UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Mexico

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) maintains a list of cultural and natural sites that are considered to be of outstanding universal value to humanity. Sites included on the list are under protection and preservation so that they may be enjoyed by the global community for years to come. With 27 cultural sites and 4 natural sites; Mexico is the country with the most UNESCO designated World Heritage Sites in the Americas, and ranks 6th in the world.

Camino Real de Tierra Adentro

The Camino Real de Tierra Adentro (the "Royal Inland Road") stretches along 1600 miles, and encompasses 55 sites, as well as five existing World Heritage sites. This road, which was used to transport silver extracted from the mines of Zacatecas, Guanajuato and San Luis Potosí, was actively used as a trade route for over 300 years, from the mid-16th to the 19th Century.

Prehistoric Caves of Yagul and Mitla in the Central Valley of Oaxaca

Lying on the northern slopes of Oaxaca's eastern valley (Tlacolula valley), this site consists of two Prehispanic archaeological complexes and a series of pre-historic caves and rock shelters, which offer evidence of the transition of nomadic hunter-gathers to early farmers. Corn cob fragments from one cave in this zone are believed to be the earliest documented evidence for the domestication of maize, and ten thousand-year-old seeds found here are considered the earliest known evidence of domesticated plants on the continent.

Agave Landscape and Ancient Industrial Facilities of Tequila

Located in the state of Jalisco, the tequila producing region encloses a landscape of blue agave fields and four urban settlements, including the town of Tequila, within which are several large distilleries where the agave is fermented and distilled. Agave culture is seen as part of Mexican national identity. The town of Tequila can easily be visited on a day trip from Guadalajara.

Ancient Maya City of Calakmul, Campeche

The ancient Maya site of Calakmul, in the state of Campeche, is located deep in the tropical forest. The imposing structures of this ancient city and its overall layout, characteristic of Maya cities, are remarkably well preserved and give a vivid picture of life in an ancient Maya capital. The commemorative stelae at Calakmul are outstanding examples of Maya art, and throw light on the political and spiritual development of the city.
**Archaeological Monuments Zone of Xochicalco**

Located in the state of Morelos, the archaeological site of Xochicalco dates to 650–900 A.D., the period following the dissolution of the great urban centers associated with Mesoamerica's Classic period, Teotihuacan, Monte Alban and Palenque. This site is an exceptionally well-preserved example of a fortified political, religious and commercial centre from this period.

**Archeological Zone of Paquimé, Casas Grandes**

The archaeological site of Paquimé (also known as Casas Grandes) is located in northern Mexico, in the state of Chihuahua. This site provides exceptional evidence of the development of adobe architecture in North America. Paquimé played a key role in trade and cultural contacts between the Pueblo culture of the south-western United States and northern Mexico, and the civilizations of Mesoamerica.

**Central University City Campus of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México**

The campus of Mexico's National Autonomous University (UNAM) in Mexico City is an example of 20th-century modernism integrating urbanism, architecture, engineering, landscape design and fine arts with references to local traditions, especially to Mexico’s pre-Hispanic past. The campus is the result of the collective work of over sixty architects, engineers and artists who worked together to create the spaces and facilities, which were built between 1949 and 1952.

**Earliest 16th-Century Monasteries on the Slopes of Popocatepetl**

Fourteen monasteries, which are located on the slopes of the Popocatepetl volcano southeast of Mexico City in the states of Morelos and Puebla, are in an excellent state of conservation and are good examples of the architectural style adopted by the first missionaries (Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians) who converted the indigenous populations to Christianity in the early 16th century.
El Tajin, Pre-Hispanic City

Inhabited between 800 and 1200 A.D., the Pre-Hispanic city of El Tajin is located in the state of Veracruz. After the fall of Teotihuacan, it became the most important centre in north-east Mesoamerica. Its cultural influence extended all along the Gulf and penetrated into the Maya region and the high plateaux of central Mexico. Its architecture, which is unique in Mesoamerica, is characterized by elaborate carved reliefs on the columns and friezes.

