

Mexico and Cuba

including the Day of the Dead Festival



Blue Dot Travel
Go somewhere different

November 2026 | 20 Days

\$13,790 per person, twin share
Solo Supplement: \$1,800

Tour Highlights

- Thriving Mexico City, with its historic plazas and cathedrals
- The iconic Day of the Dead celebrations
- Teotihuacan's extraordinary pyramids
- Boat trip in the spectacular Sumidero Canyon
- The ancient ruins of Palenque and Chichen Itza
- Oaxaca's colonial architecture
- Iconic Old Havana, with its Spanish architecture and music scene
- Trinidad's UNESCO-listed old town
- The region's diverse natural beauty



Mexico and Cuba: with Day of the Dead Festival



Tour overview

Mexico's history dates back to approximately 8,000 BC, and it is recognised as one of the world's five cradles of civilisation. Over thousands of years, advanced Mesoamerican cultures – including the Olmec, Zapotec, Teotihuacan, Mayan and Aztec civilisations – shaped the region. In 1521, the Spanish conquered the powerful city of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, now Mexico City, establishing colonial rule that lasted until independence was achieved in 1821.

We'll begin in modern-day Mexico City, where layers of pre-Columbian, colonial and contemporary history coexist. Our itinerary is planned so that we're in Mexico City for the iconic Day of the Dead festival.

Mexico is home to some of the most significant ancient sites in the Americas: Monte Albán, once the greatest Zapotec city, and the remarkable Mayan centres of Palenque, Uxmal and Chichen Itza. Travelling through the country's cultural heartland, we'll experience the warmth and hospitality for which Mexicans are well known.

In Cuba, human settlement dates back some 5,000 years, and in 1492, Christopher Columbus claimed the island for Spain. Today, Old Havana is home to some of the Americas' best-preserved Spanish architecture, alongside a vibrant contemporary energy shaped by music, art, and daily Cuban life. Trinidad's UNESCO-listed old town offers another step back in time, with colourful buildings and cobblestone streets.

The clichés of Cuba are a must-see. Locals dancing the salsa, mambo and rumba, men leisurely smoking fat cigars and drinking rum, and reminders of the revolutionary figure, Che Guevara. Of course, the quintessential postcard of Cuba is the 1950s Buicks and Chevys – spotted all over the country.

Together, Mexico and Cuba offer a journey defined by history, resilience, culture and character.



MODERATE

Activity rating: Moderate

You must be capable of: walking up to 8,000 steps daily; occasionally ascending 3-4 flights of steps; standing at attractions for up to 1 hour; boarding and disembarking transport unaided, and handling your own luggage.



Departure, Friday 30th October DEPART FOR MEXICO

We'll provide a customised flight itinerary. We may have an overnight stop en route, depending on schedules.

Day 1, Saturday 31st October ARRIVE MEXICO CITY

One of the world's largest metropolises, Mexico City is also the oldest urban centre in the Western Hemisphere, having been known then as Tenochtitlan. Spanish conqueror Hernan Cortés and his men were awestruck by the sight of the imposing temples of the Aztecs. Reporting back to King Carlos V, Cortés struggled to convey the majesty of what he had seen. Nowhere is Mexico's explosive past better depicted than at its central plaza, the Zocalo. Surrounded by some of the finest colonial-era buildings lie the remnants of one of the Aztecs' principal monuments, the Templo Mayor. Its mysterious shapes are a haunting tribute to the city's pre-Hispanic civilisation. We'll be met at the airport, transferred to our hotel, and have our Welcome Dinner and a three-night stay. Overnight: Mexico City **D**

