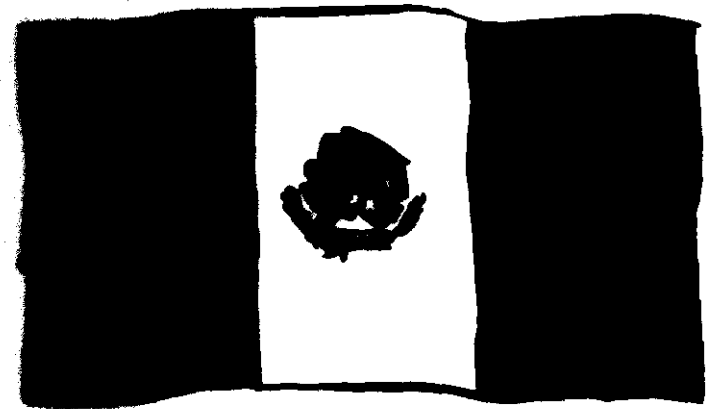


**A Student's Guide to  
Traveling and  
Studying Abroad in  
Mexico**

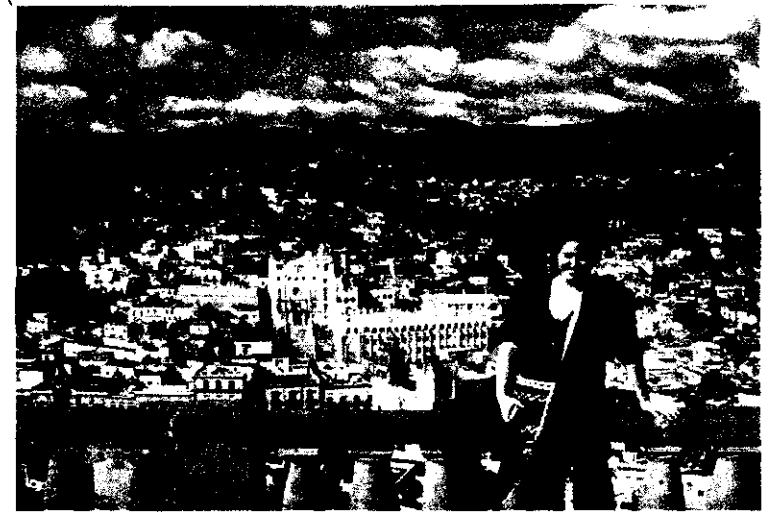


**Colleen Kiss**

**Senior Honors Thesis**

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## About the Author



Me at the bottom of La Pipila in Guanajuato. This area gives a great view of all of the city

In order for my readers to fully understand why I wrote this book, I thought it best to give a little bit of background information about myself. I am a senior at Ball State University with a minor in Spanish. I spent the past semester in Morelia, Mexico a beautiful city in the state of Michoacan. Morelia will always hold a special place in my heart. I plan to return soon and possibly move there to teach English. I spent my semester studying and traveling to many different parts of Mexico. This book is a compellation of my experiences in Mexico. It includes suggested books and websites to check out before you leave for Mexico, tips and suggestions for studying and traveling abroad, information on cultural differences, culture shock and Mexican cuisine, cultural information/ points of interest on certain Mexican cities, and extra photos that may be of interest.

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\* The information on the various cities contains general information on different places of interest as well as specific cultural information.

# Suggested Books and Websites

Baird, David and Lynn Bairstow. Frommer's '03. New York: Macmillan, 2001.

Gilbert, Joseph and Timothy J. Henderson, eds. The Mexico Reader : History, Culture, Politics. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.

Heusinkveld, Paula. Inside Mexico. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1994.

Oster, Patrick. The Mexicans: A Personal Portrait. New York: Harper & Row, Pubs., 1990.

*Online Travel Handbook:*  
<http://www.usc.edu/dept/educationglobaled/studentsabroad>

*Traveling in Mexico:*  
<http://www.oreilly.com/publishing/ttales/webtour/mexicolinks.html>

*Mexico, Arte, Cultura, y Folklore:*  
<http://www.udg.mx/cultfolk/mexico.html>

*Morelia:*  
<http://www.mimorelia.com>

*Mexico City:*  
<http://www.mexicocity.com/mx/mexcity.html>

## Tips and Suggestions

- Never travel alone. Americans traveling alone are often unsuspecting and are preyed on by thieves.
- If you have to carry a purse, make sure you have a strap that goes across your shoulder. My recommendation would be to carry a purse only if absolutely necessary. The desperately poor will just cut the strap of your purse in order to steal it.
- Make copies of your visa, passport, and anything you might be carrying in your wallet or purse of value to you, such as credit cards, phone cards, insurance cards, etc.
- Never, ever carry large amounts of cash!!!
- Make sure you always have enough money on you for at least a cab ride home. If you get lost or get in a sticky situation, you can always hop in a cab and tell the driver to take you home. Most cab rides run from about 20-40 (\$2-4) pesos in Morelia depending on what part of the city you need to go to.



## Tips and Suggestions

- Stay away from the street food vendors. These vendors are not necessarily sanitary and many a brave American has regretted buying food from these vendors after spending a few days getting sick!!
- I have 2 words for you, Pepto Bismol! Many travel guides will tell you not to take medicine such as this or Imodium AD because they tend to paralyze your intestines and not take care of the problem, but they do come in handy at times (such as long bus trips or when you are on planes).
- Pack light. I was a culprit of over packing and I regretted it almost every day! Pack once and then take out half of what you have and repack. You are not going to be happy when you have to lug huge suitcases through crowded airports or bus stations.
- Your best bet for packing would be to take one large suitcase, a duffle bag, and a back pack. Make sure you check the weight limits set by the airlines you are traveling on. They have no problem charging you for over-weight bags.

