

Mexico

Baja California p700

Copper Canyon & Northern Mexico p743

Northern Central Highlands Central p636

Pacific Western Around Mexico
Coast Central City p140
Highlands Cyp576 Mexico

City p62

p140 Peninsula P254 P203

Oaxaca p419 Chiapas & Tabasco p347

Yucatán

THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

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PLAN YOUR TRIP

ON THE ROAD

Welcome to Mexico6 Mexico Map8	MEXICO CITY 62	Cacaxtla & Xochitécatl171 La Malinche173
Mexico's Top 2110 Need to Know20 First Time Mexico22	AROUND MEXICO CITY 140 North of Mexico City141 Tepotzotlán 141	Huamantla
What's New 24 If You Like 25 Month by Month 30	Tula 144 Teotihuacán 146	Yohualichán
Itineraries	Pachuca 150 East of Mexico City 154 Puebla 154	Cuautla
Exploring Mexico's Ancient Ruins 48 Travel with Children 54 Regions at a Glance57	Cholula	Taxco



Contents

Toluca196	Orizaba232	Izamal320
Nevado de Toluca 199	Pico de Orizaba 235	Chichén Itzá 322
Valle de Bravo 199	Northern Veracruz 236	Valladolid
Malinalco 201	Tuxpan	Ek' Balam 33
Ixtapan de la Sal202	Papantla238	Río Lagartos 332
	El Tajín240	Campeche State 333
VERACRUZ203	Southeast Veracruz 245	Campeche
Veracruz City 205	Tlacotalpan 245	Edzná
Central Veracruz216	Santiago Tuxtla 247	Bolonchén de Rejón
Central Coast 216	Tres Zapotes 248	& Xtacumbilxunaan 342
Xalapa217	San Andrés Tuxtla 248	Balamkú343
Córdoba228	Catemaco	Calakmul
Fortín de las Flores 230	Reserva de la	Chicanná
Coscomatepec 232	Biosfera Los Tuxtlas 252	Becán344
	YUCATÁN	Xpujil
	PENINSULA254	Río Bec346
	Quintana Roo 255	Hormiguero346
4-1//	Cancún	CHIAPAS
	Isla Mujeres266	& TABASCO 347
• 5	Isla Contoy271	Chiapas 350
	Isla Holbox271	Tuxtla Gutiérrez 350
A COMP	Puerto Morelos 273	Chiapa de Corzo355
	Playa del Carmen 275	San Cristóbal
TOTAL TOTAL AND	Isla Cozumel 279	de las Casas 358
	Akumal284	Ocosingo
	Tulum	Toniná
	Mahahual294	Agua Azul & Misol-Ha 379
	Xcalak295	Palenque380
	Laguna Bacalar296	Bonampak, Yaxchilán & the Carretera
	Chetumal	Fronteriza390
	Yucatán State300	Comitán400
	Mérida 301	El Soconusco
	Celestún	& Beaches
	Dzibilchaltún 318	Tapachula
SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE P661	Progreso 319	Tabasco 414
P001		Villahermosa 414

ON THE ROAD

OAXACA 419		
Oaxaca City 422	PABI	
Valles Centrales 443	0 (ZUD	
Monte Albán 443	MAN/LO	
Valle de Tlacolula 445	NELY P	CIO
Valle de Zimatlán 449	LANET	
Valle de Etla451		
Sierra Norte 452		
Pueblos Mancomunados452		
Western Oaxaca 454	Ship and the same of the same	SPIDER MONKEY
Yanhuitlán, Coixtlahuaca & Teposcolula 454	0 111	
Oaxaca Coast 455	Sayulita	Inland Colima State 607
Puerto Escondido 456	Punta de Mita & Around517	Colima
Pochutla469	Puerto Vallarta 518	Inland Michoacán612
Puerto Ángel 470	Costalegre Beaches534	Morelia 612
Zipolite 471	Bahía de Navidad535 Manzanillo538	Reserva Mariposa Monarca621
San Agustinillo 474	Boca de Pascuales 542	Angangueo 623
Mazunte 476	Michoacán Coast 543	Zitácuaro 623
La Ventanilla 479	Lázaro Cárdenas 546	Pátzcuaro
Bahías de Huatulco 480	Troncones	Uruapan 631
Barra de la Cruz 487	Ixtapa	Angahuan635
Isthmus of Tehuantepec487	Zihuatanejo550	NORTHERN CENTRAL
Salina Cruz	South of Ixtapa	HIGHLANDS 636
Tehuantepec 488	& Zihuatanejo	Querétaro State 638
Juchitán488	Pie de la Cuesta 561 Acapulco	Querétaro 638
	Costa Chica	Tequisquiapan645
CENTRAL PACIFIC	Costa Cilica 5/4	Northeast
COAST 491	WESTERN CENTRAL	Querétaro State 646
Mazatlán	HIGHLANDS 576	Guanajuato State 648
San Blas507	Guadalajara577	Guanajuato
Tepic	Tequila 601	León
Chacala 512	Amatitán 601	Dolores Hidalgo 658
San Francisco 512	Lago de Chapala 601	San Miguel de Allende 661
Sair r alicisco	Zona de Montaña605	Aguascalientes State 673