Day 2, Sunday 1st November MEXICO CITY with DAY OF THE DEAD FESTIVAL

Today, we'll visit the home of renowned Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, now a museum in Coyoacan, a former colonial village in southern Mexico City. It still has its own identity, with narrow colonial-era streets, plazas, cafes and a lively bohemian atmosphere. We'll walk through the main plaza, past churches and beautiful old buildings, including the house of the conqueror Hernán Cortés. Later, we'll visit the National Museum of Anthropology, home to an amazing collection of ancient artifacts. Later in the afternoon, we'll experience the "Day of the Dead" festival. Despite its name, this vibrant, joyful festival celebrating deceased loved ones is a huge annual event for locals. **Please note: due to the size of the event, there are no toilets, chairs or other comforts. We'll observe the parade from the best available position on the day.** Overnight: Mexico City **B/L**

Day 3, Monday 2nd November DAY TRIP TO TEOTIHUACAN & GUADALUPE

Our first stop today is Plaza de las Tres Culturas, where three cultures converge: Aztec, Spanish, and contemporary Mexican. We'll visit the locally revered Basílica de Guadalupe, where it's believed that the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared to local man Juan Diego in 1531, and her image was miraculously emblazoned on his cloak. Next, we'll visit the impressive Aztec city of Teotihuacan. We'll explore its temples, palaces and pyramids, including the Quetzalpapalotl Palace Complex, the Temple of the Feathered Conches, the Pyramid of the Moon, and the immense Pyramid of the Sun, one of the biggest in the world. Returning to Mexico City, we'll drive along the famous boulevard Paseo de la Reforma to the Zocalo (main square), one of the biggest public squares in the world. We'll visit the Cathedral Metropolitana – the biggest church in Latin America, and the Palacio Nacional (if it is open), which hosts Diego Rivera's murals depicting the history of Mexico. Overnight: Mexico City **B/L/D**

Day 4, Tuesday 3rd November MEXICO CITY - PUEBLA - OAXACA

This morning we'll drive to Puebla to explore its beautiful colonial centre, where elegant buildings and mansions are adorned with the hand-painted Talavera tiles for which the city is famous. You'll have free time for lunch – you may want to try Mexico's national dish, "mole poblano," which originated here. Most of our afternoon is then spent driving to Oaxaca. Once the centre of the Mixtec and Zapotec civilisations, today's Oaxaca is a combination of pre-conquest, colonial and modern influences. The early Zapotecs developed a great civilisation at nearby Monte Albán centuries BC. After the Spanish conquest in 1533, the city took on a Spanish flavour, with ornate buildings, churches, elegant archways, balconies, decorative grill work and charming plazas. Despite its colonial heritage, the city retains deep ties to its indigenous roots, giving it a unique appeal. Overnight: Oaxaca **B/D**

Day 5, Wednesday 4th November DAY TRIP TO MONTE ALBAN

Today, we'll visit Monte Alban – a World Heritage Site – spectacularly situated on a mountain 400 metres above the Oaxaca Valley, a few kilometres west of Oaxaca. Monte Alban is the greatest of the Zapotec cities, and it came to dominate the region's cultural, religious, and economic life. It is also a triumph of engineering: the mountaintop was levelled to create the ceremonial site. Returning to Oaxaca in the afternoon, we'll take a walking tour of the colonial city centre. Highlights include the Cathedral with its attractive baroque facade, the Iglesia de Santo Domingo, a church with dazzling gold ornaments adorning its interior, and Casa Juárez, where Mexico's great liberal reformer and President Benito Juárez lived. Overnight: Oaxaca **B/D**

Day 6, Thursday 5th November DAY TRIP TO MITLA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Our first stop this morning is the colossal Tule Tree "Arbol del Tule, one of the world's largest trees, thought to be over 2000 years old. Next, we'll continue to the archaeological site of Mitla, located 46km southeast of Oaxaca. Mitla was an important Zapotec city after the decline of Monte Alban, and it was later occupied by the Mixtecs. The Spanish destroyed many of Mitla's temples, and the stones were used to build the Iglesia de San Pablo, the Catholic church that dominates the site. We'll visit a nearby restaurant for lunch to enjoy a rustic, traditional cooking experience. Returning to Oaxaca, there'll be free time to wander this atmospheric city. Overnight: Oaxaca **B/L**