## Tips and Suggestions

- Keep a journal. A journal is a nice thing to have to look back on once you get home from your trip.
- I would recommend going out and making MEXICAN friends. You are not going to better your Spanish skills or fully experience the culture if you only hang out with people in your group. Learning about the culture first hand from locals helps you to be more tolerant and may help lessen culture shock. Your new Mexican friends can also introduce you to things and places that the normal vacationer or tourist would never experience.
- Mexicans have a more relaxed concept of time than the people in the United States. People in the U.S. are very time oriented and stick to a strict schedule. At first their more relaxed time may seem a bit unnerving to you, (I learned to add about ½ hour onto any time I was supposed to meet my Mexican friends.) but it is something that you will get used to and eventually learn to enjoy.



## Tips and Suggestions

- You can find taxis all around Morelia at almost any time of the day or night. They usually run about 20 pesos or two dollars. It is best to ask the driver the cost of the ride before you get in the cab or else you risk the chance of being over charged. Your safest bet is to call a Radio Taxi and they will come straight to your home and pick you up. If you are taking a cab by yourself make sure a friend or family member takes down the number of the cab before you leave.
- Pay phones in Mexico are not the same as the pay phones in the United States. You can not just drop a few pesos in the phone and make a call. You have to buy a special card called a Latadel or Tel-Mex card. These cards can be found at most vendors or convenience stores. You place your card in a slot in the pay phone (a lot like an ATM) and then you can make your call. I would just recommend buying one of these cards with you when you get to Mexico and keep it with you at all times.

## Tips and Suggestions

- **Housing-** If you are living with a host family, respecting their rules will make your life a lot easier. Sit down and discuss the rules when you first get there so there won't be any questions or loopholes in what they expect of you.

- **Nightlife/ Bars-** Watch out for how much you drink at clubs, bars or restaurants. The alcohol content of mixed drinks tends to be a lot higher than in the U.S.



Always make sure someone knows where you are going and who you will be with. At the beginning of the night make sure you set aside enough money for a cab ride at the end of the night or make sure you have a designated driver. Walking home from any of the clubs or bars is not safe or a fun time at 2 o'clock in the morning.

- Always leave an itinerary with someone if you are planning on independent or small group travel.

## Tips and Suggestions

- You will need an adjustment period if you are not used to the high altitude. Avoid strenuous activity and alcohol for the first few days that you are in the country.

- Get checked out by a doctor before you leave. You do not want to start your trip off sick. I had the unfortunate experience of getting kidney stones while on the plane.

- Drink only bottled water or water that has been boiled for at least 20 minutes. Beware of ice cubes not made from purified water. Vegetables and fruits should be peeled or washed in a purifying solution. A good rule to follow— If you can't peel it or cook it, don't eat it.

- Bargain with the vendors at the markets. They will see you as a "rich American" and won't have any problem jacking up their prices and ripping you off. Don't feel bad bargaining, everyone does it.

- I would highly recommend using hotel safes. A friend had his camera stolen right out of his room.



## Tips and Suggestions

### Must Haves

- Lotion/Chap Stick/Eye Drops- A combination of high altitude, wind, and sun will cause your skin, eyes, and lips to dry out much quicker than at home. I always carried with me a small bottle of lotion, Chap Stick, and Visine with me at all times.
- Tennis Shoes- If you plan to do any site seeing or walking for any distance, tennis shoes are a must have.
- Film- Bring plenty of film with you to Mexico. It is a lot more expensive there. Although, I would recommend getting your film developed there. Development is cheaper there and you will not run the risk of having your film exposed or damaged on your trip home.
- 2 pesos- Although this is a very small amount of money, you should always have 2 pesos on you for the bathrooms. Many bathrooms are not free in Mexico and will charge you 2 pesos for entry.
- Bug Spray- The bugs in Mexico do not discriminate and they have no problem drinking your American blood.



## Tips and Suggestions

### Must Haves

- Toilet paper/tissues- You will find that most bathrooms in Mexico do not provide the necessary amenities. (Note: toilet paper goes in the trash can, do not flush the toilet paper, they do not have the filtration systems that we do.)
- Hand Sanitizer- Many bathrooms, along with toilet paper, do not have hand soap.
- Sun Block- You will get burned if you do not have sun block, especially in places like the pyramids. You are at a higher altitude at most places in Mexico and you will burn quicker.
- Calling Cards- You can get these cards from providers such as Sprint, MCI, or AT&T. Check out the details before you buy or use these cards. Calls can end up being very pricey. There are some good websites, such as [www.nobelcom.com](http://www.nobelcom.com), that have great deals and no connection fee.



## Cultural Differences



**There are many cultural differences between the United States and Mexico:**

### **Family:**

**Mexico-** Family is the first priority in the lives of Mexicans. The wife almost always fulfills the domestic role and mobility is generally limited.

**USA-** Family in the United States usually comes second to work. Wives often play dual roles (domestic and money maker). Mobility is quite common.

### **Religion:**

**Mexico-** There is a long Roman Catholic tradition in Mexico. They have a fatalistic outlook and believe that things occur only out of God's will.

