

# Western Central Highlands



With exquisite colonial architecture, fine food, better tequila, butterfly orgies, lonely indigenous pueblos, bustling cities, battling mariachi bands and volcanic calderas, the western central highlands are your wonderland. This region includes Guadalajara, Colima, Morelia, Pátzcuaro and Uruapan, yet tourists often forego this fascinating land, making it even more appealing. Locals are warm and generous, the streets are perfectly safe, the economy is strong and cultural traditions thrive, especially in the countryside. The climate is superb (sunny, but never too hot, during the days and cool, but seldom too cold, at night) and the natural beauty is diverse and mind-blowing. You'll see layered mountains, expansive lakes, thundering rivers and waterfalls and an endless tapestry of cornfields, avocado groves, agave plantations and cattle ranches. This is Mexico's beating heart.

Guadalajara – capital of Jalisco state – sprawls, but it doesn't overwhelm; it's a great walking city, blessed with handy public transportation. Morelia, Michoacán state's drop-dead gorgeous capital, may be the best city (in the world, not just in Mexico) that you've never heard of. Think stunning colonial architecture, a young population and an emerging hipster scene. Nearby is the Reserva Mariposa Monarca, a forested butterfly sanctuary you'll remember forever. Pátzcuaro, an endearing colonial town and the epicenter of Michoacán's indigenous Purépecha culture, is the place to be during Mexico's Día de Muertos celebration. Uruapan and Colima both have a touch of the subtropical and are near fascinating volcanoes: Parícutín, which rose from the Uruapan countryside almost overnight, the bubbling Volcán de Fuego and the spectacular snowy cones of Volcán Nevado de Colima. Mexico does not get any better than this.

WESTERN CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Stroll **Guadalajara** (p520) on a Sunday, when the streets fill with local families, art museums are free, ancient churches buzz with worship and the sidewalk cafés are packed
- Explore spectacular **Morelia** (p556) with its glowing cathedral, rooftop bars and clubs nestled in Spanish relics
- Absorb the beauty of the **Reserva Mariposa Monarca** (Monarch Butterfly Reserve; p563) the winter retreat for millions of butterflies
- Peer into the mystical soul of the Purépecha people in tranquil **Pátzcuaro** (p566)
- Bag two volcanic peaks, the snowy and extinct **Volcán Nevado de Colima** (p555) and young, precocious **Volcán Parícutín** (p581)



■ GUADALAJARA JANUARY DAILY HIGH: 52°F | 11°C

■ GUADALAJARA JULY DAILY HIGH: 26°C | 79°F



in its effort to ease the continuing poverty of the indigenous people.

In the 1920s the region's two major states, Michoacán and Jalisco, were hotbeds of the Cristero rebellion by Catholics against government anticatholic policies. Lázaro Cárdenas of Michoacán, as state governor (1928–32) and then as Mexican president (1934–40), instituted reforms that did much to abate anti-government sentiments.

Today both Jalisco and Michoacán hold many of Mexico's natural resources – especially timber, mining, livestock and agriculture – and Jalisco has a thriving tech industry. In the past, both states have seen large segments of their population head to the US for work. Michoacán reportedly lost almost half its population to emigrations and money sent home has approached two billion dollars. But with a growing economy and accessible credit, the free flow north has slowed and these days many have decided to return to Mexico and open up businesses on their home soil.

### Climate

The climate is pleasantly warm and dry most of the year, with a distinct rainy season from June to September (when rainfall reaches 200mm per month). At lower altitudes, temperature and humidity rise and tropical plants bloom. In higher-altitude towns, such as Pátzcuaro, winter nights are chilly.


### Parks & Reserves

The western central highlands has perhaps the most diverse array of wild, green spaces in all of Mexico. Inland Colima's Parque Nacional Volcán Nevado de Colima (p555) is home to two towering volcanoes (3820m and 4240m), the taller one is snow crusted, the other still smolders. On the other end of Inland Colima is the untouched Sierra de Manantlán Biosphere Reserve (p555). Think 1396 sq km of forested limestone mountains with rivers, waterfalls, eight types of forest ecosystems and plenty of adventure options. The unforgettable Reserva Mariposa Monarca (p563) is where you can observe the sublime, harmonic convergence of millions of butterflies who migrate all the way from the Great Lakes and Uruapan's Parque Nacional Barranca del Cupatitzio (p576) is an urban, tropical park par excellence and the source of the magnificent Rio Cupatitzio.

### Getting There & Around

All major cities in the western central highlands (Guadalajara, Colima, Morelia and Uruapan) are well connected by regional and national bus lines. Guadalajara and Morelia have regular flights from many other cities in Mexico, as well as from the US.

## GUADALAJARA

 33 / pop 4.1 million (metro area) / elevation 1540m

Guadalajara's countless charms are distributed equally and liberally throughout its distinct neighborhoods. The city's Centro Histórico (Historic Center) is dotted with proud colonial relics that house museums, government offices, bars and hotels. There are dozens of leafy plazas with gushing fountains, strolling families and shredding skaters. The Zona Rosa, more modern and spread out, is sprinkled with fashionable restaurants, coffee houses and nightclubs. Mellow suburbs Tlaquepaque (upscale) and Tonalá (grassroots) are the folk-art shoppers' dream destinations; and Zapopan has some interesting colonial sites, but is better known as Guadalajara's Beverly Hills. This is where the beautiful and fabulous live on shady estates accessed by cobblestone streets. Guadalajara residents (nicknamed *tapatíos*, which also refers to anyone Jalisco-born) are warm and eager to share the essence of their city.

Guadalajara's many contributions to the Mexican lifestyle include tequila, mariachi music, the broad-rimmed sombrero, *charreadas* (rodeos) and the Mexican Hat Dance and these days it is also known for its outstanding food. From street-side taco and *torta ahogada* stands to neighborhood cafés to fine dining rooms in restored colonial mansions – you're never far from a great meal in joyful Guadalajara.

### HISTORY

Guadalajara weathered some false starts. In 1532 Nuño de Guzmán and a few dozen Spanish families founded the first Guadalajara near Nochistlán, naming it after Guzmán's home city in Spain. Water was scarce, the land was dry and unyielding and the indigenous people were understandably hostile. So, in 1533 the humbled settlers moved to the pre-Hispanic village of Tonalá (today a part



of Guadalajara). Guzmán disliked Tonalá, however, and two years later had the settlement moved to Tlacotán. In 1541 this site was attacked and decimated by a confederation of indigenous tribes led by chief Tenamxtli. The survivors wearily picked a new site in the valley of Atemajac beside San Juan de Dios Creek, which ran where Calz Independencia is today. That's where today's Guadalajara was founded on February 14, 1542, near where the Teatro Degollado now stands.

Guadalajara finally prospered and in 1560 was declared the capital of Nueva Galicia province. The city, at the heart of a rich agricultural region, quickly grew into one of colonial Mexico's most important population centers. It also became the launch pad for Spanish expeditions and missions to western and northern Nueva España – and others as far away as the Philippines. Miguel Hidalgo, a leader in the fight for Mexican independence, set up a revolutionary government in Guadalajara in 1810, but was defeated near the city in 1811, not long before his capture and execution in Chihuahua. The city was also the object of heavy fighting during the War of the Reform (1858–61) and between Constitutionalist and Villista armies in 1915.

By the late 19th century Guadalajara had overtaken Puebla as Mexico's second-biggest city. Its population has mushroomed since WWII and now the city is a huge commercial, industrial and cultural center, and the hi-tech and communications hub for the northern half of Mexico.

## ORIENTATION

Four lovely plazas surround Guadalajara's glorious cathedral. The plaza east of the cathedral, Plaza de la Liberación, extends two blocks to the Teatro Degollado, another landmark. This whole area, along with a few surrounding blocks, is known as the Centro Histórico.

East of the Teatro Degollado, the Plaza Tapatía pedestrian promenade extends 500m to the Instituto Cultural de Cabañas. Just south of Plaza Tapatía is the can't-miss Mercado San Juan de Dios, a cavernous, three-story market covering two city blocks.

Calz Independencia is a major north–south central artery. From Mercado San Juan de Dios, it runs south to Parque Agua Azul and the Antigua Central Camionera (Old Bus Terminal), still used by short-distance buses.

Northward, it runs to the zoo and other attractions. Don't confuse Calz Independencia with Av Independencia, the east–west street one block north of the cathedral.

In the city center, north–south streets change names at Av Hidalgo, the street running along the north side of the cathedral.

About 20 blocks west of the cathedral, the north–south Av Chapultepec is at the heart of Guadalajara's Zona Rosa, a more modern, upmarket neighborhood. The long-distance bus terminal is the Nueva Central Camionera (New Bus Terminal), which is approximately 9km southeast of the city center.

## INFORMATION

### Bookstores

Stores with a good selection of books in English aren't common in Guadalajara.

**Libros y Arte** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3617-8207; Cabañas; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2:30pm Sun) Located at the Instituto Cultural de Cabañas, this bookstore has art and children's books in Spanish and English.

**Sanborns** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3613-6264; cnr Av 16 de Septiembre & Juárez; ☎ 7:30am-1am) Downstairs from the dining room is a rack with English-language magazines, maps and books.

**Sandi Bookstore** (Map p521; ☎ 3121-4210; Av Tepeyac 718; ☎ 9:30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9:30am-2pm Sat) About 1km west of Av López Mateos, the best English-language bookstore has an extensive travel section.

### Emergency

If you are a victim of crime you may first want to contact your embassy or consulate (p969) and/or the state tourist office (opposite).

**Ambulance** (☎ 065, 3616-9616)

**Emergency** (☎ 080)

**Fire** (☎ 3619-5155)

**Police** (☎ 060, 3668-0800)

### Internet Access

Internet cafés charge M\$10 to M\$15 per hour. Many cafés and hotels offer free wi-fi.

**CB Internet** (Map pp524-5; Sanchez 321; ☎ 8am-10:30pm)

**XS Internet** (Map pp524-5; Guerra 16; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat)

### Internet Resources

<http://visita.jalisco.gob.mx> Official website of Jalisco.

<http://vive.guadalajara.gob.mx> Official website of Guadalajara.

[www.zapopan.gob.mx](http://www.zapopan.gob.mx) Official website of Zapopan (in Spanish).

**www.tlaquepaque.gob.mx** Official website of Tlaquepaque (in Spanish).

**www.tonalá.gob.mx** Official website of Tonalá (in Spanish).

## Laundry

**Lavandería Aldama** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3617-6427;

Aldama 125; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat)

Located just a few blocks from the city center. Four kg of dirty clothes cost M\$42 for full service.

## Media

There are two Spanish-language papers competing for business around town: the indie *El Informador* and the more prominent *Público*, which offers exhaustive entertainment listings on Friday. The English-language **Guadalajara Reporter** ([www.guadalajarareporter.com](http://www.guadalajarareporter.com)) caters to local expats.

## Medical Services

**Dr William Fairbank** (Map p521; ☎ 3616-4851; Justo Serra 2515-1; ☎ 9am-2pm Mon-Fri) American doctor located 3km west of the city center.

**Farmacia Guadalajara** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3613-7509; Moreno 170; ☎ 7am-10pm) Get your first aid, sundry items and prescribed meds here.

**Hospital Mexicano Americano** (Map p521; ☎ 3641-3141; Colomos 2110) About 3km northwest of the city center; English-speaking medics available.

## Money

Banks are plentiful in Guadalajara and most have ATMs, known as *cajeros*. **HSBC** (Map pp524-5; cnr Av Juárez & Molina; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-3pm Sat) keeps the longest hours.

You can change cash off-hours at one of the eager *casas de cambio* (moneychangers) on López Cotilla, east of Av 16 de Septiembre. Rates are competitive and most will change traveler's checks.

**American Express** (Map p521; ☎ 3818-2319; Av Valarta 2440; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Located in the Plaza Los Arcos shopping center.

## Post

**Main post office** (Map pp524-5; cnr Carranza & Av Independencia, ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

## Telephone

There aren't many calling offices in Guadalajara. The cheapest way to dial home is to buy a Telmex phone card at an Oxxo store and then find a public phone in as quiet a spot as possible.

## Toilets

It's not hard finding a legal place to pee in central Guadalajara. Interestingly enough, it's the free toilets that are nicest; pay public toilets (usually M\$3) are pretty nasty. Fast-food outlets, hotels and security at government buildings won't be bothered if you duck in for a leak.

## Tourist Information

**State tourist office** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3668-1600;

Morelos 102 or Paseo Degollado 105; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun) Enter from either Morelos or Paseo Degollado. English-speaking staff offers information on Guadalajara, the state of Jalisco and the upcoming week's events.

**Tourist information booth** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 9:30am-2:30pm & 5-7:30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-12:30pm Sat & Sun) In the Palacio de Gobierno, just inside the entrance facing the Plaza de Armas. During cultural events and festivals other information booths pop up around the city center.

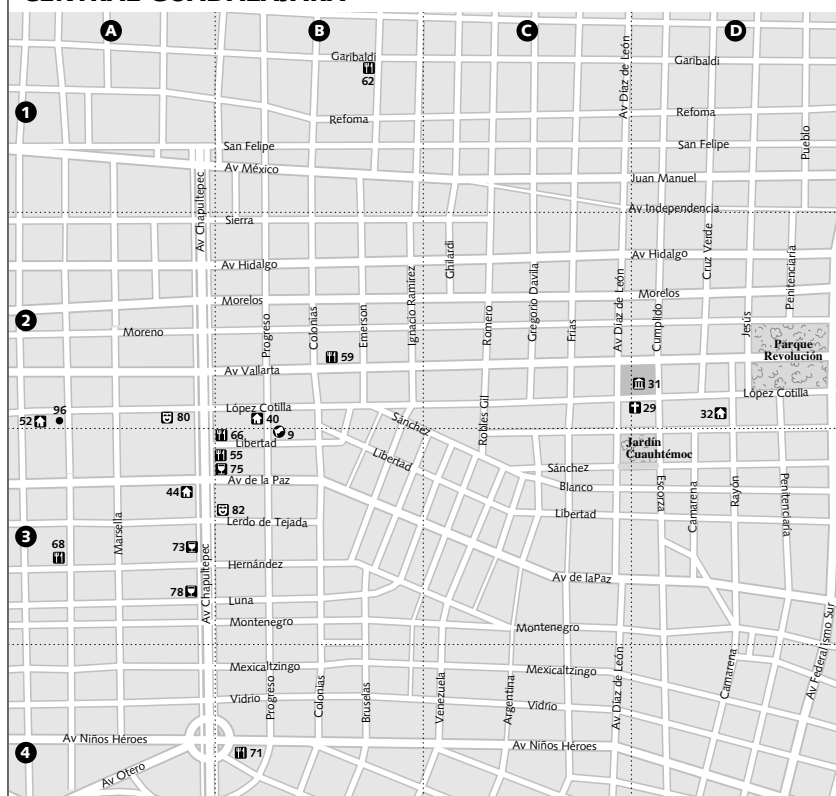
## SIGHTS

### Catedral

Guadalajara's twin-towered **cathedral** (Map pp524-5; Av 16 de Septiembre btwn Morelos & Av Hidalgo; ☎ 8am-8pm, closed during Mass) is the city's most beloved and conspicuous landmark, so you will likely bump shoulders with more tourists than worshippers. Begun in 1558 and consecrated in 1618, it's almost as old as the city itself. And it's magnificent. Time it right and you'll see light filter through stained glass renderings of the Last Supper and hear a working pipe organ rumble sweetly from the rafters. The interior includes Gothic vaults, massive Tuscan-style gold-leaf pillars and 11 richly decorated altars that were given to Guadalajara by King Fernando VII of Spain (1814–33). Its crucifix is one of the most subtle and tasteful in Mexico (Jesus isn't white!). The glass case nearest the north entrance is an extremely popular reliquary, containing the hands and blood of the martyred Santa Inocencia. In the sacristy, which an attendant can open for you on request, is *La Asunción de la Virgen*, painted by Spanish artist Bartolomé Murillo in 1650. Of course, architectural purists may find flaws. Much like the Palacio de Gobierno, the cathedral is a bit of a stylistic hodgepodge including Churrigueresque, baroque and neoclassical influences. And the towers, reconstructed in 1848, are much higher than the originals, which were destroyed in the 1818 earthquake.



## CENTRAL GUADALAJARA



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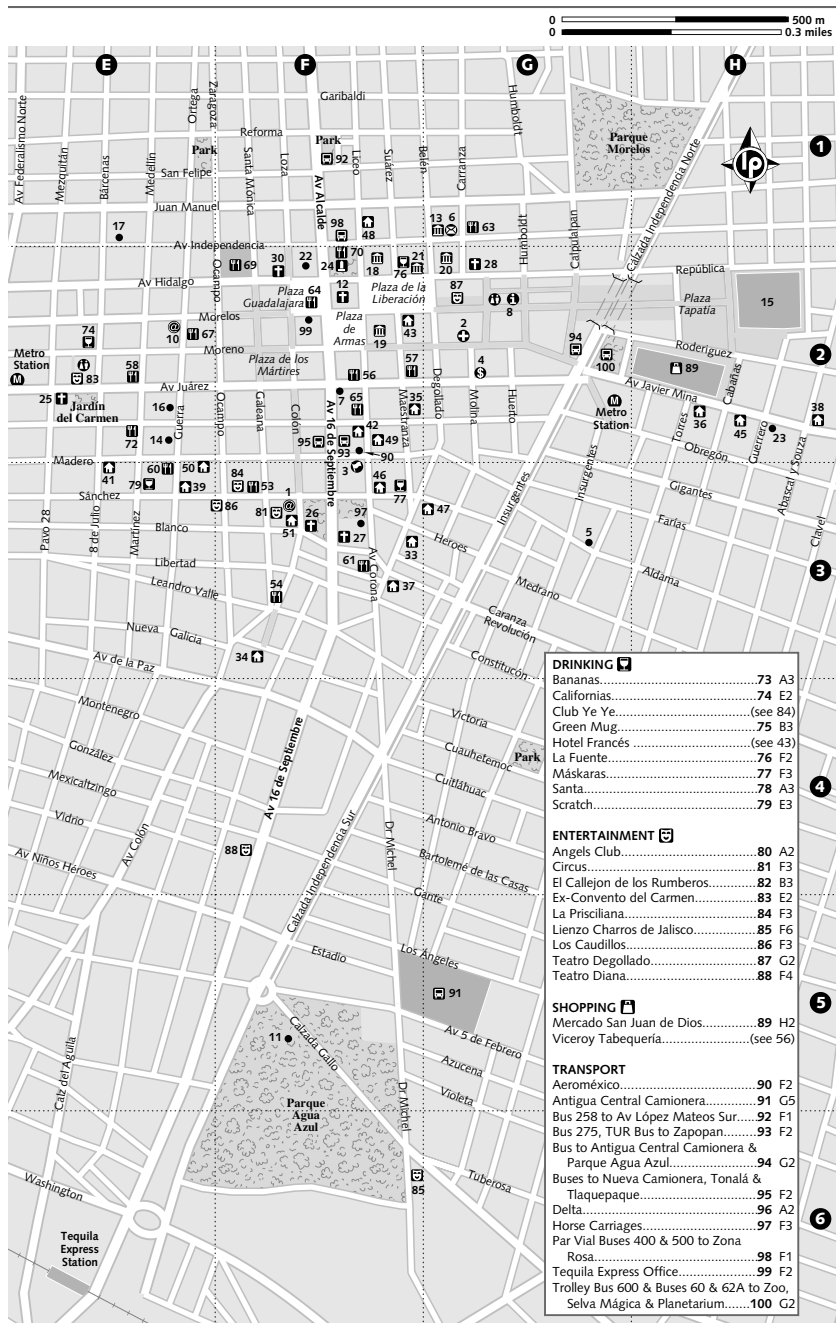
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## Plaza Tapatía

The fabulously wide pedestrian Plaza Tapatía (Map pp524–5) sprawls for more than 500m east from Teatro Degollado. Stroll the plaza on Sundays and you will flow in a sea of locals who shop at low-end crafts markets, snack (from both street vendors and cafés), watch street performers and rest on the short walls of gurgling fountains. The plaza dead-ends beautifully at the Instituto Cultural de Cabañas.

## Instituto Cultural de Cabañas

Standing proudly at the east end of the brilliant Plaza Tapatía is another of Guadalajara's architectural gems. Inside its Unesco-certified, neoclassical bones are a school, cultural institute and **museum** (Map pp524–5; ☎ 3818-2800 ext 31014; Cabañas 8; admission M\$10, free Sun; 🕒 10am–6pm Tue–Sat, 10am–3pm Sun). Founded by Bishop Don Juan Cruz Ruiz de Cabañas and designed by Spanish architect Manuel Tolsá, it was built between 1805 and 1810 as an orphanage and home for invalids and remained so for 150 years, housing 450 children at once. There are citrus trees and rose gardens in the 23 stone courtyards; temporary photography, painting and sculpture exhibitions; and occasional video installations. But the murals in the main rotunda are the highlight.

Between 1938 and 1939 José Clemente Orozco channeled the archetypal struggle for freedom into these 57 murals, widely regarded as his finest works. They seethe with dark, unnerving and distinctly modern images of fire, armor, broken chains, blood and prayer. Given the issues of Orozco's era, they almost certainly serve as a warning against fascism and any institution that subverts humanity to cultivate power. The museum also features a permanent exhibition of more than 100 Orozco drawings (mostly sketches for his onsite murals). Free tours in English and Spanish are available.

## Colonial Churches

Central Guadalajara has dozens of churches in addition to those mentioned previously and some are quite impressive.

The **Santuario de Nuestra Señora del Carmen** (Map pp524–5) – facing the small plaza on the corner of Av Juárez and 8 de Julio – is lovely with lots of gold leaf, old paintings and murals in the dome. Closer to the city center, on the corner of Loza and Av Hidalgo, is the ornate **Templo Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes** (Map

pp524–5), which was built in 1650; inside are several large paintings, crystal chandeliers and more gold leaf. Six blocks further east is the fairly unremarkable **Templo de Santa María de Gracia** (Map pp524–5), which served as the city's first cathedral (1549–1618). The sanctuary at the **Templo Santa Eduvigis** (Map pp524–5), built in 1726, is usually packed with worshippers and, during Mass, perfumed with clouds of sandalwood smoke. It's just south of the main market.

On the corner of Av 16 de Septiembre and Blanco, the compact **Templo de Aranzázu** (Map pp524–5) is perhaps the city's most beautiful. Built from 1749 to 1752, it has three ornate Churrigueresque golden altars and lovely ceiling detail. Beside it is the larger but less glamorous **Templo de San Francisco** (Map pp524–5), built two centuries earlier. Come at dusk and see the stained glass glow.

## Plaza de Armas & Palacio de Gobierno

The Plaza de Armas (Map pp524–5), on the south side of the cathedral, is a sweet place to rest and absorb the surrounding history. Frequent free concerts take place on the attractive art nouveau bandstand (see p538).

The impressive **Palacio de Gobierno** (Map pp524–5; Av Corona btwn Morelos & Moreno; 🕒 9am–8pm), which houses state government offices, was finished in 1774. It's a neoclassical building accented by more than a few Churrigueresque decorations and an enormous 1937 mural of Miguel Hidalgo looming over an interior stairway. Hidalgo brandishes a torch in one fist while the masses struggle at his feet. José Clemente Orozco, the artist, used this Mexican hero to examine the dueling isms of his day – communism and fascism – and he obviously has a point of view on religion, as well. Another Orozco mural in the ex-Congreso (former Congress Hall) upstairs depicts Hidalgo, Benito Juárez and other historical luminaries.

## Museo Regional de Guadalajara

East of the Rotonda de los Jaliscenses Ilustres, this **museum's** (Map pp524–5; ☎ 3614-9957; Liceo 60; admission M\$37, free Sun; 🕒 9am–5:30pm Tue–Sat, 9am–4:30pm Sun) eclectic array of antiquated cannons, wagons and worn saddles of grizzled revolutionaries, and a beautiful collection of pre-Hispanic ceramics dating from 600 BC help tell the story of the history and prehistory of western Mexico. The star of the ground-floor natural history wing is a reconstructed woolly

## GUADALAJARA IN TWO DAYS

Breakfast at **Chai** (p535) then check out the visceral Orozco murals at **Instituto Cultural de Cabañas** (opposite). Stroll through **Mariachi Plaza** (p528) and visit the sandalwood shrouded **Templo Santa Eduvigis** (opposite). Explore the stellar **Mercado San Juan de Dios** (p540) and stroll the brilliant **Plaza Tapatía** (opposite) to the **Cathedral** (p523) and **Plaza de Armas** (opposite). Duck into the **Museo Regional de Guadalajara** (opposite) for a taste of Guadalajara's past then get your modern art fix at **Galería Jorge Martínez** (below). By now you'll need a drink, so find **La Fuente** (p537) and enjoy live happy hour music. Dine at the exceptional **Birriería las Nueve Esquinas** (p535) and close the night out with more old Latin tunes at **Hotel Francés** (p537). Hustle up to the roof and take in the view!

Wake up and breakfast at **Café Madrid** (p535), then catch a cab to Tlaquepaque and stroll the suburb's cobblestone streets and fine galleries. Don't miss the **Museo Regional de la Cerámica** (p529) or **El Paríán** (p536).

You can't do Tlaquepaque without paying your respects to El Socio. So when it's time for lunch, head to **Mariscos el Social** (p536).

After a siesta, grab a late dinner at **Cocina 88** (p536) then step around the corner to Av Chapultepec and dance all night to live salsa sounds at **El Callejón de Los Rumberos** (p538).

mammoth skeleton. The archaeological section houses well-preserved figurines, ceramics and silver and gold artifacts. Upstairs are colonial paintings depicting the Spanish conquest, an ethnography section with displays about indigenous life in Jalisco and a revolutionary wing where the guns, uniforms and desks of Mexico's great rebels are on display. One battlefield rendering features the Mexican rebels taking Guadalajara from the Spanish in 1862.

### Universidad de Guadalajara & Templo Expiatorio

West of the city center, where Av Juárez meets Av Federalismo, is shady **Parque Revolución** (Map pp524–5), which has become a haven for pierced skaters. Three blocks further west at Av Juárez 975 is the **Paraninfo** (Theater Hall), one of the main buildings of the **Universidad de Guadalajara** (Map pp524–5). Inside, the stage backdrop and dome feature large, powerful murals by Orozco. In the back of the same building is the **Museo de las Artes** (Map pp524–5; ☎ 3134-1664; admission free; 🕒 10am–6pm Tue–Fri, 10am–4pm Sat & Sun), which houses temporary exhibitions that will scratch your modernist itch once you've overdosed on *antigua*. The **Galería Jorge Martínez** (☎ 3613-2362; Belén 120; admission free; 🕒 9am–6pm) is an interesting modern and conceptual art gallery in the colonial center, adjacent to and benefitting Guadalajara's top art school, Artes Plásticas, operated by UDG.

A block south of Museo de las Artes is the 1897 Gothic **Templo Expiatorio** (Map pp524–

5; 🕒 7am–11pm), accented by enormous stone columns, 15m-high mosaic stained-glass windows and a kaleidoscopic steeple. At 9am, noon and 6pm, a door in the clock tower opens and the 12 apostles march right out.

### Plaza Guadalajara & Palacio Municipal

Directly west of the cathedral, Plaza Guadalajara (Map pp524–5) is shaded by dozens of laurel trees, has great cathedral views, a few fine cafés and fun people watching. On its north side is the Palacio Municipal (City Hall; Map pp524–5), which was built between 1949 and 1952 but looks ancient. Above its interior stairway is a dark mural by Gabriel Flores depicting the founding of Guadalajara.

### Rotonda de los Jaliscenses Ilustres

Welcome to Jalisco's hall of fame. The plaza on the north side of the cathedral is ringed by 20 bronze sculptures of the state's favorite writers, architects, revolutionaries and a composer. Some of them are actually buried beneath the Rotonda de los Jaliscenses (Rotonda of Illustrious Jaliscans; Map pp524–5), the round-pillared monument in the center. Before the macho city establishment added a woman to the mix, the rotunda was 'de los Hombres Ilustres.'

### Plaza de la Liberación

East of the cathedral, this plaza (Map pp524–5) was a 1980s urban planner's dream project and two whole blocks of colonial buildings were viscerated for his concrete slab. But it

does gush with fountains and overflow with herds of students, solitary suits on mobiles and love-drunk couples kissing in the sun.

On the north side of the plaza, next to the Museo Regional, is the **Palacio Legislativo** (Map pp524-5). Distinguished by thick stone columns in its interior courtyard, this is where the state congress meets. Across the street to the east is the **Palacio de Justicia** (State Courthouse; Map pp524-5). It was built in 1588 and began life as Guadalajara's first nunnery. Duck inside to the interior stairwell and check out the 1965 mural by Guillermo Chávez depicting legendary Mexican lawmakers, including Benito Juárez.

### Teatro Degollado

Construction on the neoclassical **Teatro Degollado** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3614-4773; Degollado; admission free; 🕒 for viewing 12:30-2:30pm Mon-Fri), home of the Guadalajara Philharmonic, was begun in 1856 and completed 30 years later. The five-tiered interior is swathed in red velvet and gold and is crowned by a Gerardo Suárez mural based on the fourth canto of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Over the columns on its front is a frieze depicting Apollo and the Nine Muses. The Theater was renovated in 2005 and it has a new café.

### Plaza de los Mariachis

Tucked behind the Templo Santa Eduvigis near the intersection of Av Juárez and Calz Insurgentes, just south of Mercado San Juan de Dios, is the birthplace of mariachi music. By day it's just a narrow walking street, flanked by charming old buildings and dotted with a few plastic tables and chairs and the odd uniformed mariachi man chatting on a cell phone. At night it can get lively, when patrons swill beer and listen to bands play requests for about M\$100 per song.

### Museo de la Ciudad

This **museum** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3658-3706; Av Independencia 684; admission M\$7.50, free Sun; 🕒 10am-5:30pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2:30pm Sun) has some nice historical details, such as colonial armor, spears and locks, swords and mandolins that tell the history of Guadalaajaran laymen.

### Casa-Museo José Clemente Orozco

During the 1940s, the great *tapatio* painter and muralist, José Clemente Orozco (1883-1949), lived and worked in this **house** (Map p521; ☎ 3616-

8329; Aurelio Aceves 27; admission free; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sat). There's only one of Orozco's murals on display, but at the time of writing an adjacent Orozco museum was scheduled to open some time in 2008.

### Parque Agua Azul

This green oasis, a large, leafy **park** (Map pp524-5; Calz Independencia Sur; adult/child M\$4/2; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) about 20 blocks south of the city center, is a nice place to rehab from too much urbanity. There are benches and lawns to lounge upon and jogging trails aplenty, so bring a good book or some running shoes. And check out the Orchid House. The orchids look their best in October, November, April and May. Bus 60 (or any marked 'Agua Azul') heading south on Calz Independencia will drop you here from the city center.

The **Casa de las Artesanías de Jalisco** (Map pp524-5; Calz Gallo 20; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) is a large museum-like store selling high-quality Jalisco handicrafts including pottery, glassware, jewelry, textiles and furniture. Prices are reasonable and there's a small, free ceramics museum.

### Zoológico Guadalajara, Selva Mágica & Planetario

The zoo, Selva Mágica amusement park and planetarium are near one another on the northern outskirts of the city. Trolleybus R600 and buses 60 and 62A (marked 'Zoológico'), heading north on Calz Independencia, drop you close by.