Day 7, Friday 6th November OAXACA – TUXTLA GUTIERREZ

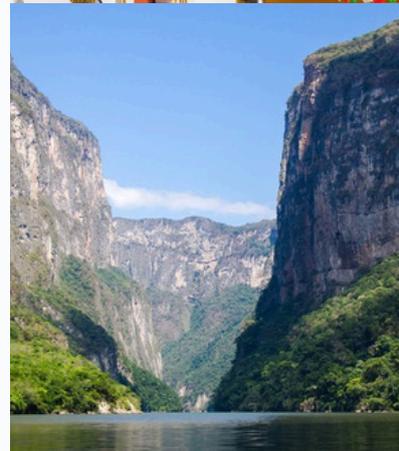
Today is mainly a day of transfers. To avoid a long road trip over mountainous terrain, we'll fly to Tuxtla Gutiérrez via Mexico City, arriving late in the afternoon (flight schedule to be advised). Overnight: Tuxtla Gutiérrez **B/D**

Day 8, Saturday 7th November TUXTLA GUTIÉRREZ – SAN CRISTÓBAL DE LAS CASAS

This morning we'll drive to Chiapa de Corzo, located 70km west of San Cristobal, on the Grijalva River, to join a (shared) boat trip through the magnificent Sumidero Canyon. Nearly a kilometre deep and 14km long, carved out by the Grijalva river over millions of years, we'll navigate between towering sheer rock walls and along beautiful caves and waterfalls. There are opportunities to spot a variety of plants, animals and birds, including monkeys, crocodiles, iguanas, herons, and kingfishers. Back in Chiapa de Corzo, we'll take a walk through this pleasant colonial town, founded by the conquistador Diego de Mazariegos in 1528 around a giant Ceiba tree sacred to the Indians. The town's centrepiece is the intricately designed La Pila fountain, built in a Moorish style. We'll continue to San Cristobal de las Casas for a two-night stay. Overnight: San Cristóbal de las Casas **B/D**

Day 9, Sunday 8th November DAY TRIP TO SAN JUAN CHAMULA & ZINACANTAN

San Cristobal de las Casas is a characteristically indigenous Chiapaneca town nestled in the heart of the jungle highlands. We'll start our day with a walking tour of the colonial city centre of San Cristóbal de las Casas, which features the impressive 16th-century Dominican church, Templo de Santo Domingo, with its intricate pink facade and gilded Baroque interior. We recommend taking some time to browse the handicraft market in front of the church, where the Tzotzil people from the surrounding hills come to trade. The Tzotzils are descendants of the ancient Maya and maintain unique customs, costumes, and beliefs. We'll drive into the Chiapas highlands to visit two Tzotzil communities, San Juan Chamula and Zinacantan, and learn more about their traditions. Overnight: San Cristóbal de las Casas **B/L**



Day 10, Monday 9th November SAN CRISTÓBAL DE LAS CASAS – VILLAHERMOSA – PALENQUE

With a long day ahead, we'll leave early and have breakfast along the way. Our first stop is the La Venta open-air museum, which features a collection of original Olmec artifacts and monumental sculptures. After lunch in Villahermosa, we'll drive to the town of Palenque, set in the foothills of the Tumbala Mountains. The nearby archaeological zone showcases the creative genius of the Mayan civilisation, with elegantly crafted buildings and sculpted reliefs with their mythological themes. We'll explore the site tomorrow. Overnight: Palenque **B/L/D**