**USA-** The USA is a melting pot of religions and there is a tendency to believe that one is the master of their own life.

### **Status:**

**Mexico-** Title and position are more important in the eyes of Mexican society.

**USA-** Money is the main measure of status in the United States. Money is the main reward for achievement.

### **Aesthetics:**

**Mexico-** In Mexico, the aesthetic side of life is important even in the workplace.

**USA-** Americans are more time oriented and don't have much time for useless frills.

### **Etiquette:**

**Mexico-** Mexicans often have an old world formality where etiquette and manners are seen as a measure of breeding.

**USA-** In the United States formality is often sacrificed for efficiency. Americans tend to have more of a "lets get to the point" approach.

## Culture Shock

Even if you are quite fluent in Spanish, it may take some time to adjust to the language. More than likely, you have learned the text book version of Spanish in your classes. Every Spanish speaking country has its own dialect, slang, etc. Mexico is no different. Don't feel bad asking someone to repeat themselves, explain a word, or speak slower. They will often appreciate that you are making the effort to speak to them in their own language. Also, You may find yourself feeling down or lonely during your stay in Mexico. These feelings are completely normal for anyone studying abroad. It might help to call family or friends from home, talk to your program director or host family, or just go out and explore Mexico to keep your mind off home. Everyone hears about culture shock coming into a new country, but there is also something called reverse culture shock. This is when students find it hard to re-adapt upon returning to the U.S. Students become accustomed to lives in another country and often look upon the U.S. with a critical eye. Whatever you are feeling know that these feelings are normal and that everyone goes through them.



# Mexican Cuisine

Food is probably one of the most important elements of Mexican culture. Much of the day revolves around the preparation of and eating food. Many women wake early in order to get to the markets and pick out fresh meats, fruits and vegetables. All of these items are used for the main meal of the day, known in Mexico as *comida*. In the past, the *siesta* or rest time, started around 1 pm and lasted until 4 pm with *comida* first and then a rest. During the main meal the family gathered back at the home. Today because the Mexican society is becoming more business oriented, there have been some changes in this time honored tradition. Some people no longer return home for *comida*, opting for eateries, street vendors, or fast food. Most women do not make their own tortillas any longer and instead buy them at local *tortillariás*. Also, fresh breads and cookies are often bought at *panaderías* or bakeries.



The Mexican cuisine is rich with diverse flavor. At least 60 different types of chilies are grown throughout Mexico. Chiles, along with tortillas, are the staple of Mexican dishes. Traditional indigenous dishes are often combined and blended with Spanish influences.

# Mexican Cuisine

## Translation of Food Terms

### Carnes— Meats

- Cabra: Goat
- Carne de Res: Beef
- Carnero: Lamb
- Lengua: Tongue
- Jamón: Ham
- Pavo: Turkey
- Pato: Duck
- Pollo: Chicken
- Puerco: Pork
- Chorizo: Spicy Sausage
- Tocino: Bacon

### Legumbres— Vegetables

- Aceitunas: Olives
- Arroz: Rice
- Calabazas: Squash
- Cebolla: Onion
- Champiñones: Mushrooms
- Frijoles: Cooked Beans
- Lechuga: Lettuce
- Maíz: Corn
- Papas: Potatoes
- Zanahoria: Carrots

### Frutas— Fruits

- Aguacate: Avocado
- Fresas: Strawberries
- Guayaba: Guava
- Manzana: Apple
- Melón— Melon
- Naranja— Orange
- Piña: Pineapple
- Uvas: Grapes

### Bebidas— Drinks

- Agua: Water
- Aguardiente: Brandy
- Café: Coffee
- Cerveza: Beer
- Crema: Cream
- Ginebra: Gin
- Jugo de Naranja: Orange Juice
- Leche: Milk
- Refrescos: Soft Drinks
- Té Helado: Iced Tea
- Té Caliente: Hot Tea

### Condimentos— Condiments

- Ajo: Garlic
- Azúcar: Sugar
- Canela: Cinnamon
- Mantequilla: Butter
- Mayonesa: Mayanaisse
- Miél: Honey
- Mostaza: Mustard
- Pimienta: Pepper
- Sal: Salt
- Vainilla: Vanilla

### Postres— Baked Goods/ Sweets

- Flan: Custard
- Galletas: Cookies
- Helado: Ice Cream
- Paleta: Flavored Ice on a Stick
- Pan: Bread
- Pan Dulce: Sweet Bread
- Pastel: Cake
- Pay: Pie

## Mexico City

Teotihuacán- Teotihuacán, the “City of the Gods,” tells the story of thousands of years of rich history. As you walk down the Avenue of the Dead you are taken over by the grandeur and sheer size of the two pyramids that tower over you. The Pyramid of the Moon stands in front of you at the end of the Avenue. The Pyramid of the Sun, larger in size, looms with an ominous feeling over to the right. The original inhabitants of these pyramids are unknown, but Teotihuacán was later inhabited by the Aztec Indians.



The Pyramid of the Sun

National Museum of Anthropology- This museum is one of the most important in the world because it shows the cultures that grew and flourished in pre-Hispanic Mexico. The exhibitions include studies of prehistoric animal life in Mexico and ethnological displays of the peoples of Mexico. The ground-floor halls are dedicated to pre-Hispanic Mexico, and the upper level covers the way modern Mexico's indigenous people (the descendants of those pre-Hispanic civilizations) lived. The most interesting part of this building depicts the layout of Tenochtitlan, which is present day Mexico City. The building that houses all of these exhibitions was built by architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez and was inspired by ancient Mexican architecture.