The **Zoológico Guadalajara** (Map p521; ☎ 3674-4488; www.zooguadalajara.com.mx; Paseo del Zoológico 600; adult/child M\$45/25; 🕒 10am-5pm Wed-Sun) is a large, relatively pleasant place with aviaries, a reptile house and a children's petting zoo. Animals include lions, tigers, hippos and flamingos. There's a good view of the Barranca de Oblatos, an impressive 670m-deep canyon, at the north end. Stroller and wheelchair rentals are available.

Beside the zoo, off Calz Independencia Nte, is **Selva Mágica** (Map p521; ☎ 3674-1290; Paseo Zoológica 600; admission M\$150; 🕒 10am-8pm). It has four large roller coasters and five live animal (dolphins, seals, birds) shows daily.

### Zapopan

The fashionable, upmarket suburb of Zapopan (population 1,022,600) is about 8km from the city center, on the northwestern edge of

Guadalajara. There are some interesting historical sights around the main plaza.

Zapopan's pride and joy, the **Basilica de Zapopan** (Map p521), built in 1730, is home to Nuestra Señora de Zapopan, a petite statue of the Virgin visited by pilgrims year-round. The faithful get extreme during the Fiestas de Octubre, when thousands of kneeling old women crawl behind as the statue is carried here from Guadalajara's central cathedral. The kneeling pilgrims then make the final trek up the basilica's aisle to pray for favors at her altar. The Virgin receives a new car each year for the procession, but the engine is never turned on (thus remaining 'virginal'). It's hauled by men with ropes.

The **Museo de Arte de Zapopan** (MAZ; Map p521; ☎ 3818-2575; www.mazmuseo.com; cnr Paseo Tepitzintli & Andador 23 de Enero; admission M\$24; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) is one block east of Plaza de las Américas and is Guadalajara's best modern art complex. Permanent exhibitions of some of Mexico's finest including Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Juan Soriano and Luis Barragán are on display; and temporary exhibitions have included works by Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo and a whimsical showing of Anthony Browne prints that saw the top floor covered with turf, sticks, stones and sand.

**Los Arcos** is a street with a dozen bars near the plaza, each catering to unique musical tastes, such as electronica or reggae. A **tourist kiosk** (🕒 Tue-Sun) can usually be found in front of the Museo de Arte de Zapopan along Paseo Tepitzintli, a pleasant pedestrian street (head straight out the basilica's front door).

Bus 275 Diagonal and the turquoise TUR bus marked 'Zapopan,' heading north on Avs 16 de Septiembre or Alcalde, stop beside the basilica; the trip takes 20 minutes.

## Tlaquepaque

Just 7km southeast of downtown Guadalajara is the artisan community of Tlaquepaque (lah-keh-pah-keh; population 510,500), where artisans live behind the pastel colored walls of abandoned old mansions and their goods, such as wood carvings, sculpture, furniture, ceramics, jewelry, leather items and candles, are sold in swank contemporary design boutiques that line the narrow cobblestone streets.

In the 19th century Tlaquepaque was an upper-class suburb of Guadalajara. Now these latter-day homes belong to artisans, restaurateurs and owners of cute garden

B&B's. The plaza is leafy and blooming with flowers and the benches around the fountain are always packed. The eating is very good and the strolling is even better, especially at sunset when the sky behind the gorgeous, white-domed basilica burns orange and families take to the streets, enjoying the last ticks of daylight.

The **tourist office** (Map p521; ☎ 3562-7050 ext 2319; www.tlaquepaque.gob.mx; Morelos 88; 🕒 9am-3pm Mon-Fri) is upstairs in the Casa del Artesano. It offers two- to three-hour **walking tours** (donation) of the area, which include visits to local workshops and museums and can be given in English or Spanish, but you must reserve ahead.

The **Museo Regional de la Cerámica** (Map p521; ☎ 3635-5404; Independencia 237; admission free; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) is set in a great old adobe building with stone arches and mature trees in the courtyard. It has a nice collection that exhibits the varied styles and clays used in Jalisco and Michoacán. Explanations are in English and Spanish.

More miniature figurines, as well as enormous, lightly fired urns and other ceramic crafts from around Mexico are on display at the **Museo Pantaleón Panduro** (Map p521 ☎ 3639-5646; Sánchez 191; admission free; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun).

To get to Tlaquepaque, take bus 275 Diagonal, 275B or 647 (M\$4). The turquoise TUR bus marked 'Tonalá' has air-con and is more comfortable (M\$10). All these buses leave central Guadalajara from Av 16 de Septiembre between Cotilla and Madero; the trip takes about 20 minutes. As you near Tlaquepaque, watch for the brick arch and then a traffic circle. Get off at the next stop. Up the street on the left is Independencia, which will take you to the heart of Tlaquepaque.

## Tonalá

This dusty, bustling suburb (population 444,500) is about 13km southeast of downtown Guadalajara and home to even more artisans. You can feel this town beginning to take Tlaquepaque's lead with a few airy, inviting showrooms and cafés opening around town, but it remains happily rough around the edges. It's fun to roam through the dark, dusty stores and workshops. Anything you can buy in Tlaquepaque, you can find here for much less, which is what attracts wholesale buyers from all over the world.

## SHOPPING IN TLAQUEPAQUE

Tlaquepaque has legendary shopping. Large home decor boutiques are stocked with ceramics, exquisite light fixtures and handmade wood furniture. Guadalajara's best interior designers are based here and if you take your time you'll discover some rare and creative pieces.

At **Antigua de México** (Map p521; ☎ 3635-2402; Independencia 255; 🕒 10am-2pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat) gorgeous furniture showpieces, like benches carved from a single tree, are displayed in expansive, old-world courtyards.

**Orígenes** (Map p521; ☎ 3563-1041; Independencia 211; 🕒 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-7pm Sat, 11am-6pm Sun) is smaller than Antigua de México, but it has a tremendous lighting selection, elegant hammocks in the overstocked courtyard and some funky cowhide sofas.

**Teté, Arte y Diseño** (Map p521; ☎ 3635-7965; Juárez 173; 🕒 10am-7:30pm Mon-Sat) has massive chandeliers, reproduction antique hardware and one-of-a-kind woodcarvings.

**Los Cirios** (☎ 3635-2426; www.loscirios.com.mx; Madero 70; 🕒 10am-7pm Mon-Sat) is a high-end candle factory and showroom which makes centerpiece candles in all shapes, sizes, colors and scents. Some are nearly 2m tall.

If you need something transported, visit **Sebastián Exportaciones** (Map p521; ☎ 3124-6560; sebastianexp@prodigy.net.mx; Ejército 45; 🕒 9am-2pm & 4-6pm Mon-Fri), which ships boxes (minimum 1 sq meter) internationally.

On Thursday and Sunday, Tonalá bursts into a huge street market that sprouts on Av Tonaltecas and crawls through dozens of streets and alleys and takes hours to explore. This is where wholesale meets retail. You'll browse stalls that sell masks, glassware, ceramics, furniture, toys, jewelry, handmade soap and DVDs. There are plenty of *torta* and taco stands and there's one *michelada* vendor. You'll have to sift through junk to find great deals and the best pieces are usually found at the workshops and warehouses, not on the street. Still, it's a fun scene.

The **Tonalá tourist office** (Map p521; ☎ 3284-3092; Tonaltecas 140; 🕒 9am-3pm Mon-Fri), on the main drag in the Casa de Artesanos, gives out maps and information. Ask staff about two- to three-hour **walking tours** (donation) of the area, which include visits to local artisan workshops. They're given in English or Spanish, but need to be reserved a couple of days in advance.

The carved wood and ceramic masks at the **Museo Regional de Tonalá** (Map p521; Ramón Corona 73; admission free; 🕒 9am-3pm Mon-Fri) are outstanding. Many are decorated with real animal teeth and horsehair.

To reach Tonalá, take bus 275 Diagonal or 275D (both M\$4). The turquoise TUR bus marked 'Tonalá' has air-con and is more comfortable (M\$10). All these buses leave Guadalajara from Av 16 de Septiembre; the trip takes about 45 minutes. As you enter Tonalá, get off on the corner of Avs Tonalá

and Tonaltecas, then walk three blocks north on Tonaltecas to the tourist office (in the Casa de Artesanos). From the Casa de Artesanos, it's three blocks east and two blocks north to the Plaza Principal.

## COURSES

Travelers hell-bent on learning something can choose among a number of language, movement and art at classes available to students of all ages. Prices and curricula vary tremendously.

**CEPE** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3616-4399; www.cepe.udg.mx; Universidad de Guadalajara, Apartado Postal 1-2130, Guadalajara, Jalisco 44100) The Universidad de Guadalajara's Centro de Estudios para Extranjeros (Foreign Student Studies Center; CEPE) offers several levels of intensive two- to five-week Spanish-language courses. Day trips and longer excursions to other parts of Mexico are available. It can also arrange homestays.

**IMAC Spanish School** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3613-1080; www.spanish-school.com.mx; Guerra 180) The Instituto Mexicano-Americano de Cultura (IMAC) offers one- to 52-week courses. Study from one to four hours per day. Check its website for course fees and homestay options. Music and dance classes are also available.

**Artes Plásticas** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3613-2362; www.cuaad.udg.mx/artes; Belén 120) Learn music, dance, photography, design and drama at Guadalajara's best art school, held in a graffiti covered colonial relic in the city center. Exchange students of all ages are welcome, but instruction is in Spanish. Register through the University of Guadalajara.

**Yogare** (☎ 3170-3912; www.yogare.com; Madero 5850, Zapopan) Yogis can descend to this sweet studio near the



Zapopan plaza. Daily vinyasa yoga classes cost M\$100 each, but you can have four for M\$240 or an unlimited month's pass for M\$480. Instruction is in Spanish.

## TOURS

**Panoramex** (☎ 3810-5057; [www.panoramex.com.mx](http://www.panoramex.com.mx); Federalismo Sur 944) runs tours with English-, French- and Spanish-speaking guides, leaving from the Jardín San Francisco at 9.30am. Tours include visits to Guadalajara's main sights (M\$136, five hours, Monday to Saturday), to Chapala and Ajijic (M\$174, six hours, Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday); and to the town of Tequila, where you'll roam agave fields and Sauza's tequila distillery before sipping (M\$207, 6½ hours, Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday).

**Spirits of El Panteón de Belén** (Belén 684; [www.explore-guadalajara.com/panteondebelen.html](http://www.explore-guadalajara.com/panteondebelen.html); M\$33 per person; 🗓️ tours depart 8:30pm, 10pm, midnight Wed-Fri, 1:30am Sat) Check out the haunted, crumbling tombs in one of Guadalajara's oldest cemeteries on this creepy night tour. The later the hour the more spine-tingling the journey. Enjoy the ghosts.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Major festivals celebrated in Guadalajara and its suburbs, include:

**Feria de Tonalá** An annual handicrafts fair in Tonalá, specializing in ceramics, is held the weeks before, during and after Semana Santa (Easter week).

**Fiestas de Tlaquepaque** Tlaquepaque's annual fiesta and handicrafts fair takes place mid-June to the first week of July.

**Fiesta Internacional del Mariachi** ([www.mariachi-jalisco.com.mx](http://www.mariachi-jalisco.com.mx)) In late August and early September mariachis come from everywhere to jam, battle and enjoy.

**Fiestas de Octubre** ([www.fiestasdeoctubre.com.mx](http://www.fiestasdeoctubre.com.mx)) Beginning with a parade on the first Sunday in October, these fiestas last all month long and are Guadalajara's principal annual fair. Free entertainment takes place from noon to 10pm daily in the Benito Juárez auditorium at the fairgrounds (5km north of the city center), while elsewhere around the city are livestock shows, art exhibitions and sporting and cultural events. On October 12 there's a procession from the cathedral to Zapopan.

**Feria Internacional del Libro** ([www.fil.com.mx](http://www.fil.com.mx)) This is one of the biggest book promotions in Latin America; held during the last week of November and first week of December, headlined by major Spanish language authors, such as Gabriel García Márquez. It closes with a free public concert of a big name band at the convention center.

**Guadalajara Winefest** (☎ 3812-3614; [www.gdlwinefest.com](http://www.gdlwinefest.com)) The inaugural event in November 2007 was

held in 20 of Guadalajara's best restaurants. The week was highlighted by courses, conferences and winemaker-sponsored dinners, all accompanied by plenty of bottles of Baja red.

## SLEEPING

During holidays (Christmas and Easter) and festivals you *must* reserve ahead. Ask for discounts if you arrive in the low season or will be staying more than a few days.

## Central Guadalajara

### BUDGET

**Hostel Guadalajara** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3562-7520; [www.hostelguadalajara.com](http://www.hostelguadalajara.com); Maestranza 147; dm with/without ISIC card M\$115/145; 🗺️) If you like a good party and a better deal than nest at this fine HI hostel, decorated by contemporary paintings and old-world stone columns. The six private and dorm rooms surround one giant loft. Parties are frequent, excursions (think tequila factories, salsa dancing) are a good value, breakfast is free and the crowd is attractive international. The two private rooms are M\$300/320 for a single/double.

**Hostal de María** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3614-6230; Nueva Galicia 924; dm M\$160, r M\$320) Less MTV and more old-world Mexico can be found at this sweet hostel tucked into a narrow street near the Nueve Esquinas neighborhood. Breakfast and wireless internet are free. The Puerto Vallarta room on the 2nd floor terrace has the best digs.

**Casa Vilasanta** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3124-1277; [www.vila-santa.com](http://www.vila-santa.com); Rayón 170; s/d M\$180/\$390) This is the best value in Guadalajara. The bright, pastel-colored rooms are scattered around a cool interior courtyard, decorated with pottery and flowers and a sunny 2nd-story terrace. Singles can feel cramped, but the doubles are large and all rooms have plasma TV, air-con and wireless internet. There's a shared kitchen and plenty of chill space on both floors. But with just 11 rooms and English-speaking management, this place books up. Reserve ahead!

**Posada San Pablo** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3614-2811; <http://sanpablo1.tripod.com>; Madero 429; s/d M\$280/350) A pleasant budget choice, complete with grassy garden and sunny terrace. Upstairs rooms with balconies are best.

Southeast of Mercado San Juan de Dios there's a cluster of budget hotels. This part of town is a bit rough, but you can usually find a cheap room here when other places are full.



**Hotel México 70** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3617-9978; Av Javier Mina 230; s/d/tw M\$170/190/270) Popular among budget-minded Mexican families, which despite the dark, bleak halls means you won't be running into hookers or hourly customers at this hotel (they'll be down the block). Ask for one of the larger, sunnier outside rooms.

**Hotel Ana Isabel** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3617-7920; Av Javier Mina 164; s/d M\$185/240) This clean and surprisingly quiet budget haunt has soft beds and a lobby perfumed with always brewing (free!) coffee. But the metal doors and dark rooms do have a certain cell-like quality.

**Hotel Azteca** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3617-7465; www.hotelazteca.com; Av Javier Mina 311; r from M\$350; (P)) The cleanest hotel in this end of town and even the street-front rooms are remarkably quiet. All have cable TV and fan and the beds are hard (in a good way).

Several cheap accommodation options can be found around the Antigua Central Camionera (Old Bus Terminal) in a busy neighborhood about 10 blocks south of the city center.

#### MIDRANGE

**Posada Regis** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3614-8633; http://posadarregis.tripod.com; Av Corona 171; s/d M\$365/430) The rooms at this funky posada are spacious with high, detailed ceilings, but choose wisely: those facing the street are noisy and others are just not clean enough.

**Hotel Consulado** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3563-2287, fax 3827-2287; Lopez Cotilla 1405; s/d/tw M\$470/540/610; (P)) At first glance this place feels like your modern Zen oasis. In reality the clean, modern rooms aren't fabulous, but they are the best deal in Zona Rosa so reserve ahead. Amenities include cable TV and wireless internet and it's walking distance to countless cafés, bars and restaurants. Make sure to remind the staff to switch your hot water on before you get in the shower!

**Don Quixote Hotel** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3658-1299, fax 3614-2845; Héroes 91; s/d M\$490/655; (P)) Simple, clean, tasteful rooms, even if they are a bit cramped. There's an attached restaurant and the lobby has character. Exhibit A: an antique case displaying a prodigious tequila collection.

**Hotel El Aposento** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3614-1612; Madero 545; r from M\$500; (P)) Rooms in this converted 19th-century hospital are large with old-world charm – including lovely tiled bathrooms – but they should be cleaner. Still, they're set around a sunny, open court-

yard filled with plants, a small fountain and tables where you'll enjoy a full American breakfast, gratis.

**La Rotonda** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3614-1017; www.hotelesselectos.com; Liceo 130; r from M\$550; (P)) Two stories of attractively tiled rooms with hardwood furnishings surround a bright colonial stone courtyard filled with glass tables and potted plants – perfect for your morning coffee. Try to get an upstairs room for more privacy and light.

**Hotel San Francisco Plaza** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3613-8954; www.sanfranciscohotel.com.mx; Degollado 267; s/d M\$600/650; (P)) The bright, leafy enclosed courtyard twittering with the sound of parakeets goes along with the beautifully polished exterior. If only the large rooms weren't so dark and the bathrooms so tiny.

**Hotel Francés** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3613-1190; www.hotelfrances.com; Maestranza 35; r from M\$643; (P)) This living, breathing baroque time capsule has been operating since 1610. You'll feel its age. Rooms are a far cry from luxurious, but they are clean. And if you get one on the 3rd floor, you'll have immediate roof access – and insane views of colonial Guadalajara at your fingertips. Magic!

**Hotel Cervantes** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3613-6816; www.hotelcervantes.com.mx; Sánchez 442; s/d M\$665/710; (P)) This modern high-rise with the flashy lobby and sunny rooms is a bit soulless. But it's also comfortable and stocked with amenities, including a swimming pool.

**Hotel Laffayette** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3615-0252, fax 3630-1112; www.laffayette.com.mx; Av de la Paz 2055; r from M\$755; (P)) Another 1980s-era high-rise located just off Chapultepec. Rooms are comfortable, not classy, despite the marble baths. But you gotta love the 40in plasma flat screen. Rooms in the upper reaches of this 17-floor tower have spectacular city views.

**Santiago de Compostela** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3613-8880, fax 3658-1925; Colón 272; r from M\$840; (P)) The stone facade will draw you in, but like many Guadalajara hotels, the exterior outshines the interior. The location is good, however, and it is a clean and decent three-star hotel, if a touch overpriced.

**Hotel Morales** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3658-5232; www.hotelmorales.com.mx; Av Corona 243; r from M\$850; (P)) A pretty fountain gurgles and business travelers and families gather in the beautifully tiled lobby. Rooms are a bit dark, but they're reasonably large with firm beds and balconies that overlook sensational city

views. Book ahead because this attractive colonial hotel fills up.

**Hotel Fenix** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3614-5714; www.fenixguadalajara.com.mx; Av Corona 160; r from M\$890; (P) (X) (2) (Q) (R)) Another modern high-rise. This one has a great central location, English-speaking staff, thin walls and some musty rooms. But the commanding views from those in the upper reaches offer cause to forgive their shortcomings.

#### TOP END

**Hotel Aranzazu** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3942-4042, fax 3942-4035; www.aranzazu.com.mx; r from M\$990; (P) (X) (2) (Q) (R)) Another relatively charm-less executive tower hotel. But it has all the amenities, comfortable rooms with king-sized beds and outstanding 9th floor views.

**Casa Madonna B&B** (Map p521; ☎ 3615-6554; www.casamadonna.com.mx; Lerdo de Tejada 2308; d/st M\$1200/1400; (2) (Q) (R)) This intimate boutique hotel offers five cozy rooms in a converted 1920s era Mexican hacienda. Days begin with breakfast on a garden patio and they end around the fireplace with a glass of red. It's a couple of kilometers west of the city center.

**Presidente Intercontinental Guadalajara** (Map p521; ☎ 3678-1234, fax 3678-1222; www.ichotelsgroup.com; cnr Lopez Mateos Sur & Moctezuma; r from M\$1400 (P) (X) (2) (Q) (R)) This is your massive modern glass palace with over 400 rooms, 40 suites, two restaurants and a bar that is generally patronized by suits high on expense accounts. The concierge can arrange tours, rental cars, dinner reservations and a massage at the spa, and rooms are new, carpeted and comfortable. Get one with a balcony and a view (only about M\$100 more) as long as you're spending.

**Fiesta Americana Guadalajara** (Map p521; ☎ 3818-1400; www.fiestamericana.com.mx; Aceves 225; r from M\$1443; (P) (X) (2) (Q) (R)) The location – along Av López Mateos Norte – isn't so magical, but this fine hotel offers 390 rooms on 22 stories and all the services and amenities you could want. Views are stunning from top floors and the glass elevator is a nice touch.

**Villa Ganz** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3120-1416; www.villaganz.com; López Cotilla 1739; r from M\$2000; (P) (Q) (R)) Without a doubt the best hotel in town. The 10 unique suites in this converted Zona Rosa mansion have sensational features like fireplaces, queen-sized hammocks, oyster shell vanities, brick ceilings, rustic wood furniture and tiled floors throughout. The garden terrace, and

an enormous wood-burning fireplace and too many candles to count, oozes romance.

**Quinta Real Guadalajara** (Map p521; ☎ 3669-0600; www.quintareal.com; Av México 2727; r from M\$2506; (P) (X) (2) (Q) (R)) There is no denying the beauty of this five-star stay, with its exquisite stone and ivy-covered exterior. The lobby and bar are inviting and stylish, the grounds are impeccably manicured and the service is outstanding. But the rooms are a bit cramped and don't live up to the steep price tag.

#### Tlaquepaque

Just 15 minutes away by bus or taxi from downtown Guadalajara, Tlaquepaque is an excellent option for those who crave small town charm but still want to visit the sights downtown. The shopping is superb, and you won't have to lug your purchases too far.

**La Posada de la Media Luna** (Map p521; ☎ 3635-6054; http://lamedialuna.tripod.com; Juárez 36; r from M\$290) An affordable, basic choice. It's centrally located, the rooms are tidy, not spotless, but the upstairs terrace is sunny and on weekends the sound of countless jamming mariachi drifts in.

**El Retoño** (Map p521; ☎ 3587-3989; www.lacasadelreto.com; Matamoros 182; s/d M\$600/750) Another cute courtyard B&B set on a quiet street. The rooms have arched brick ceilings, exposed stone walls, sweet tiled bathrooms and some have balconies overlooking the backyard. This is an exceptional deal.

**Casa Campos** (Map p521; ☎ 3838-5296; www.hotelcasacampos.com; Miranda 30A; s/d M\$850/1000; (2) (X) (Q) (R)) This old converted mansion marries stone columns and wrought iron with sleek wood furnishings, for a stylish blend of old and new. The brilliant courtyard has cages full of rare pygmy monkeys and there's a swank tequila bar.

**La Villa del Ensueño** (Map p521; ☎ 3635-8792, fax 3659-6152; www.villadelensueno.com; Florida 305; r from M\$950; (P) (X) (2) (Q) (R)) Behind its garish purple exterior are 20 modern rooms set around two pools. This place lacks the culture and style of some of the smaller B&Bs in town, but the rooms are quite new and comfortable and it has all the amenities. Breakfast is included.

**Quinta Don José** (Map p521; ☎ 3635-7522, fax 3838-4641; www.quintadonjose.com; r from M\$975; (X) (Q) (R)) You'll enjoy the comfy sunken lobby/lounge and the sunny upstairs rooms with sponged pastel walls. It also has larger and darker rooms accessed from the pool deck. Breakfast is included.

### TOP FIVE MEALS IN JALISCO

- Take Jalisco's best fine food distributors, an old, converted Zona Rosa mansion and an ethos to make haute cuisine affordable and you have, **Cocina 88 (opposite)**, Guadalajara's best restaurant. Choose your cut of steak and seafood from the butcher case, pay a small kitchen fee, pluck a bottle of red from the cellar and bring a date!
- If you crave tradition over innovation then step into **Birriería las Nueve Esquinas** (opposite). It serves what could be considered *comida típica*, but it's anything but typical. This attractive, open tiled kitchen prepares the best lamb in the region and it does a mean *birria de chivo* (steamed goat) too. The price is right, the portions are huge and savory and the atmosphere is steeped in old Mexico.
- Ceviche in the highlands, 300km from the sea? Does that sound like a good idea to you? Well, it should. Because the man known mythically as El Socio, proprietor of **Mariscos el Social** (p536), has been dicing and marinating fresh ceviche and crafting huge shrimp and octopus cocktails on a Tlaquepaque street corner for 20 years. He's so popular it's hard to get a seat and he and his staff, who arrive before 7am each day to begin peeling and boiling the shrimp, go through 350kg of seafood each week. It's fresh, absurdly good and you will have a blast. El Socio will make sure of that.
- The spiciest dish we've ever loved can be found at a superb ranch-style restaurant in tequila country. The signature dish at **Real Campestre** (p545) is *aguachile* (a dish where two dozen raw shrimp are cooked in a cold lime juice and chili broth). The shrimp still look raw, but they are tender and full of deliciously tart fire that is immediately addictive. Peruse the menu because everything here is good, especially the bar – which serves 50 varieties of fine highland tequila.
- There's something pure and true about a great taco. It's simple – with only a few ingredients, satisfying to even the most naive and sophisticated palates, but never too filling and no utensils are required, which is always a plus. Rich and poor, old and young, neat and sloppy – everybody loves tacos! And the best taco in Jalisco (which by default puts it on the shortlist for Best Taco Worldwide) is served at **Rica Birria** (p549), a humble stand in a humble mountain town. Go find it!

**our pick** **Casa de las Flores** (Map p521; ☎ 3659-3186; www.casadelasflores.com; Santos Degollado 175; r from M\$1030; ☒ ☑) From the outside it looks like just another neighborhood compound, but when you enter this stunning courtyard B&B, you will be hit by a swirl of captivating colors. There's an incredible collection of Mexican folk art, including some very rare pre-Hispanic pieces; a blooming garden and patio patrolled by hummingbirds out back; and a stocked bar and fireplace in the living room. Rooms are all quite large and decorated in the same folksy style as the main building and breakfasts verge on the ultra gourmet – especially when co-owner Stan is on breakfast duty. He trained as a chef at Berkeley's Chez Panisse.

### EATING

Guadalajara is a good eating town and if you don't have at least one exceptional meal here – on the street, or in Guadalajara's wide range

of restaurants and cafés, then it's either your own fault, or you're a vegetarian. Fact is, this city has phenomenal steak and lamb, superb *carnitas* and *birria*, wonderful roasted chicken dinners, outstanding *ceviche* and too many *taquerías* and *torta* stands to count. Whether you are downtown, in the Zona Rosa or the suburbs, you will eat well. Everyone does.

### Centro Histórico & Around

All fancy hotels sport equally fancy restaurants. The ones at Hotel Francés and Hotel de Mendoza are magnificent old dining rooms. More adventurous stomachs can head to the Mercado San Juan de Dios (Map pp524–5), home to endless savory food stalls serving the cheapest and some of the tastiest eats in town.

**El Tío** (cnr Corona & Ferrocarril; mains M\$3.50-6; ☒ ☑ 7:30am-1:30pm) Once the savory, spicy aroma

wafts over you, you will not be able to ignore this humble taco stand. All it serves are bean and ground beef tacos with grilled peppers and fiery red salsa. Cue up with the locals and enjoy some exceptional street food.

**Danés** (☎ 3613-4401; Madero 451; pastries M\$5-25; ☎ 8am-6pm) Dessert lovers flock to this neighborhood bakery that turns out a luscious array of Mexican and European pastries. Dark chocolate oozes from the crust of the *cuerno de chocolate* and its *sorbete de crema* (a custard-stuffed pastry shaped like a cone) are dusted with cinnamon and encrusted with candied pecans.

**Kristy & Edwards** (Carranza 70; mains from M\$21; ☎ 8am-6pm) This lunch stand with a splash of color is across from the post office and serves burritos, fresh pressed and blended *jugos* (M\$10) and burgers.

**Alta Fibra** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3424-1510; Sánchez 370B; mains M\$25; ☎ 11am-7pm Mon-Fri, till 6pm Sat; ▼) Not much atmosphere, but a young, conscious crowd descends to snack on shrimp made from carrots, ham crafted from soy and spinach and whole bean tacos. Vegans, rejoice!

**La Chata** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3613-0588; Av Corona 126; mains M\$31-54) Quality *comida típica*, affordable prices and ample portions keep this family diner packed. The specialty is a *platillo jaliscense* (fried chicken with five sides); it also serves a popular *pozole* (hominy soup).

**Café Madrid** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3614-9504; Av Juárez 264; mains M\$35-50) What more could you want from a classic diner? The waiters are in white dinner jackets and the cash register, espresso machines and soda fountains are mint condition antiques. Come for breakfast. The *huevos rancheros* and *chilaquiles* have been favorites for 50 years.

**Chai** (☎ 3613-0001; Juárez 200; mains M\$41-65) Chai is your hippie chic café. Booths are actually love seats and sofas and flowers – from fake tulip light boxes to abstract wall paintings – are the general theme. The breakfast menu is superb. Think egg white omelettes and waffles with fresh strawberries.

**Chong Wah** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3613-9950; Juárez 558; mains M\$45; ☎ noon-11pm) Overdosed on *comida típica*? Hit Guadalajara's favorite Chinese haunt. All the classics are here – Sichuan shrimp, almond chicken, *lo mein* – and it serves a popular weekend buffet.

**Villa Madrid** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3613-4250; López Cotilla 553; mains M\$45-70; ☎ 11:30am-9pm Mon-Sat) Great stop for *licuados*, juices, fruit cocktails and

yoghurt done six different ways. There's live music on Saturday at 7pm.

**Sandy's** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3345-4636; Alcalde 130; meals from M\$65; ☎ 1-6pm Mon-Sun; ▼) This bright, 2nd-story lunch spot overlooks the Rotonda de los Jaliscenses Ilustres and the cathedral. It's popular among vegetarians for its salad bar.

**La Antigua** (Plaza Guadalajara; mains from M\$80; ☎ 11am-9pm) The location and ambience outshine the food at this charming terrace restaurant overlooking the plaza. But it's worth considering for the made-to-order salsa and tortillas and the sizzling *molcajete de arrachera*, a traditional beef and cheese stew simmering in a spicy chili sauce.

**La Fonda de San Miguel Arcángel** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3613-0809; Guerra 25; mains from M\$95; ☎ 8:30am-midnight Tue-Sat, 8:30am-9pm Sun, 8:30am-6pm Mon) A sweet and funky courtyard retreat from the sun where fountains gurgle, an old piano man tickles the keys and antique sculpture and bird cages are everywhere. Its specialty is a fish *molcajete*. Come at night and dine beneath a magnificent chandelier of wrought iron stars.

## Plaza de las Nueve Esquinas

Half a dozen blocks south of the city center is this small and untouristy triangular block where several small streets intersect. It's a little neighborhood popular with eateries specializing in *birria*, meat steamed in its own juices until it is so tender it melts in your mouth.

**Birriería las Nueve Esquinas** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3613-6260; Colón 384; mains M\$59-79; ☎ 8:30am-10pm Mon-Sat, 8:30am-7:30pm Sun) This is a can't-miss meal. The open, tiled kitchen, with its in-house tortillería is as beautiful as the tasty and absurdly tender *barbacoa de borrego* (baked lamb) and *birria de chivo* (steamed goat) served in traditional ceramic casseroles. Enjoy them with a stack of fresh tortillas and smaller bowls of guacamole, pickled onions and *salsa verde* swimming with *cilantro* and perfectly ripe chunks of avocado.