Contents

UNDERSTAND

Aguascalientes 673 San Luis Potosí State 678 San Luis Potosí 684 Matehuala 684 Real de Catorce 684 La Huasteca Potosina 689 Ciudad Valles 689	COPPER CANYON & NORTHERN MEXICO	Mexico Today. 802 History. 804 The Mexican 817 The Arts. 821 The Mexican 830
Rio Verde 691	El Fuerte 749	Landscapes
Zacatecas State 691	Cerocahui 752	& Wildlife 836
Zacatecas 691	Urique753	CHEVIVAL
La Quemada 699	Areponápuchi (Posada Barrancas)755	SURVIVAL GUIDE
BAJA CALIFORNIA 700 Northern Baja 702	Parque de Aventura Barrancas del Cobre 756	Directory A–Z 846
Tijuana 702	Divisadero	Transportation 858
Playas de Rosarito709	Creel	Language 865
Ensenada	Batopilas 761	Index 878
La Bufadora 714	Northwest Mexico 764	Map Legend 894
Parque Nacional Constitución de 1857 714	Puerto Peñasco 765 Bahía de Kino 768	
Mexicali 715	San Carlos	
Southern Baja716	Álamos771	
Guerrero Negro717	Los Mochis 775	
San Ignacio 718	Chihuahua &	
Santa Rosalía 720	Central North Mexico777	
Mulegé	Chihuahua777	
Loreto	Nuevo Casas Grandes & Casas Grandes 783	SPECIAL FEATURES
La Ventana	Mata Ortiz 784	
Los Barriles 733	Hidalgo del Parral784	Off the Beaten Track: Mexico 40
Cabo Pulmo	Durango	Eat & Drink
Reserva de la Biosfera Sierra de la Laguna 734	Northeast Mexico 789	Like a Local 42
San José del Cabo 734	Saltillo790	Exploring Mexico's
Los Cabos Corridor 737	Parras 791	Ancient Ruins 48
Cabo San Lucas 737	Cuatro Ciénegas 793	Chichén Itzá 3D Illustration 324
Todos Santos 740	Monterrey 794	3D IIIUSUAUUII 324

Plan Your Trip

Itineraries





Riviera Maya & Costa Maya Getaway

This journey showcases the best of Mexico's Caribbean coast, from the bustling beaches and nightlife of the Riviera Maya to the soporific charm of seaside villages along the Costa Maya. Some wonderfully scenic Maya ruins, caves and terrific diving and snorkeling add some action to a beach vacation.

Fly into Cancún and head straight for relaxed **Isla Mujeres'** beaches and snorkeling, taking a side trip to **Isla Contoy**,

a national park with superlative birdwatching and, June to September, the chance to swim with whale sharks that congregate nearby.