## Mexico City

Some of the most important Indian groups known to Mexico were the Olmecs, the Zapotecas, the Aztecs, and the Mayans. Artifacts from all of these civilizations are housed at the National Museum of Anthropology.

The Olmecs- The Olmecs are known as the first mother culture because they were the first important culture in Mexico. The Olmecs reigned from approximately 1200-600 BC. They were situated in present day Veracruz and Tabasco. There was an established hierarchy within the Olmec civilization. This hierarchy consisted of the supreme ruler at the top then, priests, soldiers, handcrafters, male peasants, servants, and slaves. The Olmecs are now famous for the very large sculptures that they created. Some of these sculptures are now exhibited in the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City. Although they were a very well established civilization, the Olmecs disappeared at the peak of their culture.

Zapotecas- The Zapotecas reigned from around 600-800 AD. They built their ceremonial center called Monte-Albán in Oaxaca on a plateau away from their main city. All of the pyramids found within Monte-Albán are tombs. Each tomb consists of two parts. One part house the coffin in which the ruler was buried with a mask made out of jade. The masks often resembled either a jaguar or a bat. Objects for the afterlife were placed in the second part of the tomb. Some of these objects were jewels, gold, pottery, etc.

## Mexico City

**Mayans-** The Mayans are probably one of the most well known indigenous Mexican civilizations. The first Mayans were a pre-classical culture and reigned from approximately 1500-100 BC. There were two Mayan centers: Palenque in the state of Chiapas and Tikal in Guatemala. Many indigenous people made pilgrimages to Tikal to pray. The two main gods of the Mayan civilization were *Kah*, the god of the sun, and *Chak*, the god of the rain. Sacrifices were made to these gods by weighing down virgins with many jewels and placing them in *cenotes*, which are deep underground reservoirs. The ruins of Bonampak, located in Chiapas, are the site of amazing murals that depict the legacy of kings.

**Aztecs-** The Aztecs established themselves in present day Mexico City in approximately 1325. Before settling down, they were a nomadic group and were among the last of the indigenous civilizations to arrive in Mexico. Their civilization was unfortunately eradicated by the arrival of Cortes and the Spaniards in 1519. The Aztecs made many sacrifices to their main gods. Huitzilopochtli was the god of war and of the sun and was said to crave human blood. It is said that 20,000 people were sacrificed to Huitzilopochtli the day their ceremonial center, Tenochtitlan, was finished being built.

Huitzilopochtli's enemy was said to be Quetzalcóatl the god of peace and earth. The third god worshiped by the Aztecs was Tláloc, the

## Mexico City

god of rain and war. The Aztecs built their empire on several man-made islands in a lake and this is the main reason why present day Mexico City is now sinking into the ground. Legend says that the Aztecs decided upon this area because they were to settle in a area in which they saw an eagle upon a cactus with a serpent in its mouth. This image is now the symbol we see on Mexico's flag.

Cloak of Juan Diego in the new Basilica



**Basilica of Guadalupe-** The Basilica of Guadalupe is dedicated to the appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe to a poor Indian named Juan Diego. The Virgin appeared to the Diego, a new convert, and told him of her wishes to have a church built in her honor. After some persuading Diego was able to speak with Bishop Juan de Zumarrága who told him that he needed proof of the encounter. The Virgin again appeared to Diego and told him to pick roses from the hill and deliver them to Zumarrága as the sign. Juan Diego gathered the roses and brought them to Zumarrága, but to the dismay of all, when he opened his cloak to reveal the roses, the image of the Virgin was there imprinted. The cloak of Diego still hangs in the new Basilica which is more modern. The old Basilica still stands although it is slowly sinking.

## Mexico City

Mexicans celebrate the appearance of the Virgin on December 12th. The Virgin of Guadalupe is one the most cherished and revered figures in Mexico. I didn't enter one Mexican household that didn't have at least one picture of the Virgin hanging in their homes. In addition to her appearance to Juan Diego, The Virgin of Guadalupe is accredited with numerous miracles. She is said to have eradicated an epidemic that was plaguing Mexico in 1544. Along with these miracles, she is also well known for curing many people of their sicknesses. The people of Mexico feel that the Virgin watches over them and their country.



Museo de Frida Kahlo- The Frida Kahlo museum gives a look into the amazing life of this often underestimated artist. The museum is housed in the home that was once shared by Frida and her muralist husband, Diego Rivera. Kahlo's personality and artistic flair is shown all throughout the home. Visitors are met by giant paper maché skeletons on either side of the door way. Inside many of Frida's works are displayed as well as works by artists such as Marcel Duchamps, Paul Klee and José Clemente Orozco.

## Mexico City

Frida Kahlo— Frida Kahlo was one of the most influential yet misunderstood artists of her time. Frida's life was marked by physical suffering. At the age of five she contracted polio and then was impaled through here pelvis by a pole during a bus accident in 1925. She was forced to endure 32 surgeries throughout their life. Frida was the wife of muralist Diego Rivera. They were known to have a very volatile relationship. Frida's physical and emotional suffering (through her relationship with Diego) is apparent in her paintings. Many of her paintings were done while lying in bed. The greatest sorrow of her life was her inability to have children. This sorrow was also obvious in her paintings such as "Henry Ford Hospital" which depicts Frida's miscarriage. Both Rivera and Kahlo were known to be devout communists. Frida was even buried with the communist flag draped over her grave. Many of her works are seen as morbid, but they are really just images of her life poured out onto a canvas.