## Zona Rosa & Around

Guadalajara's Zona Rosa encompasses the few blocks around Av Chapultepec north and south of Av Vallarta. It's home to some of the city's best cuisine. To get here, catch the westbound Par Vial 400 or 500 bus from Avs Independencia and Alcalde. Taxis should cost around M\$40.

**Tortas Ahogadas Héroes** (Map p521; Francia 20; tortas M\$25) The menu is simple: there's only *tortas ahogadas*, Guadalajara's beloved and famous hangover cure. Crunchy baguettes are filled with chunks of pork and drenched in a searing chili sauce and a squeeze of lime. Take a bite and your tongue will burn, your stomach unwinds and your head will clear almost instantly.

**Bisquets Guadalajara** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3827-1616; Libertad 1985; mains M\$35-65) A great breakfast spot, with baskets of fresh pastries – from pan chocolate to pecan rolls to sugary, lemony *astorgas*. It also serves eggs, omelettes, tacos and enchiladas.

**La Estación de Lulio** (Map pp524-5; Libertad 1982; breakfasts M\$55; ☎ 8am-10pm) It's hard to get a seat for breakfast at this fine café because of the great jazz soundtrack and the complete breakfasts of eggs *al gusto*, spicy beans, *chilaquiles*, coffee and fresh pressed orange, grapefruit or tangerine juice.

**Karne Garibaldi** (Map p521; ☎ 3826-1286; Garibaldi 1306; mains M\$61-90; ☎ noon-midnight) It has two specialties: *carne en su jugo* (meat cooked in its own broth flavored with beans, bacon and green tomatoes) and fast service (so speedy it landed in the *Guinness Book of Records* in 1996). Neither will disappoint.

**our pick Cocina 88** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3827-5996; Valarta 1342; mains M\$100-200; ☎ 1:30-7pm, 8:30pm-1am Mon-Sat, 2pm-10pm Sun) By every measure – taste, creativity, service, style and value – this is the best restaurant in Guadalajara. The owners renovated and converted this turn-of-the-century mansion into a restaurant where guests choose their cut of beef or choice of fresh seafood from a butcher case and select their wine from the cellar rather than a list. Here, surf and turf has many meanings – such as perfectly seared scallops and *filet mignon carpaccio*. It's not cheap, but it isn't a total budget buster. Seafood and beef are sold at cost and guests are simply charged a M\$58 kitchen fee per person. It only serves two classic cocktails, martinis and margaritas.

**Santo Coyote** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3343-2265; Tejada 2379; mains from M\$130; ☎ 1pm-2am) Locals love to send tourists here because of the set piece décor (think massive *palapa* roofs) and Mexican Hat Dance performances (um, not good). But they do make their scintillating three-chili salsa fresh at the tableside and the mostly glass bar is magnificent. Plus, if you sit there you'll avoid the 'entertainment'.

**LAO** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3630-2250; www.laorestaurante.com; Zuno 2152; mains M\$130; ☎ 1:30pm-1am Mon-Sat; 2-6pm Sun) Another mansion has been converted by the guys at Cocina 88 into a cool new restaurant. This one serves Spanish, Italian and Mexican tapas and mains come with an endless salad and antipasti bar. Try the tart mango *ceviche* and the crumbly crab cakes sprinkled with *cilantro*.

## Tlaquepaque

Just southeast of the main plaza, **El Parián** is a block of dozens of restaurant-bars with patio tables crowding a leafy inner courtyard. This is where you sit, drink and listen to live mariachi music, especially on weekends. Waiters are eager but the food is so-so. Order an appetizer, but when it's time to eat a serious meal find one of these delicious kitchens.

**Cenaduría Doña Victoria** (Map p521; Degollado 182; mains from M\$9; ☎ 7pm-11pm closed Thu) Victoria serves high quality Mexican soul food. Her street-side skillet overflows with toquitos, tacos, *tortas*, *pozole*, quail, chicken and potatoes. The *pollo dorado* (M\$25) is the best seller. It comes with potatoes, salad, tortillas and three kinds of salsa.

**Salvador Santos López Tortas Ahogadas** (Map p521; Madero 74; tortas M\$18, T-bones M\$65; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat) A hole in the wall with a street-side grill, where Señor Lopez prepares T-bones and skirt steaks. Steaks are rubbed with olive oil, splashed with soy sauce and served with Greek salad and garlic bread. Don't forget to order a cold beer.

**Alcatraz** (Map p521; Progreso 124; desserts from M\$20; ☎ 10am-8pm) You'll have to search for the lava stone facade because it has no sign. But it does have the best desserts in town. The light-as-air *jericalla* custard, coffee cakes and blueberry cheesecake have won this family shop a steady stream of local loyalists.

**La Mata Tinta** (Map p521; ☎ 3659-0207; Juárez 145-13 Plaza de Artesanías; sandwiches M\$40; ☎ 11am-11pm Tue-Sun) This is a wine bar, art gallery and café under one roof – although seating spills into the plaza. It has a prodigious wine list including Mexican vintages and a nice selection of baguettes and paninis. There's live music five nights a week and the walls are covered with rotating exhibitions from local artists. Tuesday night it shows art-house cinema.

**our pick Mariscos el Social** (off Map p521; ☎ 3838-5754; Calz Delicias 117; ceviche tostadas M\$13, cocteles M\$52-128; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat) The chef, known as 'El



## TORTAS AHOGADAS

Last night you drank a few two many tequilas, forgot to chug a liter of water before bed and you're paying for it this morning. Your hair is plastered to your forehead, your eyelids will only open halfway and you have but one choice. It's time to sample Guadalajara's most beloved hangover cure, a *torta ahogada* ('drowned sandwich').

You've no doubt noticed that Guadalajara is home to countless *tortas ahogadas* stands, but no matter where you buy it you'll find three major components. A *birote* baguette is filled with tender chunks of roast pork leg and then smothered with a searing chili sauce (made primarily from a dried chili pepper called *de árbol*, vinegar, garlic and oregano). The crusty, sour *birote* is the key. Similar to San Francisco's famous sourdough, Guadalajara's altitude and climate make its baguettes unique. Crunchy on the outside and soft in the center, their consistency allows the bread to be submerged in sauce without losing its structure. This soggy sandwich has integrity, people! And to bleary-eyed customers, like you, who lost their motor skills at last call, that is a very good thing.

With the sun beating down upon you, desperate for relief you squeeze your soggy beast with lime and crunch. The vinegary chili burns so hot that sweat trickles down your forehead and your eyes water, but it's a welcome irrigation. The tender pork melts in your mouth and the starchy bread instantaneously tames your acidic stomach. Further bites bring a hint of lime, a touch of smooth, creamy avocado and more blessed fire. Within minutes the hangover that furiously gripped your temples relents. Your eyes open fully and completely, your shoulders relax and light floods in. You are finally ready to begin your day.

Socio, started serving his sensational *ceviche* and delicious shrimp and octopus cocktails from his stainless steel cart on Glendale and Delicias 20 years ago. He still works that corner, but he has a sit-down café down the block that is equally great. Each week El Socio and his crew serve 350kg of shrimp and octopus. So, you know it's fresh. Order a shrimp and octopus plate if you're not into the soupy cocktails.

**El Abajeño** (Map p521; ☎ 3635-9015; Juárez 231; mains from M\$70; ☎ noon-10pm Mon-Sun) *Comida típica* is dressed up and served to business-types and well-off families on a beautiful brick patio with fountains, chandeliers and roving mariachi. Try the wood grilled lamb (M\$92).

**Casa Vieja** (Map p521; ☎ 3657-6250; Prieto 99; mains M\$96-117; ☎ 8am-10:30pm Mon-Thu, 8am-midnight Fri & Sat, 8am-10pm Sun) Dine on tequila-marinated chicken and *arrachera mitla* – tender skirt steak marinated in *achiote* and lime juice, within a chipped and faded pastel courtyard. The food works and the setting is lovely, but the soundtrack is bracing (Gothic classical meets Ryan Seacrest approved pop-rock).

**Casa Fuerte** (Map p521; ☎ 3639-6481; Independencia 224; mains M\$100-200; ☎ 12:30-8pm) This place leans toward fine dining, with an elegant bar, refreshing garden patio and a menu priced like an upscale Mexican restaurant in California. It's one of the more popular spots in town.

## DRINKING

**La Fuente** (Map pp524-5; Suárez 78; ☎ 8:30am-11pm Mon-Thu, 8:30am-midnight Fri & Sat) La Fuente, set in the old Edison boiler room, is an institution – and a rather friendly one. It's been open since 1921 and is mostly peopled by regulars – older men who start drinking too early. But they treat newcomers like family and women like queens. A bass, piano, violin trio sets up and jams from sunset until last call.

**Scratch** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3614-7433; Guerra 226; ☎ noon-11pm Mon-Thu, noon-midnight Fri & Sat) This new hipster bar in the Centro Historico has elevated the *michelada* (beer and Bloody Mary's lovechild) to fine art and celebrates the days when grunge rock ruled. It also has 12 labels of good tequila.

**Hotel Francés** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3613-1190; Maestranza 35; ☎ noon-midnight) The dark marble courtyard bar at this hotel encourages you to relax back into another era, where waiters in bow ties treat you like old friends, happy hour lasts until 8pm and acoustic troubadours strum gorgeous, weepy ballads.

Outside the historic center are some of the city's trendiest watering holes.

**Green Mug** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3825-7872; Chapultepec 223A; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon-Fri, 10am-11pm Sat, 6pm-11pm Sun; espresso drinks from M\$15) This sleek, indie coffee house is Starbucks' main competition on Chapultepec. There are leather sofas, flat



screen TVs and free wi-fi, all enjoyed by a young, hip crowd.

**Bananas** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3615-4191; Chapultepec 330; ☎ 4pm-2am) Beers are cheap, the crowd is young and the music gravitates from hip-hop to global rock and back again. On slow midweek nights this mod-dive always attracts a crowd.

**our pick Candela** (Map p521; ☎ 3616-9676; Mina 83, Zapopan; ☎ 1pm-2am Tue-Sun) Drink with Zapopan's young, sexy, moneyed bohemia in this converted home with a courtyard lounge, specialty cocktails and a jazz soundtrack. It serves wood-fired pizzas. Tuesday is the big night.

**Santa** (Map pp524-5; Luna 2042; ☎ 8pm-2am) Red carpets and blinking Señora de Guadalupe pictures sum up the eccentric glam interior. It gets crowded on weekends when electronic DJs spin. During the week well-dressed yuppies sip martinis (two for one on Thursday) and listen to lounge music.

## ENTERTAINMENT

Guadalajara is a musical place and live performers can be heard any night of the week at one of the city's many venues (including restaurants). Discos and bars are plentiful, but ask around for the newest hot spots.

Peruse the entertainment insert, *Ocio*, in the Friday edition of *Público*. It has the current week's scoop on restaurants, movies, exhibits and the club scene. Spanish-language dailies *Occidental* and *Informador* also have entertainment listings, as does the weekly booklet *Ciento Uno*. Or you can always ask a young and friendly local their thoughts. Guadalajarans love to show off their town.

Several popular venues host a range of drama, dance and music performances. The newest and hippest spot is **Teatro Diana** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3818-3800 via Ticketmaster; www.teatrodiana.com; Av 16 de Septiembre 710). It stages traveling Broadway shows, concerts with local and international artists and art installations. Other options include the **Teatro Degollado** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3613-1115) and the **Instituto Cultural de Cabañas** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3668-1640), both downtown cultural centers, as well as the **Ex-Convento del Carmen** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3030-1390; Av Juárez 638).

## Nightclubs

Guadalajara's hot spots are outside the historic center. You'll be mingling with a young, pretty crowd of well-dressed locals, so ditch the backpacker gear, put on your smell-goods and let

your foreign tongue pacify snarling bouncers. Sometimes the best scene and hottest *chicas*, can be found at the gay clubs (see the boxed text, opposite) – heteros are always welcome.

**El Callejón de los Rumberos** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3827-7490; Chapultepec 287; cover charge men/women M\$150/30; ☎ 7pm-1am Wed-Sun) This is the best salsa bar in Guadalajara, where locals dress to the nines and shake their asses on two floors with two bandstands and three bars. Wednesday is the big night.

**Bar Américas** (Map p521; ☎ 3389-8211; Américas 959; www.baramericas.com; ☎ 9pm-4am Thu-Sun) Mexican and international DJs spin slamming electronic music for the Jaegermeister swilling masses at this crowded old bunker. There's no sign, so it can be tough to find. You'll hear it before you see it.

**Angels Club** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3615-2525; López Cotilla 1495B; ☎ 9:30pm-5am Wed-Sat, 6am-11am Sun) Welcome to Guadalajara's megalclub. Sure, it's a gay venue, but chicks dig the mod acrylic tables, cool lounge, throwback beanbag room and the three dance floors blasting electronica, hip-hop and progressive rock so heterosexual men should shed their inhibitions and mingle with the party people. Saturday nights get wild. Clubbers often leave for breakfast at around 5am and return for sun-drenched fun after hours.

## Mariachis

You can pay your respects to the mariachi tradition in its home city. The Plaza de los Mariachis, just east of the historic center, is an OK place to sit, drink beer and soak in the serenades of passionate Mexican bands.

But you'll be happier at El Paríán (p536), a garden complex in Tlaquepaque made up of dozens of small cantinas that all share one plaza occupied by droves of Mariachi. On the weekends the bands battle and jockey for your ears, applause and cash.

**Casa Bariachi** (Map p521; ☎ 3616-9900; Av Vallarta 2221; ☎ 1pm-3am Mon-Sat) This bright barn-like restaurant-bar has romantic lighting and leather chairs, along with piñatas and colorful *papel picado* (cutout paper) hanging from the ceiling. This place may fail the hipster test, but the margaritas are bathtub big and mariachis jam from 4pm to 11pm daily. It's about a 10-minute taxi ride west of the city center.

## Other Live Music

State and municipal bands present free concerts of typical *música tapatía* in the Plaza

## GAY & LESBIAN GUADALAJARA

Guadalajara is one of the gayest cities in the country – some call it the San Francisco of Mexico. It's not nearly as open as SF, however, and discrimination (especially against transgender folks) persists. However, if you know where to go you'll feel comfortable.

Guadalajara's so-called 'gay ghetto' radiates out a few blocks from the corner of Ocampo and Sánchez, in the city center, but Av Chapultepec's Zona Rosa (just west of the city center) is starting to see upscale establishments aimed at a gay clientele.

In June there are gay **pride marches** ([www.marchadiversidadgdl.org](http://www.marchadiversidadgdl.org)) and the city even supports a **gay radio** ([www.gdlgayradio.com](http://www.gdlgayradio.com)). The best **bar listings**, complete with maps and phone numbers can be found at <http://gaybar.com/directory/mexico/guadalajara>, [www.conciergegdl.com](http://www.conciergegdl.com), and [www.angelfire.com](http://www.angelfire.com), which also list hotels, gyms and other gay vortexes in Guadalajara.

**La Prisciliana** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3562-0725; Sánchez 394; 🕒 5pm-1:30am) Laid-back and stylish, with arched windows, burgundy walls, worn tile floors and an antique wood bar in an old colonial building. It can get wild late and there's a drag show from time to time, but usually things stay chill. Downstairs Club Ye Ye is smaller but louder and wilder, with metallic decor and a club soundtrack.

**Los Caudillos** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3613-5445; cnr Sánchez 407; 🕒 5pm-3am Sun & Tue-Thu, 5pm-5am Wed, Fri & Sat) Diagonally across from La Prisciliana, this is a popular two-story disco, with three dance floors and endless lounges and bars. This is a hook-up joint, pure and simple. There's a cover on Fridays and Saturdays.

**Circus** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3616-0299; Galeana 277; 🕒 10pm-4am Mon & Thu, 10pm-5am Wed, 10pm-6am Fri & Sat) Fills up late in the night with hot young hardbodies lounging in heart-shaped chairs and howling at the variety shows. It's also popular with lesbians.

**Máscaras** (☎ 3614-8103; Maestranza 238; 🕒 3pm-midnight Mon-Thu, noon-2am Fri-Sun) Enter through the small yellow door on the left and you'll find an upstairs dance floor with a bar and another, more popular bar downstairs where gay men and lesbians mix. It's especially popular in the afternoon.

**Californias** (Moreno 652; 🕒 8pm-3am Mon-Sat) This hot spot attracts a diverse and attractive crowd – everything from cowboys to stock brokers. It gets packed around 10pm, and weekend nights are a madhouse, but there's no dancing.

Angels Club (opposite) hosts drag shows on Friday and Saturday at midnight. Cover is M\$50.

de Armas at 6:30pm on most Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays and on other days as well during holiday seasons (and especially for the Fiestas de Octubre, p531).

**La Bodega del Medio** (Map p521; ☎ 3630-1620; Av Vallarta 2320; 🕒 1:30pm-2:30am Mon-Sat, 1:30pm-1am Sun) This pseudo-Cuban joint complete with graffiti décor has an upstairs restaurant and a bar downstairs. Live Cuban music plays from 2:30pm to 4:30pm and 9:30pm to 2:30am, Monday to Saturday; no cover. There are Cuban dance lessons on Wednesday and Thursday from 6pm to 9pm.

**Hard Rock Café** (Map p521; ☎ 3616-4564; Av Vallarta 2425; 🕒 11am-2am) In the Centro Magno shopping center, this is your typical Hard Rock, with guitars on the walls and Tex-Mex burgers on the menu. Hidden inside, however, is a 1000-seat auditorium that hosts international groups (check with Ticketmaster for bands and showtimes).

## Sports

### BULLFIGHTS & CHARREADAS

**Plaza de Toros Nuevo Progreso** (Map p521; ☎ 3637-9982; [www.plazanuevoprogreso.com](http://www.plazanuevoprogreso.com); north end of Calz Independencia; seats M\$100-850) There are two bullfighting seasons running from October to November, and February to March. Fights are held on Sundays starting at 4:30pm. A couple of fights usually take place during the October fiestas, the rest of the schedule is sporadic. Check its website or ask for details at the tourist office.

**Lienzo Charros de Jalisco** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3619-0515; Dr Michel 572; admission M\$30-40) *Charreadas* are held at noon most Sundays in this ring behind Parque Agua Azul. *Charros* (cowboys) come from all over Jalisco and Mexico to wrestle and rope cows. *Escaramuzas* (cowgirls) perform daring side-saddle displays, often showing more riding skill than the *charros*!

## SOCCER

*Fútbol* flows strongly through Guadalaran blood. The city has three local teams in Mexico's top league, the *primera división*: **Guadalajara** (Las Chivas; www.chivas.com.mx) – the second most popular team in the country – **Atlas** (Los Zorros; www.atlas.com.mx) and **Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara** (Los Tecos; www.tecos.com.mx). The seasons last from July to December and from January to June and teams play at stadiums around the city. You can get an up-to-date season schedule at www.femexfut.org.mx.

The **Estadio Jalisco** (Map p521; ☎ 3637-0563; Siete Colinas 1772; admission M\$35-100), the main venue (seating around 60,000), hosted World Cup matches in 1970 and 1986. Contact the stadium or tourist office for schedule information. Big games will cost you.

## Cinemas

Big shopping centers, like **Plaza del Sol** (Map p521; ☎ 3121-5750; Av López Mateos Sur), **Plaza Milenium** (Map p521; ☎ 3634-0509; Av López Mateos Sur) and **Centro Magno** (Map p521; ☎ 3630-1113; Av Vallarta 2425), all have up-to-date multiplexes showing Spanish-language and first-run popcorn pictures from Hollywood. Hollywood movies come dubbed in Spanish or subtitled, so double check which show you're seeing.

## SHOPPING

Handicrafts from Jalisco, Michoacán and other Mexican states are available in Guadalajara's many markets. The Casa de las Artesanías de Jalisco (p528), just outside Parque Agua Azul, has the best selection of quality crafts in the city limits.

But Tlaquepaque and Tonalá, two suburbs less than 15km from Guadalajara's center, are both major producers of handicrafts and furniture (see p529 for both). You'll find the best value (read wholesale prices) in Tonalá.

**Mercado San Juan de Dios** (Map pp524-5; Mercado Libertad; cnr Av Javier Mina & Calz Independencia; ☎ 10am-9pm) This huge market has a whole three floors of stalls offering everything from cowboy boots and DVDs to kitchenware; the salespeople are eager to sell and the food court is outstanding!

**Mercado Corona** (Map pp524-5; cnr Av Hidalgo & Santa Mónica; ☎ 9am-8pm) Near downtown is this block-long market with cheap electronics, clothes, household items, knick-knacks and food.

**Viceroy Tabaquería** (Map pp524-5; Corona 72; ☎ 9am-7pm) A central Guadalajara tobacco shop that doubles as downtown's best tequila vendor. It has more than 100 labels of tequila at great prices and even offers tastings.

Guadalajara's richest citizens prefer to browse at the big shopping centers, such as **Centro Magno** (Map p521; Av Vallarta 2425), 2km west of the city center; **Plaza del Sol** (Map p521; Av López Mateos Sur), 7km southwest of the city center; and **Plaza Milenium** (Map p521; Av López Mateos Sur), 7.5km southwest of the city center. All open from approximately 10am to 9pm. To reach them, take bus 258 going west from San Felipe and Av Alcalde, or TUR 707 going west on Av Juárez.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

Guadalajara's **Aeropuerto Internacional Miguel Hidalgo** (☎ 3688-5504) is 17km south of downtown, just off the highway to Chapala. Inside are ATMs, money-exchange, cafés and car-rental booths. There's also a **tourist office** (☎ 8am-6pm).

A multitude of airlines offer direct flights to major cities in Mexico, the US and Canada, including:

**Aero California** (Map p521; ☎ 800-237-62-25; www.aerocalifornia.com)

**Aeroméxico** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3658-0799; www.aeromexico.com; Av Corona 196)

**American Airlines** (Map p521; ☎ 3616-4402, 800-904-60-00; www.aa.com; Av Vallarta 2440, Colonia Arcos Vallarta)

**Aviacsa** (Map p521; ☎ 800-713-57-44; www.aviacsa.com; Av Vallarta 2440, Colonia Arcos Vallarta)

**Delta** (Map pp524-5; ☎ 3630-3530; www.delta.com; López Cotilla 1701, Colonia Americana)

**Mexicana** (Map p521; ☎ 800-502-20-00; www.mexicana.com; Av Vallarta 2440, Colonia Arcos Vallarta)

### Bus

Guadalajara has two bus terminals. The long-distance bus terminal is the **Nueva Central Camionera** (New Bus Terminal; Map p521; ☎ 3600-0495), a large modern V-shaped terminal that is split into seven separate *módulos* (mini-terminals). Each *módulo* has ticket desks for a number of bus lines, plus rest rooms and cafeterias. The Nueva Central Camionera is 9km southeast of Guadalajara city center, past Tlaquepaque.

Buses go to and from just about everywhere in western, central and northern Mexico. Destinations are served by multiple compa-

nies, based in the different *módulos*, making price comparisons difficult and time-consuming. The good news is that if you're flexible, you won't have to wait long for a bus.

Destinations include the following (departures are frequent, fares are for 1st-class services):

Destination	Fare	Duration
Barra de Navidad	M\$305	5½hr
Colima	M\$168	3hr
Guanajuato	M\$300	4hr
Manzanillo	M\$230	4hr
Mexico City (Terminal Norte)	M\$460	7-8hr
Morelia	M\$242	4hr
Puerto Vallarta	M\$405	5hr
Querétaro	M\$345	5½hr
San Juan de los Lagos	M\$155	3hr
San Miguel de Allende	M\$405	5hr
Tepec	M\$195	3hr
Uruapan	M\$210	4½hr
Zacatecas	M\$345	5hr
Zamora	M\$128	2¼hr
Zapotlanejo	M\$25	30min

**ETN** (Módulo 2) offers a deluxe nonstop ride to many of these destinations. You'll pay 20% more, but it's more comfortable, faster and its plush waiting room has wireless internet.

Guadalajara's other bus terminal is the **Antigua Central Camionera** (Old Bus Terminal; Map pp524-5; ☎ 3619-3312), about 1.5km south of the cathedral near Parque Agua Azul. From here 2nd-class buses serve destinations within 75km of Guadalajara. There are two sides to it: Sala A is for destinations to the east and northeast; Sala B is for destinations northwest, southwest and south. There's a M\$1 charge to enter the terminal, which offers a **left-luggage service** (☎ 7.30am-8pm) in Sala B.

Destination	Fare	Duration	Frequency
Ajijic	M\$40	1hr	every 30 min 6am 9pm, Sala A
Chapala	M\$37	50min	every 30 min 6am 9pm, Sala A
Ciudad Guzmán	M\$100	3hr	hourly, Sala B
San Juan	M\$40	1¼hr	every 30 min 6am 9pm, Sala A
Tequila	M\$40	1¾hr	every 15 min until 9:15pm, Sala B
Tapalpa	M\$75	3hr	hourly, Sala B

## Car

Guadalajara is 535km northwest of Mexico City and 344km east of Puerto Vallarta. Highways 15, 15D, 23, 54, 54D, 80, 80D and 90 all converge here, combining temporarily to form the Periférico, a ring road around the city.

Tolls and driving times to main destinations are as follows: Manzanillo (\$24, three hours), Puerto Vallarta (\$26, 3¼ hours) and Mexico City (\$52, 5½ hours).

Guadalajara has many car rental agencies. Several of the large US companies are represented, but you may get a cheaper deal from a local company. Costs average M\$600 to M\$700 per day. And it will cost you (something like M\$3000) to leave the car in any city other than the one you rented it from. Recommended agencies include:

**Alamo** (☎ 3613-5560)

**Budget** (☎ 3613-0027, 800-700-17-00)

**Dollar** (☎ 3826-7959, 3688-5659)

**Hertz** (☎ 3688-5633, 800-654-30-30)

**National** (☎ 3614-7994, 800-227-73-68)

**Thrifty** (☎ 3688-6318)

## Train

The only train serving Guadalajara is the *Tequila Express* – a tourist excursion to the nearby town of Amatitán (see p543).

## GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

The airport is about 17km south of the center of Guadalajara, just off the highway to Chapala. To get into town on public transportation, exit the airport and head to the bus stop in front of the Hotel Casa Grande, about 50m to the right. Take any bus marked 'Zapote' (M\$6) or 'Atasa' (M\$10) – both run every 15 minutes from about 5am to 10pm and take 40 minutes to the Antigua Central Camionera, where you can hop a bus to the city center.

Taxi prices are M\$200 to the city center, M\$180 to the Nueva Central Camionera and M\$160 to Tlaquepaque. Buy fixed-price tickets inside the airport.

To get to the airport from Guadalajara's center, take bus 174 to the Antigua Central Camionera (the stop is in front of the Gran Hotel Canada) and then get on an 'Aeropuerto' bus (every 20 minutes, 6am to 9pm) from this stop. Metered taxis cost roughly M\$180.

## To/From the Bus Terminals

To reach the city center from the Nueva Central Camionera, take any bus marked 'Centro' (M\$5). You can also catch the more comfortable, turquoise-colored TUR bus (M\$10). They should be marked 'Zapopan'. Don't take the ones marked 'Tonalá' or you'll be headed away from Guadalajara's center. Taxis to the city center cost around M\$180 unless they let the meter tick (some don't use it).

To get to the Nueva Central Camionera from the city center, take any bus marked 'Nueva Central' – these are frequent and leave from the corner of Av 16 de Septiembre and Madero.

To reach the city center from the Antigua Central Camionera, take any bus going north on Calz Independencia. To return to the Antigua Central Camionera from the city center, take bus 174 going south on Calz Independencia. Taxis cost M\$40.

Bus 616 (M\$5) runs between the two bus terminals.

## Bus

Guadalajara has a comprehensive city bus system, but be ready for crowded, rough rides. On major routes, buses run every five minutes or so from 6am to 10pm daily and cost M\$5. Many buses pass through the city center, so for a suburban destination you'll have a few stops to choose from. The routes diverge as they get further from the city center and you'll need to know the bus number for the suburb you want. Some bus route numbers are followed by an additional letter indicating which route they take through the suburbs.

The TUR buses, painted a distinctive turquoise color, are a more comfortable alternative. They have air-con and plush seats (M\$10). If they roar past without stopping, they're full; this can happen several times in a row during rush hour and may drive you mad.

The tourist office has a list of the complex bus routes in Guadalajara and can help you reach your destination. Following are some common destinations, the buses that go there and a central stop where you can catch them.

**Antigua Central Camionera** Bus 174 going south on Calz Independencia.

**Av López Mateos Sur** Bus 258 at San Felipe and Av Alcalde, or TUR 707 going west on Av Juárez.

**Nueva Central Camionera** Bus 275B, 275 Diagonal or TUR marked 'Tonalá'; catch them all at Av 16 de Septiembre and Madero.

**Parque Agua Azul** Any bus marked 'Agua Azul' going south on Calz Independencia.

**Planetarium, Zoo and Selva Mágica** Bus 60 or 62A, or trolleybus R600 going north on Calz Independencia.

**Tlaquepaque** Bus 275B, 275 Diagonal or TUR marked 'Tlaquepaque' at Av 16 de Septiembre and Madero.

**Tonalá** Bus 275D, 275 Diagonal or TUR marked 'Tonalá' at Av 16 de Septiembre and Madero.

**Zapopan** Bus 275 or TUR marked 'Zapopan' going north on Avs 16 de Septiembre or Alcalde.

**Zona Rosa** Par Vial buses 400 and 500 at Avs (not Calz!) Independencia and Alcalde.

## Horse Carriages

If you're a romantic, you can hire a horse carriage for M\$150 per half-hour or M\$200 per hour. There's a carriage stand right at Jardín San Francisco and another in front of the Museo Regional de Guadalajara.

## Metro

The subway system has two lines that cross the city. Stops are marked with a 'T'. But the metro isn't tourist friendly because most stops are far from the sights. Línea 1 stretches north-south for 15km all the way from the Periférico Nte to the Periférico Sur. It runs below Federalismo (seven blocks west of the city center) and Av Colón: catch it at Parque Revolución, on the corner of Av Juárez. Línea 2 runs east-west for 10km below Avs Juárez and Mina.

## Taxi

Taxis are everywhere in the city center. They all have meters, but not all drivers use them. Most would rather quote a flat fee for a trip, especially at night. Generally it's cheaper to go by the meter – if you're quoted a flat fee and think it's inflated, feel free to bargain. Note that from 10pm to 6am a 'night meter' is used and fares rise 25%.

# AROUND GUADALAJARA

Guadalajara's version of the 21st century is enthralling, but you'd be wise to explore the surrounding countryside, where lonely mountain pueblos and lazy lakeshore towns promise an intoxicating shot of old Mexico. San Juan de los Lagos, 150km northeast of



Guadalajara, is a small, colorful market city and pilgrimage destination for millions. There are two major tequila-producing towns. Tequila, in the lowlands 50km to the northwest, is the obvious tourist's choice. But the good stuff comes from the highlands, around Atotonilco El Alto. Lago de Chapala, just 45km south, offers spectacular lake scenery, traditional working-class towns and bizarre B&B barrios for retired gringos. Further south and west, Jalisco's Zona de Montaña is home to a string of mountain retreats where horses wander free through dusty streets and you may stumble onto the perfect taco.