Day 11, Tuesday 10th November PALENQUE – CAMPECHE

This morning we'll visit the UNESCO-listed archaeological site of Palenque, a powerful Maya city that flourished between 600 and 800 AD and once dominated the Usumacinta River basin. Set deep in a rainforest alive with toucans and howler monkeys, the vast site contains around 500 structures, only a fraction of which have been excavated. Highlights include the Temple of the Inscriptions, the Temple of the Sun, and the Palace complex. We'll then drive to Campeche, stopping for lunch in Escárcega. From the 16th to 18th centuries, Campeche was the Yucatán Peninsula's principal seaport, making it a target of pirates such as Lorenzillo, Diego "The Mulatto," and William Parker. The Spanish Crown fortified the city to protect the port, and we'll take a walking tour of the UNESCO-listed old town before dinner. Overnight: Campeche **B/L/D**

Day 12, Wednesday 11th November CAMPECHE – MERIDA

The UNESCO-listed site of Uxmal is known for its low, elegant palaces decorated with symbolic motifs and images of the rain god Chaac. We'll visit the site this morning, including highlights such as the House of the Magician, the Nunnery, and the House of Turtles. Next, we'll drive to Merida, and take a walking tour of the city – the main boulevard, Paseo Montejo, is home to impressive European-style mansions with pastel shades and elaborate trim reminiscent of lavishly iced wedding cakes. Built more than 450 years ago on the site of the ancient Maya city of T'ho, Mérida is now the social and economic centre of the Yucatán, a bustling city of around 700,000 that still retains its colonial charm and laid-back atmosphere. Overnight: Merida **B/D**

Day 13, Thursday 12th November DAY TRIP TO CHICHEN ITZA & PARQUE IKKIL

The archaeological site of Chichén Itzá – one of the New 7 Wonders of the World – is the best-preserved of Yucatán's Mayan sites. We will explore the magnificent ruins set in a dense jungle, including the Pyramid of Kukulcan – whose height and striking geometric design dominate the site, the Great Ball Court – the largest and most impressive in Mesoamerica, and the Sacred Cenote – a natural well used for human sacrifice. Next, we'll visit nearby Parque Ikkil. This ethereal cenote is illuminated by shafts of light from above, highlighting its mini waterfalls, lush vegetation, and cascading vines that drape from the opening like a natural curtain. The sinkhole is 40m deep, and you have the opportunity to descend the 90 stone steps for a swim. (Your guide will brief you on the physicality and requirements.) Return to Merida, and say farewell to Mexico with dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight: Merida **B/L/D**

Day 14, Friday 13th November MERIDA – HAVANA

Today we'll fly from Merida to Havana, Cuba. Flights to be confirmed. Overnight: Havana **B/D**

Day 15, Saturday 14th November HAVANA

Old Havana is the city's heart and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, home to one of the largest and most intact collections of Spanish colonial architecture in the Americas. This morning, we'll take a walking tour of the old city, visiting the room where Ernest Hemingway lived and wrote for many years, as well as the city's key sites. After free time for lunch, we'll continue our tour of the old town, stopping at various bars and local spots for refreshments and live music. In the afternoon, we'll visit the Revolution Museum and the Havana Club Rum Museum. Tonight's dinner is at Guajirito Cultural Centre in Old Havana (which pays homage to revered musicians of the Buena Vista Social Club) with live music and dancing. Overnight: Havana **B/D**

Day 16, Saturday 15th November DAY TRIP TO PINAR DEL RIO

This morning, we'll journey to the Viñales Valley, known for its distinctive, picturesque landscape. Known as "Mogotes", steep-sided limestone hills rise abruptly out of an otherwise flat valley floor. We'll continue to "La Cueva del Indio", where we'll sail on traditional boats along an underground river that passes through the interior of some of the Haystack Hillcock Mountains. Our lunch today is at a local restaurant serving traditional Creole cuisine. On our way back to Havana, we'll visit the brightly coloured Mural of Prehistory, painted onto a mogote. Your evening is free to explore Old Havana. Overnight: Havana **B/L**