Alternatively, opt for hip **Playa del Carmen**, with its own fine beaches, underwater activities and lively nightlife. 'Playa' is also the jumping-off point for the world-famous dive sites of **Isla Cozumel**. If you have kids, spend a day at the turtle farm on Isla Mujeres, one of the nearby 'eco-parks' such as **Selvática** with its 12 jungle zip-lines, or **Crococun** in Puerto



Maya ruins, Tulum (p286)

Morelos, an interactive zoo with crocodiles and wild monkeys. Next stop: **Tulum**, with one of Mexico's most perfect beaches and most spectacularly located Maya sites. Nearby are the pyramids and temples of **Cobá**, as well as the wildlife-rich Reserva de la Biosfera Sian Ka'an. South of Tulum the Costa Maya is less developed and less touristed than the Riviera Maya. Head to

Mahahual, a laid-back village with snorkeling and diving at the coral atoll **Banco Chinchorro**, or the tiny fishing town of **Xcalak**, another excellent water-sports base. After three nights chilling at either of these, opt for a fourth night or, if you're worried that you missed out on **Cancún's** nightlife, spend your last night there.









Top: Palenque archaeological site (p381) Bottom: Cancún (p255)



This classic journey leads south from Mexico's central heartland to its glorious Caribbean beaches, and gives a superb sampling of what makes the country so fascinating.

Start by exploring the exciting megalopolis of **Mexico City**, key to any understanding of the country. Take a side trip to the awesome pyramids at **Teotihuacán**, capital of ancient Mexico's biggest empire. Then head east to the fun-loving port city of **Veracruz**, before crossing the mountains southward to **Oaxaca**. This cultured colonial city, with Mexico's finest handicrafts, sits at the heart of a beautiful region with a large indigenous population. Don't miss the ancient Zapotec capital, **Monte Albán**, nearby.

Head to one of the relaxed beach spots on the Oaxaca coast, such as **Puerto Escondido**, **Mazunte** or **Zipolite**, for a few days' sun, surf and sand, before continuing east to **San Cristóbal de las Casas**, a beautiful highland town surrounded by intriguing indigenous villages. Move on to **Palenque**, perhaps the most stunning of all ancient Maya cities, with its backdrop of emerald-green jungle, and **Yaxchilán**, another marvelous Maya city, accessible only by river.

Head northeast to **Campeche**, an attractive mix of colonial city and bustling modern town. detouring to the ancient Maya city of Calakmul en route. Move on to colonial Mérida, the Yucatán Peninsula's lively cultural capital and the base for visiting the superb ruins of Uxmal and the **Ruta Puuc**. Next stop: **Chichén Itzá**, the most celebrated of all the Yucatán's Maya sites. From here it's on to Tulum on the Caribbean coast, another spectacular Maya site set beside a glorious beach. Finally make your way northward along the Riviera Maya to the hip beach town of **Playa del Carmen**, with a side trip to Isla Cozumel for world-class snorkeling and diving. End at Mexico's most popular and unabashed coastal resort, Cancún.

Baja from Tip to Toe

The world's second-longest peninsula seems tailor-made for road tripping, with 1200km of road snaking through picturesque villages, along dramatic coastline and past otherworldly rock canyons. Baja's charms are further enhanced by its appealing colonial towns, world-class diving and some of the best fish tacos you'll ever taste.

Enjoy a full-on day of Mexican life-on-thestreets in **Tijuana** before heading south via the **Valle de Guadalupe** winery route, stopping to tour the vineyards and taste the terrific tipples. Then make a stop in **Ensenada** for great fish tacos and a stroll through the shopping streets before heading south via the Carretera Transpeninsular's spectacular desert scenery. If it's migration season (December to April), book a whale-watching tour at **Guerrero Negro**. Alternatively, continue south and detour to **Sierra de San Francisco** to view ancient petroglyphs in the local caves.

Further south, pass through San Ignacio and stop in **Mulegé** for a tranquil paddle in the cerulean **Sea of Cortez**. The highway then hugs the coast en route to **Loreto**, where you can spend a day or two discovering the artisan shops, great restaurants, historic architecture and 17th-century mission. Heading south again, the road passes several stunning beaches before ducking inland and leading you to the unspoiled charms of **La Paz**. Spend a day kayaking and snorkeling off the island of **Espíritu Santo**, or go swimming with whale sharks (October to March).

