



Cathedral Spires
أبراج الكنيسة

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Guadalajara:

Where Mexican history is still alive

Guadalajara, the capital of the state of Jalisco and one of the country's great colonial cities, embodies the soul of Mexico. It is renowned, even in the outside world, for its beautiful setting, green flower-decked parks, and its cultural and historic sites, rousing folklore, gourmet cooking, beautiful women and authentic handicrafts. Due to its innumerable attributes, travelers, writers and its own inhabitants have given it such labels as: 'City of Roses', 'City of Fountains' 'the Western Mexican Pearl' and 'the Royal City'.

For centuries, travelers seeking a taste of authentic Mexican culture, together with modern comforts have found that Guadalajara was the place to visit. Besides its numerous historical sites, the city has always been a major centre for the arts. But, above all, what made this rambling urban centre welcoming were the city's inhabitants, called *tapatíos*, known for their cheerfulness, civic pride and hospitality.

Yet, even though this picture postcard image of Guadalajara, to some extent, still prevails, in the last few decades, modern traffic and pollution have greatly tarnished the city's reputation and reduced its attractiveness. However, in the last few years a great effort has been made to clear the air and, according to the inhabitants, has met with some success. The smog today is much less than it was twenty years ago.

Guadalajara, named after a town established by the Moors in Spain, derives its name from the Arabic Wadi al-Hajara (river of stones). Nuño Guzmán the most brutal of the conquistadors who defeated then massacred many of the Jalisco Indians founded the city in 1542. In the ensuing centuries, the city became a great centre, filled with churches, fountains, impressive mansions, parks, plazas, wide-tree-lined avenues and tropical gardens - a synthesis of Indian and Spanish, making it a historic city of serene beauty.

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Teatro Degollado
مسرح ديغولادو



Teatro Degollado-Front
واجهة مسرح ديغولادو

In this, one of the most Spanish of Mexico's metropolises and the second largest urban centre in the country with one of the finest climates in the world - year-round spring weather - were born four things typically Mexican: *jarabe tapatío* (flirtatious hat dance), Mexican type rodeo, the traditional mariachi and tequila - a potent alcoholic drink for which Mexico is renowned. Through the years the city has flourished as the centre of a rich agricultural region and today it is the home of three universities.

Modern Guadalajara, with a population of some five million, dominates the state of Jalisco and is an energetic, noisy city, carrying a tradition of conservatism. Despite its expansion in all directions, it has preserved much of its colonial treasures. The heart of the old town is filled with fountains and flower-filled plazas, ancient government buildings, churches, other structures enwrapped in history and eleven museums housing the saga of the city's past.

The best place to begin a tour of this section is at the core of these treasures - a 30 square block area of restored civic and religious buildings imbuing an Old World atmosphere. It has the appearance of a landscape that has remained unchanged since Spanish times. ▶

Here, besides the charming plazas, the most important historic structures to be found are the magnificent Cathedral, incorporating numerous architectural styles its two towering spires are the a symbol of the city; the 17th-18th centuries Palacio del Gobierno with a spectacular ceiling mural, considered to be one of Mexico's finest 20th century works of art; the gracious Teatro Degollado, a neoclassical masterpiece of colonial architecture and theatrical beauty; the 17th century Museo Regional de Guadalajara, containing a collection of Jalisco art, archaeology and history; and the Palacio Municipal, incorporating attractive murals which depict the settling of Guadalajara. Helping to make these sites accessible, a detachment of friendly tourist police patrols the area, assisting visitors with directions and answering their questions.

In recent times, the old city of Guadalajara has expanded to incorporate the neighbouring towns of Zapopan, famous for its Basilica de la Virgen de Zapopan whose tiny 10 inch statue draws thousands of pilgrims; and the artisan centres of Tonalá and Tlaquepaque, creating a large metropolitan area of four municipalities. If travelers have time to spare, after exploring the heart of the city, the municipality of Tlaquepaque is well worth a visit.

An artist and shopper's paradise some 8 km (5 mi) from downtown Guadalajara, Tlaquepaque appears to be especially made for tourists. Its attractive colonial streets and pedestrian arcades, lined with former grand mansions, today housing galleries, museums, fine restaurants and souvenir shops, give the area an aura of history. In the past, the home of potters, this once separate town has become one of Mexico's renowned arts and crafts centres. Thanks to an authentic colonial setting, high quality crafts, fine works of art and a friendly and very helpful tourist police unit, it offers visitors a great shopping experience.

Next door, the municipality of Tonalá, one of the oldest towns in Mexico, is packed with workshops and factories. Here, most of the blown glassware, brass and copper products, ceramics, leather, paper maché and pottery produced in the area are made. A less touristy version of Tlaquepaque, it is a mecca for those searching for traditional handicrafts.

When visitors tire of shopping and the hustle and bustle of the city, Lake Chapala, the largest lake in Mexico is only 56 km (35 mi) away. The home of some 30,000 retired North Americans, the lake in the last few years has become polluted and is drying up. Yet, people keep coming, to enjoy the area's languid and restful atmosphere. This lake, with its aura of forgetfulness, along with the goods of the world featured in both the old and modern sections of Guadalajara are a lure to many tourists. However, what visitors remember most are the city's venerable structures, the flowing tequila and, above all, the colourful Mariachis, singing of love and broken hearts. ■



Palacio del Gobierno

قصر الغوبيرنو



Tonalá-Playing checkers on the Sidewalk

تونالا- لعبة شعبية على جانب الطريق

IF YOU GO

Tips:

- 1) Small cars, fully insured with unlimited mileage, rent for about \$60. per day. Beware! It is not easy to drive in Mexico - it seems that all drivers continually drive in and out of their lanes.
- 2) The official Mexican currency is the peso currently trading at around - 10.5 pesos to a US dollar - 9 pesos to a CDN dollar.
- 3) Tip baggage handlers and bellboys \$1.00 per suitcase; maids \$1.00 per day. A 50 cents tip for washroom attendants is usual.
- 4) Guadalajara is considered the golf capital of Mexico. In and around the city there are half a dozen championship quality courses.
- 5) Guadalajara is noted for its cuisine, from Arabic and Chinese to European, it is all there. However, visitors should try the local dishes: pozole, broth made with chicken or pork and corn; pipián, a sauce made from peanuts, squash and sesame; and tortas ahogadas (drowned sandwiches), served with spicy tomato and chile sauce. Two excellent places to try these and other local dishes is the La Gorda Restaurant with four outlets in Guadalajara - cost of meal \$8. - and Restaurante & Bar Adobe in Tlaquepaque - cost of a meal \$18.
- 6) When you leave Mexico there is a 'Departure Tax' of about \$18.00 US per person. However, this tax is usually included in your airline ticket.

Other Important Sites in Metropolitan Guadalajara:

Guadalajara Zoo - one of the most important and impressive zoos in Latin America.
 Libertad Market- an enormous modern structure which houses the largest market in Mexico.
 Plaza de los Mariachis - here Mariachis are to be found 24 hours a day.
 Plaza Tapatía - a nine block long plaza with gardens and fountains.
 Parque Agua Azul - a beautiful park with magnificent gardens, much favoured by the tapatíos.
 Tlaquepaque Cultural Centre - called El Refugio, the building, saturated with chapels, colonnades, domes and patios, was once a mental asylum which has been restored and turned into a cultural centre.
 Sanctuary of the Virgin of Solitude - a neoclassical romantic Tlaquepaque church built in Byzantine architectural style.

Note: all prices quoted are in US dollars.

For Further Information, Contact:

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