National Palace- This is of course the work place of the president of Mexico, but more importantly it houses works by one of the most influential Mexican muralists, Diego Rivera. These murals depict Mexico's rich history and political scene.

Mural by Diego Rivera



## Guanajuato

Juarez Theater- Standing strong in the center of Guanajuato, the Juarez Theater is representative of the great period of richness thanks to the mining boom in Guanajuato from 1873-1903. The theater is decorated in 3 prominent styles: the exterior is Doric, the foyer is French, and the interior is Moorish. Crowning the building are 8 muses that look over Guanajuato's rich landscape.

Museo Iconográfico Cervantino- This museum houses amazing works of art including paintings and sculptures that are all inspired by Cervantes' *Don Quixote de la Mancha*.

The streets of Guanajuato during Cervantino



The International Cervantino Festival- Each year Guanajuato hosts a four weeks arts festival in honor of Miguel de Cervantes. During these four weeks many different cultural and artistic events are held including exhibitions, plays, concerts, and cinema. The streets of Guanajuato are filled with people from all over the world. It is indeed a melting pot of cultures during this time. I spent a day in Guanajuato during the festival. I found it to be more of a venue for young people to crowd in the streets and drink rather than a homage to art and culture.

## Guanajuato

Valencia Mine- This mine is one of the largest and richest silver mines that are still operating in Guanajuato. Visitors can take a tour of the mine and learn of the harsh conditions once faced by the workers years ago.

View of Guanajuato from the top of El Pipila



El Pipila- A huge hollow statue standing tall over the hillside in Guanajuato, El Pipila is a constant reminder of the heroic efforts of Juan Martínez, a Mexican revolutionary

during the War of the Independence. He is known for lighting the door of the Alhondiga de Granitas on fire on September 28, 1810. Visitors can walk up the many steps inside the Pipila for only a few pesos and get a magnificent panoramic view of all of Guanajuato.

Callejón del Beso- The most famous street in Guanajuato. This street is named "The Kiss" because it is said that a person can lean from a balcony on one side of the street to someone on a balcony across the way from them and exchange a kiss for they are only separated by 69 cm.

## Guanajuato

**Casa de Diego Rivera-** The birthplace of Diego Rivera, one of Mexico's best and most well known muralists. The first floor included furniture of the period and the bed in which Rivera was born. The second floor holds a large number of Rivera's works and the third is a gallery for an exhibition of changing art. Diego Rivera is known as one of the best muralists of all time. He was born in Guanajuato and began drawing at the age of 2. In his murals he used the fresco style of painting. Through his murals he wished to teach Mexicans to respect and glorify their past. He believed that the artist must be the conscience of his age. Some of his more famous murals are in the National Palace and the Ministry of Education building in Mexico City

**Allondiga de Granitas-** Once a grain warehouse, this building houses an amazing mural painted by artist Chávez Morado that is dedicated to the heroes of the independence. The building contains much history within its walls. 4 hooks are grim eerie reminders of the impaled heads of revolutionaries that once hung from that very spot.

## El Rosario Monarch Butterfly Sanctuary

Monarch butterflies covering a tree limb



Every year between October and March millions of monarch butterflies migrate from the north to Mexico to spend the winters in the mountains of the state of Michoacan.

Located in the small town of El Rosario lies the Monarch Butterfly Sanctuary, open yearly from November to March. It is best to get to the Sanctuary early in the morning because once the sun comes out, the magic starts happening. The pine and fir

trees in the mountains are weighed down with millions upon millions of monarch butterflies. As the sun comes up over the mountains, the capillaries in the butterflies' wings are heated up and they begin to fly. The sky is literally shrouded with orange and black wings.

There is a fairly long hike up the mountain side to see the butterflies. Gym shoes or hiking boots are highly recommended.

## Tzintzuntzan

Church in the village of Tzintzuntzan. Scenes from the movie Stigmata were filmed here.



Tzintzuntzan, meaning “place of the hummingbirds”, was once the capital of the Tarascan Empire and was a main center of worship long ago. The Yacatas located on a bluff overlooking the city are

pyramidal structures that tell a history all their own. The ceremonial center of Tzintzuntzan sits on the Great Platform, a broad terrace built into the sloping hillside, about 400 meters long by 200 meters wide, and facing to the northwest, overlooking the lake. The village of Tzintzuntzan is a well-known craft

center. The crafters of Tzintzuntzan are best known for their straw goods including dolls, Christmas decorations, mats, and baskets. The village is also known to hold what is believed to be the oldest olive trees in the Americas. The trees are said to have been planted by Vasco de Quiroga . Quiroga was an important figure in the establishment of Tzintzuntzan and Patzcuaro.



Olive Tree

## Janitzio

Janitzio, an island located in the midst of Lake Patzcuaro, is home to the Purepecha Indians, an indigenous



View of Janitzio from Lake Patzcuaro

group to Mexico. The Purepechas live almost exactly how they did hundreds of years ago. Towering over Janitzio is the monumental

statue of Father Jose María Morelos. Visitors can walk up inside the statue to see a magnificent view over Janitzio. On their way up the stairs the story of Morelos is told through a series of murals. Just getting up the base of the statue is often a journey in itself. Visitors must climb hundreds of stairs that wind through the enormous marketplace.