Next, stop at **Todos Santos**, a gorgeous little town with picturesque old sugar mills, before you hit wild **Cabo San Lucas**. Indulge in banana-boating, parasailing and other beach activities before hitting the bars, and don't forget to take a boat to **Land's End** for a glimpse of the magical stone arch. If you need a respite, head for **San José del Cabo**, Cabo's tamer twin, with its appealing colonial church, art galleries and a clutch of good restaurants, or go underwater for a closer glimpse of the reef at **Cabo Pulmo**.





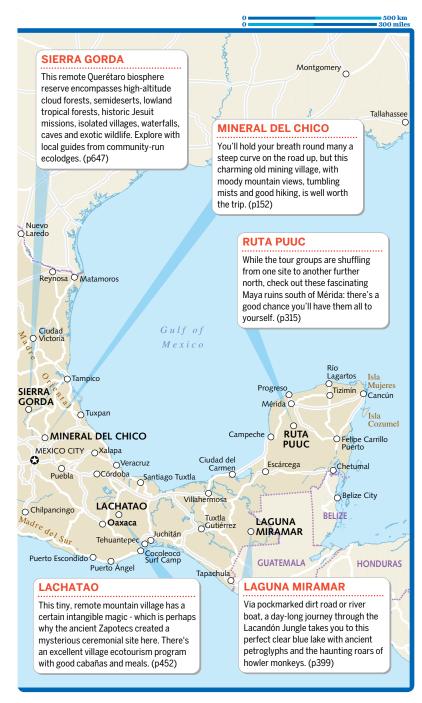
Top: Tijuana (p702) Bottom: Stand-up paddleboarding, Sea of Cortez





Off the Beaten Track: Mexico





Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Ŏ lain
- 0 lewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- ø Shinto Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities. Courses & Tours

- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kavaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing Snorkeling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping

Eating

Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

Entertainment

Shopping

Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate ♣ Hospital/Medical
- @ Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone (II) Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- ▲ Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park) (Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- Citv/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- ++ Cable car/Funicular
- - Cycling
- -@- Ferry
- Metro station
- Parking
- Petrol station Subway/Subte station
- Taxi
- → Train station/Railway
- -@- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

appear on the maps in this book

Routes

Tollway Freeway

Secondary Tertiary

Primary

Unsealed road Road under construction

Plaza/Mall

Steps = = Tunnel

Pedestrian overpass

Walking Tour

Walking Tour detour Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

--- International State/Province

Disputed

Regional/Suburb Marine Park

Cliff - Wall

Hydrography

River, Creek Intermittent River Canal

Water

Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake

Reef

Areas

Airport/Runway Beach/Desert

Cemetery (Christian)

Cemetery (Other)

Glacier

Mudflat siliz

Park/Forest

Sight (Building)

Sportsground

Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above

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Anna Kaminski

The Mexican Way of Life, Directory, Transportation Anna's love affair with Mexico began in 1999, when she crossed the land border to Tijuana; she liked the merry chaos so much that she ended up backpacking all the way down to Cabo San Lucas. Since then, she's put her university background in Latin American history and culture to good use, coming back on many occasions to teach English in Oaxaca, visit every major ancient ruin in the country, learn to surf in Sayulita, criss-cross the

country by bus, ride the country's only train and travel far and wide in search of the perfect fish taco.

Anna tweets at @ACKaminski. Anna also contributed to the Plan Your Trip chapters of this edition.



Tom Masters

Copper Canyon & Northern Mexico Tom has had an extended love affair with Mexico ever since working in the jungle of Chiapas as a documentary producer in 2005. Since then he has lived in Mexico City and written widely about many different parts of the country for Lonely Planet. In writing the monster Copper Canyon & Northern Mexico chapter, Tom particularly found himself loving Alamos, Parras and Monterrey's reinvigorated Barrio Antiguo, as well as finally getting to

do the Copper Canyon Railway. You can find Tom online at www.tommasters.net.



Josephine Quintero

Baja California Josephine was married for many years to a Mexican American with a large extended family, leading to a healthy exposure to mariachi music and margaritas. She made frequent trips over the border from her home in San Diego and continues to be enthralled by the heady mix of vibrant culture, wonderful people, fabulous food and all that history. Josephine now lives in Andalucía, Spain. A highlight of this trip was discovering the fabulous urban art in downtown Tijuana.