## SAN JUAN DE LOS LAGOS

☎ 395 / pop 47,003 / elevation 1950m

Toward the northeastern finger of Jalisco state lies a town that was built upon a Virgin – the Virgin of San Juan de los Lagos. Legend has it this smallish sculpture of Mary, crafted in the 16th century as one of the Three Sisters of Jalisco, once restored a dead seven-year old girl to life in 1623. Word leaked out, pilgrims began pouring in and they haven't stopped. Hordes arrive around Christmas, Easter, throughout the month of May and during the Fiestas de la Virgen de la Candelaria (January 20 to February 2), Fiestas de la Virgen de la Asunción (August 1 to 15) and Fiestas de la Virgen de la Inmaculada Concepción (December 1 to 8). But odds are you'll see the faithful work their way up the aisle of the gorgeous, rose-washed basilica, on their knees, praying to the *virgencita* no matter when you drop in. Don't forget to wander the endless market stalls huddled on the streets surrounding the basilica where you can haggle for religious trinkets, virgin statuettes, rosaries, jewelry, clothes, blankets and pottery or gorge on sweet coconut candy and *rompope* (a kind of eggnog). Don't capitalism and Catholicism make a lovely couple?

Hotels fill up during holidays and festivals. For information there's a **tourist office** (☎ 785-09-79; Segovia 10; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat & Sun) one block behind the cathedral.

San Juan de los Lagos makes a long day trip from Guadalajara, but you only need a few hours here. Frequent buses leave Guadalajara's Nueva Central Camionera (M\$155, three hours). Once you get into town, head left for about three blocks, go over the pedestrian bridge and zigzag around a couple of

corners, following the market stalls down to the cathedral.

## TEQUILA

☎ 374 / pop 27,600 / elevation 1219m

This valley town 50km northwest of Guadalajara is surrounded by an ocean of blue agave, the gorgeous succulent from which tequila is distilled. The Cuervo family settled here in 1758 to grow agave and distill *mezcal*. In 1795 José Cuervo introduced the first bottle of what we now know as tequila. Tourists come to tour distilleries (yes, samples are given) and troll the cobbled backstreets looking for good deals on, what else, tequila.

If you come by bus, its last stop will probably be on Gorjón. Continue on foot away from the highway for about 10 minutes and you'll eventually arrive at the church; the plaza is beyond it. If you're in town from November 30 to December 12 you'll catch the Feria Nacional de Tequila (Tequila Fair), celebrated with *charreadas*, parades and tequila exhibitions.

The biggest game in town is **Mundo Cuervo** (☎ 742-00-50; cnr Corona & José Cuervo; ☎ 9am-6pm), which produces more José Cuervo tequila than the world needs. Hourly tours include tastings and a margarita. There are four kinds of tour to choose from, costing between M\$100 and M\$250. You can't miss the distillery complex located across from the plaza. When it comes time to taste, sip *Tradicional*, Cuervo's saving grace. The makers of *Sauza*, **Perseverancia Distillery** (☎ 742-02-43; Francisco Javier Sauza Mora 80; admission M\$35; ☎ 11am-4pm Mon-Sat, closed Dec 22-Jan 2), located 4½ blocks south, also gives tours.

The **Museo Nacional del Tequila** (Corona 34; adult/child under 11 M\$15/8; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun) is half a block south from the Cuervo complex. It's very well done, with photos, exhibits, distillation apparatus and good explanations of the mechanics and history of this fairly young industry.

Sleep it off locally at **Hotel Posada del Agave** (☎ 742-07-74; Gorjón 83; s/d M\$210/300), which has clean and comfortable budget rooms with TV and fan. For more grace try **Casa Dulce María Hotel** (☎ 742-32-40; hotelcasadulcemaria@yahoo.com.mx; Abasolo 20; s/d M\$320/450), a beautiful courtyard hotel with comfortably large rooms.

The most stylish way to travel is via the **Tequila Express** (☎ in Guadalajara 33-3880-9099; www.tequilaexpress.com.mx; adult/child 6-11 M\$72/38). It departs Guadalajara's train station, located a couple of blocks south of Parque Agua Azul,



## TEQUILA

Mexico's national spirit has a past, but the industry itself is quite young. Spanish conquistadors first cultivated the blue agave plant (*Agave tequilana weber*) as early as the mid-1550s in the state of Jalisco. But tequila, which is only produced in Jalisco, didn't become popular until after the Mexican Revolution when José Cuervo introduced the first bottle to the public.

It all starts in the agave fields. Plants are cultivated for eight to 12 years then the *jimadores* come calling. These tough field hands expertly strip away the spiny foliage until they've found its heart, called a *piña*. The largest weigh up to 150kg, are hauled from the fields by burros, shipped to the distillery by truck and fed into brick or clay ovens where they cook for up to three days. Afterwards the softened pulp is shredded and juiced and the liquid is pumped into fermentation vats where it is usually mixed with yeast. In order to bear the 100% agave label, premium tequilas can legally add nothing else. Lesser tequilas, however, add sugar and sometimes flavoring and/or coloring agents. By law the mixture can contain no less than 51% agave if it is to be called tequila.

There are four varieties of tequila. White or silver (*blanco* or *plata*) tequila is not aged, no colors or flavors are added (though sugar may be) – it has a distinct agave flavor and is best sipped as an aperitif or mixed in a margarita. The similar gold variety (*oro*) also is not aged, but color and flavor, usually caramel, are added. Do yourself a favor and avoid the gold. Most of it is motor oil.

Aged tequila, a fairly recent phenomenon, can be used as a mixer, but it's best sipped neat. Tequila *reposado* (rested) has been aged from two to 11 months in oak barrels and tends to taste sharp and peppery. Tequila *añejo* (aged) is aged at least one year in oak barrels. It's sweet and smooth and works best as an after-dinner drink paired with chocolate.

Don Julio, the progenitor of the fine Don Julio brand, invented aged tequila by accident. He'd kept an oak cask of tequila in his office for years, but only shared it with close friends. After recovering from a major illness in 1988 his family threw him a party, irrigated by the aged tequila. The crowd loved it and offers for the new variety poured in. It took a year to produce the first cask, but in 1989 aged tequila was finally brought to the marketplace for the first time.

In Mexico you can buy a decent bottle of tequila for M\$150, though for something special you'll need to spend over M\$300. Treat the good stuff like a bottle of single malt and before you sip it, sniff it a few times to prepare your palate for the heat and it won't taste so harsh.

And don't be looking for a 'special' worm (*gusano*) in each bottle. These are placed in bottles of *mezcal* (an agave spirit similar to tequila but distilled outside of Jalisco state) as a marketing ploy – and even if you slurp the critter, you won't get any higher. Blue agave's psychoactive properties will leave you feeling lifted regardless.

at 11am Saturday (occasionally on Sunday). The diesel loco chugs to Amatitán, 39km from Guadalajara where it steams to a halt at the Herradura distillery, easily the best lowland distiller and the only one that harvests and cooks the agave hearts traditionally. You'll get a tour of the distillery, a mariachi show, snacks, lunch and an open bar with *mucho* tequila. Book a few days ahead through **Ticketmaster** (☎ 3818-3800).

For details of bus services from Guadalajara see p540.

## ATOTONILCO EL ALTO

☎ 391 / pop 27,276 / elevation 1596m

The soil reddens and the blue agave blooms as the road winds about 150km into the high-

lands east of Guadalajara. The striking red earth signifies a higher concentration of iron and other nutrients that make agave sweeter and the tequila smoother than those distilled and bottled in Tequila. Don Julio, the man who invented aged tequila, is the biggest name, but 7 Leguas and 50 other producers are scattered through the hills that encircle this quaint colonial town that remains unspoiled by tourism. The good side: you'll see a real working tequila town – and Calle Independencia is strung with tequila shops that sell the best bottles in Mexico for a great price. The bad news: tours are hard to come by. **Don Julio** (Díaz 24; ☎ 9am-5pm) does have a shop across the street from its distillery where you can get great deals. Pair its *añejo* with is dark chocolate truffles. Divine.

**Siete Leguas** (☎ 917-09-96; www.tequilasieteleguas.com.mx; Independencia 360; ☎ 9am-5pm), another producer of fine tequilas, has a full-functioning visitors centre and rumor has it that it will soon be giving tours.

One more reason to trek out here is to dine at **Real Campestre** (☎ 917-2838; Carretera Atotonilco-Ayotlán Km 3; mains M\$90; ☎ noon-8pm). Taste its *aguachile*, a dish in which raw shrimp are cooked in a spicy broth of fresh lemon juice and chili and follow it up with an exquisitely tender and flavorful *arrachera* to absorb that fire. It also has a great tequila bar and soothing mountain views. Too weary to make it home? Check into **Real Cervantes** (☎ 917-4814; Espinoza 26; d/ste M\$400/550). This new hotel has Spanish tile, granite staircases and bright, spotless rooms with king sized beds. Excellent value.

Bus depart regularly for Atotonilco El Alto from Guadalajara's Nueva Central Camionera (M\$75, two hours).

## CHAPALA

☎ 376 / pop 20,700 / elevation 1550m

Lago de Chapala, Mexico's largest natural lake, lies 45km south of Guadalajara. Surrounded by mountains – some of which tumble dramatically to the shore, its beauty is deep and undeniable, but it's not always healthy. Water levels fluctuate due to Guadalajara and Mexico City's water needs and on-again, off-again drought. Commercial fertilizers washed into the lake have nourished water hyacinth, an invasive plant that clogs the lake's surface, blocks sunlight from the depths – leaving the lake dead in some places. But beauty and an addictive climate (always warm during the day and pleasantly cool at night) balance Chapala's eco-sins and continue to lure American and Canadian retirees to the area, which means soaring real estate prices, especially in nearby Ajijic.

The lake's namesake, Chapala, became a well-known resort destination after president Porfirio Díaz vacationed here every year from 1904 to 1909. DH Lawrence wrote most of *The Plumed Serpent* at Zaragoza 307, now a beautiful villa (see Quinta Quetzalcóatl, right). But today Chapala is just a simple working-class Mexican town that gets busy on weekends when Guadalajarans invade. Its best quality is its authenticity and if Ajijic rubs you wrong (you won't be the first), you'll be grateful for this happy, bustling slice of real Mexico.

## Information

Chapala has a **tourist office** (☎ 765-31-41; upstairs at Madero 407; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat & Sun) and **Libros de Chapala** (☎ 765-69-90; Madero 230; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9am-2pm Sun), opposite the plaza, has a few English novels, guidebooks and magazines.

## Sights

The **pier** extends from the end of Av Madero, over marshlands and into the sky-blue lake. Relax on one of the white wrought iron benches and catch an afternoon breeze or some morning sun. A ticket booth at the pier's entrance sells boat tickets to **Isla de los Alacranes** (Scorpion Island), 6km from Chapala, which has some restaurants and souvenir stalls but is not very captivating. A round-trip, with 30 minutes on the island, costs M\$420 per boatload; for one hour it's M\$480. A better and pricier option is **Isla de Mezcala**, 15km from Chapala. Here you'll find ruins of a fort where Mexican independence fighters held strong from 1812 to 1816, repulsing several Spanish attacks before finally earning the respect and a full pardon from their enemies. A three-hour round-trip boat ride costs M\$1500, for up to eight people.

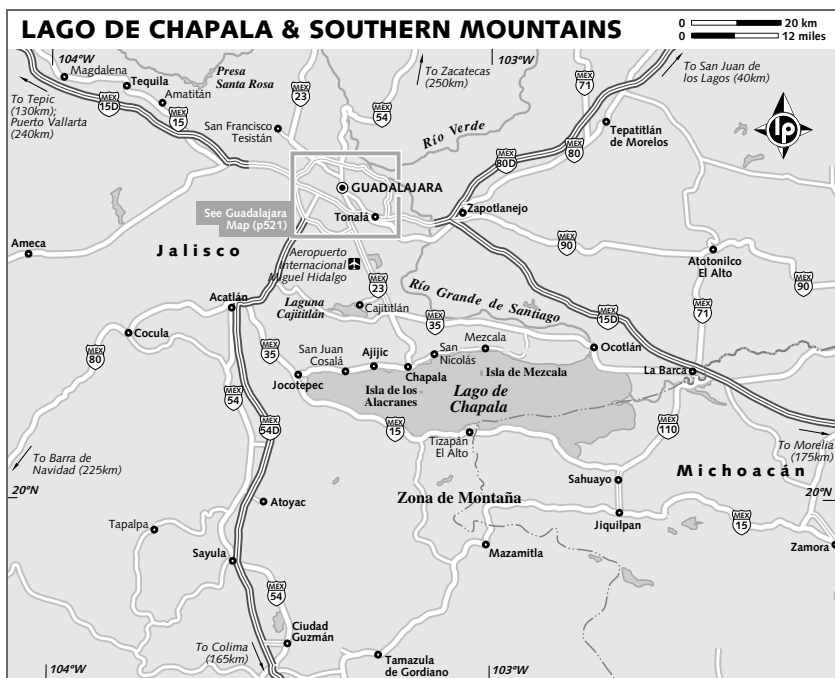
Near the pier is a small crafts market that spills over a network of lawns running parallel to the *malecón* (waterfront walk).

## Sleeping

**Rincón de los Sueños** (☎ 765-60-00, fax 765-60-01; www.rincondelossuenos.com.mx; Niños Héroes 59; r from M\$450; ☎ ☎) This new, stylish yet understated spot offers 17 modern and sunny upstairs rooms, a comfortable lobby/lounge, a community kitchen and long term discounts.

**Lake Chapala Inn** (☎ 765-47-86; www.mexonline.com/chapala/inn.htm; Paseo Ramon Corona 23; r M\$700; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Perfectly perched on the lake with views of mountains, swaying palms and bobbing fishing boats is this attractive four-room inn. But book ahead because only two rooms have lake views. Breakfast is included. It has a lap pool.

**pick** **Quinta Quetzalcóatl** (☎ 765-36-53; www.accommodationslakechapala.com; Zaragoza 307; r from M\$800; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Behind the regal stone walls are a pool, an acre of lush gardens, a colorfully tiled sun terrace, five unique suites and two houses each with cable TV, a fireplace, private entrance, patio and tap water you can drink. Mexican gourmet breakfasts are included.



This is where DH Lawrence wrote *The Plumed Serpent* in 1923. The Aussie owners tried to read it. 'It's rubbish,' they'll say with a smile. Reserve ahead. Adults only.

## Eating

Seafood joints with reasonable prices gather along Paseo Corona. The most popular among expats is Restaurant Cozumel.

**Coffee Break** (☎ 765-59-31; Madero 413; desserts M\$25; ☎ 8am-10:30pm) A young crowd, good tunes, high speed wireless internet and great coffee equals the perfect coffee house.

**Café Paris** (☎ 765-53-53; Madero 421; mains M\$40) This old school diner with groovy bar/counter seating is a Chapala institution. It serves everything from omelettes to tacos to T-bones.

**Blue Agave** (☎ 765-77-70; Hidalgo 242; burgers M\$55, mains from M\$95; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Sat) Cowboy cuisine with great lake views upstairs at this satisfying, but not sensational, Tex-Mex cantina on the highway to Ajijic. The burgers are good.

## Getting There & Away

For details of bus services from Guadalajara see p540. Once you get to Chapala's bus ter-

minal, it's a 10-minute walk down Av Madero to the pier. There are long-distance services to Puerto Vallarta (M\$425) and Mexico City (\$490), but to anywhere else you'll have to return to Guadalajara.

Buses connect Chapala and Ajijic every 20 minutes (M\$8, 15 minutes).

## AJIJIC

☎ 376 / pop 14,000 / elevation 1550m

Praise tends to be heaped upon Ajijic (ah-hee-heek), the lakeside enclave 7km west of Chapala, and, with its 400 year-old streets and backdrop of sandy peaks, it does have a certain cobblestone charm, but beware the gringo retirees. They've put Ajijic on the map, boosted area real estate and provided a vital market for the town's boutiques, galleries and restaurants, some of which are locally owned, but somehow this place just doesn't feel like Mexico.

Buses will drop you on the highway at the top of Colón, the main street, which leads two blocks down to the main plaza and four more blocks down to the lake. The chapel on the north side of the plaza dates from the 18th century.

## Information

**Bancomer** (☎ 8:30am-4pm Mon-Fri) On the plaza, with an ATM.

**Ciber café** (☎ 10am-8:30pm) On the plaza. Offers internet access for M\$15 per hour and long-distance calls.

**Lavandería** (Morelos 24A; per load M\$30; ☎ 9:30am-2pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat) Head here for clean clothes; it's off the northwest corner of the plaza.

## Sleeping

There is no shortage of B&Bs in Ajijic and a simple Google search will provide a crop to sift through, but remember that many of them feel like grandma's house crowded with ageing in-laws. So if you go that route it may take time to find one that suits you.

**Hotel Italo** (☎ 766-22-21; marianabrandi60@hotmail.com; Guadalupe Victoria 8; s/d M\$240/310) Ajijic's cheapest rooms are found at this unfriendly Italian themed joint. But the rooms are clean, the rooftop terrace has a nice view of the lake and apartments are available for longer-term rentals.

**Hotel Casablanca** (☎ 766-44-40; www.casablancaajijic.com; 16 de Septiembre 29; r M\$690; (P) (A)) This comfortable, new Moroccan themed hotel comes with peaked windows, mosaic baths, a roof deck and a Bedouin soundtrack. It also has a great central location, free wi-fi and complimentary breakfasts.

**La Nueva Posada** (☎ 766-14-44; nuevaposada@prodigy.net.mx; Donato Guerra 9; s/d M\$900; (P) (A)) The lobby and restaurant of the Nueva Posada are over decorated, unless you're into multi-hued walls and garish floral prints on the furniture, and the 19 spacious rooms are strangely bland. But be thankful that this is a proper hotel and there will be no obligatory B&B chit-chat at breakfast, which by all accounts is the best in town. The mountain vistas are extraordinary.

## Eating & Drinking

**Café Grano** (☎ 766-56-84; Castellanos 15D; coffees from M\$19; ☎ 9am-9pm) The smell of roasting organic coffee will soothe your soul and your conscience too because only organic free-trade beans from Chiapas are roasted and ground here.

**La Tasca** (☎ 766-52-69; Guerra 22; mains M\$100; ☎ 4-10:30pm Tue-Sun) Nestled on a sweet lakefront plot is this Flamenco bar and grill. Locals rave about the food, but on most nights you can also simply come for a drink and listen to live Flamenco music.

**ourpick Ajijic Tango** (☎ 766-24-58; Morelos 5; mains M\$70-105; ☎ 12:30-10pm Mon, Wed-Sat, till 6:30pm Sun) You'll dine on exceptional Argentine food at unbelievable prices at Tanjo, Ajijic's most beloved restaurant. The intimately lit indoor-outdoor dining room, with cozy booths and modern art decorating the walls, almost manages the impossible: make Ajijic feel hip. It isn't, but this restaurant rocks, mainly because of the tender cuts of beef that will blow your mind. The wood-fired pizzas look appealing on paper, but don't get distracted: order the steak.

**Tom's Bar** (☎ 766-03-55; Constitución 32; ☎ 10am-midnight Sun-Thu, 10am-1am Fri & Sat) If Ajijic has driven you to drink, belly up to this fine knotted wood bar where you can sip, watch movies in the courtyard or ballgames on the big screen. It's Canadian-owned and serves a damn good burger.

## Getting There & Around

For details of bus services from Guadalajara see p540. Autotransportes Guadalajara-Chapala buses drop you on the highway at Colón. Buses connect Chapala and Ajijic every 20 minutes (M\$8, 15 minutes).

Like to bike? Check out **Bicicletas Rayo** (☎ 766-53-46; Carretera Ote 11; ☎ 10:00am-8pm Mon-Sat). Bike rentals cost M\$20 per hour or M\$100 per day; you can cruise the 5km bike path that parallels the highway to Chapala, but look out for the ATVs!

## SAN JUAN COSALÁ

☎ 387 / pop 3000 / elevation 1560m

At San Juan Cosalá, 10km west of Ajijic, there's a popular **thermal spa** (adult/child M\$100/50; ☎ 8:30am-7pm) on the lake. It has seven steaming pools, plays loud music and attracts Mexican families on weekends. It's located between hotels Balneario San Juan Cosalá and Villa Bordeaux; if you stay at either of these places entry to the spa is free.

**Hotel Balneario San Juan Cosalá** (☎ 761-02-22; www.hotelpacosala.com; La Paz 420; s/d M\$708/763; (P)) has 34 large and somewhat bare tiled rooms; some have lake views. It also offers spa services including hot stone and seaweed massages.

A few kilometers further west in **Jocotepec** you'll see signs for **El Chante Spa Resort** (☎ 763-26-08; Ribera del Lago 170; r from M\$2574). The concept is a good one – a four-star resort on a nice slice of lakefront – but it hasn't quite pulled it off. However, it has an ample spa menu

and a sauna set inside a Disney version of an indigenous sweat lodge.

Autotransportes Guadalajara–Chapala buses depart Sala A every half-hour from 6am to 9pm for San Juan Cosalá (M\$40, 1¼ hours). Buses from Ajijic run every 20 minutes (M\$8, 15 minutes).

## ZONA DE MONTAÑA

South of Lago de Chapala, Jalisco's Zona de Montaña – a seemingly endless range of layered mountains – is an increasingly popular weekend retreat for Guadalajarans who come to enjoy the rangeland, the pines, timeless colonial pueblos, local food and the cooler climes.

### Tapalpa

☎ 343 / pop 16,000 / elevation 2100m

A labyrinth of adobe walls, red tiled roofs and cobblestoned streets surround two impressive 16th century churches. It's no wonder that this old mining town just 130km southwest of Guadalajara has become a tourist magnet. Perched on the slopes of the Sierra Tapalpa and ringed by a tapestry of pastureland and pine forests threaded with streams, there is good walking in all directions. Don't miss Las Piedrotas – impressive rock formations in cow pastures 5km north of town. It's an easy walk along a country road to these megaliths, past a funky old paper mill. Taxis cost M\$60. El Salto, a jaw-dropping, 105m-high waterfall, is about 13km south of town (taxi M\$120).

Don't miss the **Centro de Integración** (CITAC; ☎ 432-05-70; citac96@hotmail.com; Salto de Nogal 100; ☎ 9am-2pm & 3-7pm Mon-Thu, 9:30am-4pm Fri), a school for special-needs kids, dedicated to teaching self-confidence along with computer and art skills. Wonderful recycled art is made by the children from *papel malhecho*, a kind of papier-mâché. You can buy these creations at the school, or at its small stall in the Mercado del Artesano on the plaza. Volunteers are welcome. Call the main phone number and ask for Héctor Aguirre if you're interested in helping out. To get to the school, head 200m down Calle Pastores (from Ignacio López) and go right at the fork after about 100m.

There is a Banorte with an ATM on the plaza and dozens of hotels and guesthouses around town, but you should make reservations on weekends and holidays (when Guadalajarans stream in). The basic, musty, but acceptable **Hotel Tapalpa** (Matamoros 35; s/d

M\$150/200) is the cheapest and is right on the plaza. **Casa de Maty** (☎ 432-01-89; Matamoros 69; r M\$800), almost next door, is the popular choice; rooms border on deluxe, have in-room fireplaces and some open onto verdant gardens. In between, in both value and comfort, is **Hostal Posada Las Margaritas** (☎ 432-07-99; 16 de Septiembre 81; s/d M\$500/900), uphill from the plaza, with well-decorated, rustic rooms and apartments with kitchenettes.

Local food is tasty in Tapalpa. Munch *tamales de acelga* (chard-filled *tamales*) at the cheap food stalls near the church, and gorge on *borrego al pastor* (grilled lamb) at **El Puente** (☎ 432-04-35; Hidalgo 324; ☎ 10am-6pm Thu-Tue; mains M\$80), a casual restaurant three blocks down from the church, just after the bridge. Other regional specialties include homemade sweets, *rompo* (eggnog), *ponche* (pomegranate wine) and *Barranca* (a tequila made from wild agave).

Hourly buses to Tapalpa leave from Guadalajara's Antigua Central Camionera (M\$75, 3½ hours). There are also buses to/from Ciudad Guzmán (M\$50, two hours). Buses in Tapalpa stop at the **Sur de Jalisco bus office** (Ignacio López 10), a block off the plaza.

### Mazamitla

☎ 382 / pop 12,500 / elevation 2200m

Mazamitla, a charming whitewashed mountain town south of Lago de Chapala and 132km by road from Guadalajara, is seldom fully awake. Shops close at 5pm, restaurants open at 6pm and *abuelas* (grandmothers) dressed in black wander haphazardly through the hilly cobbled roads, stopping traffic. Mazamitla sports an interesting take on the Swiss alpine theme and you'll see small storefronts selling fruit preserves, cheeses, *rompo* and *cajeta* (milk caramel) around the plaza. There's a small but lively **market** (☎ 8am-3pm) on Juárez each Monday. About 5km south of town is the leafy park **Los Cazos** (admission M\$10; ☎ 9am-5pm), with the 30m waterfall El Salto. You can picnic or ride horses here; a taxi costs M\$50.

Mazamitla's **tourist office** (☎ 538-02-30; Portal Degollado 4; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri) is by the church. There's a bank on the plaza. For internet access try **Compudick** (Galeana 4; ☎ 10am-10pm; per hr M\$12) across from the food stalls.

There are a few sleeping options in town; prices rise during holidays. Close to the plaza is **Hotel Fiesta Mazamitla** (☎ 538-00-50; Reforma 2;



s/d Mon-Thu M\$95/150, Fri-Sun M\$190/240). The varnished wooden stairwell is enticing and the rooms are large, clean and comfortable, but the hostess can be surly. Unique **Hotel Cabañas Colina de los Ruiseñores** (☎ cell phone 33-34941210, in Guadalajara 33-361-56-45; www.mazamitlahotelcabana.com.mx; Allende 50; r M\$300) is a wonderfully rustic place, offering a local spin on the Swiss chalet. There are creative wood accents everywhere. Right on the plaza, **Posada Alpina** (☎ 538-01-04; posada\_alpina@yahoo.com.mx; Reforma 8; r M\$400) has a leafy interior courtyard, sweet wooden rooms and outstanding views. It also has a smart restaurant that serves the best *molcajete* (M\$75) in town.

There are a handful of restaurants in Mazamitla, but if you have time for only one meal you must seek out the greatest taco known to humanity. Tucked into the back corner of a permanent strip of food stalls on the intersection of Galeana and Allende, is the modest **Rica Birria** (tacos M\$10; ☎ 8am-10pm). Immediately you will notice a different level of cleanliness and care here. You'll also see steaming, tender chunks of beef brisket and, if you come early enough, goat, sizzling on the griddle. Order one and receive a perfectly torched tortilla piled with tender *carne* that melts in the mouth, sprinkled with onions, *cilantro* and splashed with *salsa verde*. It's a simple yet transcendent dish. Call it taco enlightenment. Adjacent stalls serve fresh squeezed juices. **El Rinconcito** (Cárdenas 5; mains M\$44-48; ☎ 8:30am-8pm) is another good choice. The owner is gracious and charming, and cooks up a mean chicken *mole*.

Frequent buses run daily from Guadalajara's Nueva Central Camionera (\$7, three hours); they stop three blocks north of the plaza. From Colima there are seven buses daily (M\$105, 2¾ hours); these stop at the market, just a block west of the plaza. Other destinations include Zamora (M\$72), Morelia (M\$140) and Manzanillo (M\$165).

## Ciudad Guzmán

☎ 341 / pop 90,300 / elevation 1500m

Busy Ciudad Guzmán (Zapotlán el Grande) is no tourist attraction, but it is the closest city to Volcán Nevado de Colima (p555), a majestic volcano about 25km southwest of Guzmán.

Guzmán's crowded plaza is surrounded by market stalls and shopping arcades set around two churches: the 17th-century **Sagrado Corazón** and a neoclassical **cathedral**.

In its center is a stone gazebo with a homage to famous Mexican muralist José Clemente Orozco – called 'Man of Fire' – painted on its ceiling. (the original is in Guadalajara – see Instituto Cultural de Cabañas, p526). Orozco was born here and some of his original carbon illustrations and lithographs are displayed at the small **Museo Regional de las Culturas de Occidente** (Dr Ángel González 21; admission M\$25; ☎ 9:30am-5:30pm Tue-Sat).

The **tourist office** (☎ 413-53-13 ext 107; Lázaro Cárdenas 80; ☎ 8:30am-3pm Mon-Fri) is in the government building, just a few blocks east of the plaza.

There are hotels around the plaza but they tend to be noisy. Try the good-value **Reforma Hotel** (☎ 412-44-54; Reforma 77; s/d M\$235/270; ☎ ☎), midway between the bus station and plaza. Another sweet deal is **Tlayolan Hotel** (☎ 412-33-17; Javier Mina 35; s/d M\$250/360). It has small, clean and modern rooms a few blocks southeast of the plaza.

The market behind the cathedral has the cheapest eats.

The bus terminal is about four blocks west of the plaza. Destinations include Guadalajara (M\$100, two hours), Colima (M\$65, one hour), Tapalpa (M\$50, two hours) and Mazamitla (M\$50, two hours). Buses to El Fresnito, the closest village to Volcán Nevado de Colima, run from the plaza (M\$18, 15 minutes).

## INLAND COLIMA STATE

The tiny but ecologically rich and diverse state of Colima (5191 sq km) connects lofty volcanoes in the arid northern highlands to idyllic turquoise lagoons near the hot and humid Pacific coast. This section deals with the state's inland area; the narrow coastal plain is covered in the Central Pacific Coast chapter.

Inland Colima should become Mexico's next great adventure hub. The famous volcanoes to the north – the active, constantly steaming but inaccessible Volcán de Fuego (3820m) and the extinct, snowcapped Volcán Nevado de Colima (4240m) – remain the big draw, but the Sierra de Manantlán Biosphere Reserve is a jungle and limestone playground in waiting with single-track mountain biking, exceptional hiking and canyons that see a few canyoneers abseiling, leaping into crystalline



streams and bathing in the magical El Salto Falls. Colima is a growing garden city with an exceptional climate and Comala is the perfect place to sip *micheladas* and munch tapas on a lazy Sunday afternoon. Tourism infrastructure hasn't caught up to the area's potential yet, so those who like virgin territory should come now.

## History

Pre-Hispanic Colima was remote from the major ancient cultures of Mexico. Seaborne contacts with more distant lands might have been more important: legend says one king of Colima, Ix, had regular treasure-bearing visitors from China. Eventually, northern tribes moved in. The Otomi settled here from about AD 250 to 750, followed by the Toltecs, who flourished between 900 and 1154 and the Chichimecs from 1154 to 1428.

All of them left behind exceptional pottery, which has been found in over 250 sites, mainly tombs, dating from about 200 BC to AD 800. The pottery includes a variety of comical and expressive figures. The most famous are the plump, hairless dogs, known as *xoloitzcuintles*.

Two Spanish expeditions were defeated and turned back by the Colimans before Gonzalo de Sandoval, one of Cortés' lieutenants, conquered them in 1523. That year he founded the town of Colima, the third Spanish settlement in Nueva España, after Veracruz and Mexico City. In 1527 the town moved to its present site from its original lowland location near Tecomán.

