

Valentine's date ideas for every budget + Cold-weather hikes

San Diego

MAGAZINE

Mexico

COLONIAL-ERA CITIES,
SEXY SEASIDE RESORTS,
AND PUEBLOS MÁGICOS

➤
Plaza
Allende in
San Miguel
de Allende

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Mexico

There's never been a better time to explore our next-door neighbor. It's now a breeze to hop on a flight out of Tijuana airport, and Mexican airlines have launched many new nonstops, making much of the country more accessible than ever to San Diegans. That's why we went beyond Baja to cover the country from coast to coast. It's not a comprehensive guide, but a good jumping-off point to experience the magical parts of the country. Through these pages, take a quick tour of Mexico starting at the jungles and shores on its Caribbean side, then work your way west back home. ¡Vámonos!

GULF OF MEXICO

Merida

Cancún

Mexico City

Oaxaca

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOLLY EDITION

The capital of Jalisco state, Guadalajara is in many ways also the capital of Mexican culture. Locals have diligently preserved traditions that were born here, from tequila production and mariachi music to charrería, a rodeo-like competition that's become Mexico's national sport.

Guadalajara



DO

By law, tequila can be made only in certain areas, and almost all of the blue-agave-based spirit comes from Jalisco. On Saturdays, the José Cuervo Express and Tequila Herradura Express trains celebrate this, departing Guadalajara for the drink's namesake town, taking passengers on indulgent daylong tours of the distillation process from piña to glass.

In Guadalajara, experience unique Mexican culture at Lienzo Charros de Jalisco, where highly regarded, immaculately dressed charros compete on horseback every Sunday, while onlookers cheer, sip tequila, and sing along with mariachis. Known as charrería, the rodeo-like competition honors the country's animal husbandry traditions and is on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Tour neoclassical architecture and landmarks of political history simultaneously in Centro Histórico, where the controversial, larger-than-life frescos of muralist José Clemente Orozco (a contemporary of Diego Rivera) depict the struggle between indigenous populations and Europeans during the Mexican Revolution. He painted an astounding 57 frescos in just two years at Instituto Cultural Cabañas, a World Heritage Site, but don't skip the Palacio de Gobierno, a gorgeous 18th-century government building where a masterpiece overlooks the grand staircase.

Wander for hours through Mercado Libertad (locally called "San Juan de Dios"), Latin America's largest indoor market. No matter what you're on the hunt for—bruja (witch) herbs, Mexican candies, leather goods, huarache sandals, woven bags, studded saddles, an extra duffel for souvenirs—you'll find it here while hopelessly (and joyfully) lost in the labyrinth.

—HANNAH LOTT-SCHWARTZ

WHO WILL LOVE IT Foodies, art lovers, and tequila connoisseurs will find plenty of excuses to return again and again.

WHEN TO GO The cooler temperatures from August to March are ideal for exploration and also coincide with the annual International Mariachi Festival (August 23–September 1).

STAY

Originally a private residence in the 1940s, Casa Habita is in the heart of Guadalajara's hip and walkable Colonia Lafayette neighborhood, where tree-lined streets point you toward cool concept shops and romantic architecture. When it opens next month, the shiny new 11-room Casa Rébora is expected to be an even bigger draw, with its 24/7 restaurant and bar decked out in nothing but pink. Or find a home base in Tlaquepaque—a Pueblo Mágico in the metropolitan area's southern outskirts, about 30 minutes away—at the richly designed Juana Bautista. The restored 16th-century colonial mansion played a part in Mexico's independence.

EAT

Find unrivaled people-watching at the city's oldest cantina, La Fuente, which serves no-frills drinks like tequila shots and ice-chilled beer bottles (there is no fridge) and not much else.

By day, snack on street food like verduro gordo (steamed veggies topped with Cotija cheese, mayo, and spicy salsa macha) or the local torito (meat, onions, cilantro, and beans in a flour tortilla, smothered in cheese and baked until bubbly) at roving carts and in market stalls.



For dinnertime, make reservations at Hueso, where the menu changes daily and everyone sits together as compañeros among thousands of chef-collected animal bones that line the whitewashed walls. Last year, one of the owners opened Veneno, an earth-toned, cavelike space perfect for sipping cazuela (a typical Guadalupeño alcoholic punch) and a boozy spin on tejuino, a staple beverage made from fermented corn. When a hankering for late-night nibbles hits, head to Guilty, a bar and restaurant that would feel right at home in North Park—with masterfully made \$5 cocktails.

For an elegant afternoon out, join the well-heeled families of Guadalajara at Casa Luna, a whimsical restaurant with live music and toothsome fare tucked inside one of Tlaquepaque's old mansions.

HOW TO GET THERE Frequent nonstop flights from Tijuana get you to Guadalajara International Airport in about three hours for less than \$100 round-trip.

EAT THIS Drowning in tomato and chile de árbol sauce, the torta ahogada sandwich is the ultimate hangover cure. The roll has a thick crust so when it's stuffed with refried beans, carnitas, and pickled onion, the sandwich is saturated.