Read more about Josephine at lonelyplanet.com/members/josephinequintero



Brendan Sainsbury

Western Central Highlands An expat Brit now living near Vancouver, Canada, Brendan first went to Mexico in the 1990s on an ill-conceived long-distance bike ride from Veracruz to Mexico City. Having survived manic driving, thin air and a minor earthquake, he went back in 2004 to get married on a Pacific beach. This book is his second Mexican sojourn for Lonely Planet, although he has also researched and written guides to Cuba, Spain, Peru and Jamaica. When not climb-

ing youthful volcanoes or searching for enlightenment in pre-Hispanic ruins, Brendan likes relaxing with his flamenco guitar, watching *Dr Who* and following the exploits of Southampton Football Club.



Andy Symington

Central Pacific Coast Australian and based in Spain, Andy is a widely experienced guidebook author who has written or co-written more than 100 titles with Lonely Planet and other publishers. Latin America is one of his life passions: on this trip he revelled in the superb Pacific coast seafood and tried to catch as many sunsets as possible from just beyond the breakers.



Phillip Tang

Mexico City, Around Mexico City A degree in Latin American studies brought Phillip Tang to these shores, and over a decade later he calls Mexico City home, between stints living in Sydney and London. He writes about travel on his two loves, Asia and Latin America, and has contributed to Lonely Planet's guides to China, Japan, Korea, Peru and Mexico. Find his Mexico Insta-photos from this visit through philliptang.co.uk.



Lucas Vidgen

Chiapas & Tabasco, Yucatán Peninsula Lucas first visited Mexico back in 2002, breezing through the Yucatán long enough to be captivated by the lush scenery and irresistible food. Later he moved to Guatemala, which served as a good base for exploring Chiapas and the rest of the Mundo Maya. Lucas has contributed to a variety of Lonely Planet titles, mostly in Central and South America. Back home he publishes – and very occasionally works on – Quetzaltenango's leading night-

life magazine, XelaWho (www.xelawho.com).



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born. Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Dublin, Franklin, London,

Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



John Noble

Oaxaca John has been making extended trips to Mexico for over three decades and has had a big hand in every edition of this guide since edition 3, wandering from Tijuana to Chetumal and many, many places in between. He's climbed volcanoes, boated down jungle rivers, explored the barrios of Mexico City and understood why Oaxacans revere mezcal, and he's already looking forward to the next trip. Originally from England's Ribble Valley, John has lived

for 20 years in the land of Mexico's old colonial masters, Spain. John also wrote Mexico Today, History, The Arts, Landscapes & Wildlife, Exploring Mexico's Ancient Ruins and several other Plan Your Trip chapters.



Kate Armstrong

Northern Central Highlands As Australian as a kangaroo, but a Latina (she believes) in a former life, Kate visits Mexico regularly. Covering the silver cities for the fifth time for Lonely Planet, she headed to festivals, hiked gorges in Sierra Gorda, and ate kilos of gorditas (filled dough pockets). She plunged over, in and under every waterfall in the Huasteca Potosina, and talked, danced and ate her way through the magic of Mexico. She is a freelance travel writer; see www.

katearmstrongtravelwriter.com and twitter @nomaditis. Kate also contributed to The Mexican Kitchen chapter and several Plan Your Trip chapters.



Stuart Butler

Veracruz Stuart first traveled to Mexico in the late 1990s as part of a longer trip through Latin America. Mexico stood out for him thanks to its heady mix of beaches, wildlife, surf, mountains and a rich culture, and he has since made a number of repeat visits. Hailing from southwest England Stuart now lives on the beautiful beaches of southwest France, close to the Spanish border, with his wife and young son and daughter. He is also the co-author of many Spain-

based Lonely Planet books.



John Hecht

Yucatán Peninsula John has spent more than 20 years down Mexico way, during which time he has contributed to numerous editions of Lonely Planet's Mexico and Central America books. Among the most recent titles, he has worked on the past two editions of LP's Cancún, Cozumel & the Yucatán. He also wrote and produced a series of short-form videos in the Yucatán for Lonely Planet TV. Mom is starting to give up hope that he'll ever return to the good of USA.

OVER MORE PAGE WRITERS

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