ghost' town of **Real de Catorce** (p682)
- 5 Ride high on the *teleférico* (cable car) over the top of **Zacatecas** (p686) up to the pinnacle, La Bufa
- 6 Put a positive spin on death in Museo Nacional de la Muerte, **Aguascalientes** (p671)

History

Until the Spanish conquest, the northern central highlands were inhabited by fierce seminomadic tribes known to the Aztecs as Chichimecs. They resisted Spanish expansion longer than other Mexican peoples but were ultimately pacified in the late 16th century. The wealth subsequently amassed by the Spanish was at the cost of many Chich-

imecs, who were used as slave labor in the mines.

This historically volatile region sparked the criollo fight for independence from Spain, which was plotted in Querétaro and San Miguel de Allende and launched from Dolores Hidalgo in 1810. A century later Francisco Madero released his revolutionary Plan de San Luis Potosí and the 1917 signing of Mexico's constitution in Querétaro