Day 17, Saturday 16th November HAVANA – CIENFUEGOS – TRINIDAD

Today we'll travel to Cienfuegos, settled by French colonists from Louisiana, who gave the town its distinctive French colonial style infused with Cuban character. For coffee lovers, try the strong, sweet espresso that is a distinct part of Cuban culture! We'll walk around the main square and visit the beautiful opera building, followed by lunch at a local restaurant. In the afternoon, we'll continue to Trinidad – a wonderful colonial town built on the foothills of the Escambray Mountains. The town was founded in 1515 by Diego Velázquez, one of the original Spanish settlers who arrived with Columbus. Dinner is at your leisure, and there's a great choice of restaurants and bars within walking distance of the hotel. Overnight: Trinidad **B/L**

Day 18, Sunday 17th November TRINIDAD

We'll start our day with a walking tour of Trinidad's UNESCO-listed Old Town. Enjoy its winding cobbled streets, magnificent churches, museums, and the busy street market selling handmade souvenirs. The Plaza Mayor is the city's centrepiece, with pastel-coloured colonial buildings and surrounding museums, including the Palacio Brunet, or the "Romantic Museum". The Iglesia Parroquial de la Santísima Trinidad church dominates the plaza and is the town's most significant religious and architectural landmark. After lunch at a local restaurant, we'll visit the craftsman market and the Canchanchara bar, famed for the traditional local drink of the same name. Next, we'll visit El Valle de los Ingenios, a valley near Trinidad dotted with former sugar mills, slave quarters, and plantation estates that tell the story of Cuba's 19th-century sugar boom. Your evening is at your leisure. Overnight: Trinidad **B/L**

Day 19, Monday 18th November TRINIDAD – HAVANA

On our way back to Havana, we'll stop at the San Carlos de La Cabaña fortresses to get a great view of Havana from the opposite side of the bay. After a short walk through the fort, a fleet of American classic convertible cars from the 50s will whisk us away to see the sights of the old city. We'll drive along the famous Malecón, Havana's 7 km seafront promenade, and visit iconic sites such as the Hotel Nacional and Revolution Plaza. You're free to explore any particular areas of interest in the afternoon or soak up this fabulous city. Our farewell dinner tonight is at a local restaurant with a special seafood menu. Overnight: Havana **B/D**

Day 20, Tuesday 19th November DEPARTURE Transfer to Havana airport for your flight home. **B**





Accommodation

Our hotels are carefully chosen to capture the local atmosphere and set you up in an ideal location. You can expect accommodation that comprises a mix of standard hotels, boutique-style hotels, and smaller, independently owned establishments. Below are some of the hotels on this tour. Final hotels may change, and a complete list will be shared with you.

Galeria Plaza Reforma, Mexico City
www.galeriaplazahotels.com.mx

Hotel Casa Vieja, San Cristobel
www.hotelcasaviejasantocristobal.com

Hotel Colonial, Merida
www.hotelcolonial.com.mx

Palacio de los Corredores, Havana
www.habaguanexcuba.com

Why Blue Dot?

Travel is more than just moving from one place to another; it is an opportunity to explore this vast planet, connect with its people and marvel at its beauty. We have established a group of loyal, like-minded travellers who share this feeling and have taken multiple tours with us. With Blue Dot, you'll experience

- Thoughtfully designed itineraries with unique experiences
- Small, inclusive groups with a maximum of 16 travellers
- The support of both an Australian tour leader* and experienced local guides
- Programs designed to meet the needs of mature-age travellers
- Hands on, personalised service including customised flight bookings
- Tipping included in your tour cost

*Australian leaders accompany groups with more than 10 travellers.

Blue Dot welcomes solo travellers

In fact, over half of our clients are solo travellers. We understand it can be daunting to travel on your own, and we'll ensure your travel is safe, inclusive and enjoyable. You can confidently join our groups, knowing that we bring solo travellers together to share the camaraderie of an unforgettable adventure.

Enquiries and bookings

A \$500 deposit is required to secure your booking.

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