Franciscan Missions in the Sierra Gorda of Querétaro

Five Franciscan missions which date from the mid-18th century, during the last phase of evangelisation of the interior of Mexico, bear witness to the cultural encounter of the European missions with the nomadic populations of central Mexico. The churches' richly decorated façades represent an example of the joint creative efforts of the missionaries and the native people.

Historic Centre of Mexico City and Xochimilco

Built in the 16th century by the Spanish on the ruins of the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan, Mexico City has has five Aztec temples, the largest cathedral on the continent, and some fine 19th and 20th-century public buildings such as the Palacio de las Bellas Artes. Xochimilco is home to chinampas, known as “floating gardens,” the Aztecs' ingenious form of wetland agriculture.

Historic Centre of Morelia

Morelia, in Michoacán, was founded in the 16th century. The city conserves its original grid layout, and has over 200 historic buildings, built with the region's characteristic pink stone, that reflect Morelia's eclectic architectural history.

Historic Centre of Oaxaca and Archaeological Site of Monte Albán

The city of Oaxaca, founded in 1642, is built on a grid pattern, and is a good example of Spanish colonial town planning. The solidity and volume of the city's buildings are an adaptation to the earthquake-prone region. Monte Albán was the capital of the Zapotec people. This hilltop city was one of the first urban centers in Mesoamerica.
**Historic Centre of Puebla**

Puebla, the capital of the state of the same name, has preserved its great religious structures such as the 16th-century cathedral and fine buildings like the old archbishop's palace, as well as many houses with walls covered in tiles (azulejos). The aesthetic concepts resulting from the fusion of European and American styles were adopted locally and are peculiar to the Baroque district of Puebla.

**Historic Centre of Zacatecas**

Founded in 1546, following the discovery of mineral deposits, Zacatecas was one of the most important mining towns of New Spain. The historic town center is home to magnificent churches, abandoned convents and breathtaking Baroque architecture. Zacatecas’ cathedral is particularly noteworthy as one of the most beautiful examples of churrigueresque architecture in Mexico.

**Historic Fortified Town of Campeche**

The town of Campeche, an old commercial port that often came under the attack of pirates and privateers, is a baroque city with a grid layout. The historic centre of Campeche is surrounded by defensive walls that once protected the residents from invasions.

**Historic Monuments Zone of Querétaro**

Founded in 1531, this colonial city located in central Mexico is adorned with inspiring architecture and retains its original street patterns, including the geometric street plan of the Spaniards as well as twisting alleys which are characteristic of the residential areas of the native peoples. Queretaro contains many notable civil and religious Baroque monuments from the 17th and 18th centuries.

**Historic Monuments Zone of Tlacotalpan**

Founded in the mid-16th century, Tlacotalpan is a port town on the Papaloapan River. The buildings of this town follow the Caribbean tradition rather than the more common Spanish colonial style. The many trees, both in Tlacotalpan's public spaces and in its private gardens and courtyards, lend a special appeal to the townscape. Día de la Candelaria (Candlemas) celebrations in Tlacotalpan are particularly exuberant.
**Historic Town of Guanajuato and Adjacent Mines**

The area around the town of Guanajuato was originally settled in 1529. When silver deposits were discovered in 1548, the settlers built four fortified structures to protect the area, and the town grew up around them. In the 18th century Guanajuato was the world's leading silver-extraction center. The town is host to some beautiful examples of baroque art and architecture. One of Guanajuato's most famous attractions is the accidental mummies of Guanajuato.

**Hospicio Cabañas, Guadalajara**

The Hospicio Cabañas in Guadalajara was designed by architect Manuel Tolsá and built at the beginning of the 19th century. This is one of the oldest and largest hospital complexes of New Spain. In the early 20th century, the chapel was decorated with a superb series of murals by José Clemente Orozco.

**Luis Barragán House and Studio**

Luis Barragán was a Mexican engineer and architect. His home and studio, built in 1948, represent a masterpiece of the new developments in the Modern Movement, integrating traditional, philosophical and artistic currents into a new synthesis. The house and studio of Luis Barragán are located in Mexico City and can be visited by appointment.