## COLIMA

☎ 312 / pop 129,900 / elevation 550m

Colima is a laid-back city with blooming subtropical gardens, four fine public plazas, a pleasant touch of moisture in the air and the warmest weather in the western central highlands. It would be hard to find a better climate, or a more nurturing city in which to raise children, which is why it's growing so fast. This relatively conservative town is absolutely safe at all hours, but it's not exactly boring. The university attracts intellectuals and a taste of global culture. The one thing it's missing is a steady stream of international tourists, but thanks to the abundant adventure available in the canyons, forests and mountains surrounding Colima, that looks to be changing.

The billowing volcano you see on clear days, Volcán de Fuego – visible 30km to the north – continues to rumble and shake and the city has been hit by several major quakes over the centuries (the last in January 2003). It's no wonder that Colima has few colonial buildings, despite having been the first Spanish city in western Mexico.

## Orientation

Colima's Plaza Principal is the heart of the city. Portal Medellín is the row of arches on the north side, with Portal Morelos on the south side. Jardín Quintero lies behind the cathedral, while Jardín Núñez is three blocks further east. Street names change at Plaza Principal (also known as Jardín Libertad). Colima's long-distance bus terminal, the Terminal Foránea, is some 2km east of the city center, on the Guadalajara–Manzanillo road. There's also a local bus terminal, Terminal Rojos, for closer destinations, located 7km west of the city.

## Information

You can change money at numerous banks and *casas de cambios* around the city center; most banks have ATMs.

**Centro Médico** (☎ 312-40-45; Herrera 140; ☎ 24hr)

**Cl@Internet** (Degollado 62; internet per hr M\$15;

☎ 9am-9pm)

**Lavandería Amana** (Dominguez 147-A; per kilo M\$14;

☎ 8am-9pm Mon-Sat, 8am-3pm Sun)

**Main post office** (Madero 247; ☎ 8am-5:30pm Mon-Fri)

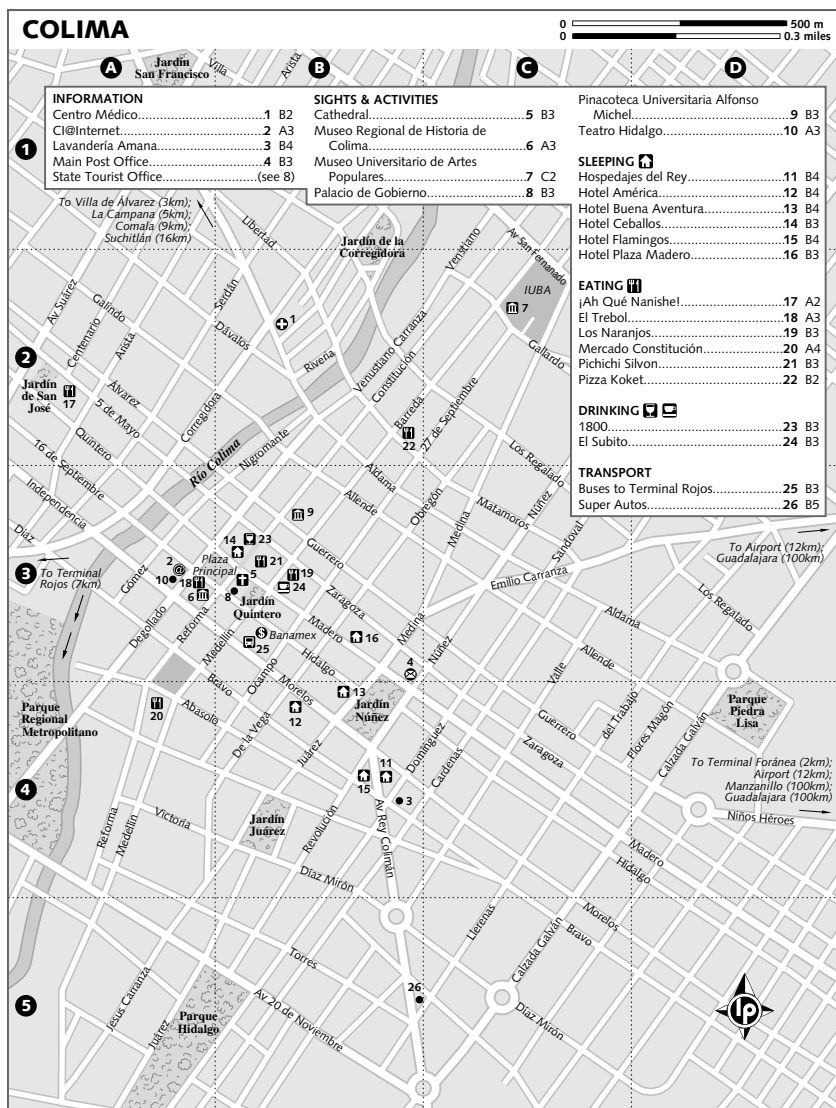
**State tourist office** (☎ 312-43-60; www.visitacolima.com.mx; Palacio de Gobierno; ☎ 8:30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) Open during holidays.

## Sights

### AROUND PLAZA PRINCIPAL

Light floods the **cathedral** from the dome windows of this would-be relic on the east side of Plaza Principal (also known as Jardín Libertad). It has been rebuilt several times since the Spanish first erected a cathedral here in 1527, most recently after the 1941 earthquake. So it's too new to offer old-world soul, but it remains a focal point of the community.

Next to the cathedral is the **Palacio de Gobierno**, built between 1884 and 1904. Local artist Jorge Chávez Carrillo painted the stairway murals to celebrate the 200th birthday of independence hero Miguel Hidalgo, who was once parish priest of Colima. The mu-



rans honor freedom fighters, the feminine, the indigenous roots and the beautiful land of Mexico. There's a great collection of pottery in the 1st-floor **museum** (admission free; 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), including some from 1500 BC, and check out the case 10 ten ceramic frogs estimated by UCLA archaeologists to date from 600AD.

The **Museo Regional de Historia de Colima** ( 312-92-28; Portal Morelos 1; admission M\$37; 9am-6pm Tue-Sat, 6-8pm Sun, closed Mondays) once held an extensive ceramic display, but the museum was in transition when we visited. Out was the archaeology and in were oil on canvas meditations on the human form (read male and female full-frontal). There was also a conceptual

artist's take on bird nests, next to a mixed media fetus-themed series. OK, then.

The **Teatro Hidalgo** (cnr Degollado & Independencia) was built in neoclassical style between 1871 and 1883 on a site originally donated to the city by Miguel Hidalgo. The theater was destroyed by the earthquakes of 1932 and 1941 and rebuilt once more in 1942. It is only open for special events.

### MUSEO UNIVERSITARIO DE ARTES POPULARES

Folk art lovers will be in heaven at this **museum** (University Museum of Popular Arts; ☎ 312-68-69; cnr Barreda & Gallardo; admission M\$10, free Sun; 🕒 10am-2pm & 5-8pm Tue-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun). On display is a stellar collection of masks, *mojigangas* (giant puppets that dance in parades), musical instruments, baskets and wood and ceramic sculpture from every state in Mexico.

### PINACOTECA UNIVERSITARIA ALFONSO MICHEL

This beautiful **museum** (☎ 312-22-28; cnr Guerrero & Constitución; admission M\$10; 🕒 10am-2pm & 5-8pm Tue-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun), in a 19th-century courtyard building, offers four halls filled with surrealist art. Included are a permanent collection of paintings by Colima's Alfonso Michel – a cross between Picasso and Dalí – and works by other Mexican artists, like Alfonso Cabrera and Richard Rocha.

### PARKS

The **Parque Regional Metropolitano**, on Degollado a few blocks southwest of the city center, has a depressing zoo, a swimming pool (M\$10), snack kiosks and a forest with an artificial lake. Explore the forest paths on quad bikes (M\$25 per 30 minutes), or cruise the lake by paddleboat (M\$25 per 30 minutes).

East of the city center on Calz Galván, **Parque Piedra Lisa** is named after its mythical Sliding Stone. Legend says that visitors who slide on this stone will some day return to Colima, to marry...or die!

### LA CAMPANA

The low, pyramid-like structures at this modest **archaeological site** (☎ 313-49-46; Av Tecnológico s/n; admission M\$34; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) date from as early as 1500 BC. They have been excavated and restored, along with a small tomb and a ball court (unusual in western Mexico). The structures are oriented due north toward

Volcán de Fuego, which makes an impressive backdrop on clear days. It's about 5km north of Colima city and easily accessible by buses 7 and 22; taxis cost M\$30.

### Festivals & Events

The following festivals take place in or very near Colima city:

**Fiestas Charro Taurinas** For two weeks in early February this celebration takes place in Villa de Álvarez, 5km north of central Colima. Giant *mojigangas* gather at Colima's cathedral and parade to Villa de Álvarez, where the celebrations continue with food, music, rodeos and bullfights.

**Feria de Todos los Santos** The Colima state fair (late October and early November) includes agricultural and handicraft exhibitions, cultural events and carnival rides.

**Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe** From about December 1 to the actual feast day, on December 12, women and children dress in costume to pay homage at the Virgin's altar in the cathedral.

### Sleeping

**Hotel Flamingos** (☎ 312-25-25; Av Rey Colimán 18; s/d/tw M\$220/270/300; 📍) This four-story budget place is family owned, but not friendly, cleanish but not spotless. However, it is popular with Mexican families and does book up.

**our pick Hotel Buena Aventura** (☎ 136-12-46; Juárez 70; d from M\$350; 📍 📺 📶) Across from Jardín Núñez, this brand-new hotel is already the best value in town. The large, pastel-colored, tiled rooms are sparkling with queen beds, A/C and satellite TV. The high-speed internet doesn't disappoint and Angela, the owner, will even rent you her truck (just M\$300 per day). But, let's be honest, these wheels have seen better days.

**Hotel Plaza Madero** (☎ 330-28-95; Madero 165; s & d M\$400; 📍 📺 📶) Some hotels have shopping galleries on the 1st floor. This place has a mall. Rooms could use a bit of the love and charm that were channeled into the attractive reception and lobby area. But it does have satellite TV, wireless internet and excellent people-watching. Good value.

**Hospedajes del Rey** (☎ /fax 313-36-83; Av Rey Colimán 125; s/d/tw M\$350/450/600; 📍 📺 📶) This converted, mod apartment complex looks like something out of Miami Vice. Rooms are basic and clean with wireless internet, cable TV and A/C, but those with two beds are considerably larger. It books up so reserve ahead.

**Hotel América** (☎ 312-74-88; hamerica@hotelamerica.com.mx; Morelos 162; s & d from M\$702, ste from M\$1053; 📍 📺 📶 📺) The rooms don't live

up to the polished exterior and manicured grounds, but they aren't bad. Interior courtyard rooms are best. Older Executive suites overlook the shady fountain patio, but they are definitely outdated.

**Hotel Ceballos** (☎ 312-44-44; www.hotelceballos.com; Portal Medellín 12; r from M\$950; (P) (♿) (♿) (♿) ) Ignore the Best Western sign and this hotel will make you happy. The large rooms, decorated with antiques, all have high ceilings with crown moldings and some have balconies that overlook Plaza Principal. The halls are decked out with benches, arches and antique folk art, which lends a stately, old-world feel.

## Eating & Drinking

Many small restaurants around Plaza Principal offer decent fare and good people-watching on weekends. **Mercado Constitución** (♿ 7am-6pm Mon-Sat, 7am-2pm Sun), a couple of blocks south of Plaza Principal, has cheap food stalls serving juices, *pozole* and other snacks. **Pichichi Silvon** (churros M\$5; ♿ noon-10pm), operates out of a tiny window on the walking street adjacent to Hotel Ceballos, attracting a stream of customers for its addictive *churros rellenos* – hot, sugar crusted Mexican donuts stuffed with chocolate, caramel or strawberry sauce.

**El Subito** (☎ 314-70-01; Barreda 4; coffees M\$10-12; ♿ 8am-10pm Mon-Sat) Inexpensive and damn good espresso drinks are served in this cozy, stylish coffee bar decorated with antiquated photos of old Colima. There are no tables, just bar stools.

**ourpick El Trebol** (☎ 312-29-00; Degollado 59; mains from M\$25; ♿ 8am-10pm Sun-Fri, closed Saturday) Colima's most popular family restaurant also serves the best breakfasts in town. The scent of freshly squeezed orange juice perfumes the dining room and diners devour *huevos a la Mexicana* and scrambles with ham, bacon and chorizo.

**Pizza Koket** (☎ 314-41-41; cnr Berreda & Matamoros; pizzas M\$35-70; ♿ 11am-10pm) Take an empty gravel lot, install a wood burning oven and a few plastic tables and you've got yourself a pizzeria. It has tons of fresh toppings, serves personal pizzas as well as calzones – and delivers.

**Los Naranjos** (☎ 312-00-29; Barreda 34; mains M\$39-75) The purple-and-burgundy walls lend a laid-back elegance and there's a nice collection of hand blown glass, but come here for the simple and extremely tasty menu with great prices. Get five tacos for just M\$39 and make sure to order the *cilantro* heavy guacamole. It

is outstanding and so are the beans. Two for one *micheladas* and great tequila prices too.

**¡Ah Qué Nanishe!** (☎ 314-21-97; 5 de Mayo 267; mains M\$45-75; ♿ 1pm-midnight Wed-Mon) The name of this restaurant means 'How delicious!' and the rich, chocolaty, but not overwhelming *mole* is superb. Other Oaxacan delicacies like *chile rellenos* (stuffed chili) or *chapulines* (crunchy fried grasshoppers) are also available and on Sunday it serves *barbacoa de borrego* (tender lamb). Half orders of many mains are available which makes this spot a great value.

**1800** (5 de Mayo 15; mains from M\$60; ♿ 7pm-2am Mon-Sat) This new, hip restaurant lounge attracts a late coming crowd of uni students for snacks, drinks and, on Thursday nights, an electronic dance party. The menu is all over the place – with pizza, sushi, burritos and more, but you'll be happiest if you duck in for a few late drinks.

## Getting There & Around

Colima's airport is near Cuauhtémoc, 12km northeast of the city center off the highway to Guadalajara (taxi M\$100). **Aeromar** (☎ 313-55-88) flies to Mexico City daily.

Colima has two bus terminals. The long-distance terminal is Terminal Foránea, 2km east of the city center at the junction of Av Niños Héroes and the city's eastern bypass. There's a **left-luggage facility** (♿ 6am-10pm). To reach downtown, hop on a Ruta 4 or 5 bus (taxi M\$18). For the return trip catch the same buses on 5 de Mayo or Zaragoza. Destinations with frequent departures:

Destination	Fare	Duration
Ciudad Guzmán	M\$65	1-2hr
Guadalajara	M\$168	3hr
Manzanillo	M\$60	2hr
Mexico City (Terminal Norte)	M\$610	10hr

Colima's second bus terminal (serving local towns) is Terminal Rojos, about 7km west of Plaza Principal. Ruta 4 or 6 buses run to Colima's center from this terminal (taxi M\$20). To get back here, take any bus marked 'Rojos' going north on Morelos. Destinations include Comala (M\$7, 15 minutes, every 15 minutes), Manzanillo (M\$60, 1¼ hours, every half-hour), Tecomán (M\$30, 45 minutes, every 20 minutes) and Armería (M\$35, 45 minutes, every half-hour).

Taxi fares within town are M\$10 to M\$18. For car rentals try **Super Autos** (☎ 312-07-52; Av



Rey Colimán 382); its cheapest sedan will cost you around M\$600 per day. Hotel Buena Aventura (p552) also rents its uninsured clunker to willing guests. The price is right (just M\$300 per day), but she's old and needs work. Proceed at your own risk.

## AROUND COLIMA

The outlying villages and countryside around Colima are gorgeous and demand exploration. You can visit most worthy destinations on day trips or by public transportation, but a rental car is liberating.

### Colima

☎ 312 / pop 9500 / elevation 600m

There are certainly (much!) worse ways to pass a sleepy afternoon than to sip *micheladas* at *centros botaneros* (tapas bars) and devour free plates of chicken taquitos, guacamole and *ceviche* tostadas in this leafy country town just 9km north of Colima. **Don Camalón** is the most popular patio bar, but **Comala Bar** has better tapas. All the bars are located beneath the arches at the main plaza and are open from noon to 6pm. On clear days you'll see great

views of the nearby twin volcanoes, Fuego and Nevado. Sunny weekends fetch Colima locals and the occasional tour bus from Manzanillo quiet cobblestone streets.

A 30-minute walk from town is the can't-miss **Museo Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo** (☎ 315-60-28; admission M\$25; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), in the gorgeous Ex-Hacienda Noguerras. Hidalgo (1923–2000) was a designer, painter and illustrator, whose incredibly detailed work redefines indigenous and religious symbolism and has a captivating magical realism quality. Check out *Angel of Kenya*, his 1962 depiction of a Maasai goddess. There's also a tremendous collection of pre-Hispanic ceramics and a cool sketch of Frida Kahlo. To get here, walk 400m along Calle Degollado (left of the church); turn left at the T-intersection, go 1km, then turn right at the next T-intersection and go another 1km. You can also take a bus (M\$5) from behind the church or a taxi (M\$20).

Adventure hounds should seek out **Fuego Bike** (☎ 315-54-14; fuegobike@gmail.com; Juárez 25). It rents mountain bikes and runs cycling, kayaking and camping tours throughout the region. Call or email ahead to learn about upcoming tours and prices, and to book your trip.

Colima buses leave from Colima's Terminal Rojos (M\$7, 15 minutes, every 15 minutes). Buses back to Colima depart from Comala's plaza.

### Suchitlán

☎ 318 / pop 3850 / elevation 1200m

Street chickens own this tiny, hilly pueblo, 7km northeast of Comala, known for its animal masks. The masks are carved in home workshops and worn by traditional dancers during the *Danza de los Morenos*, a Semana Santa ritual that commemorates the dancing animals who distracted the Roman guards and enabled the Marys to rescue Christ's body.

There are two places to eat. **Restaurant El Balcón de Don José** (☎ 312-76-75; cnr Galeana & Azucena; mains from M\$72; ☎ 8:30am-6:30pm Tue-Sun) on the street into town has a lovely view, but the popular **Restaurant Portales Suchitlán** (☎ 395-44-52; tapas under M\$50; ☎ 8:30am-6:30pm Tue-Sun) makes its own tortillas and serves terrific tapas in a beautifully green grove. Colima's day trippers dine here.

Buses to Suchitlán leave half-hourly from Colima's Terminal Rojos (M\$12, 45 minutes).



## Parque Nacional Volcán Nevado de Colima

This national park, straddling the Colima–Jalisco border, includes two dramatic volcanoes: the still-active Volcán de Fuego and the inactive Volcán Nevado de Colima. Ciudad Guzmán (p549) is the closest city, but Colima is a more pleasant base. **Colima Magic** (☎ 312-310-74-83; [www.colimamagic.com](http://www.colimamagic.com)) and **Returi** (☎ 312-311-35-26; [www.returi.com](http://www.returi.com)), the area's two best adventure tour operators, run day trips from Colima to Volcán Nevado de Colima's peak, with English-speaking guides. Tours cost M\$818 to M\$1308, which includes transportation, food/beverages and entry fees. But you must book in advance. It can be difficult to find a guide on the fly if you only have a few days.

### VOLCÁN DE FUEGO

Overlooking Colima, 30km north of the city is steaming Volcán de Fuego (3820m) – Mexico's most active volcano. It has erupted dozens of times in the past four centuries, with a big eruption about every 70 years. A profound belch in 1913 marked the end of one cycle of activity, but another began in the 1960s. Current rumbling started in 1998 and has included pyroclastic flows and the growth of lava domes. In June 2005 a large explosion sent ash 4.8km into the sky, all the way to Colima. Current information about the volcano is posted on the website of the **Universidad de Colima** ([www.ucol.mx/volcan](http://www.ucol.mx/volcan)).

### VOLCÁN NEVADO DE COLIMA

The higher, more northerly peak, Nevado de Colima (4240m) is accessible on foot for most of the year. Patches of pine forest cover Nevado's shoulders, while alpine desert takes over at the highest altitudes. Area wildlife includes deer, wild boar, coyotes and even a few mountain lions.

The best months for climbing are the dry months of December through May. But temperatures from December to February often dip below 0°C and snow does regularly fall on the upper slopes – *nevado* means 'snow covered.' Weather changes fast here and lightning strikes the peak in stormy weather, so make sure you keep an eye on the clouds. The park's winter hours are 7am to 6pm (no cars up after 2pm). The summer rainy season is from July to September, when park hours are longer.

To access the volcano with your own car (rear-wheel drive cars can handle the road during the dry winter) you need to start early. Take highway 54D (the *cuota*, or toll road, M\$90) north from Colima, get off at the Tuxpan exit and follow the 'Guadalajara libre' signs. Just before you reach Ciudad Guzmán, turn left onto the El Grullo road. Drive 8.5km and you'll see the gravel road marked 'Nevado de Colima' on the left. Some 20 winding kilometers later you'll reach La Joya/Puerto Las Cruces (3500m), where you can sign in and pay the M\$5 entry fee (plus M\$10 per car). The *micro-ondas* (radio antennae) are a strenuous 90-minute hike up from the end of the road. If you want to bag the peak, you'll need another 90 minutes and while the peak is easy to see, you shouldn't go alone. There are many trails up and back and it's very easy to get lost or led to areas with hazardous footing. Going with a guide or good maps and GPS (hard to find in Colima) is highly recommended. Bring extra water!

Driving up this volcano on the relatively good dirt road means that you'll be ascending to a high altitude very quickly. If you feel lightheaded or dizzy, you may be suffering from *mal de montaña* (altitude sickness). Descend as quickly as possible, as this condition can be potentially fatal. For more on this health problem, see p1004.

## Reserva de la Biosfera Sierra de Manantlán

A 1396-sq-km swath of the jungled limestone mountains northwest of the city of Colima are protected by the UN as critical habitat. It's certainly diverse, ranging in elevation from 400m to 2960m, with eight varieties of forest ecosystem – including tropical, cloud, oak and alpine. This land is rich and alive with nearly 2000 varieties of plants, 160 orchid species, 336 bird species (a third of Mexico's bird species can be found here), 60 types of reptile and the two big cats – puma and jaguar. It's also drop dead gorgeous with spectacular limestone karsts, narrow canyons and powerful waterfalls.

Adventurers will not be bored. There are canyons to explore, 50km of adrenaline-addled downhill single-track for mountain bikers and an abundance of trekking trails. Returi (left) runs canyoneering trips that include abseiling, cliff jumping and conclude at the beautiful **El Salto** (☎ 314-336-00-92; admission



M\$10). These massive falls, just outside the reaches of the reserve, gush over granite and tumble 10m into a crystalline pool, which licks a pebble beach. Fuego Bike (p554) and Colima Magic (p555) also run adventure trips to the reserve.

If you choose to go it alone, know that tourist infrastructure is virtually nil. But those who like to break trail will be in heaven. Take the road to Manzanillo out of Colima (Niños Héroe in town) and veer right at the turnoff to El Terero (about 30 minutes). From here it's an hour's drive up a well-maintained dirt road to the reserve's entrance. In the dry season any car can make it. Rangers at the gate will point out trails and good campsites. If you just want to hit El Salto, continue on the road to Manzanillo. Just after the town of Minatitlán you'll see signs for El Salto.

## INLAND MICHOACÁN

Michoacán is a treasure chest that holds the best of Mexico's gifts like beautiful secrets. Inside are clouds of rugged butterflies that fly thousands of kilometers to cling, cuddle and shag at the incredible Reserva Mariposa Monarca (Monarch Butterfly Reserve). There are Purépecha pueblos strung through the state's 200km of the impressive 600km-long volcanic mountain range, Cordillera Neovolcánica, home to master craftsmen who create striking masks, pottery and elegant guitars. They also put on the best Day of the Dead celebrations in the country. And there are three great towns – the sweet, dusty colonial town of Pátzcuaro, rich in history and mystical energy; the larger and more Mexican city of Uruapan with the mythic Volcán Parícutín nearby; and spectacular Morelia – with classic, Unesco-certified colonial Spanish architecture, one of Mexico's finest universities, an abundance of festivals and art installations and a young, pretty population that loves to party.

### MORELIA

☎ 443 / pop 611,147 / elevation 1920m

Morelia is the coolest place you've never been. The colonial heart of the city is so well preserved that it was declared a Unesco World Heritage site in 1991. The cathedral is not just gorgeous. It's inspirational. Especially on Saturday nights when the stee-

ples glow, classical music blares and cannons blast fireworks into a black sky where they explode and drip color on the incandescent bell towers. And that's just an appetizer.

Morelia, founded in 1541, was one of the first Spanish cities in Nueva España. The first viceroys, Antonio de Mendoza, named it Valladolid after the Spanish city and he encouraged Spanish nobility to move here with their families. In 1828, after Nueva España had become the Republic of Mexico, the city was renamed Morelia in honor of local hero José María Morelos y Pavón, a key figure in Mexico's independence.

Sixteenth- and 17th-century stone buildings, baroque facades and archways line the narrow downtown streets, and are home to museums, hotels, restaurants, exquisite bars and rooftop lounges, *chocolaterías*, sidewalk cafés, a popular university and cheap and tasty *taquerías*. Traffic snarls around the cathedral, but Morelia even looks good from inside a traffic jam. There are free public concerts, frequent art installations, and yet so few foreign tourists! Those that do come often extend their stay and enrol in classes to learn how to cook and speak Spanish. Yes, word has started to leak out and more and more internationals are beginning to discover Mexico's best kept secret. So get here soon.

### Orientation

The historical center is set on a plateau and newer development snakes down hillsides to the north and south. Morelia's extraordinary cathedral is the soul of the city and a major landmark. East-west streets change their names at the cathedral, while north-south streets change names at Madero.

The elegant row of arched verandas facing the Plaza de Armas is commonly called Portal Hidalgo; the arches on Abasolo facing the west side of the plaza are called Portal Matamoros.

Morelia's bus terminal is about 4km north-west of the city center.

### Information

Banks and ATMs are plentiful around the plaza, particularly on and near Av Madero.

**La Central Internet** (Matamoros 72A; per hr M\$8;

☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-10pm Sun)

**Lavandería Cósmica** (☎ 317-19-38; Tapia 543; 3kg M\$30, dry cleaning available; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat)



**Main post office** (Av Madero Ote 369)

**Sanborns** (☎ 317-84-72; cnr Av Madero Pte & Zaragoza; ☎ 7:30am-midnight) English magazines, novels and maps.

**Tourist office** (☎ 317-23-71; www.visitmorelia.com; cnr Av Madero Pte & Nigromante; ☎ 9am-7pm)

## Sights

### CATEDRAL

Morelia's beautiful cathedral (unforgettable when it's lit up at night) dominates the plaza and took more than a century to build (1640–1744), which explains its combination of Herrerresque, baroque and neoclassical styles: the twin 70m-high towers, for instance, have classical Herrerresque bases, baroque midsections and multicoloured neoclassical tops. Inside, much of the baroque relief work was replaced in the 19th century with neoclassical pieces. Fortunately, one of the cathedral's interior highlights was preserved: a sculpture of the Señor de la Sacristía made from dried corn paste and topped with a gold crown from 16th-century Spanish king Felipe II. It also has a working organ with 4600 pipes.

### PALACIO DE GOBIERNO

The 17th-century **palace** (Av Madero Oriente), originally a seminary and now state government offices, has a simple baroque facade and impressive historical murals inside. They were commissioned in 1961, painted by Alfredo Zalce and are worth a peek.

### MUSEO REGIONAL MICHOACANO

Just off the plaza, this **museum** (☎ 312-04-07; Allende 305 & Abasolo; admission M\$30, free Sun; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Sat, 9am-4pm Sun) is housed in a late-18th-century baroque palace where you can view a nice variety of pre-Hispanic artifacts, colonial art and relics. There's also another evocative Alfredo Zalce mural, *Cuauhtémoc y la Historia*, on the stairway. It offers a taste of Mexican history with a good-versus-evil twist.

### PALACIO DE JUSTICIA

Across from the regional museum is the Palacio de Justicia, built between 1682 and 1695 to serve as the city hall. Its facade blends French and baroque styles, with stairwell art in the courtyard. An Agustín Cárdenas mural portrays Morelos in action. A small two-room **museum** (admission free; ☎ 10am-2pm & 5-8pm) shares the history of Michoacán's justice system through old photos and papers (look for the grisly cadaver shots).

### MUSEO DEL ESTADO

Michoacán **state museum** (☎ 313-06-29; Prieto 176; admission free; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm & 4-7pm Sat & Sun) details Michoacán's journey from prehistoric times to first contact with the conquistadors. Pre-Hispanic arrowheads, ceramic figures, bone jewelry and a shimmering quartz skull can be found downstairs. Upstairs are first-person accounts of how force-fed religion coupled with systematic agricultural and economic development tamed the region's indigenous soul.

### MORELOS SITES

José María Morelos y Pavón, one of the most important heroes in Mexico's struggle for independence, is king. At least it seems that way when you consider how many monuments, statues, plazas and murals the man has earned. He was born in a house on the corner of Corregidora and García Obeso, on September 30, 1765. Now it's the **Museo Casa Natal de Morelos** (Morelos Birthplace Museum; ☎ 312-27-93; Corregidora 113; admission free; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & Sun). Morelos memorabilia includes old photos and documents. An eternal torch burns next to the projection room. Free international films and cultural events are occasionally held here.

In 1801 Morelos bought the Spanish-style house on the corner of Av Morelos and Soto y Saldaña. Today it's another Morelos museum. **Museo Casa de Morelos** (Morelos House Museum; ☎ 313-26-51; Av Morelos Sur 323; admission M\$25, free Sun; ☎ 9am-7pm) explains his role in the independence movement and has an array of photos, books and antique furniture.

Morelos studied at the **Colegio de San Nicolás** (cnr Av Madero Pte & Nigromante), one block west of the plaza. Don't worry – it is not another museum, but it has become a foundation for the Universidad Michoacana. Upstairs, the Sala de Melchor Ocampo is a memorial to another Mexican hero, a reformer-governor of Michoacán. Preserved here is Ocampo's library and a copy of the document he signed donating it to the college, just before he was executed by a conservative firing squad on June 3, 1861.

### PALACIO CLAVIJERO & MERCADO DE DULCES

From 1660 to 1767 the **Palacio Clavijero**, with its awesome main patio, imposing colonnades and pink stonework, was home to the Jesuit

school of St Francis Xavier. After the Jesuits were expelled from Spanish lands, the building became a warehouse, a prison and then in 1970 it was completely renovated, restored and rechristened as state government offices. Who said politics and crime don't mix?

The seductive **Mercado de Dulces** (Sweets Market; ☎ 9am-10pm), on the western side of the palace, deals the region's famous sweets (see the boxed text, p562), including spicy chunk chocolate that melts into the perfect hot drink.

### MUSEO DE ARTE COLONIAL

Mel Gibson would dig this **museum** (☎ 313-92-60; Juárez 240; admission free; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & Sun) south of Plaza del Carmen. There are 100 crucifixes here – many of them quite grizzly and very little else. On the 18th-century canvases Jesus looks healthier – as a baby, a preacher and a healer.

