

# Tabasco & Chiapas



Mismatched siblings, the neighboring states of Tabasco and Chiapas are almost a study in contrasts. Smaller Tabasco – between central Mexico and the Yucatán Peninsula – is less diverse than Chiapas, and prone to flooding, as demonstrated by a catastrophic flood in October 2007. A largely flat, steamy, well-watered lowland, it sees fewer visitors, but those who do drop in discover a place with fascinating pre-Hispanic heritage from the Olmec and Maya civilizations, a relaxed tropical lifestyle and a unique environment of enormous rivers, endless wetlands and inviting beaches heading out into the Gulf of Mexico.

In Chiapas, pine-forest highlands, wildlife-rich rainforest and well-preserved colonial architecture highlight a region of incredible variety. Palenque and Yaxchilán are evocative vestiges of powerful Maya kingdoms, and the presence of modern Maya is a reminder of the region's rich history. The colonial hubs of San Cristóbal de Las Casas and Chiapa de Corzo give way to fertile plots of coffee and cacao in the Soconusco, and for outdoor adventurers excursions to Laguna Miramar and the Cañón del Sumidero are unmissable. Nature lovers venturing off the beaten track will swoon over the frothy cascades and exotic animals of the Lacandón Jungle.

Tabasco has mostly rebuilt and refortified since the 2007 flood submerged more than one million homes and an estimated 80% of the state. Rains were unusually heavy that year, but the scale of the devastation underscored Tabasco's vulnerability to seasonal rains and the general precariousness of its infrastructure. Though some preventative measures have been put in place since then, the region remains prone due to its many waterways, as evidenced by the 2009 flooding of Cárdenas and Huimanguillo, which displaced about 35,000 residents.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Scale the jungle-covered hills and soaring Maya temples of **Palenque** (p238)
- Stroll the high-altitude cobblestone streets of **San Cristóbal de Las Casas** (p228)
- Cruise through the waterway and sheer high rock cliffs of the spectacular **Cañón del Sumidero** (p243)
- Spend a few splendid days hiking and relaxing at the mountain-ringed **Laguna Miramar** (p243)
- Admire the mysterious art of the ancient Olmecs at Villahermosa's **Parque-Museo La Venta** (p226)



■ POPULATION: TABASCO 2 MILLION;  
CHIAPAS 4.3 MILLION

■ AREA: TABASCO 25,267 SQ KM;  
CHIAPAS 74,211 SQ KM