Statue of Morelos

## Janitzio— The Purepechas

The Purepechas are the indigenous people of the state of Michoacan. Still today they speak Tarascan, but many know both Spanish and Tarascan. The Purepechas migrated from the north around 1200 AD and are said to possibly have a connection with Peru and the Incas. They were mainly a farming and fishing society. Before the Spaniards imposed their beliefs upon the Purepecha civilization, there were 3 main parts to their universe. 1) *Aundaru*- the place where celestial gods live. 2) *Echerindo*- the place where humans live. 3) *K'umieckuarhu*- the place of shadows where humans go when they give up on living. The Purepechas are presently known for their handicrafts such as woven goods, wood carvings, and pottery.

## Patzcuaro



Road in Patzcuaro

Casa de los once patios— This covenant was established in the mid-18th century. It is the only order of Santo Domingo that was ever established in Patzcuaro. Its name is basically self explanatory; it contains within its walls 11 different patios. Today many diverse crafts of the area are made and sold here.

Basilica of Our Lady of Health- Built between 1546 and 1554, the Basilica is dedicated to the patron of Patzcuaro. The famous statue of the Virgin of Health was erected by Don Vasco de Quiroga and his Indian followers. The statue is made of cornstalks and is glued together by a substance extracted from orchids.



Los Viejitos

Dance of the Viejitos- The dance of the viejitos is a spectacle in itself. Performed almost daily in the main plaza of Patzcuaro, the dancers wear wooden masks that depict smiling old men. The masks are made to represent the fruits of old age; that old age is not a time to be sad, but a time to enjoy life.



## Uruapan

The Eduardo Ruiz National Park, located just a few minutes from the main plaza of Uruapan, is probably one of Mexico's best kept secrets. No one would ever guess that this magnificent park is located right in the heart of the city. The park was built on 3 levels and contains terraced gardens, cascading waterfalls, lush vegetation, pathways, and bridges. If you come to the park at the right time of the year, you may

Fountain in the National Park



catch a glimpse of divers plummeting into the deep pools of the Capatizio River from the trees above. The divers expect a few pesos in return of course. Uruapan is well known for its year-round spring like climate. It is the world capital of the avocado which is the main base of Uruapan's economy. Five different types of avocado are grown there. Uruapan is know as the paradise of Michoacan because of its wonderful climate and abundance of vegetation.

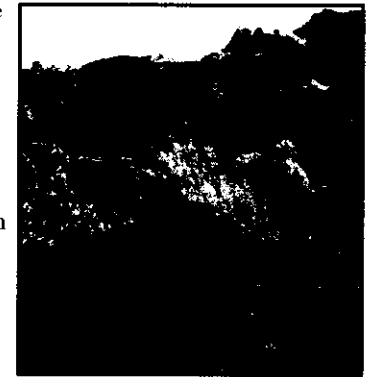


Waterfall in the National Park

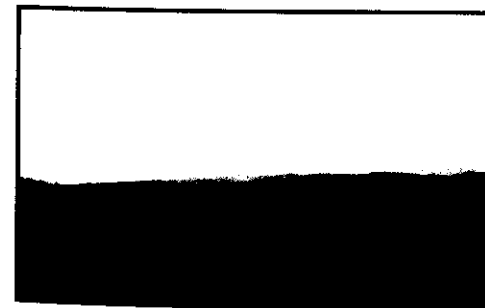
## Paricutín

The Paricutín Volcano, located in close proximity to Uruapan, first erupted in 1943 and continued to erupt for the next ten years. You can take a short horse ride to see the village of San Juan Parangaricutiro that was buried under forty feet of molten rock. All that is left of the village of one-thousand people is the church. One can see the church steeples jutting seventy feet out over the rock. Inside the ruins, a small niche protects an image of El Señor de los Milagros, The Lord of the Miracles, to whom the church was dedicated. Flowers and candles surround the icon. Walking through this area can be a little dangerous. You need to watch your step because some of the rocks tend to move when you step on them. Tourists can also take tours to the top of the volcano.

Ruins of the Church



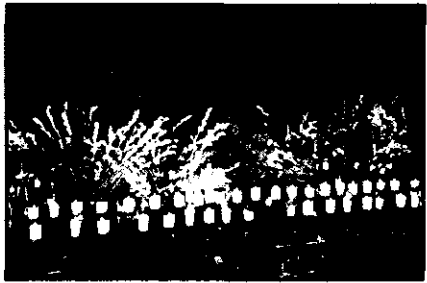
This is a very long and exhausting day trip. There is a long horse ride up to the top of the volcano and then a walk to the mouth. Because of the ash and the altitude, it is very easy to get out of breathe.



View of the Volcano

# El Día de los Muertos

Grave adorned with candles and flowers



*El Día de los Muertos* or **The Day of the Dead** is probably one of the most interesting, intriguing and misunderstood traditions celebrated in Mexico. In the United States, death is a topic that is

rarely talked about and definitely is not celebrated. Mexicans set aside these days, November 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, to commemorate the lives of their loved ones. They erect altars in their homes with food and drink offerings to the dead. The altars are also often adorned with pictures of their loved ones, candles, and flowers. Flowers, food, drink, candles, and photos are also placed at the family burial plot. An all night vigil is often held at the graves. When one walks into the cemetery in some of the rural towns in Mexico, you are overcome by the pungent aroma of the marigold flowers that are placed all

around the cemetery and on the graves. One of the prominent figures of The Day of the Dead is *La Catrina*. *La Catrina* is the figure of a skeleton woman first drawn by artist José Guadalupe Posada and rediscovered by Diego Rivera.