### CASA DE LAS ARTESANÍAS

If you don't have time to scour the Purépecha pueblos for the perfect folk art piece, come to the **House of Handicrafts** (☎ 312-12-48; Plaza Valladolid; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun), a cooperative marketplace launched to benefit indigenous craftspeople. Attached to the renaissance-style Templo de San Francisco, arts and handicrafts from all over Michoacán are displayed and sold here. Prices are high, but so is the quality and all your cash goes directly to the craftspeople. Upstairs, artists demonstrate their craft in small shops that represent specific Michoacán towns. You'll find guitars from Paracho, copper from Santa Clara del Cobre, lacquerware, pottery and much more.

### FUENTE LAS TARASCAS & EL ACUEDUCTO

At the east end of Madero Ote, the *f fuente* (fountain) erupts from a fruit tray held by three beautiful, topless Tarascan women. The original vanished mysteriously in 1940 and this reproduction was installed in the 1960s.

**El Acueducto** (Aqueduct) runs for several kilometers along Av Acueducto and bends around Plaza Villalongín. It was built between 1785 and 1788 to meet the city's growing water needs. Its 253 arches are gorgeous when illuminated at night.

### PLAZA MORELOS & AROUND

Running east from the Fuente Las Tarascas, the shaded and cobbled Calz Fray Antonio de San Miguel is a wide, romantic pedestrian

promenade framed by exquisite old buildings. It wanders 500m to Plaza Morelos, an irregular, conspicuously vacant plaza surrounding **Estatua Ecuestre al Patriota Morelos**, a majestic statue of – who else – Morelos, on horseback, sculpted by the Italian artist Giuseppe Ingillieri between 1910 and 1913.

On the northeast edge of the plaza, the **Santuario de Guadalupe** feels like the set piece from Willy Wonka's psychedelic spiritual dream. The pink and red walls of this baroque church built from 1708 to 1716 bloom with white flowers and glisten with an abundance of gold leaf. There's so much color, the interior (decorated in 1915) feels like a Hindu temple. It's the kind of place that would inspire Timothy Leary to do up *Virgen de Guadalupe* acid tabs. Beside the church, the much less splashy **Ex-Convento de San Diego** was built in 1761 as a monastery and now houses the law school of the Universidad Michoacana.

The **Bosque Cuauhtémoc** is a large park favored by families because of its shade trees, amusement park and museums. But a city as majestic as Morelia deserves a better maintained, more dynamic green space. Modern art fans will enjoy the **Museo de Arte Contemporáneo** (☎ 312-54-04; Acueducto 18; admission free; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun). The 19th-century building hosts temporary exhibitions of contemporary art. The strange, lifeless **Museo de Historia Natural** (☎ 312-00-44; Ventura Puente 23; admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm), on the east side of the park, displays stuffed, dissected and skeletal animals and human fetuses.

### PLANETARIO & ORQUIDARIO

Near the convention center, about 1.5km south of the city center, is a **planetarium** (Parque 150; admission M\$40; ☎ shows at 7pm Fri & Sat, 6:30pm Sun), with 164 projectors simulating stars on a dome 20m in diameter. There's also a worthwhile **Orchid House** (☎ 314-62-29; admission M\$5; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10:30am-3pm & 4-6pm Sat & Sun), which exhibits nearly 3000 species of wild and hybrid orchid. The orchids bloom best in April, May and October.

### PARQUE ZOLÓGICO BENITO JUÁREZ

The **zoo** (☎ 314-04-88; Calz Juárez s/n; adult/child M\$18/10; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) is 3km south of the Plaza de Armas and surprisingly pleasant, with most critters in decent habitats. Animals include sea lions, giraffes, elephants, lots of birds and reptiles. Gravel

paths make it hard for strollers, but kids will love the small train and playground.

The Ruta Guinda and Ruta Rosa combi, or the Santa María bus (white with blue-and-grey stripes), all heading south on Nigromante, will drop you off at the entrance.

## Courses

Few foreigners and plenty of culture make Morelia an exceptional place to learn how to cook, dance and speak Spanish. Ask for a discount if taking a course for more than two weeks.

**Baden-Powell Institute** (☎ 312-40-70; www.baden-powell.com; Antonio Alzate 565; private lessons per hr M\$175, group lessons per week M\$1908) This small, well-run and affordable school offers courses in Spanish language, as well as Mexican politics, cooking, culture, guitar and salsa dancing. It books homestays (M\$262 per day) for students.

**Centro Cultural de Lenguas** (☎ 312-05-89; www.ccl.com.mx; Av Madero Ote 560; group lessons per week M\$1963, private lessons per week M\$3053) This school offers Spanish-language classes running from one to four weeks, as well as music, dance and cooking classes. Homestays (from M\$218 per day, including meals) are available.

## Tours

For tours outside the city ask the tourist office for recommendations.

**Leyendas de Morelia** (☎ 312-02-34) An interesting 2½ hour night tour (M\$70) where guides explain the legends behind the major sites in the city center. Includes a visit to an underground crypt. Tours are in Spanish.

**Mex Mich Guías** (☎ 390-47-34, 340-46-32; www.mmg.com.mx) Provides personalized tours and transportation to many destinations in the area, including the Santuario Mariposa Monarca (per person M\$469).

## Festivals & Events

In addition to the usual Mexican celebrations, Morelia's many annual festivals include the following:

**Feria de Morelia** Morelia's biggest fair, running for three weeks in mid-May, hosts exhibits of handicrafts, agriculture and livestock, plus regional dances, bullfights and fiestas. May 18 is the city's founding date (1541) and is celebrated with a fireworks show.

**Cumpleaños de Morelos** Morelos' birthday is celebrated on September 30 with a parade and fireworks show.

**Festival Internacional de Cine de Morelia** (www.moreliafilmfest.com) This major international exhibition for Mexico's vibrant film industry brings a week of parties and star sightings each October.

**Día de Muertos** Michoacán's outlying villages and smaller cities are the top attraction on the week of November 1, but Morelia hosts free flamenco concerts and stunning art installations in and around Plaza de Armas.

**Festival Internacional de Música** (www.festival.morelia.com) The international classical music festival occurs for two weeks in mid-November with orchestras, choirs and quartets giving concerts in churches, plazas and theaters around town.

**Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe** The Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe is celebrated on December 12 at the Ex-Convento de San Diego; in the preceding weeks a carnival erupts on Calz Fray Antonio de San Miguel.

**Feria Navideña** The Christmas Fair, with traditional Christmas items, foods and handicrafts from Michoacán, happens during the month of December.

## Sleeping

Rates may rise 20% during the holidays, but in the low season you can negotiate discounts.

## BUDGET

**Hotel Señorial** (Tapia 507; s/d M\$55/80) You won't find a cheaper sleep in town. Rooms are basic but spotless, spacious and well located in the heart of downtown. Management is gruff, but you don't pay enough for it to be sweet. Internet and laundry options are located just outside the front door.

**Hotel Colonial** (☎ 312-18-97; 20 de Noviembre 15; s/d from M\$160/250) Colonial courtyard digs with a winding stone staircase leading to 25 clean and basic rooms. Some have high, beamed ceilings. Cable TV costs extra.

**Hostal Allende** (☎ 312-22-46; Allende 843; s/d M\$250/360) Cute, basic rooms, each with its own look, surround a leafy courtyard planted with citrus trees and elephant ear palms. There is roof access with amazing views and wireless internet. The best cheap sleep in town.

**Hotel El Carmen** (☎ 312-17-25; hotel\_elcarmen@yahoo.com.mx; Ruiz 63; s/d M\$275/350; (P)) Centrally located, this tasteful and affordable hotel has exposed stone walls, locally fired tile and a pastel paint job. Rooms can be cramped, but they are clean and comfortable.

## MIDRANGE

**Hotel La Merced** (☎ 312-40-95; reservas\_lamerced@hotmail.com; Madero Pte 670; s/d M\$351/450; (P)) Rooms are basic but very clean. The staff is warm and friendly and rooms come with cable TV.

**Hotel Concordia** (☎ 312-30-52; www.hotelconcordiamorelia.com.mx; Gómez Farías 328; s/d M\$450/530; (P) (Q)) A rather soul-less business hotel with



decent value rooms in a polished, modern exterior. It'll do, but you can do better.

**ourpick Casa Rosa** (☎ Vonage VolP +1-773-696-5771; www.casadelarosa.info; Calle Aldama; r M\$450; 📍) This underground posada doesn't publish its address to discourage window shoppers, but you can make an appointment to see the rooms and apartments, which are brushed in pastels and decorated with a lovely array of folk art and framed festival posters. The apartments, especially the Love Shack, are an absolute steal and ideal for long-term rentals.

**Hotel Valladolid** (☎ 312-00-27; Portal Hidalgo 245; r M\$800) A beautiful blend of old bones and new soul are available at Morelia's best midrange hotel. There are exposed stone walls in the halls and the rooms, light boxes built into the hallway floor and everything else, from the doors to the headboards to the flat screens, screams high design.

**Hotel Casino** (☎ 313-13-28; www.hotelcasino.com.mx; Portal Hidalgo 229; r from M\$970; 📍 📍) Set front and center on the plaza this Best Western hotel offers the little extras: large rooms with high ceilings and antique wardrobes, a treadmill, free wifi and use of brand new laundry machines, gratis (it provides the soap).

## TOP END

**Hotel de la Soledad** (☎ 312-18-88; www.hsoledad.com; Zaragoza 90; d from M\$1000; 📍) This sweet higher-end hotel is housed in an expansive stone hacienda, accented by a collection of antique carriages (this used to be a carriage house). Rooms aren't fabulous but they are spacious and have lovely stone baths. Some have volcano views.

**Posada Del Artista** (☎ 317-94-20; www.posadadelartista.com; San Miguel 324; r from M\$1500; 📍 📍) Four luxurious rooms, a charming café and art gallery are set around a meticulously tended sculpture garden in the courtyard. It's off the pedestrian plaza, Calzada Fray Antonio de San Miguel, and a real find.

**Hotel Virrey de Mendoza** (☎ 312-06-33; www.hotelvirrey.com; Av Madero Pte 310; r from M\$1900; 📍 📍) The lobby is drop-dead gorgeous with a spectacular stained glass atrium and the rooms have an ageing grace with old wood floors and high ceilings, but they are a little dark, musty and overpriced. Of course, the palatial Virreinal Suite (M\$3900), with three rooms and a marvelous stone arched terrace overlooking the cathedral, doesn't suck.

**La Casa de las Rosas** (☎ 312-45-45; www.lacasadelasrosas.com; Prieto 125; ste M\$2180-3200; 📍 📍) Long considered the best hotel in town, it offers four gorgeous suites with gauzy curtains around stone bathtubs, gilded mirrors and period furniture. The garden is a little paradise. Breakfast is included.

**Hotel Villa Montaña** (☎ 314-02-31; www.villamontana.com.mx; Patzimba 201; r from M\$2300; 📍 📍 📍) Nestled 3km south of the city center is this hacienda-like luxury hotel, with huge elegant suites (think antiques, fireplaces and private stone patios) and breathtaking city and mountain views. The verdant grounds include a heated swimming pool, tennis court, business center and spa. If you don't stay here, come have a drink at the bar.

## Eating

**Al Taquito** (Calz Madero Ote 993; tacos M\$7; 🕒 9am-11:30pm) This tiny *taquería*, near the aqueduct and the clandestine make-out promenade – Callejón Romántica – serves up delicious *nopales* (cactus), chorizo, shredded pork and beef tacos and burritos. Its specialty, *alambre*, a diced mixture of onions, sweet peppers, beef and chorizo, covered in cheese and served with griddled tortillas, is a hit with local uni students.

**Gazpachos La Cerrada** (Hidalgo 67; gazpachos M\$22) *Gazpachos* – a salad of diced mango, pineapple and *jicama*, drowned in orange and lime juice and dashed with pepper, chili sauce and cheese (optional) – is a local delicacy served all over town. But according to locals, this place is the best.

**Govinda's** (☎ 313-13-68; Av Madero Ote 549; mains M\$41-52; 🕒 10:30am-5:15pm; 📍 📍) This veggie oasis has volcano and Madero boulevard views, Hindu art on the walls and no meat or dairy in the kitchen. Tasty combo meals include a daily curry, rice and veggies.

**Café Catedral** (☎ 313-04-06; www.hotelcatedralmorelia.com; Zaragoza 37; mains from M\$45; 📍) Packed from breakfast to the wee hours, this is easily the most popular sidewalk café beneath the arches across from the cathedral. It has great coffee, hot chocolate, tasty breakfasts (make sure to mix that smoked *chipotle* salsa with your eggs) and good pizza.

**Super Cocina La Rosa** (cnr Tapia & Prieto; mains under M\$50; 🕒 8:30am-4:30pm) Family owned and operated, devour Mexican soul food in this colonial stone relic. Nice!



**630** (☎ 313-97-79; Tapia 363; mains M\$65-95; 🍷 2pm-midnight) Ancient architecture and modernism coexist here, sometimes awkwardly, and the menu is likewise off-beat – mingling Italian, Mexican and Thai dishes. But if you order right, you'll leave happy. The octopus carpaccio – with five thin slices of octopus sprinkled with sea salt crystals, parsley and drizzled with flavorful olive oil – is fantastic.

**Onix** (☎ 317-82-90; Portal Hidalgo 261; mains M\$95-150; 🍷 8am-1pm) This bizarre restaurant has a sleek, seductive décor and exotic menu items like scorpion and steak with star fruit and coconut sauce. The soundtrack is equally schizophrenic, but the food is good. The bar upstairs goes off on Fridays and Saturdays.

**Mirsoles** (☎ 317-57-75; Av Madero Pte 549; mains from M\$105; 🍷 1-11pm Mon-Sat, 1-6pm Sun) Authentic Michoacán cooking, including traditional bean soup, chicken mole and *chamarro* (pork leg dry rubbed with chili and cooked in a clay pot), is dressed up and served in a gorgeous historic building. It serves over 100 wines.

**La Casa del Portal** (☎ 317-42-17; Prieto 125; mains M\$115-150; 🍷 8am-11pm Mon-Sun) The setting, a converted three story mansion, has history. Don Juan Villaseñor lived here during the 16th century and Lázaro Cárdenas retreated here when he was President of Mexico from 1934 to 1940. There's a stunning upstairs bar, La Terraza, overlooking the Plaza de Armas, an in-house wine shop, oh and it serves meals. Specialties include a Purépecha trout smothered in red chili sauce and local cheese.

**Fonda Las Mercedes** (☎ 312-61-13; Guzmán 47; mains M\$145-185; 🍷 1:30pm-midnight Mon-Sat, 1:30-6pm Sun) The bar ceiling at this hip, upscale spot is embedded with 200 clay pots, the intimate courtyard dining room is decorated with old stone columns and spheres and the kitchen serves four cuts of steak 10 different ways.

**Villa San José** (☎ 324-45-45; Patzimba 77; mains M\$145) About 3km south of town is a luxury hotel dining room with world-class views. Grab a table on the terrace and snack on *huitlacoche* quesadillas and marinated, grilled shrimp tacos, as the twinkling city spills out below.

**Hotel Virrey de Mendoza** (☎ 312-06-33; Av Madero Pte 310; brunch adults/kids M\$150/65; 🍷 9am-2pm) This fancy dining room serves other meals, but brunch is really what it does best. Try an all-encompassing buffet that features fruit, yogurt, fresh juices, made to order omelettes and scrambles, trays of *chilaquiles*, chorizo,

## SWEETS IN MORELIA

*Dulces morelianos* – delicious sweets made with ingredients like fruit, nuts, milk and sugar – are famous throughout the region. They're showcased at Morelia's Mercado de Dulces (p558). Some of the tastiest candies are the cinnamon infused chunk chocolate and *ates* (fruit leathers), which are produced from tamarind, guyaba and mango and have chili, sugar and salt added. Another local specialty – and probably the healthiest – is *gazpachos*, a snack made of chopped *jicama*, mango and pineapple or papaya, with cheese, chili, lime and salt sprinkled on top.

*tamales* and *enchiladas*, and a dessert table with a fountain of chocolate that gushes over perfectly plump strawberries.

Cheap food stalls with lots of tables can be found under the covered arches at **Plaza San Agustín** (cnr Abasolo & Corregidora; 🍷 1pm-11pm).

## Drinking

**our pick** **Balcones del Ángel** (Valladolid; 🍷 5pm-1am Mon-Sat) A hip and beautiful crowd gathers in this open courtyard lounge on the top floor of a 17th-century building just south of the cathedral. The design is seamless, the music bounces between global pop and electronica and the glowing dome of the cathedral is visible through the open roof. Stunning!

**Velvet Centro** (cnr Gómez Farías & Tapia; 🍷 5pm-midnight Tue-Thu, 5pm-1am Fri & Sat) This new spot on the roof of the Cinépolis building is hopelessly hip and extremely white – as in white awnings, white velvet sofas and white light fixtures. Oh and the cathedral views are outstanding. During the film festival producers, directors and stars party here. Saturday night is their big night.

**Lillian's Coffee** (☎ 312-72-52; Madero Pte 388; www.lillianscoffee.com; coffees from M\$12; 🍷 9am-9:30pm Mon-Sat, 11am-10pm Sun) Students flock here, just a block off the plaza, for morning coffee in this historic building.

## Entertainment

Being a university town and the capital of one of Mexico's most interesting states, Morelia has a thriving cultural life. Stop by the tourist office or the **Casa de la Cultura** (☎ 313-12-68; Av Morelos Nte 485) for *Cartelera Cultural*, a free

weekly listing of films and cultural events. Daily newspapers *El Sol de Morelia*, *La Voz de Michoacán* and *El Cambio de Michoacán* also publish current events.

For international films, dance, music and art exhibitions check what's up at the Museo Regional Michoacano (p558), the Museo Casa Natal de Morelos (p558) and the Casa de la Cultura – a hive of creative energy with music and dance classes and a cool coffee house set in an old colonial palace. The cathedral has occasional impressive organ recitals.

For theater experiences visit the **Teatro Ocampo** (☎ 312-37-34; cnr Ocampo & Prieto) or **Teatro Morelos** (☎ 314-62-02; www.ceconexpo.com.mx; cnr Camelinas & Ventura Puente), part of the Centro de Convenciones complex, 1.5km south of the city center. **Ginopolis** (☎ 312-12-88; cnr Gómez Farías & Tapia) screens blockbusters in English with subtitles and dubbed Spanish, so make sure you know which show you're seeing.

**Casa de la Salsa** (Plaza Morelos 121; admission free) ☎ 7-9pm Mon-Fri, live salsa music & dancing ☎ 9:30pm-2:30am Wed-Sat) Locals converge to shake their collective ass to a rocking four-piece band on a raised stage in this dark, cavernous club. Don't worry, this is not one of those snooty, show-off salsa clubs, so feel free to get loose. Tequila and beer are priced to move if you need liquid courage.

**Ego** (☎ 333-48-32; Camión Jesús del Monte; cover men/women M\$100/50; ☎ 10pm-3am Wed-Sat) On the hillside 3km south of town, Morelia's hottest club thumps, bumps and grinds to house and electronica tunes. Dress code is casual. The crowd is young and pretty and they don't stop dancing til they have to.

## Shopping

**Dulce Morelianos** (Madero Ote 440; sweets from M\$5) This old fashioned *chocolatería* is stacked with truffles, preserves, candied nuts and sugary chunks of candied peaches and pumpkin and women in ridiculous starched green uniforms patrol it.

**Mayoreo y Menudeo** (☎ 312-37-73; Madero Ote 620) Hipster alert! Get Diesel and Furor jeans and accessories for a third of what you'd pay in the US.

## Getting There & Around

### AIR

The **Francisco J Mújica Airport** (☎ 317-47-11) is 27km north of Morelia, on the Morelia-Zinapécuaro Hwy. There are no public buses,

but taxis to the airport cost M\$180. Plenty of flights are available to cities in Mexico and limited flights serve destinations elsewhere in North America.

Airlines servicing Morelia include the following:

**Aeromar** (☎ 324-67-77; Hotel Fiesta Inn, Pirindas 435)

**Mexicana** (☎ 313-94-30; Av Acueducto 60, Plaza Rebullones)

## BUS & COMBI

Morelia's bus terminal is about 4km northwest of the city center. It's separated into three *módulos*, which correspond to 1st-, 2nd- and 3rd-class buses. To get into town from here take a Roja 1 combi (red) from under the pedestrian bridge, or catch a taxi (M\$30). First-class buses depart frequently to the following destinations:

Destination	Fare	Duration
Guadalajara	M\$242	4hr
Lázaro Cárdenas	M\$310	5hr
Mexico City (Terminal Norte)	M\$240	4½hr
Mexico City (Terminal Poniente)	M\$240	4hr
Pátzcuaro	M\$35	1hr
Querétaro	M\$131	3-4hr
Uruapan	M\$100	2hr
Zamora	M\$112	2½hr
Zitácuaro	M\$89	3hr

Around town, small combis and buses operate from 6am until 10pm daily (M\$5). Combi routes are designated by the color of their stripe: Ruta Roja (red), Ruta Amarilla (yellow), Ruta Guinda (pink), Ruta Azul (blue), Ruta Verde (green), Ruta Cafe (brown) and so on. Ask at the tourist office for help with bus and combi routes.

## TAXI

Taxis flood the city center and an average ride costs M\$30.

## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

To rent a car, call **Hertz** (☎ 313-53-28), at the airport, or **Budget** (☎ 315-99-42; Av Camelinas 2315).

## RESERVA MARIPOSA MONARCA

In the easternmost corner of Michoacán, straddling the border of México state, lies the incredible 563-sq-km **Monarch Butterfly Reserve** (admission M\$30; ☎ 9am-6pm mid-Nov–Mar), the site of the butterfly Burning Man. Every autumn, from late October to early November, millions

of monarch butterflies flock to these forested Mexican highlands for their winter hibernation, having flown all the way from the Great Lakes region of the US and Canada, some 4500km away. Sometime around the autumnal equinox, they begin their journey alone – flying 12km per hour within 150m of the ground. As they close in on their destination they gather in gentle swarms, crossing highways and fluttering up steep mountainsides where they cling together in clusters that weigh down thick branches of the *oyenal* (fir) trees. When the sun rises and warms the forest, they take to the sky in gold and orange flurries, descending to the humid forest floor for the hottest part of the day. By midafternoon they often carpet the ground brilliantly. The best time to see them is on a warm, sunny afternoon in February (they don't fly as much in cool weather), when the butterflies have already begun their slow descent down the mountain.

In the warm spring temperatures of March the butterflies reach their sexual maturity and the real fun begins. Males fly carrying the females beneath them as they mate – abdomen to abdomen. Each female attracts multiple partners to ensure reproduction and exhausted males don't fall asleep immediately after sex – they die! When the vernal equinox strikes, pregnant females fly north to the southeastern US, where they lay their eggs in milkweed and die fulfilled. Their eggs hatch into caterpillars that feed on the milkweed, then make cocoons and emerge in late May as new butterflies. These young monarchs flutter back to the Great Lakes, where they breed, so that by mid-August yet another generation is ready to start the long trip south. It takes from three to five generations of butterflies (living one to eight months each) to complete the entire round-trip journey from Canada to Mexico and back. This is one of the most complex animal migrations on earth and scientists still have no idea how or why they do it. But they must tune into some kind of *mariposa* collective consciousness hardwired into their dynamic DNA.

Monarch butterflies are not in danger of extinction – there are thriving colonies in other parts of the world. However, the migratory behavior of this particular population is threatened. Milkweed, the plant upon which the monarchs depend, is considered invasive in most of the southeast US and is being sprayed

### HIGH IS WHERE IT HAPPENS

Monarch butterflies like basking at altitude, so getting to them requires hiking (or horseback riding) up to 3000m. Hike slowly, remember to take plenty of breaks (and water) and be aware of the symptoms of altitude sickness (see p1004).

with insecticides. Habitat destruction is also a problem; the area is ecologically significant enough to have been decreed a Reserva de la Biosfera (giving it protected status), but illegal logging still occurs in up to 60% of reserve lands. Local farmers, most strapped for cash, cut down the precious wood, plant corn and allow their livestock into butterfly territory. Some organizations are trying to change these patterns, offering local communities incentives to not only protect their remaining forests, but also to restore habitat via tree planting projects. For more information check out the websites [www.michoacanmonarchs.org](http://www.michoacanmonarchs.org) and [www.monarchwatch.org](http://www.monarchwatch.org).

### Visiting the Reserve

The reserve is divided into five separate areas, four of which are open to visitors from mid-November through March, but exact opening dates depend on weather, temperatures and the butterflies' arrival. El Rosario and Sierra Chincua are the most popular reserve areas. Both are accessible from Angangueo, the closest town to Sierra Chincua (just 8km away) and the best base for this end of the reserve. El Rosario is close to the pueblo of the same name and can be reached from Angangueo via Ocampo. Cerro Pellón is the newest reserve area and has the healthiest habitat. It's best reached from Zitácuaro. At the beginning or end of the season ask for information on butterfly activity at the Morelia or Mexico City tourist offices before heading out here. Some people do day trips or tours from Morelia (see Mex Mich Guías, p560) or Mexico City to see the butterflies, but this means more than eight hours of travel in one day. It's better to take your time and enjoy this unique and beautiful region.

The reserve areas are spread out, so you'll probably only be able to visit one. But the butterflies all look and behave the same in each spot.

**El Rosario**, which is also the name of a nearby village, is the most popular area and the easi-

est to reach via public transportation from Anganguero. But during the height of butterfly voyeurism (February and March) they get as many as 8,000 visitors a day. It is also the most commercial – souvenir stalls abound on the hillside and the habitat has been severely impacted by illegal logging. El Rosario village and the entrance to the El Rosario reserve area are located about 12km up a good gravel road from the small village of Ocampo. Getting to the butterflies requires a steep hike (or horse ride) of 2km to 4km from the reserve's parking lot, depending on the time of year. There are a couple of hotels in Ocampo, but you should stay in the cute village of Anganguero (just 45 minutes from Ocampo).

**Sierra Chincua** is 8km beyond Anganguero, way up in the mountains. This area has also been damaged by logging, but not as badly as El Rosario. It's a less strenuous hike, so this sanctuary is for those who want an easier walk. To get here from Anganguero take the 'Talpujahuá' bus (\$1) or a taxi (\$5).

**Cerro Pellón**, which is actually located in México state, is the newest reserve area and by far the best choice. The mountains rise high (over 3000m) here, the forest is in great shape and there is barely a trickle of tourism (on its busiest day it may get 80 visitors; when we visited we were all alone on the mountain). Logging has been eliminated and local guides have replanted trees for years to restore habitat. Expect to see huge, cathedral fir trees, moss covered trunks, wildflowers and incredible canyon views. Camping in a natural meadow just below Cerro Pellón peak, only an hour's hike from where the butterflies gather in the early season, is a terrific option. Guides will arrange burros to haul the heavy stuff up the mountain.

This reserve area is about a 40-minute drive southeast of Zitácuaro, Michoacán's third-largest city, where you can buy necessary food, water and supplies. You should bring your own camping gear. There are a couple of access points – Macheros and El Capulín. Both are within 1.5km of each other and can be reached by public transportation from outside Zitácuaro's bus terminal (take a bus marked 'Aputzio,' M\$10, which goes as far as the border to México state, then a taxi, M\$10 to M\$20). A taxi straight from Zitácuaro to either of the reserve areas cost M\$180 to M\$250. The steep hike from the sanctuary entrances to the butterflies can take

from 90 minutes to over two hours depending upon your condition.

Daily admission for each reserve area costs M\$30 and all areas rotate compulsory local guides. Expect to pay around M\$150 per horse, if you don't want to hike, plus M\$150 for the guide. Note that the length of your hike/horseback ride will be shorter later in the season – the butterflies work their way down as the weather warms up. Parking is M\$20.

## ANGANGUEO

☎ 715 / pop 5000 / elevation 2980m

This sweet, drowsy old mining town is the most popular base for butterfly-watchers, because it's close to both the Sierra Chincua and the El Rosario sanctuaries. The town is layered into the hills, knitted with pine forest, grazing land and cornfields. Most services can be found along a single main drag with two names (Nacional and Morelos). Stop at the **tourist office** (☎ 156-00-44; ☎ 8am-8pm Nov-Apr), just downhill from the plaza.

Cheap sleeps include decent and basic **Hotel Real Monarca** (☎ 156-03-24; Nacional 21; r from M\$150), with an appealing kitchen; and **Hotel Juárez** (☎ 156-00-23; Nacional 15; r M\$320), with basic rooms encircling a gorgeous flower garden. You may have to shout for service. **Albergue Don Bruno** (☎ 156-00-26; Morelos 92; s/d from M\$595/865) offers upscale rooms (some with fireplace) and is the class of this tiny town.

Restaurants include **Simon's Restaurant** (Obregón 24; mains M\$35) across from the plaza; and **Fonda Villacorzo**, which serves a great chicken and potato dinner in the central market.

Frequent buses from Morelia go first to Zitácuaro (M\$89, three hours) where you'll hop another bus to Anganguero (M\$14, 1¼ hours). From Mexico City's Terminal Poniente you can take Autobuses MTZ (M\$120, four hours, four daily) direct to Anganguero; but the majority of buses go through Zitácuaro.

To reach the El Rosario sanctuary from Anganguero, first take a combi to Ocampo (M\$4, 15 minutes, frequent), then another to El Rosario (M\$14, 30 minutes, frequent), from the corner of Independencia and Ocampo. In season there are also *camionetas* (open-back trucks) that leave from the *auditorio* (auditorium) in Anganguero, or from outside hotels; these cost around M\$300 for around 10 people and take 45 bumpy minutes (via a back road) to reach the sanctuary.

## ZITÁCUARO

☎ 715 / pop 79,800/ elevation 1940m

Zitácuaro is Michoacán's third-largest city, but it feels like a provincial working-class town. Known primarily for its baked bread and trout farms, it is also the best base for visiting the butterflies at Cerro Pellón. Other attractions include the **Iglesia de San Pancho** (☎ 9am-2pm & 4-7pm) in the village of San Pancho, just south of Zitácuaro. It's the restored 16th-century church that appeared in the great John Huston-Humphrey Bogart film, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* and was visited by Prince Charles in 2002. Come at sunset when light streams through the stained glass. About 16km north of Zitácuaro lie the peaceful Matlazincua ruins, **Pirámides Los Alzati** (☎ 10am-5pm). Veterans of other archaeological sites won't be too impressed by the pyramids, but the views are great and it's a nice picnic spot.

The main drag, Av Revolución, is where you'll find most hotels and restaurants, including the best downtown option, **Hotel America** (☎ 153-11-16; Revolución Sur 8; M\$190/250). Their spacious rooms come with a balcony. The modern **Hotel California** (☎ 153-97-98; Revolución Nte 3; s/d M\$250/350) has king sized beds and the clean and bright **Hotel Nefer** (☎ 156-79-27; Revolución Nte 4; r from M\$260; P) is a decent value as well. But the best hotel in the entire butterfly region is just a couple of kilometers south of town.

**our pick** **Rancho San Cayetano** (☎ 153-19-26; www.ranchosancayetano.com; Carretera a Huetamo Km 2.3; s/d incl service charge from M\$900; P) is owned and run by English- and French-speaking Pablo and Lisette, retirees from Mexico City. Pablo is passionate about the butterflies and offers detailed maps, driving directions and shows background videos to interested guests. He can also arrange transportation to and from the sanctuaries. The grounds are huge with stands of pine and fruit trees and great canyon views. Rooms are rustic chic with exposed stone walls, beamed ceilings and marble baths. And its multi-course, gourmet meals (breakfast/dinner M\$150/300; reserve one day in advance) are superb. A taxi here is M\$20.

