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# 5 Destinations to Visit in Mexico Right Now

by Michaela Trimble January 5, 2017



Mexico is much more than its all-inclusive resort reputation, as many towns and bustling metropolises are home to myriad cultural institutions showcasing the best of Mexican culture, arts, and culinary delights.

Zachary Rabinor, CEO of Journey Mexico and a member of T+L's A List, sees an uptick in custom itinerary requests for access to these communities, as travelers seek to *get out of resorts and into the heartland of Mexico where its culture shines the brightest.*

“Mexico offers world class opportunities for culture, wildlife, active travel, and more,” said Rabinor. “Ranking seventh in the world for UNESCO World Heritage Sites—we have 34—and with the U.S. dollar at an all-time high relative to the Mexican peso, the time to *get off the beaten path in Mexico is now.*”

Here, Journey Mexico's tips for exploring five of the country's most revered cities and towns.

## For the Aesthete: Guadalajara

As a contemporary art hotspot and home to an emerging cultural scene, Guadalajara is fast becoming a vibrant Mexican epicenter where modern design and historic architecture collide.



To explore the city, stay at Casa Fayette or Hotel Demetria in the vibrant Lafayette district, just steps from Guadalajara's best galleries, design shops, bars, and restaurants. On a tour with Journey Mexico's art expert, visit galleries like Travesía Cuatro, founded in 2003 by Silvia Ortiz and Inés López-Quesada to bridge the gap between Latin American and European artists. Recently, Travesía Cuatro launched a new gallery at Casa Franco, a building designed by the famed architect Luis Barragán in 1929.

Continue your art crawl to view exhibitions from emerging artists at Páramo Galeria, architecture and unconventional art at Curro y Poncho, and gain exclusive access to meet artists like Gonzalo Lebrija, Jose Dávila, and Eduardo Sarabia at their studios. View murals by José Clemente Orozco and a retrospective of Eduardo Sarabia's work at Instituto Cultural Cabañas, and end with a visit to Cerámica Suro, where you can meet owner and curator José Noé Suro who works with artists to produce limited-edition ceramics.

## For the Oenophile: San Miguel de Allende

The secret is out about San Miguel de Allende: The cobblestoned streets of this UNESCO World Heritage City are already home to hotels like Rosewood San Miguel de Allende and Belmond Casa de Sierra Nevada, the perfect bases to explore restaurants, markets, and flourishing boutiques in the city.



But the area is also host to several boutique hotels, private homes, and haciendas celebrating the region's cuisine and wine. Just outside San Miguel de Allende, the Guanajuato wine route begins: Starting at the vineyards of Cuna de Tierra, explore the vineyards on a wagon ride and visit the barrel room to discover how San Miguel de Allende's wine differs from the rest of the world's production—the Dolores Hidalgo region has produced wine since the 16th century, a history propelling the area to craft Mexico's best Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, and Nebbiolo.

Continue the trail to Bodega Dos Búhos and Vinícola Toyán before taking a horseback ride on the Antiguo Camino Real for the best views of the Guanajuato Sierra and the Golden Corridor of San Miguel De Allende, all while trotting past hacienda ruins, villages, and 450-year-old chapels.

## Four the Gourmand: Mexico City

Mexico City is the height of cuisine, culture, and world-class museums, all in one intoxicating locale. As Mexico's capital, the metropolis radiates energy everywhere from renowned fine dining establishments to incredible taco stands.



To explore the city, base yourself at one of many luxury or boutique hotels: For traditional opulence, book a room at [Four Seasons Hotel Mexico City](#) on Reforma Avenue; for a trendy stay in Condesa amidst contemporary design, choose [Condesa DF](#); and if you prefer historic charm and 17th-century grandeur, stay at [Downtown Mexico](#), home to a convivial rooftop bar that's worth an afternoon visit.

To eat your way through Mexico City, begin with a taco crawl of street side purveyors and public market bodegas with [Club Tengo Hambre](#). Try local delicacies like elotes, corn on the cob lathered in Mexican crema, cotija cheese, and spices. At [Casa Jacaranda](#) in Roma Norte, learn familial tamale and chalupa recipes with chefs Jorge and Beto in their home. End with a chocolate and mezcal tasting at [Temporal](#), where chef Diego Pérez-Turner crafts a custom menu blending two classic Mexican specialties.

## For the Beach Bum: Isla Holbox

Located where the Caribbean Sea meets the Gulf of Mexico and only a drive and ferry ride from Cancun, Isla Holbox couldn't differ more from its raucous neighbor. This small island is only 26 miles long and less than two miles wide, offering a relaxed demeanor and a hammock-strewn coastline home to natural beauty unspoiled by tourism.

The preferred mode of transportation is biking or walking, and it's perfectly acceptable to leave your shoes at home, as the roads and walkways are entirely made of sand. Part of the island belongs to the Yum Balam ecological reserve, an area rich in shallow lagoons, a refuge which attracts a flourishing population of flamingos and white pelicans. The island's protected waters provide shelter for whale sharks, the largest fish in the world, and you can swim side-by-side the fish while snorkeling. During a visit, stay at Casa Sandra Boutique Hotel or Las Nubes, both quiet locales to enjoy the island's seclusion. For relaxed island fare, enjoy an extended morning at Casa Sandra for the boutique's breakfast of fresh fruit, banana bread, and hibiscus-lemon tea. For lunch, opt for ceviche at Las Panchas, and visit Lobster Pizza for dinner, an Isla Holbox tradition.

## For the Historian: Mérida

The capital of Mexico's Yucatán state and home to a colonial city founded atop the ancient Mayan city of Thó, Mérida is history in the flesh, replete with elegant buildings and former homes of wealthy hacienda owners of the past.



At the convergence of several ancient civilizations, the narrow streets and shady plazas exude Old World charm as horses and cars alike traverse the cobblestone streets lined with centuries-old mansions. During a visit stay at the aptly named Casa Azul, just steps from Paseo de Montejo, or Casa Lecanda, a seven-room boutique hotel with perfectly restored European architecture and Spanish tiles. To discover Mérida's history, visit the Museo Regional Antropología within Palacio Cantón for an anthropological exploration of Mayan culture, Museo de la Canción Yucateca for the city's musical history, and El Gran Museo del Mundo Maya for archeological relics from Mexico's beginnings.

Wander the halls of the pastel-hued Palacio de Gobierno for murals depicting the Spanish takeover of the Mayans, and discover Barrio de Santiago, home to the Iglesia de Santiago Apóstol, a church known for its 17th-century construction. Before departing walk Paseo de Montejo, a historic block lined with colonial mansions and eateries, often described as the Champs-Élysées of Mérida.