

Guadalajara

Municipalities and Magical Towns

MUNICIPALITIES

Guadalajara Metropolitan

Guadalajara's metropolitan area is the country's second largest after Mexico City. Walking Guadalajara's historic center is a can't-miss activity as visitors can observe architecturally impressive landmarks dominating the skyline, particularly that of the double-spired Guadalajara Cathedral. Other buildings of note include the neoclassical Teatro Degollado, which regularly hosts ballets and the Jalisco Philharmonic Orchestra; World Heritage Site Instituto Cultural Cabañas, built at the beginning of the 19th century to provide care for orphans and the disabled and home to a collection of more than 340 art pieces and murals; and Palacio de Gobierno, Guadalajara's golden-hued government building that housed the Mexican parliament in the 19th century.

While walking, visitors will come across four main plazas: La Rotonda de Los Jaliscienses Ilustres, which features grassy areas and busts of important figures from the state; Plaza Guadalajara, the city's most-trafficked with street vendors and visitors due to its close proximity to and wonderful views of the cathedral; Plaza de Armas, which is centered around an impressive bandstand; and Plaza de la Liberación, a quieter area with a fountain and central walkway for an easy stroll.

Aside from Guadalajara's impressive outdoor markets, the city is home to Mercado Libertad, the largest indoor market in Latin America. Visitors will find everything from meats and vegetables to toys and handbags, as well as a specific section where charros frequent to acquire saddles, boots, and leather belts. Another impressive large market is San Juan de Dios, a three-floor covered market in the heart of the historic center selling variety of goods.

Visitors should not miss two activities that have deep roots in Guadalajara's history: charrería (Mexican rodeo), dating back more than 500 years and lucha libre (Mexican wrestling), dating back more than 200 years. Both take place in stadiums around the city. Guadalajara's charros (Mexican horsemen) undergo constant training and practice and preserve the expert horsemanship first seen in hacienda charro competitions in the 1500s.

Tlaquepaque

Tlaquepaque is a colonial town best known for its high quality craftsmanship and longtime tradition of mariachi performances. Approximately six miles south of Guadalajara's city center, local arts and crafts fill up-market showrooms and stores in town where travelers will find carved wood furniture, colorful ceramics from blown glass, and hand-stitched clothing, among other goods. Well-known artists and

sculptors like Sergio Bustamante have galleries in the area, and workshops are available for travelers to learn more from artisans on their craft.

The downtown area retains the traditional structure of a small Mexican community with a parish street, central market, main square, and many pedestrian-only streets, making this a good place to take a stroll. Its mansions date back to the 19th century when Tlaquepaque was one of the principal stops en route to Mexico City. Notably, the Plan de Iguala, which announced Mexico's independence from Spain, was signed in Tlaquepaque.

Travelers and locals also come to Tlaquepaque to catch the daily mariachi performances at the local restaurants and cantinas, some with outdoor seating perfect for people-watching.

Tonalá

Tonalá is one of the largest municipalities within Guadalajara and another go-to place for artisan workshops of all sizes. Southeast of Guadalajara's city center and east of Tlaquepaque, some of the best bargains can be found among Tonalá's narrow streets where most of Guadalajara's local goods are made. This includes wide-mouth clay bowls frequently used to serve Cazuela Guadalajara, Guadalajara's signature citrus punch. The area is particularly known for silver and gold crafts, hand painted pottery, paper-mâché, and clay figurines. Visitors will see many sun symbols, the traditional symbol of Tonalá.

On Thursdays and Sundays, bargain-priced merchandise is sold at a vast street market where wholesalers arrive from all over the country to buy in bulk. Travelers will also find the Museo Regional Tonallán where they can explore the history and practice of crafts in Tonalá.

Zapopan

Zapopan is known for its large religious processions, civic buildings, top universities, and upmarket shopping. The central district of Zapopan is a 25-minute cab ride west of downtown Guadalajara and is home to some of both the newest and oldest architecture in the area, including the Palacio de la Cultura y la Comunicación, a modern space for the arts, and the Basilica de Zapopan, home to the city's most revered religious icon, a 16th century image of Virgin of Zapopan. The image has been credited with a number of miracles and has received many distinguished visitors, including Pope John Paul II.

Locals in their 20s and 30s often enjoy a pedestrian corridor filled with restaurants and bars near the Basilica, as well as La Plaza Andares, an exclusive shopping mall inclusive of luxury apartments.

Also within Zapopan is the Centro Cultural Universitario, which includes the Public Library of the State of Jalisco, spaces for the performing arts, museums, offices, and more. The complex also includes Auditorio Telmex, a popular venue for performances by national and international artists seating up to 11,000.