The best downtown restaurant is **La Trucha Alegre** (☎ 153-98-09; Av Revolución Nte 2; mains M\$75-90). There are tablecloths and fresh flowers on the table and it cooks up local trout 35 different ways. But it's so fresh it doesn't need mushroom sauce or shrimp stuffing. Get it grilled, give it a squeeze of lime and a douse of

*salsa verde*. Divine! Zitácuaro's bus terminal is 1km from the center. There are frequent buses to and from Morelia (M\$89, three hours) and Angangueo (M\$14, 1½ hours), among other destinations.

## PÁTZCUARO

☎ 434 / pop 49,424 / elevation 2175m

This small, well-preserved colonial town in the Michoacán highlands is also the beating commercial heart of Purépecha country. Indigenous craftspeople from surrounding villages journey here to sell their wares and their presence, as well as Pátzcuaro's dramatic history, infuses the town with a palpable mystical energy.

Its center is defined by impressive old churches – including a hillside basilica – dusty, cobbled streets, tiled adobe buildings brushed white and reddish-brown and by two bustling plazas: Plaza Vasco de Quiroga (known as Plaza Grande) and the smaller Plaza Gertrudis Bocanegra (popularly known as Plaza Chica). At night it is so quiet that you can actually hear the wind (or are they forgotten spirits?) whisper through the narrow back streets.

Just 3km to the north lies scenic Lago de Pátzcuaro, ringed by traditional Purépecha villages and sprinkled with a few islands. Isla Janitzio is Mexico's biggest party magnet during early November's Día de Muertos, when Mexican tourists flock to Pátzcuaro, though plenty also come for Christmas, New Year and Semana Santa. Make advance reservations during holidays and bring warm clothes in winter – you're at altitude here and it gets frigid.

## History

Pátzcuaro was the capital of the Tarasco people from about AD 1325 to 1400. After the death of King Tariácuri, the Tarascan state became a three-part league. Comprising Pátzcuaro, Tzintzuntzan and Ihuatzio, the league repulsed repeated Aztec attacks, which may explain why they welcomed the Spanish, who first arrived in 1522. Bad idea. The Spanish returned in 1529 under Nuño de Guzmán, a vicious conquistador.

Guzmán's reign against the indigenous people was brutal, even for those times. The colonial government recalled Guzmán to Spain, where he was arrested and locked up for life and dispatched Bishop Vasco de



Quiroga, a respected judge and cleric from Mexico City, to clean up his mess. Quiroga was one enlightened dude. When he arrived in 1536, he established village cooperatives based on the humanitarian ideals of Sir Thomas More's Utopia.

To avoid dependence on Spanish mining lords and landowners, Quiroga successfully encouraged education and agricultural self-sufficiency in the Purépecha villages around Lago de Pátzcuaro, with all villagers contributing equally to the community. He also helped each village develop its own craft specialty – from masks to pottery to guitars and violins. The utopian communities declined after his death in 1565, but the crafts traditions continue to this day. Not surprisingly, Tata Vasco, as the Tarascos called Quiroga, has not been forgotten. You'll notice that streets, plazas, restaurants and hotels all over Michoacán are named after him.

## Orientation

Life in Central Pátzcuaro revolves around its two plazas. Ahumada heads north out of town toward the old Morelia–Uruapan Hwy (Hwy 14) 2km away. Lago de Pátzcuaro is another 500m further north from the highway.

The bus terminal lies southwest of the city center, about 2km away.

## Information

Several banks in the city center will change currency; all have ATMs.

**Consultorio Médicos del Centro** (☎ 342-45-33; Navarrete 44A; ☎ 9am-2pm & 4-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat)

**Icer Internet** (Portal Morelos 64; per hr M\$12; ☎ 9am-10pm)

**Lavandería San Francisco** (☎ 342-39-39; Terán 16; per 3kg M\$40; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Sat)

**Meganet** (Mendoza 8; per hr M\$12; ☎ 9am-9.30pm)

**Municipal tourist office** (☎ 342-02-15; Portal Hidalgo 1; ☎ 10am-8pm)

**Post office** (Obregón 13; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

**State tourist office** (☎ 342-12-14; Calle Buena Vista 7; ☎ 10am-2pm & 5-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun)

## Sights

### PLAZA VASCO DE QUIROGA (PLAZA GRANDE)

Pátzcuaro's leafy **main plaza** is one of Mexico's best hang-out spots. It is framed by the 17th-century facades of old mansions that have

since been converted to hotels, shops and restaurants, and watched over by a serene statue of Vasco de Quiroga which rises from the central fountain. The sides of the plaza are named Portal Hidalgo (west side), Portal Aldama (south side) and Portal Matamoros (east side). The north side is Portal Allende east of Iturbe and Portal Morelos west of Iturbe.

### PLAZA GERTRUDIS BOCANEGRA (PLAZA CHICA)

Pátzcuaro's second plaza is named after a local heroine who was shot by firing squad in 1818 for her support of the independence movement. Her statue commands the center of the plaza and she looks like your basic badass.

The local market on the west side of the plaza is where you can find everything from fruit, vegetables and fresh trout to herbal medicines, crafts and clothing – including the region's distinctive striped shawls and sarapes. There's outstanding cheap food, too.

On the north side of the plaza is one of the coolest libraries of all time. The **Biblioteca Gertrudis Bocanegra** (☎ 342-54-41; cnr Padre Lloreda & Títere; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) occupies the cavernous interior of the 16th-century San Agustín church. There are oyster shell skylights and a massive colorful Juan O'Gorman mural on the rear wall that depicts the history of Michoacán from pre-Hispanic times to the 1910 revolution. It also has high-speed internet for just M\$5 per hour.

A tumbledown **Mercado de Artesanías** (☎ 8am-6pm) operates on the side street adjacent to the library. Wooden masks and pastel crucifixes, are among the crafts sold here. Quality varies. Prices are low.

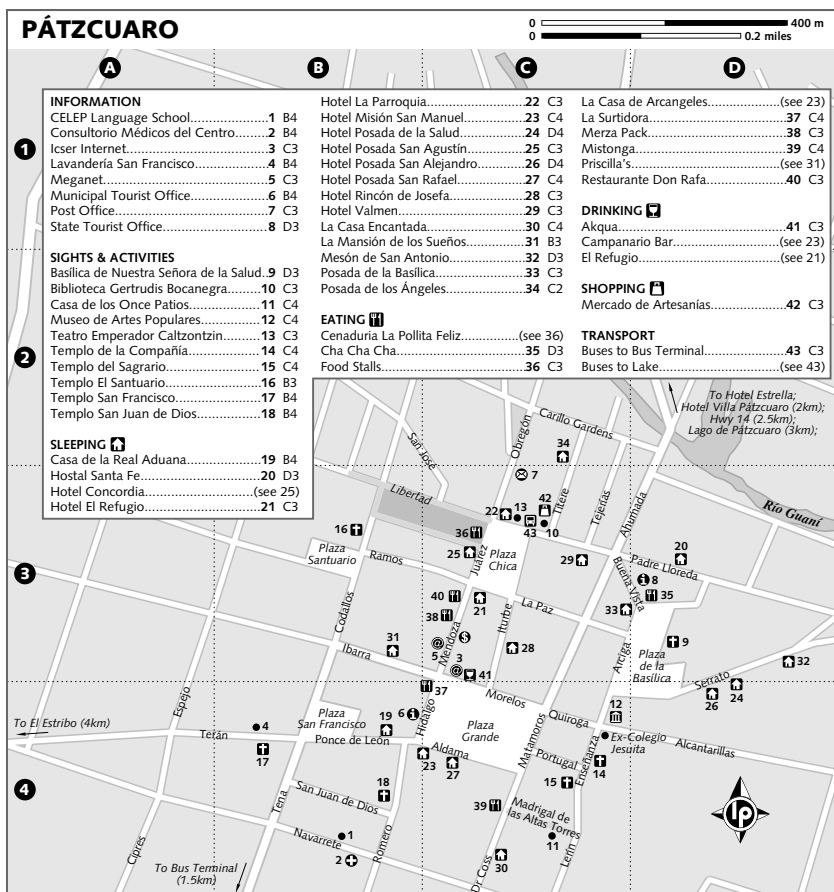
On the west side of the library, the **Teatro Emperador Caltzontzin** was a convent until it was converted to a theater in 1936; it hosts occasional films and performances

### BASÍLICA DE NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LA SALUD

This gorgeous church, built on the hill atop a pre-Hispanic ceremonial site, was intended to be the centerpiece of Vasco de Quiroga's utopia. The building wasn't completed until the 19th century and only the central nave was faithful to his original design. Quiroga's tomb, the Mausoleo de Don Vasco, is left of the main doors.

Behind the altar at the east end stands a much revered figure of the Virgin, Nuestra





Señora de la Salud (Our Lady of Health), which 16th-century Tarascans crafted the image from a corncob-and-honey paste called *tatzingue*. Soon after, people began to experience miraculous healings and Quiroga had the words ‘Salus Infirmorum’ (Healer of the Sick) inscribed at the figure’s feet. Ever since, pilgrims have come from all over Mexico to pray for miracles. They crawl on their knees across the plaza, into the church and along its nave. Upstairs, behind the image, you’ll see many tin impressions of hands, feet and legs that pilgrims have offered the mystical Virgin.

### MUSEO DE ARTES POPULARES

This **folk art museum** (☎ 342-10-29; cnr Enseñanza & Alcantarillas; admission M\$34; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Sat, 9am-

4:30pm Sun) housed in old colonial environs was under renovation during research. In 1540 Quiroga founded the original Colegio de San Nicolás, arguably the Americas’ first university, on this site. The building was constructed on pre-Hispanic stone foundations, some of which can be seen behind the museum courtyards.

In the past permanent exhibitions have included impressive collections of ceremonial masks, religious artifacts, gorgeous jewelry and stunning lacquerware. There’s also a room set up as a typical Michoacán kitchen (note the large brick oven). Though the museum was closed to the public at the time of writing, it should be up and running, with additional temporary exhibits, during your visit.

## OTHER CHURCHES

Built in the 16th century, the **Templo de la Compañía** (cnr Lerín & Alcantarillas) became a Jesuit training college in the 17th century. The church is still in use and houses some Vasco de Quiroga relics. The adjacent college building fell into ruin after the expulsion of the Jesuits. It is now used for community activities and often has free temporary exhibits.

Pátzcuaro has several other old churches of interest, including the creaky **Templo del Sagrario**, **Templo San Juan de Dios**, the pink stone **Templo San Francisco** and **Templo El Santuario**.

## CASA DE LOS ONCE PATIOS

This cool, rambling colonial **edifice** (House of the 11 Courtyards; Madrigal de las Altas Torres) was built as a Dominican convent in the 1740s. (Before that, the site held one of Mexico's first hospitals, founded by Vasco de Quiroga.) Today it houses small *artesanías* shops, each specializing in a particular regional craft. Look for copperware from Santa Clara del Cobre and musical instruments from Paracho, as well as lacquerware, hand-painted ceramics and vibrant textiles. You'll likely find privacy on the top floors where you can take in the surrounding natural and architectural beauty.

Most shops are open from 10am to 7pm daily, with a lunch break in the afternoon.

## EL ESTRIBO

This hilltop lookout, 3.5km west of the city center and popular with joggers, walkers and couples, has a great view of Lago de Pátzcuaro. It takes about an hour to traverse the cobbled, cypress-lined road up to the viewing pavilion. Take Ponce de León from the southwest corner of Plaza Grande and follow the signs.

## Courses

**Centro de Lenguas y Ecoturismo de Pátzcuaro** (CELEP; ☎ 342-47-64; www.celep.com.mx; Navarrete 50; two-week Spanish language course M\$3816; language & culture program M\$5888) Courses involve four to six hours of classes Monday to Friday. Cultural programs include seminars in Mexican literature and excursions to the butterfly sanctuary (in season) and local villages. Homestays (including meals) cost M\$273 per day.

## Tours

Several tour guides operate around the Pátzcuaro area.

**Miguel Ángel Núñez** (☎ 344-01-08; casadetierra@hotmail.com) English-speaking Miguel Ángel, an anthro-

pologist, offers insider tours of the Pátzcuaro area and throughout Michoacán. He covers indigenous culture, archaeology, colonial history, art and architecture. Tour prices depend on the destination, but local tours cost M\$200 per person; transportation is provided. He can also organize cooking classes and food tours upon request.

## Festivals & Events

The villages around Pátzcuaro, most notably Tzintzuntzan and Isla Janitzio, stage the most popular Day of the Dead celebrations in Mexico. Parades, crafts markets, dancing, ceremonies, exhibitions and concerts are held in and around Pátzcuaro on the days before and after Día de Muertos. Cemeteries are packed with observants throughout the festivities.

Other interesting events in Pátzcuaro include:

**Pastorelas** These dramatizations of the shepherds' journey to see the infant Jesus are staged in Plaza Grande around Christmas. *Pastorelas indígenas*, on the same theme but including mask dances, enact the struggle of angels against the devils that are trying to hinder the shepherds. These *pastorelas* are held in eight villages around Lago de Pátzcuaro, on different days between December 26 and February 2.

**Semana Santa** Easter week is full of events in Pátzcuaro and the lakeside villages, including Palm Sunday processions; Viacrucis processions on Good Friday morning, enacting Christ's journey to Calvary and the crucifixion; candlelit processions in silence on Good Friday evening; and, on Easter Sunday evening, a ceremonial burning of Judas in Plaza Grande.

**Nuestra Señora de la Salud** On December 8 a colorful procession to the basilica honors the Virgin of Health. Traditional dances are performed, including Los Reboceros, Los Moros, Los Viejitos and Los Panaderos.

## Sleeping

Pátzcuaro has a wide variety of accommodations, but during holidays and festivals, especially Día de Muertos, be sure to secure reservations months ahead (more for the most popular places); or you may be homeless. The best deals can be found near the basilica.

## BUDGET

**Hotel Valmen** (☎ 342-11-61; Padre Lloreda 34; s/d/t M\$200/250/300) The leafy interior of this decent budget choice is lit with skylights. The halls are decorated with funky tiles and the rooms are immaculate. Drawbacks include thin mattresses and late night and early morning noise.

## DÍA DE MUERTOS WARNING

Pátzcuaro is usually a wonderfully serene little town, but when Día de Muertos rolls around it seems all of Mexico is trying to get in. If you plan on being here around the first two days of November, make sure you've made hotel reservations many months in advance. Be ready for crowds and bring a camera, as the markets and surrounding cemeteries are beautiful.

Isla Janitzio is witness to many colorful festivities, but its small cemetery is ground zero for crushing crowds of young party animals. Instead visit the cemeteries in surrounding villages (try Ihuatzio, Jarácuaro or Capula). Going after 3am is another strategy to avoid crowds (except on Janitzio, which is jam-packed all night long). Tzintzuntzan's cemetery is one of the best, but it's extremely popular and can be crowded. Come early in the day and watch as families decorate the graves.

**Hotel Estrella** (☎ 342-56-99; Lázaro Cárdenas 2; s/d M\$220/400) This small, pink, family-run budget spot on the road to the pier is the best among a string of lakeside hotels. The rooms are clean, management speaks English and it helps arrange boat trips to the islands.

**Hotel Posada San Agustín** (☎ 342-04-42; Portal Juárez 27; s/d M\$250/350) Cramped and not nearly clean enough, some rooms have stellar volcano views. It will do for a night or two if you're desperate.

## MIDRANGE

**Posada de los Ángeles** (☎ 342-24-40; posada.angeles@hotmail.com; Títere 16; s/d M\$300/420) Rooms are spacious, clean and have character (arches and high ceilings). The garden is sunny and warm and the price is right. You won't love the industrial carpeting but it keeps the room warm and it isn't musty.

**Hotel Posada San Rafael** (☎ 342-07-70; Portal Aldama 13; s/d M\$300/420) The lovechild of a colonial mission and a US motel, rooms open onto wide verandas overlooking a driveway and parking area. There are plenty of beautiful details – like columns, beamed ceilings and potted plants. First floor rooms are dark, but upstairs rooms are a great deal. It's located right on Plaza Grande.

**Hotel Concordia** (☎ 342-00-03; Portal Juárez 31; s/d M\$320/450; 📍) Run by a sweet *abuelita* who will offer same day discounts (to M\$280), this is Pátzcuaro's choice budget spot. For a few more bucks you can have a room with a pastel paint job that makes it feel larger than it really is. The showers are not built for basketball players.

**Hotel Posada de la Salud** (☎ 342-00-58; posadadela.salud@hotmail.com; Serrato 9; d/tw M\$350/420) A lovely, rambling hotel painted in a pastel yellow that just feels like Mexico. There's cable TV, fairly

narrow beds in the simple, clean rooms and plenty of outdoor common space.

**Hotel Posada San Alejandro** (☎ 342-61-33; Serrato 5A; hpsalejandro@yahoo.com.mx; d from M\$480) The simple, tiled rooms are clean, come with soft double beds and cable TV and are set in a quiet end of town. Management is friendly and accommodating.

**our pick Mesón de San Antonio** (☎ 342-25-01; www.mesondesanantonio.com; Serrato 33; s/d M\$500/600; 📍) This old hacienda-style inn is the best of the midrangers by far. Rooms border a courtyard, the beamed overhangs are held up by ancient timbers and the extremely cozy rooms are decorated with fine Purépecha pottery and have wood burning fireplaces and cable TV.

**Hostal Santa Fe** (☎ 342-05-12; www.hostaldelvalle.com; Padre Lloreda 27; d/t M\$500/700; 📍) With pottery on the tiled floors and ironwork on the walls, this sunken lobby is as inviting as it is unusual. Some rooms are better than others, but on the whole they are comfortable and spotless. Number 9 has a romantic terrace.

**Hotel Rincón de Josefa** (☎ 342-11-43; www.hotel.rincondejosefa.com.mx; Iturbide 29; s/d M\$538/644) Well located between the two plazas is one of the better options in town. The 60 rooms are all unique, some have arched brick ceilings and are furnished with antiques. The lobby vibes with almost 2000 indoor plants. It feels good in here and it's a great deal.

**Hotel El Refugio** (☎ 342-55-05; hotelcasadelrefugio@hotmail.com; Portal Régules 9; s/d M\$750/880) A cozy, stylish choice with spacious rooms that have terra cotta tile floors and high beamed ceilings. Management is warm and gracious. You may want to stay a while.

## TOP END

**Hotel Misión San Manuel** (☎ 342-10-50; www.mision.sanmanuel.com; Portal Aldama 12; s/d M\$702/1053; 📍) (📍)

The public spaces are endearing at this converted monastery. Think wood columns, a fireplace and exquisite local pottery in the courtyard. But the rooms, though large with high ceilings, are pretty average.

**Hotel La Parroquia** (☎ 342-25-16; reserva\_laparroquia@hotmail.com; Plaza Gertrudis Bocanegra 24; r M\$963; (P) (Q)) This palatial three-story hacienda style hotel has been recently renovated, with re-finished beams and columns, granite and tile baths and Tempurpedic beds. The Plaza Chica location is excellent.

**La Casa Encantada** (☎ 342-34-92; www.lacasaencantada.com; Dr Coss 15; r from M\$974-1461; (P) (Q)) If you crave affordable luxury, this intimate US-owned B&B offers 10 elegant rooms with local rugs and beautifully tiled baths in a converted 1784 mansion. Amenities include cheap international calls, wireless internet, airport transfers and gourmet breakfasts.

**Posada de la Basílica** (☎ 342-11-08; www.posadala basilica.com; Arciga 6; r from M\$1350; (P) (Q)) For rustic luxury consider this boutique hotel with terra cotta rooftop and lake views. The 12 huge rooms have wood floors and open fireplaces. The courtyard is plain but the location rocks.

**La Mansión de los Sueños** (☎ 342-57-08; www.prismas.com.mx; Ibarra 15; r from M\$2230) This restored mansion built around three adjacent courtyards offers some of the best digs in town. It has one of the more tasteful collections of folk art and some rooms have fireplaces and lofts. Full breakfast and a welcome cocktail are included and served at Priscilla's, its posh restaurant.

**Casa de la Real Aduana** (☎ 342-02-65; www.lafo liamx.com; Ponce de León 16; r M\$2400-2750) Pátzcuaro's classiest rooms can be snagged at this converted 16th-century colonial house. Think plush linens, fine art on the walls and a stunning historical courtyard that is part-museum, part-garden and hard to leave on a sunny morning. Full breakfast is included; no kids allowed.

## Eating

Pátzcuaro has decent, but not great, food. Local specialties include *sopa tarasca*, a rich tomato-based soup with cream, dried chili and bits of crisp tortilla and *corundas* – *tamales* with a creamy pork and bean filling.

**Our pick** **Cenaduría La Pollita Feliz** (cnr Obregón & Plaza Chica; mains M\$35; ☎ 5-10pm) Enormous skillet sizzle with perfectly crisp and tender

chicken, potatoes and carrots and boil with sweet and tangy enchilada sauce at this packed food stall beneath the pink tarp. Its Super Orden (M\$140) includes salad, enchiladas, two whole chickens, a pile of steaming *papas* and feeds four. Delicious!

**La Surtidora** (☎ 342-28-35; Portal Hidalgo 71; mains M\$35-120; ☎ 8am-10pm) Waiters are dressed in chef whites, but don't expect fine dining at this old school café, which has been in operation on Plaza Grande since 1916. The beamed interior is perfumed with roasting coffee, it serves all manner of salads and the chicken enchiladas come topped with butternut squash.

**La Casa de Arcangeles** (☎ 342-10-50; Portal Aldama 12; mains M\$50-85; ☎ 8am-10pm) This bright courtyard café attached to Hotel Mision San Manuel serves all the typical Mexican favorites. Pátzcuaro's youngest mariachi band performs on weekends, which is always a good time.

**Restaurante Don Rafa** (☎ 342-04-98; Mendoza 30; mains from M\$60; ☎ 8:30am-9pm) The bow-tied waiters at this narrow, intimate restaurant serve set, three-course menus starring Mexican classics – such as chicken *mole*. There are tablecloths and candles on the tables, but fluorescent lighting spoils the mood. Still, a good deal.

**Cha Cha Cha** (☎ 342-16-27; www.restaurantchachacha.com; Buena Vista 7; mains M\$75-95; ☎ 8:30am-9:30pm) Just off the Plaza Basílica is this funky courtyard café freckled with great Purépecha folk art and photography. Its burgers and fries get rave reviews. The salmon with *chipotle* sauce is tasty and it even has its own organic herb garden.

**Mistonga** (☎ 342-64-50; Dr Coss 4; mains M\$85-115; ☎ 1-10pm Tue-Sun) When you dine Argentine, steak is your best option. This gorgeous enclosed courtyard restaurant serves it in a variety of ways, such as *milanesa* (pounded thin and breaded) and *chimichurri* (marinated in a garlic, parsley and olive oil sauce). It also has a fantastic Argentine wine list.

**Priscilla's** (☎ 342-57-08; Ibarra 15; mains M\$95-150; ☎ 7:30am-10:30pm) Posh and fancy, this fine dining room serves international dishes, like lasagna al prosciutto, fish-filled nopals and cheese fondue. There's courtyard dining on warm days and live music on Saturday nights.

The market on Plaza Chica has inexpensive **food stalls** (☎ 8am-7pm) serving everything from fruit juices to tacos to *tortas*. If you need a supermarket check out **Merza Pack** (Mendoza 24; ☎ 7am-9:45pm).

## Drinking

Pátzcuaro seldom parties, but you can toast the saintly Quiroga at the airy sidewalk tables or in the cramped black-lit environs of **Campanario Bar** (Plaza Grande 14; ☎ 3-11pm), which offers live bands on occasion. If the Pátzcuaro night has a pulse, this is its heart.

**El Refugio** (☎ 342-55-05; Portal Régules 9; ☎ 2-noon-midnight) This elegant hotel bar has two (quite different) points of highlight: the lovely wood burning fireplace that attracts couples and sparks good conversation, and the flat screen TV above the bar that displays global and American football games to an international expert crowd.

**Akqua** (☎ 342-11-11; Plaza Grande 66; ☎ 2-10pm) Pátzcuaro's newest bar-lounge attempts to blend modern electronica vibrations into the ancient soul of this quiet town. Brand-new at the time of writing, it wasn't crowded. But the old stone courtyard is a great location and it should find its groove.

## Shopping

The Casa de los Once Patios is a good place to seek Michoacán crafts, but you'll get better deals on similar work in the main market and the Mercado de Artesanías, both next to Plaza Chica. On Friday mornings a ceramics market, with pottery from surrounding villages, is held in Plaza San Francisco. There's also a small crafts market in front of the basilica every day.

There are countless villages within a few hours of Pátzcuaro and they all specialize in different crafts. Shoppers will enjoy the hunt.

## Getting There & Around

Pátzcuaro's bus terminal is 1.5km southwest of the city center. It has a cafeteria and left-luggage services.

To catch a bus heading to the center, walk outside the terminal, turn right and at the corner take any bus marked 'Centro' (M\$5). Taxis cost M\$20 (with a small surcharge after 11pm).

Buses back to the terminal (marked 'Central') leave from the northeast corner of Plaza Chica. Buses to the boat pier (marked 'Lago') also leave from here and run from about 6am to 10pm daily.

Common destinations that have frequent services include the following (price quotes are for 1st-class fares):

Destination	Fare	Duration
Erongaricuro	M\$10	35min
Guadalajara	M\$200	4½hr
Mexico City (Terminal Poniente)	M\$270	5½hr
Mexico City (Terminal Norte)	M\$270	5½hr
Morelia	M\$35	1hr
Quiroga	M\$16	35min
Santa Clara del Cobre	M\$8	30min
Tzintzuntzan	M\$9	20min
Uruapan	M\$37	1hr
Zirahuén	M\$14	50min

## AROUND PÁTZCUARO

### Lago de Pátzcuaro

About 3km north of central Pátzcuaro, you will come over a rise to find a lake so blue that its edge blends seamlessly with the sky. Within it are a few populated islands. It is stream fed, natural and though pollution is a concern, it's still damn beautiful.

To get to the *muelle* (dock), take a bus marked 'Lago' from Pátzcuaro's Plaza Chica. The dock caters to tourists in a profoundly cheesy way – with cheap fish eateries and souvenir shops. The ticket office is about 50m down on the right-hand side.

**Isla Janitzio** is a popular weekend and holiday destination. It's heavily devoted to tourism, with lots of low-end souvenir stalls, fish restaurants and drunk college kids on holiday. But it is car-less and threaded with foot paths that eventually wind their way to the top, where you'll find a 40m-high **statue** (admission M\$6) of independence hero José María Morelos y Pavón. Inside the statue are murals depicting Morelos' life. Want a stellar panoramic view? Climb up to his see-through wrist. The **Hotel Terhunukua** (r M\$220; ☎ ) has small, modest rooms (some with views) and is 50m straight up from the dock.

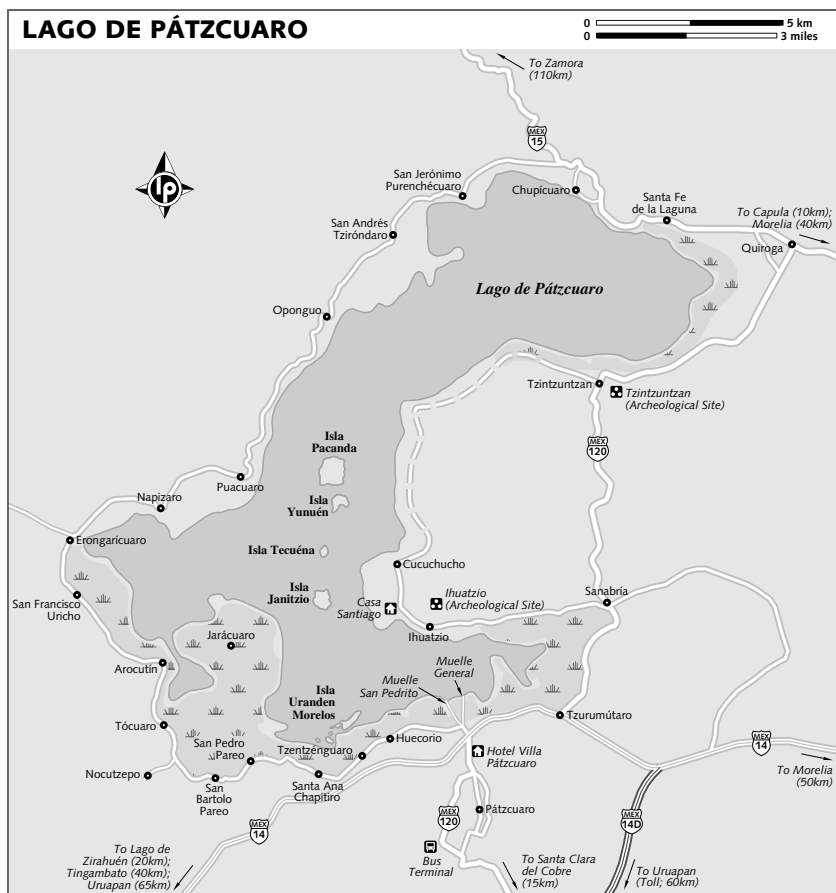
Round-trip boat rides to Janitzio cost M\$40 and take 25 minutes each way; they leave when full (about every 30 minutes, quicker on weekends).

Tiny **Isla Yunuén** is green, tranquil and has a tight-knit Purépecha community. Crash at **Cabañas de Yunuén** (☎ 434-342-44-73; cabañas from M\$400). These romantic wood *cabañas* sleep up to 16 people; all have TV and kitchenette.

Round-trip boat rides to Yunuén also cost M\$40 per person. Boats leave when full, so you may have to wait.

### Lakeside Villages

The villages surrounding Lago de Pátzcuaro make perfect day trips and almost all can



be reached by local transportation from Pátzcuaro's bus terminal. Or, to avoid backtracking to the bus station, take a 'Lago' bus from Plaza Chica and get off anywhere between the Posada de Don Vasco and Hwy 14; then wait by the roadside for a bus heading to your village. Buses to Ihuatzio run directly from Plaza Chica.

Frequent combis run between the villages, so you can visit several in one day. Transportation between Quiroga and Erongaricuro is infrequent, however, so travel between the two may be quicker via Pátzcuaro.

### IHUATZIO

Ihuatzio, 14km from Pátzcuaro, was capital of the Tarascan league after Pátzcuaro (but

before Tzintzuntzan). Today it's just a slow, dusty village where everyone knows everyone else, until *you* walk into town.

The large and partially restored **Ihuatzio archaeological site** (admission M\$25; ☞ 10am-6pm) lies just over 1km up a cobbled road from the village's small plaza. The ruins' best attraction is an open ceremonial space. It is 200m long and features two pyramid-like structures at its west end. Climbing the pyramids is forbidden, but it is possible to walk to the top of the restored wall to their left (south) for good views. Two carved stone coyotes were found at the site; one is in the National Anthropology Museum in Mexico City, the other graces the bell tower of Ihuatzio's church.



If you ever wanted to experience a night or two in an authentic indigenous pueblo, consider **Casa Santiago** (☎ 342-59-62; www.geocities.com/theothermexico; bed & breakfast M\$436, full-board M\$545). It's located 1.5km west of Ihuatzio on the road to Cucuchucho and run by a friendly US-Purépecha couple who also run inexpensive shopping tours.