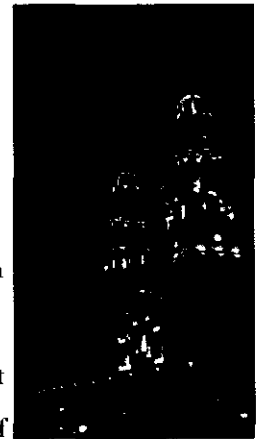
La Catrina

# Morelia

**Palacio de Gobierno**- This building was constructed in the Baroque style of architecture. Although it is the seat of the Morelian government, its main attraction are the murals that it houses. The murals were painted by Alfredo Zalce, an artist from Michoacan. These murals portray the many different periods in the history of Mexico and more importantly Michoacan.

**La Catedral**- The cathedral, built with rose-quarry stone in the Baroque style of architecture, is a permanent and striking figure in the skyline of Morelia. Its Doric style interior and neoclassical relief carvings lend to the beauty and presence of this building. Inside there is an 18<sup>th</sup> century silver baroque showcase and a silver neoclassical baptismal font. One of its most interesting points is the sculpture of the Lord of Sacristy made from dried maize paste.

The Cathedral at night



**Casa Natal de Morelos**- Don Jose María Morelos y Pavón is one of the important heroes in the Mexican Independence. Morelia is named after this figure. This house is the birthplace of Morelos. Its exterior is done in the Baroque style of architecture and is decorated in the neoclassical style.

## Morelia

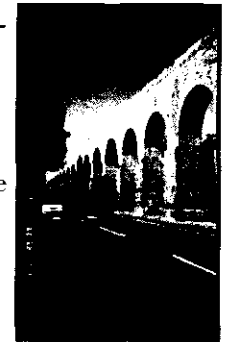
**Mercado de Dulces-** This market is held in what was once the Jesuit School. The market is host to a variety of different sweets indigenous to Mexico including morelianos, ate, charamuscas, and rom-pope. Visitors can also find a variety of different handicrafts, folk arts, and souvenirs made by the indigenous people of Mexico. Some of the most important handicrafts are *judas*, *piñatas*, *exvotos*, and *alebrijes*. Many of these handicrafts hold some type of religious connotation. *Judas*, for example, are paper-maché dolls that are burned by children on Sábado Santo. The dolls represent Judas who betrayed Jesus. *Piñatas*, which have now become Americanized and popularized at children's parties, were once representative of the seven deadly sins. The original piñata was a seven point star; one point for each sin. The children who swat at the piñata with sticks are "crushing" the seven deadly sins and are rewarded with the sweets placed inside. *Exvotos*, which originated in Italy, are three-part simplistic drawings. The drawings are very small at only 20 by 30 cm and depict a certain deity (a saint, angel, the Virgin, or God), a sick or dying person, and then a prayer request. These drawings are a thank you to God for his help for a "miracle" that he made happens. These exvotos were popularized by artists like Frida Kahlo who collected them from churches in Mexico City and hung them in her home. *Alebrijes* were first introduced to Mexico by handrafter Pedro Linares of Mexico City. Linares was once a handrafter of Judas and came upon alebrijes by chance when he was fooling around in his workshop one day. Alebrijes are fantastic animals made out of paper maché and are covered with a gloss finish. They are painted with bright colors and varying designs. They are now primarily made by the people of Oaxaca.

## Morelia

**Casa de la Cultura-** Housed in the 350 year old Carmelite monastery, this building serves as the cultural headquarters for many cultural groups in the state of Michoacan. Inside there is an archaeology museum, many changing exhibitions, and a mask museum that contains examples from Jalisco, Chiapas, Oaxaca, Veracruz, and many other regions.

**Aqueduct-** The aqueduct is constructed out of cantera stone. It is almost 2 miles long and contains 254 arches. This aqueduct, completed in 1789 was once the center of water distribution in Morelia. Although no longer functional, the aqueduct remains in excellent condition and is a focal point of Morelia. Its arches are used in much of the advertisement for Morelia.

The Aqueduct



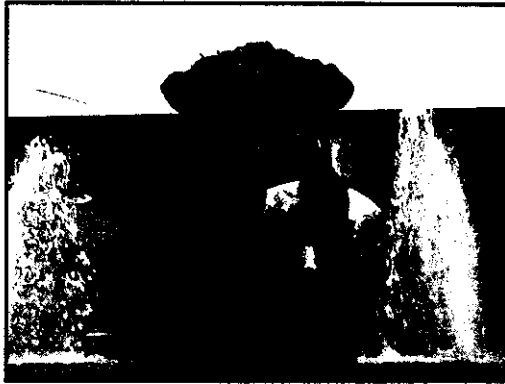
**Mueso de arte contemporáneo-** This museum has thirteen different exhibition rooms. It is dedicated to one of the most influential contemporary artists in Mexico, Alfredo Zalce. This museum houses many works done by new local artists and has its own style and flair compared to some of the older museums in Morelia.

## Morelia

Museo de arte colonial- Once the home of the first printing business in Morelia, this building now houses a variety of art, documents and sculptures from the colonial period. The Christ figures are probably the most prominent exhibit in this museum. They are made mostly by the indigenous people of Mexico from a dried maize paste.

