

NORTH AMERICA · BEACHES · HISTORY · FOOD · CULTURE · CITY BREAKS · DIVING

 Mexico

Mexico combines ancient pyramids, colonial silver towns, Caribbean reefs and one of the world's great food cultures. Chichén Itzá's step pyramid is among the most recognisable Maya monuments, Oaxaca is a pilgrimage for mole and mezcal, and Mexico City rivals any capital for museums. The highland cities stay mild all year, while the coasts are hot year-round.

 **The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all but essential travel to parts of Mexico.**
Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice.
FCDO advice last updated 20 October 2026.

 CAPITAL Mexico City	 CURRENCY Mexican peso (MXN) £1 ≈ MX\$24.66	 LANGUAGE Spanish, Nahuatl Yucatec Maya	 BEST TIME Nov–Apr
 DAILY BUDGET £40–£210 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type A, B 127V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 10h 20m direct ~£500–£1,100 return	 TIME ZONE UTC-6, UTC-5... standard time

Mexico is enormous, about eight times the size of the UK, so most first trips focus on one region. The classic choices are central Mexico, combining Mexico City with Teotihuacan, Puebla, Oaxaca and the colonial towns of Guanajuato and San Miguel de Allende; or the Yucatán Peninsula, linking Cancún's airport with Mérida, Chichén Itzá, Tulum and swims in cenotes. Chiapas, with San Cristóbal de las Casas and the jungle ruins of Palenque, connects the two. The north is less visited but holds the Copper Canyon railway and Baja California's whale-watching lagoons.

Travel is good value away from the Caribbean resort strip: comfortable first-class buses, cheap street food and characterful guesthouses keep costs down, while Tulum and Cancún charge resort prices. The Yucatán's big sites are packed by mid-morning in high season, so start early. Mexico works for backpackers, families and food-focused trips alike, and its range of climates means somewhere is pleasant in any month. Visitors are often surprised by Mexico City's altitude and its world-class restaurants, by the sheer number of regional cuisines, and by how warmly they are welcomed in small towns.

Top 5 highlights

1

HISTORY

Chichén Itzá

The great Maya city of the Yucatán, dominated by the El Castillo pyramid, whose staircase casts a serpent of light and shadow at the equinoxes. Arrive at opening time, before the day-trippers from Cancún, and cool off in a nearby cenote.

2

FOOD

Oaxaca

A colonial city of green-stone churches and markets, famed for its seven moles, tlayudas, chocolate and mezcal. Use it as a base for the Zapotec hilltop city of Monte Albán, craft villages and the mineral cascades of Herve el Agua.

3

HISTORY

Teotihuacan

An hour north-east of Mexico City, this vast pre-Aztec city is laid out along the Avenue of the Dead between the Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon. Arrive early to beat the heat, or see it at dawn from a hot-air balloon.

4

BEACH

Tulum and the Riviera Maya cenotes

Maya ruins perched on a cliff above a turquoise Caribbean beach, with freshwater cenotes such as Gran Cenote and Dos Ojos nearby for swimming and snorkelling. Tulum town is expensive; neighbouring Akumal is good for snorkelling with turtles.

5

ADVENTURE

Copper Canyon

A network of canyons in the Sierra Madre Occidental, larger overall than the Grand Canyon and deeper in places. Ride the Chepe train between Los Mochis and Chihuahua, stopping at Divisadero and Creel to hike and meet Rarámuri communities.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Mexico City

≈ 21.8 million people

Give it at least four days: the Zócalo and Templo Mayor, the National Museum of Anthropology, Frida Kahlo's Casa Azul, the restaurants of Roma and Condesa, and Xochimilco's canal boats.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Monterrey

≈ 5.3 million people

A wealthy industrial city ringed by dramatic mountains; worth a stop for the Macroplaza, the Horno3 steelworks museum, roast cabrito and climbing in Parque La Huasteca.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Guadalajara

≈ 5.3 million people

The home of mariachi and tequila, with a handsome cathedral, Orozco's murals at the Hospicio Cabañas and easy day trips to the agave fields around the town of Tequila.

Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

Holiday regions in Mexico

These areas have their own season and weather — see their guides for sea temperatures, resorts and flights.

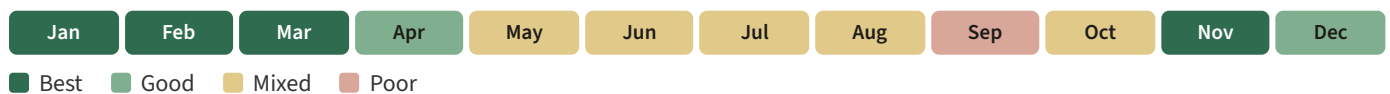
**Cancún & the Riviera Maya**

Mexico Best: Dec–Apr 11h from London

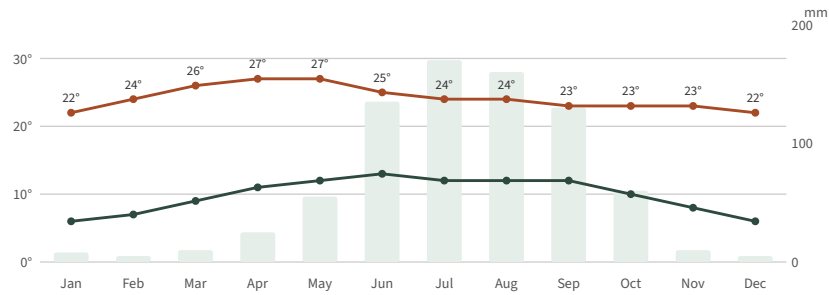
Sea up to 29°C ~£130/day

When to go to Mexico

Best time: **Nov–Apr**.