**Pre-Hispanic City and National Park of Palenque**

At its height between AD 500 and 700, Palenque is an exquisite example of a Mayan sanctuary of the classical period. When it was at its peak, Palenque's influence extended throughout the area of the Usumacinta River basin. The elegance and craftsmanship of the buildings, as well as the lightness of the sculpted reliefs with mythological themes, attest to the creative genius of the Mayan civilization.

**Pre-Hispanic City of Chichén Itzá**

One of the greatest Mayan sites of the Yucatán peninsula, Chichén Itzá illustrates two major periods of Mesoamerican history. The vision of the world and the universe of both the Maya and the Toltecs is revealed in the stone monuments of the site.
Pre-Hispanic City of Teotihuacan

The holy city of Teotihuacan ('the place where the gods were created') is situated some 50 km north-east of Mexico City. Built between the 1st and 7th centuries A.D., it is characterized by the vast size of its monuments – in particular, the Temple of Quetzalcoatl and the Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon, laid out on geometric and symbolic principles. As one of the most powerful cultural centres in Mesoamerica, Teotihuacan extended its cultural and artistic influence throughout the region.

Pre-Hispanic Town of Uxmal

The ruins of the ceremonial structures at Uxmal represent the pinnacle of late Mayan art and architecture in their design, layout and ornamentation, and the complex of Uxmal and its three related towns of Kabáh, Labná and Sayil admirably demonstrate the social and economic structure of late Mayan society.

Protective town of San Miguel and the Sanctuary of Jesús de Nazareno

San Miguel de Allende constitutes an exceptional example of the interchange of human values; due to its location and functions, the town acted as a melting pot where Spaniards, Creoles and Amerindians exchanged cultural influences, something reflected in the tangible and intangible heritage. The Sanctuary of Jesús Nazareno de Atotonilco constitutes an exceptional example of the cultural exchange between European and Latin American cultures; the architectural disposition and interior decoration testify to the interpretation and adaptation of the doctrine of Saint Ignacio de Loyola to this specific regional context.

Rock Paintings of the Sierra de San Francisco

From c. 100 B.C. to A.D. 1300, the Sierra de San Francisco (in the El Vizcaino reserve, in Baja California Sur) was home to a people who have now disappeared but who left one of the most outstanding collections of rock paintings in the world. They are remarkably well-preserved because of the dry climate and the inaccessibility of the site. Showing human figures and many animal species and illustrating the relationship between humans and their environment, the paintings reveal a highly sophisticated culture.
Islands and Protected Areas of the Gulf of California

The site comprises 244 islands, islets and coastal areas that are located in the Gulf of California in north-eastern Mexico. The Sea of Cortez and its islands have been called a natural laboratory for the investigation of speciation. Moreover, almost all major oceanographic processes occurring in the planet’s oceans are present in the property, giving it extraordinary importance for study. The site is one of striking natural beauty in a dramatic setting formed by rugged islands with high cliffs and sandy beaches, which contrast with the brilliant reflection from the desert and the surrounding turquoise waters.

Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve

The 56,259 ha biosphere lies within rugged forested mountains about 100 km northwest of Mexico City. Every autumn, millions, perhaps a billion, butterflies from wide areas of North America return to the site and cluster on small areas of the forest reserve, colouring its trees orange and literally bending their branches under their collective weight. In the spring, these butterflies begin an 8 month migration that takes them all the way to Eastern Canada and back.

Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve

Located on the east coast of the Yucatán Peninsula, this biosphere reserve contains tropical forests, mangroves and marshes, as well as a large marine section intersected by a barrier reef. It provides a habitat for a remarkably rich flora and a fauna comprising more than 300 species of birds, as well as a large number of the region's characteristic terrestrial vertebrates, which cohabit in the diverse environment formed by its complex hydrological system.

Whale Sanctuary of El Vizcaino

Located in the central part of the peninsula of Baja California, the sanctuary contains some exceptionally interesting ecosystems. The coastal lagoons of Ojo de Liebre and San Ignacio are important reproduction and wintering sites for the grey whale, harbour seal, California sea lion, northern elephant-seal and blue whale. The lagoons are also home to four species of the endangered marine turtle.