Fuente de las Tarascas- The story behind the commission of this fountain is a mystery. Nobody knows exactly who made and/or commissioned this fountain. Many attribute it to Lázaro Cárdenas. There has even

Fountain in front of the aqueduct



been a book written about the mystery of the Fuente de las Tarascas. Located at the end of the aqueduct the fountain depicts three half-clothed Tarascan women holding up a basket of fruits and vegetables.

El Mirador- This lookout point was erected in 1979 two hundred feet into the Santa María Hills. Flying high at this lookout is the Mexican flag. Visitors can view the entire city from here. The view is especially beautiful at night when all the city is lit up.

## Useful Terms and Phrases

English	Spanish	English	Spanish
Do you speak English?	¿Habla inglés?	Can I see the menu?	¿Puedo ver el menú?
I don't speak Spanish.	No hablo español.	Disgusting!	¡Guácala!
I don't understand.	No entiendo.	Delicious!	¡Qué rico!
What is your name?	¿Como se llama?	Check, please!	La cuenta, por favor!
How much does it cost?	¿Cuánto cuesta?	Do you accept credit cards?	¿Aceptan tarjetas de crédito?
I would like...	Me gustaría...	Help!	¡Ayúdame!
Where are...?	Dónde están...	I lost my passport.	Perdí mi pasaporte.
Excuse me.	Perdón.	Call the police!	¡Llame a la policía!
Could you speak more slowly?	¿Podría hablar más despacio?	I'm allergic to...	Soy alérgico a...
What?	¿Mande?	Pleased to meet you.	Mucho gusto.
Where are you from?	¿De dónde es?	Where is the bathroom?	¿Dónde está el baño?
Do you have rooms available	¿Tiene habitaciones libres?	Would you like to go out with me?	¿Quieres salir conmigo?
I'm hungry/thirst	Tengo hambre/sed	I'm... years old..	Tengo.... años

Extra Photos



Waterfall/ Fountain in Uruapan



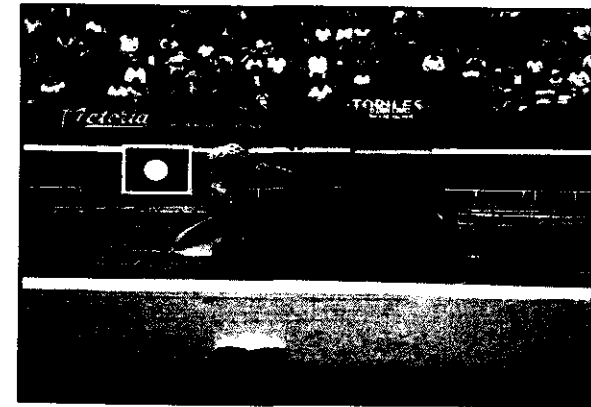
The Old Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico City

Note that it is on an angle! (and not because of shoddy camera work!)

Extra Photos



Waterfall in Uruapan

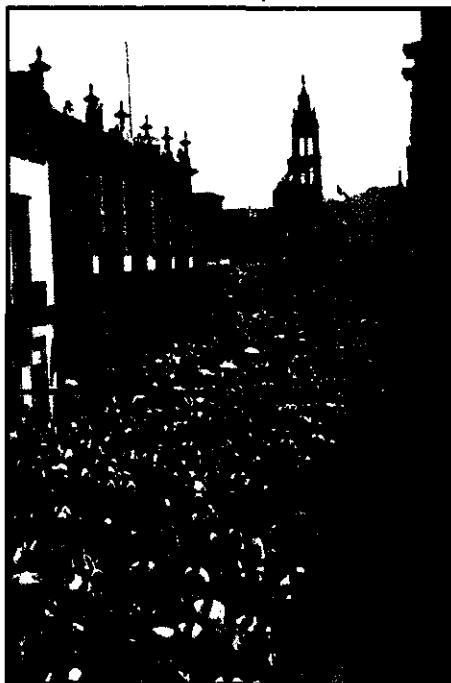


Bullfight in Morelia

Extra Photos



Gravesite at the Day of the Dead

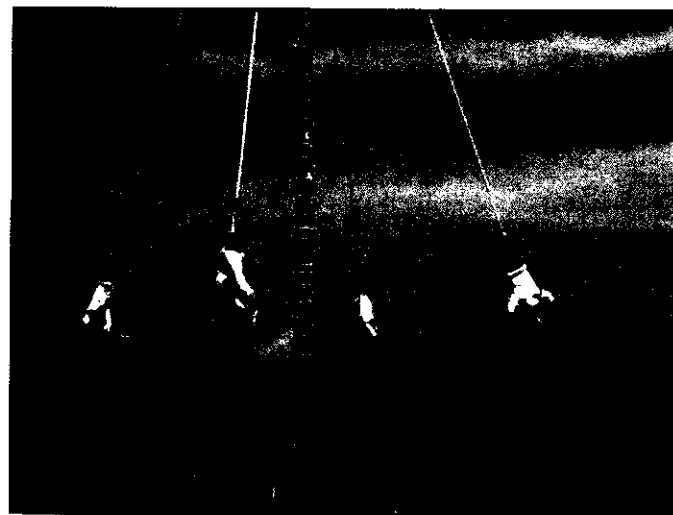


Independence Day parade in Morelia

Extra Photos



View from Pyramid of the Moon at Teotihuacán



Ancient ritual performed at Teotihuacán

Extra Photos



Mural by Morado in Alhondiga de Granitas



Soccer game in Morelia

Extra Photos



Purepecha children in Paricutín



Mouth of Paricutín Volcano



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