**Average climate in Mexico City**

■ High °C
 ■ Low °C
 ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jul

Guelaguetza

Oaxaca's great July festival, when dance troupes from across the state perform in the hillside auditorium on two consecutive Mondays, surrounded by parades and mezcal fairs.

Sep

Independence Day

On the night of 15 September the president re-enacts the Grito de Dolores from the National Palace balcony to a packed Zócalo, followed by fireworks, pozole and parades on the 16th.

Oct–Nov

Día de Muertos

Around 1–2 November, families welcome back the dead with marigold-decked altars, candlelit graveyard vigils and sugar skulls; Oaxaca, Pátzcuaro and Mexico City are the best places to see it.

How much does Mexico cost?

SHOESTRING

£40

per person / day
≈ MX\$986

hostels, street food, buses

MID-RANGE

£95

per person / day
≈ MX\$2,342

3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis

COMFORTABLE

£210

per person / day
≈ MX\$5,178

4-star+, guided trips, private transfers

Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Tacos al pastor

Pork marinated in chilli and achiote and cooked on a vertical spit, an idea brought by Lebanese immigrants, shaved onto small tortillas with pineapple, onion and coriander.

Mole

A complex sauce of chillies, spices, nuts and sometimes chocolate; Puebla's mole poblano and Oaxaca's seven moles are the benchmarks, usually served over chicken or turkey.

Cochinita pibil

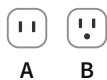
Yucatecan pork marinated in sour orange and achiote, slow-cooked in banana leaves and served in tacos or tortas with pickled red onions.

Getting around

Long-distance travel is mostly by comfortable first-class buses run by ADO, ETN and Primera Plus, or by cheap domestic flights on Volaris, Viva and Aeroméxico. The Tren Maya now links Cancún, Mérida, Palenque and Tulum, and the Chepe train crosses the Copper Canyon. Uber and DiDi work in the big cities, Mexico City's metro is very cheap, and hiring a car is easy in the Yucatán.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



127V — bring a UK-to-A/B adapter

DIALLING CODE

+52

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

TIPPING

Tip 10–15% in sit-down restaurants (check whether a 'propina' has been added), plus small change for petrol attendants, supermarket packers and guides.

ETIQUETTE

Say 'buenos días' or 'buenas tardes' when entering shops and lifts. Meals are unhurried, and the waiter won't bring the bill until you ask for 'la cuenta'.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Mexico City International Airport (MEX), Mexico City; Cancún International Airport (CUN), Cancún; Guadalajara International Airport (GDL), Guadalajara

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Telephone: **911** (ambulance, fire, police)

Mexico City Tourist Police: Telephone: **(0052) 55 5207 4155**

WhatsApp: **(0052) 55 4891 1166**

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

TIME ZONES

UTC-6, UTC-5, UTC-7, UTC-8 (standard time)

DRIVING

On the right

Visas & entry for Mexico

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

If you're visiting Mexico as a tourist, you do not need a visa. You'll get a stamp in your passport with the number of days you are allowed to stay.

British nationals entering Mexico by land must fill in an immigration form online.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Chikungunya

Dengue

Measles

Rabies

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

Very low risk of malaria

- There is a very low risk of malaria in Mexico: awareness of risk and bite avoidance recommended.

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Mexico

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Mon 16 Nov 2026	Revolution Day
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Mon 1 Feb 2027	Constitution Day
Mon 15 Mar 2027	Benito Juárez's birthday
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Thu 16 Sep 2027	Independence Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Spanish

ENGLISH	SPANISH	SAY IT
Hello	Hola	OH-lah
Thank you	Gracias	GRAH-see-ahs
Please	Por favor	por fah-VOR
Excuse me	Disculpe	dees-KOOL-peh
How much is this?	¿Cuánto cuesta?	KWAN-toh KWES-tah

Know before you go

- Use ATMs inside banks or shopping centres, and always choose to be charged in pesos rather than pounds when a machine or card terminal offers a conversion.
- Mexico City sits at about 2,240m: take the first day gently, drink plenty of water and pack layers, as mornings and evenings are cool even when afternoons are warm.
- Sargassum seaweed can blanket Caribbean beaches between roughly April and September, so check recent reports before booking a beach stay in Cancún, Playa del Carmen or Tulum.