Tlajomulco

Tlajomulco is a large commercial area south of Guadalajara's city center and serves as the location of Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla Guadalajara International Airport (GDL).

MAGICAL TOWNS

Guadalajara is surrounded by five Magical Towns as deemed by the Mexico Secretariat of Tourism, all but one approximately two hours from the city center. These include:

Tequila

(approximately 1 hour northwest of Guadalajara)

In the area around the town of Tequila, greenish blue fields of agave stretch out mile after mile over the rugged, hilly terrain. All of the tequila in the world is produced in this region, which includes parts of the states of Guanajuato, Nayarit, Michoacan, and Tamaulipas. The fields of blue agave plants are so beautiful that they have been named a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

When travelers visit Tequila, they can sightsee at the town's 18th century church, visit the National Museum of Tequila, and tour a distillery where they learn about the tequila-making process and sample different varieties of the spirit.

Notable distilleries include Sauza, the first to export tequila to the United States; Jose Cuervo, one of the most recognizable names in the world of tequila; La Cofradia, which has been in the tequila business for more than 50 years; and El Llano, a fifth generation distillery that specializes in 100 percent agave tequila.

The region is also known for quirky transportation experiences for travelers ferrying between Guadalajara and the tequila-producing region. The Jose Cuervo Express is a full-day train package that includes experiences like a guided tour of the Jose Cuervo distillery and agave fields, lunch at a Mexican hacienda, and a tequila tasting. The Herradura Express is a 90-minute journey that includes a guided tour of the Herradura distillery and live entertainment at the estate. The Sauza Tequilicopter includes experiences like a guided tour of Casa Sauza, the agave fields, and Sauza distillery with a tequila tasting.

In addition to the area being known for tequila, the town is also an important producer of opal, multiple tones of the stone used to make beautiful garments.

Lagos de Moreno

(approximately 2 hours northeast of Guadalajara)

Lagos de Moreno is known for producing a number of well-known writers and poets, as well as the multitude of cultural and historic sites, one of which being an imposing 18th century Baroque parish on the principal plaza. Behind the church is Rosas Moreno Theatre, one of the few provincial theaters to have survived with interior spaces and decorations unchanged from the end of the 19th century. Of note is Lagos de Moreno's Historic City Center and bridge, both designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The provincial nature of the town is complemented by a succession of small squares with old trees and gardens along a wide river.

Mazamitla

(approximately 1 ½ hours southeast of Guadalajara)

Located in Sierra del Tigre mountain range, Mazamitla is known for its cool climate and natural beauty with many rivers and expansive forests. Hikers opt for mountain trails, while climbers often choose to

scale one of the many rock faces. While Mazamitla was founded by Aztecs, today visitors will mainly see colonial attractions like Parroquia de San Cristóbal, a cathedral that stands on a pyramid-shaped base with ornamental details that stir thoughts of a Chinese pagoda. The colorful stained glass windows overlook the town's main square and its cobblestone streets. This Magical Town is known for Mazamitla-style jellies and jams, as well as a traditional Bote, a soupe made with three kinds of meat. Every October, weekend visitors are able to experience the colorful Festival of Flowers.

San Sebastián del Oeste

(approximately 4 hours west of Guadalajara)

San Sebastián del Oeste's landscape maintains a pristine nature seen in its surrounding flora and fauna that complement the town's historical character. Its historic center is designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site and consists of traditional Spanish architecture on buildings dating back to the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. Visitors will find public squares, winding alleyways, original stone pavements, mud-brick walls, archways and a series of terraces offering a panoramic view of the downhill succession of the town. Some old haciendas in the municipality have been purchased and restored in recent decades.

Tapalpa

(approximately 2 hours southwest of Guadalajara)

Tapalpa comes from the native Nahuatl and means "land of colors". Like Mazamitla, the quiet village is located among pine and oak forests, rivers and rock formations. And within the town, Tapalpa is comprised of cobblestone streets and whitewashed houses with uniform red tile roofs.

Places of interest include the "Casa Gálvez" Cultural Center and its sculpture garden; 17th century Old San Antonio Church created by Franciscan friars and host to the original mesquite floors; Las Piedrotas, a group of colossal geological formations surrounded by prairies; and El Salto del Nopal waterfall. The main square has the particularity of having two temples known as the Old Temple and the New Temple, the first known for its stone walls and the second for its red brick. Tapalpa is also known for its gastronomy, including roasted, seasoned lamb and pomegranate punch, the town's signature beverage.

For more information on Guadalajara, please visit www.visitguadalajara.com.

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