### TZINTZUNTZAN

The tiny town of Tzintzuntzan (tseen-tsoon-tsahn), about 15km north of Pátzcuaro, has an old nurturing soul. There's a beautiful sprawling cemetery that becomes an unbelievably vibrant floral memorial to lost loved ones during intricate 48-hour-long Day of the Dead celebrations, crumbling Tarascan ruins and some relics from the early Spanish missionary period. The town's pulse comes from its thriving weekend crafts market, saintly Quiroga's beloved olive grove and two old churches.

Tzintzuntzan, or 'Place of Hummingbirds' in Purépecha, was the Tarascan capital when copper blades helped the Tarascans defeat the invading Aztecs in the late 15th century. When the Spanish arrived with a bible in hand and a gun behind their back, the Purépecha chief made peace with Cristóbal de Olid, leader of the first Spanish expedition in 1522. But when Nuño de Guzmán arrived in 1529 hungry for gold, he had the same chief burned alive. This barbaric act is depicted on the O'Gorman mural in Pátzcuaro's Biblioteca Gertrudis Bocanegra.

Vasco de Quiroga also established his first base here when he reached Michoacán in the mid-1530s and Tzintzuntzan became the headquarters of the Franciscan monks who followed him. The town declined in importance after Quiroga shifted his base to Pátzcuaro in 1540.

On the lake side (west) of Av Cárdenas lies the **Ex-Convento de San Francisco**, a religious compound built partly with stones from the Tarascan site up the hill which the Spanish demolished. This is where Franciscan monks began the Spanish missionary effort in Michoacán in the 16th century. The gnarled, shady olive trees in the churchyard came from seedlings planted by Vasco de Quiroga; they're believed to be the oldest olive trees in the Americas. Can you think of a better place to snag an outdoor siesta?

Straight ahead as you walk into the churchyard is the crumbling, but still-functioning **Templo de San Francisco**, built exclusively for the

monks. Vegetation sprouts from its facade and the lovely cloister, to the left of the *templo*, includes a set of faded murals around the galleries and Mudejar-patterned wooden ceiling ornamentation.

Toward the right rear corner of the complex stands the church built for the Purépecha masses, the **Templo de Nuestra Señora de la Salud**. Inside is El Santo Entierro de Tzintzuntzan, a much-revered image of Christ. For most of the year it lies in a *caja de cristal* (glass coffin). During Day of the Dead celebrations it is festooned with fruit and marigolds. On Good Friday, following an elaborate costumed passion play, the image is removed from its coffin and nailed to the large cross; being a Cristo de Goznes (hinged Christ), his arms can be extended and his legs crossed. Afterwards, the image is paraded through town until dark, when it is returned to the church. Pilgrims descend from all over, some in chains or carrying crosses, some crawling on their knees. Thousands of candles are placed in the church for an all-night wake.

In the enclosed yard beside this church is the **Capilla Abierta de la Concepción**, an old open chapel that dates to the 16th century.

Behind the church you'll find **Taller De Cerámica**, a converted missionary hospital that is now a rustic ceramics studio run by local artist, Manuel Morales, a fifth generation potter. His work is colorful, intricate, unique and is sold in galleries throughout Mexico and California. Inside you'll see ceramics in all stages of production and a cool, underground showroom in the back. Prices are high but the man is a master. Morales gives classes and accepts apprentices as well. If you want to become a potter, you'd have a hard time finding a more creative learning environment, or a more qualified teacher. But Morales has no phone. You'll just have to show up.

Head out the monastery's front gate, across the highway and up the hill and you'll find the **Tzintzuntzan archeological site** (Las Yácatas; M\$34; ☎ 10am-5pm), an impressive group of five round, reconstructed temples, known as *yácatas*. They are all that remain of the mighty Tarascan empire. The hillside location offers wonderful views of the town, lake and surrounding mountains.

### QUIROGA

The bustling market town of Quiroga, named for the man responsible for many of its build-

ings and handicrafts, is 7km northeast of Tzintzuntzan. Every day there's a busy crafts market and there are hundreds of shops selling brightly painted wooden, ceramic and leather goods, as well as colorful woolen sweaters and sarapes. The town is set at the crossroads of Hwys 15 and 120, so there is seldom a dearth of shoppers.

Traffic also stops for Quiroga's famous *carnitas* (chunks of slow-cooked pork). There are dozens of *carnitas* stands and storefronts to choose from. But the town's best meal can be found at **Taquería Los Compadres**, a hole-in-the-wall on the main road. Despite its name, it specializes in *molcajetes* (M\$50 per person) and they could be the best in Mexico. Steak is grilled, sliced into fine ribbons and placed over chunks of onion, which are immersed in bubbling salsa in the heated *molcajete* (a volcanic stone grinding bowl). Then chorizo is added along with *carnitas* and the whole pot is slathered with cheese, garnished with grilled nopales and served with griddled tortillas. Extra napkins, please!

On the first Sunday in July the **Fiesta de la Preciosa Sangre de Cristo** (Festival of the Precious Blood of Christ) is celebrated with a long torchlight procession led by a group carrying an image of Christ crafted from a paste made of corncobs and honey.

### ERONGARÍCUARO

A pretty 18km trip west from Pátzcuaro, Erongarícuaro (or 'Eronga') is one of the oldest settlements on the lake. French artist André Breton (1896–1966) lived here for a time in the 1950s, visited occasionally by Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo. Breton made the unusual wrought-iron cross in the forecourt of the church. Peruse the gorgeous gardens behind the old seminary attached to the church and look for the traditional Purépecha *troje* house.

On January 6, the **Fiesta de los Reyes Magos** (Festival of the Magic Kings) is celebrated with music and dance.

### TÓCUARO

Some of Mexico's finest mask makers live in this cobblestoned town surrounded by cornfields, 10km west of Pátzcuaro. But there are no traditional shop fronts – just a sign here and there signifying entry into family courtyard compounds with workshops and showrooms.

Tócuaro's best mask maker, Juan Horta, recently passed away, but his son **Orlando Horta** (☎ 443-349-72-31; maskorta@hotmail.com; ☹ 10am–6pm) and his brothers carry on. Their gruesome skull, bat and bull masks are decorated with real hair and teeth. Walk up the street (Morelos) from the bus stop; after you pass Hidalgo it is the first house on your left. The town's best wood sculpture can be found at **Taller de Don Salvador Tera e Hijos** (☎ 443-303-37-82; ☹ 9am–6pm) on the highway.

Prepare to spend. It takes a month or more to produce a fine mask, carved from a single piece of wood. The best ones are wonderfully expressive and surreal and thanks to a growing legion of global collectors, can cost hundreds of dollars.

### Capula

This small foothill town on Highway 15 between Pátzcuaro and Morelia celebrates the Day of the Dead with more color and flare, and fewer tourists, than anywhere else. The **cemetery** is visible from the highway and open to the public. Graves are covered in moss and marigold crosses, while headstones are wreathed with red roses and purple orchids. There are no raucous, drunken crowds here, just observant families, sitting around graveside fires, staying up all night and keeping tradition alive.

Next to the cemetery is an incredible property owned by another of Mexico's celebrated artists, Juan Torres. Sculpture, dozens of fruit and shade trees and a cactus garden surround Torres' sprawling adobe home and magical chapel, which doubles as an art gallery. Inside a series of large-scale canvases and wood paintings hint at Torres' love of the feminine, the pagan altar is a lone volcanic boulder and before it lies a large terra cotta Christ. The paintings are for sale, but Torres does more business from his showroom, **La Candelaria** (443-320-56-37; juantorrescapula@hotmail.com). This is the type of gallery Jerry Garcia would have loved. Inside are shelf after shelf of *Catrin*s (clay skeletons), smiling, in evening gowns, floral lampshade hats, in Catholic robes and some are knocked up and smoking. It's a colorful, dark and strangely intoxicating space. Don't miss it. In town you can get knock-off *Catrin*s, created by some of Torres' former students, for a third of the price. Look for the **Mercado de Artesanías** on the main road.

## URUAPAN

☎ 452 / pop 242,100 / elevation 1620m

All praise the thundering, proud Río Cupatitzio. Because if it weren't for this impressive river that begins life underground and then rises sensationally to the surface – feeding a subtropical garden of palms, orchids and massive shade trees in downtown Uruapan's Parque Nacional Barranca del Cupatitzio, this city would not exist. When the Spanish monk Fray Juan de San Miguel arrived here in 1533 he was so taken with it that he gave the area the Purépecha name, Uruapan (oo-roo-ah-pahn), which roughly translates into 'Eternal Spring.' Fray Juan designed a large market square – still a hit with area families on weekends, built a hospital and chapel and arranged streets into an orderly grid that survives today.

Uruapan quickly grew into a productive agricultural center renowned for high-quality *aguacates* (avocados) and still holds the title 'Capital Mundial del Aguacate' (see boxed text, opposite). The avocado fair in November underlines that point.

Avocados may pay the bills, but the river is king. The city's nicest neighborhoods kiss the riverside. The national park, a 15-minute walk from the city center, is a rush of waterfalls and trickling streams that wind through thick vegetation; and one of the coolest clubs in Mexico, Bar Río, is housed in an old underground waterworks, within earshot of the rumbling Cupatitzio.

Uruapan is 500m lower than Pátzcuaro and is much warmer. Don't miss the remarkable volcano Parícutin, 35km to the west.

### Orientation

Uruapan's heart is its long, narrow main plaza. Everything you'll need is within walking distance.

Note that street names change often in Uruapan, both at the plaza and at various other points. The *portales* facing the plaza are named independently of the streets; Portal Degollado is the east side of the plaza, while Portal Carrillo and Portal Matamoros run along the south side. The north portal is Portal Mercado.

### Information

Several banks (with ATMs), along with a few *cambios*, are near the central plaza.

**Casa del Turista** (☎ 524-06-67; www.urupan.gob.mx; Carranza 20; ☎ 9am-7:30pm) The municipal tourist office.

**Lavandería** (☎ 523-26-69; cnr Carranza & García; per kg M\$15; ☎ 9am-2pm & 4-8pm Mon-Sat)

**Main post office** (Jalisco 81; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

**Mi Cafe JG.Net** (Independencia 35; per hr M\$5;

☎ 10:30am-10pm, Mon-Sat, 10:30am-4pm Sun)

**Secretaría de Turismo** (☎ 524-71-99; Ayala 16;

☎ 8:30am-3pm & 4-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm & 4-7pm Sat, 9am-2pm Sun) The state tourist office.

### Sights

#### MUSEO DE LOS CUATRO PUEBLOS INDIOS

In the Huatápera, an old colonial courtyard building near the northeast corner of the central plaza, is this three-room **museum** (☎ 524-34-34; admission free; ☎ 9:30am-1:30pm & 3:30-6pm Tue-Sun). Built in the 1530s by Vasco de Quiroga, this relic once housed the first hospital in the Americas. The decorations around the doors and windows were carved by Purépecha artisans in a Mudejar style. The museum showcases regional *artesanías*, like ceramics from Capula and lacquerware from Quiroga.

#### PARQUE NACIONAL BARRANCA DEL CUPATITZIO

This incomparable urban **park** (Independencia; adult/child M\$12/5; ☎ 8am-6pm) is just 1km west of the main plaza, but it's another world. Nature is big here. Tropical and subtropical foliage (including burly banana palms) is thick and alive with colorful birds and butterflies. The river boils over boulders, cascades down waterfalls and spreads into wide, crystalline pools. Cobble paths follow the riverbanks from its source at the Rodilla del Diablo pool, near the park's north end. There are a few fruit stands and taquerías to choose from and water from hidden springs peels off the surrounding hillsides, before flowing into the great river. There's even a trout farm where you can net your own catch.

#### FÁBRICA SAN PEDRO

This great old **textile factory** (☎ 524-06-77; telaresurrapan@prodigy.com.mx; Treviño s/n; ☎ tours 9am-6pm Mon-Sat) from the 19th-century is essentially a living museum. Hand-loomed and hand-dyed bedspreads, tablecloths and curtains are made here from pure cotton and wool and are available for sale. The original machines are over 100 years old and are still used. Call ahead for a tour and see the entire weaving process from cotton bale to finished tablecloth.

## HOLY GUACAMOLE! THE AMAZING AVOCADO

Avocados are huge in Uruapan. Mexico is the world's largest producer of the fruit and the majority come from gnarled old groves that shade the city's outskirts. All told they produce over one billion kilos of avocados annually, with only about 5% – including the best fruit – being exported. That's a lot of guacamole.

Avocados are native to Mexico, Central America and the Andes range. The word 'avocado' comes from the Spanish 'aguacate,' which came from 'ahuacatl,' the Náhuatl word for testicle. The rich and sensuous fruit do indeed dangle in pairs and the Aztecs even considered the fruit an aphrodisiac. They actually banned young women from strolling outdoors when avocados were being harvested.

Today there are over one hundred avocado varieties. The Hass variety is by far the most popular, accounting for about 80% of worldwide consumption. Commercial trees are produced by grafting (since production is faster and quality superior this way) rather than by seeding and are currently being grown in a wide variety of temperate regions, such as California, South Africa, Spain, Israel, Brazil and, of course, Mexico. Mature avocado trees can produce up to 400 fruit each season and live for over 200 years. The trees around Uruapan produce two crops each year.

The avocado has a diverse fan base. It's dunked into Ecuadorian soups, puréed into Southeast Asian smoothies, mashed into sushi rolls in California and blended into ice-cream in Brazil. You can stuff it, batter it or cream it and spas use it in facials and skin and hair treatments. Its high fiber, cholesterol-lowering abilities and anti-oxidant benefits make this the perfect fruit. Just remember to enjoy it in moderation, as a good-sized avocado can pack over 300 calories! And if you're lucky enough to have access to a tree, keep in mind that those rock-hard avocados don't start ripening until *after* you pick them.

## Festivals & Events

**Semana Santa** Palm Sunday is marked by a procession through the city streets. A major crafts competition takes place on this day and two weeks after Palm Sunday a week-long exhibition of Michoacán handicrafts fills the plaza.

**Día de San Francisco** St Francis, the patron saint of Uruapan, is honored with colorful festivities on October 4.

**Festival del Cristo Rey** On the last Sunday of October an evening procession parades an image of Christ along the town's winding streets, which are covered in murals made of flower petals or colored sawdust.

**Feria del Aguacate** The Avocado Fair erupts for three weeks in November/December and is celebrated with agricultural, industrial and handicraft exhibitions. Previous years have seen record setting attempts for the world's largest guacamole.

**Festival de Coros y Danzas** A Purépecha dance and choral contest held December 22.

## Sleeping

Reserve a room ahead of time for the Día de Muertos (early November) and Semana Santa (March/April) festivities.

## BUDGET

**Campamento de Área de Montaña** (☎ 523-23-09; Lenin s/n; camping per person M\$54) Camp within a 182-hectare nature reserve located just 4km west of downtown. Register at Parque Nacional

Barranca del Cupatitzio; ask to see the 'Oficina Área de Montaña' to enter the national park without paying admittance. The reserve is best reached by taxi.

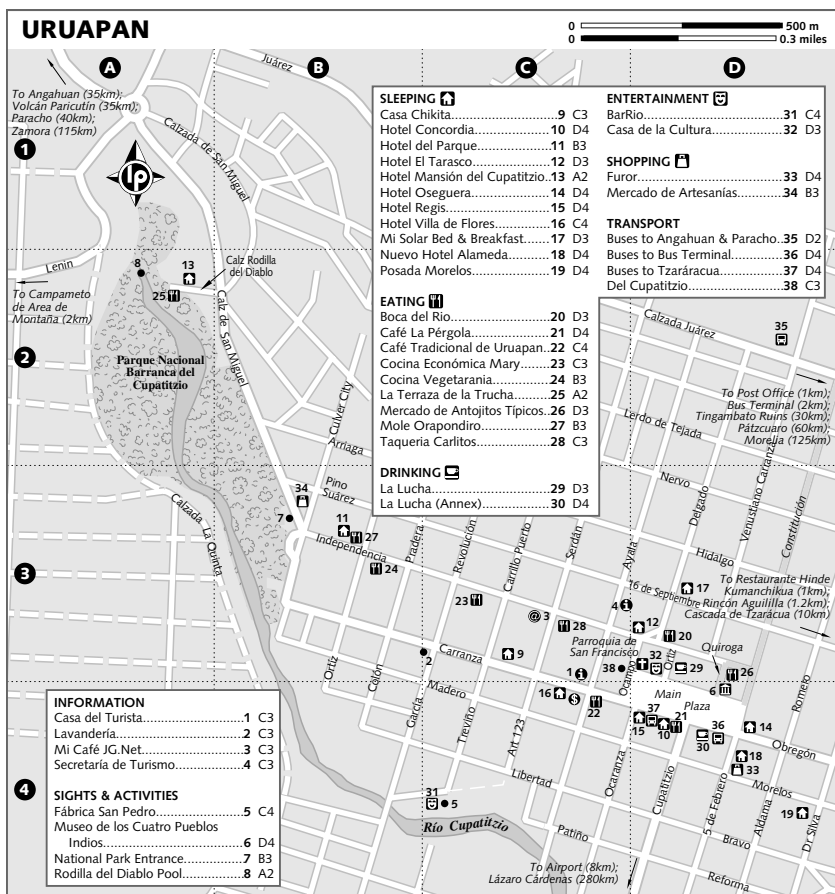
**Hotel Oseguera** (☎ 523-98-56; Portal Degollado 2; s/d M\$100/200) The best of the three super-cheapies on the east side of the plaza and that's not necessarily a compliment. Top floors have lovely mountain views.

**Hotel del Parque** (☎ 524-38-45; Independencia 124; s/d M\$190/265; (P)) Convenient to the national park is this ageing, bargain hotel. Rooms are dark but quite clean – though front rooms funnel traffic noise.

**Posada Morelos** (☎ 523-23-02; Morelos 30; s/d with private bathroom M\$200/300) A brightly painted courtyard hotel, with oddly raised bathroom units and beamed ceilings in the rooms. Grab an interior courtyard room, which are the best in the budget class. Test the beds first. Some share more sleep than cushion.

## MIDRANGE

**Hotel Villa de Flores** (☎ 524-28-00; Carranza 15; s/d M\$350/480) Street noise and your first impressions fade as you wander deeper into this garden hotel. This place is a find, with pink-washed walls, dark wood headboards, tiled bathrooms and vaulted and beamed ceilings.



**Nuevo Hotel Alameda** (☎ 523-41-00; [hotelalameda.com.mx](http://hotelalameda.com.mx); 5 de Febrero 11; s/d M\$360/440; ) Austin Powers would sleep well at this ageing business hotel with a retro switchboard and a funky, mod vibe that defines kitsch. Rooms are bright and clean, top floors have terrific views and it has wireless internet. Groovy, baby!

**Hotel Regis** (☎ 523-58-44; [hotelregis@intermatsa.com.mx](mailto:hotelregis@intermatsa.com.mx); Portal Carrillo 12; s/d M\$365/540; ) This is the best value among the plaza hotels. You'll receive a warm reception and will probably enjoy the massive chandelier of dangling stars. The rooms have personality, with hand-painted sinks and headboard murals.

**Hotel Concordia** (☎ 523-04-00; [www.hotelconcordia.com.mx](http://www.hotelconcordia.com.mx); Portal Carrillo 8; s/d M\$365/540) Clean, basic

rooms with cable TV and a fabulous location right on the plaza. A nice value.

**Casa Chikita** (☎ 524-41-74; [www.casachikita.com](http://www.casachikita.com); Carranza 32; s/d M\$380/707) This 19th-century house has just five guestrooms set around a garden decorated with local pottery. The rooms won't blow your mind, but they are comfortable and have nice accents – like granite or wooden counters in the bathroom, tiled floors and local art on the walls. Great value!

**Hotel El Tarasco** (☎ 524-15-00; [contacto\\_hotel\\_tarasco@hotmail.com](mailto:contacto_hotel_tarasco@hotmail.com); Independencia 2; s/d M\$755/872; ) Even the switchboard of this ageing hotel on the plaza is from the 1970s. But the creative plasterwork and mosaic bathroom counters in rooms with luscious mountain views keep it feeling youngish.



**ourpick Mi Solar Bed & Breakfast** (☎ 524-09-01; www.hotelmisolaruruapan.com; Delgado 10; r from M\$795; (P) (X) (B) (Q)) Recently opened at the time of research, but already the best bed in town. It's a boutique property with 17 spacious rooms on three floors surrounding an atrium bar. Rooms have luscious king beds, high ceilings and wireless internet access. There's a small gym, sauna and it serves a full breakfast.

## TOP END

**Hotel Mansión del Cupatitzio** (☎ 523-21-00; www.mansiondelcupatitzio.com; Calz Rodilla del Diablo 20; r from M\$1242; (P) (X) (Q) (B)) A beautiful hacienda-style property at the north end of the Parque Nacional Barranca del Cupatitzio. The ageing rooms have a certain 1940s California bungalow charm and the rambling grounds are absolutely gorgeous. If only they would kill that evil elevator music. Discounts are available if you pay cash.

## Eating

**Hinde Kumanchikua** (☎ 524-84-96; Chiapas 4; tacos M\$8; ☎ 10am-3am Wed-Mon) After a drunken evening at Bar Rio you'll be eternally grateful for Uruapan's best late night *taqueria*. Munch beef chorizo or tacos *al pastor*, served with three fiery salsas.

**Taqueria Carlitos** (cnr Serdán & Independencia; 6 tacos M\$11; ☎ 9:30am-9pm) Locals line up around the block for Carlitos' crunchy, savory rolled tacos filled with beef, potatoes, beans and cheese. An order includes six tacos served in a plastic bag and splashed with red or green salsa. Beef sells out early.

**Cocina Vegetariana** (Independencia 113; mains M\$25-45; ☎ 9am-7pm; (V)) This hole-in-the-wall vegan café is run by the surliest veggie broker on earth, but she does make pasta with soy chorizo and grills up veggie burgers. It may not be a pleasant meal, but it will be meatless.

**Mole Orapondiro** (Independencia 112; mains M\$30-40, sauce M\$40/liter; ☎ 9am-5pm) This sunny café specializes in one thing: a rich, thick and chocolaty *mole* sauce. Local ladies smuggle home bottles of it, so they can pass it off as their own. You can have it ladled over chicken, rice and beans and on *tortas*. Get here early because chicken always sells out.

**Café La Pérgola** (☎ 523-50-87; Portal Carrillo 4; mains M\$30-85) Ambience is old school at this arched, cavernous café that serves everything from enchiladas to sandwiches to salads to capuccinos. The clientele, mostly old men with

backstory etched into their bones, is good fodder for sketch artists and photographers and it has a nice breakfast menu.

**Cocina Económica Mary** (☎ 519-48-69; Independencia 59; mains M\$35; ☎ 8:30am-5:30pm Mon-Sat) This busy family joint just smells delicious. The open, cafeteria-style kitchen serves filling meals with your choice of main (eg, chicken *mole*, pulled pork with squash or *chiles rellenos*), along with soup, rice, beans and freshly made tortillas.

**Boca Del Río** (☎ 600-00-00; Delgado 2; tostadas M\$7, cocteles M\$35-60; ☎ 10am-5pm) *Ceviche* tostadas and fresh shrimp and octopus cocktails are the exclusive domain of this café tucked just behind Parroquia San Francisco. It's been here since 1974.

**Café Tradicional de Uruapan** (☎ 523-56-80; Carranza 5B; snacks & breakfast M\$35-65; ☎ 8am-11pm) It's got burgers, hot dogs, quesadillas and subs and all manner of coffees, shakes and cakes. The charming beamed dining room is almost always packed.

**ourpick La Terraza de la Trucha** (☎ 524-86-98; Calz Rodilla del Diablo 13; mains M\$70-80; ☎ 9am-6pm; (P)) Irresistibly nestled at the north entrance of the national park, you'll find a cozy table with shady cascade views and order the trout, of course. Get it grilled, crusted in macadamias or *a la tampiqueña* (with guacamole and beans). It comes with fresh chips and a searing salsa.

## Drinking & Entertainment

**ourpick BarRio** (☎ 527-20-90; www.barriodeuruapan.com.mx; Treviño 57; cover M\$50; ☎ 8pm-3am Wed-Sun) Located in the basement of an old, abandoned waterworks, this club is the perfect blend of sleek and comfortable and the best night out in Uruapan. There's a large dance floor packed with an exuberant, sexy crowd of 20-somethings, old stone walls that drip with river water, huge exposed pumps, wheels, belts and pipes overhead and a global progressive soundtrack (although musical style and DJs rotate nightly). Service is brilliant. It'll keep you drinking.

**La Lucha** (☎ 524-03-75; Ortiz 20; coffees M\$30; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Sat) The dark, arched interior and the black-and-white photos on the wall give the place gravitas and will entice you to sit down with some good coffee.

**Casa de la Cultura** (☎ 524-76-13; Ortiz 1) This old megalith just north of the plaza has a quiet courtyard, ample public chill space, rotating contemporary art exhibits and it has the word on upcoming concerts and events.

## Shopping

Local crafts, such as lacquered trays and boxes, can be found at **Mercado de Artesanías** (☎ 9am-6pm), opposite the entrance to Parque Nacional Barranca del Cupatitzio. The sinuous **Mercado de Antojitos Típicos** (☎ 8am-11pm) is ideal if you're in the market for candy, DVDs, strawberries, bras, cowboy boots, or a taco and it has a few thousand other items on offer. Fábrica San Pedro (p576) is good for textiles. If you want low prices on Italian designer jeans head to **Furor** (☎ 523-85-34; 5 de Febrero 31) two blocks south of the plaza.

## Getting There & Around

Uruapan's bus terminal is 2km northeast of central Uruapan on the highway to Pátzcuaro and Morelia. It has a *caseta de teléfono* (public telephone call station), a cafeteria and a **left-luggage facility** (☎ 7am-11pm). Frequent destinations include those on the following table (price quotes are for 1st-class buses when available).

Destination	Fare	Duration	Frequency
Angahuan	M\$16	1hr	hourly
Colima	M\$252	6-8hr	4 daily
Guadalajara	M\$210	4½hr	hourly
Lázaro Cárdenas	M\$252	4hr	daily
Mexico City (Terminal Norte)	M\$335	7hr	every 2 hrs
Mexico City (Terminal Poniente)	M\$335	5½hr	every 2 hrs
Morelia	M\$74	2hr	hourly
Paracho	M\$16	1hr	hourly
Pátzcuaro	M\$37	1hr	hourly
Tingambato	M\$10	30min	Same buses as those to Pátzcuaro or Morelia
Zamora	M\$65	2hr	hourly

Local buses marked 'Centro' run from just outside the bus terminal to the plaza (M\$5). For taxis, buy a ticket inside the bus terminal (M\$20). For the return trip catch a 'Central Camionera' bus from the south side of the plaza.

The car-rental agency **Del Cupatitzio** (☎ 523-11-81; autorent@prodigy.net.mx; M\$700-850 per day) is located at the Hotel Plaza Uruapan.

## AROUND URUAPAN

### Cascada de Tzaráracua

Ten kilometers south of downtown Uruapan, the wild Rio Cupatitzio makes its last act

count. It pumps hard over the vine covered, 30m-high red rock cliffs and crashes into a misty turquoise pool. This is the **Tzaráracua waterfall** (☎ 106-04-41; www.tzararcua.com.mx; admission M\$10, cars extra M\$5; ☎ 10am-6pm). On the meandering hike down the 557 slippery steps to the falls you'll see that the raging river has been dammed a few kilometers downstream. The tame lake set against rolling green hills is pretty enough, but it's also a sad fate considering the river's furious beauty. Once you reach the bottom you can forget all that and enjoy the power of the falls by hooking on to the author-tested, 96m **tirolesa** (M\$50), a zip line that flies low across the river. Nice!

There's also a 20-minute hike upstream from Tzaráracua to the equally beautiful Tzararacuita, a smaller waterfall. This trail is not as well maintained, so bring waterproof sandals. To get here, follow the steep muddy track beyond the Tzaráracua bridge and after about 10 minutes turn right at the stone outcropping.

If you don't feel like walking down and back from the dusty parking lot, hire one of the lingering horses. They cost M\$70 round-trip.

Hourly buses to Tzaráracua depart from in front of the Hotel Regis, on the south side of Uruapan's main plaza (M\$5). Taxis cost M\$80.

### Tingambato

Stroll through luscious avocado groves to the beautiful **ruins** (admission M\$34; ☎ 9am-6pm) of this ceremonial site, which predates the Tarascan Empire and thrived from about AD 450 to 900. They are located outside of Tingambato village, about 30km from Uruapan on the road to Pátzcuaro. The ruins, which include two plazas, three altars and a ball court (rare in western Mexico), have a Teotihuacán influence. There's also an 8m-high stepped pyramid and an underground tomb where a skeleton and 32 scattered skulls were found – hinting at beheading or trophy skull rituals.

Buses to Morelia leave from Uruapan's terminal every 20 minutes and stop in Tingambato (M\$10, 30 minutes). The ruins are 1.4km downhill on Calle Juárez, the first street on the right as you enter town.

### Paracho

☎ 423 / pop 16,100 / elevation 2220m

Paracho, 40km north of Uruapan on Hwy 37, is a small but lovely Purépecha town famous

for its high-quality, handmade stringed instruments. If you're looking for a reasonably priced and well-made guitar, violin, cello or traditional Mexican *guitarrón* (Mexican stand-up bass), you've come to the right pueblo. There are dozens of guitar showrooms and workshops scattered around the bustling plaza. You can also attend free guitar concerts by first-rate musicians and watch some of the country's best luthiers at work. The liveliest time to come is during the annual **Feria Nacional de la Guitarra** (National Guitar Fair) in early August; it's a weeklong splurge of music, dance and exhibitions.

About two blocks southeast of the plaza is the **Centro para la Investigación y el Desarrollo de la Guitarra** (CIDEG; ☎ 525-01-90; www.cideg.org; cnr Nicolás Bravo & Hidalgo; admission free; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat). Among the intricately decorated guitars displayed at this museum – including classical, Flamenco, Hawaiian and steel-string varieties – is one with ample breasts and a woman's mouth for the sound hole. Very Freudian. CIDEG hosts free guitar concerts in its auditorium on the last Friday of every month.

If you're in town for the festival or simply want to stay the night in guitar country, try the new, clean and bright **Hotel Melinda** (☎ 525-00-80; 20 de Noviembre; s/d M\$300/360; ☐). Reserve ahead during festival week. If you're hungry then run to the mercado, opposite the main plaza. Inside you'll find torta and taco stands, gorgeously caramelized rotisserie chickens and the wonderful, **El Pony**, a revelatory *carnitas* and *birria* stand. All it serves is meat. The lamb *birria* is slow cooked and steamed in its own juices. Grab a bar stool, buy it by the kilo (or any fraction thereof) and it will be placed on butcher paper in front of you. Soon an old lady will appear with warm tortillas and you will be crafting a series of unforgettable tacos, which you'll drench with El Pony's delicious *cilantro* heavy tomatillo salsa. Expect to spend less than M\$30 for a full, carnivorous meal.

Galeana Ruta Paraíso buses depart Uruapan's bus terminal every 15 minutes (M\$16, one hour) and stop along Calz Juárez on their way out of town (so you can avoid backtracking to the bus terminal). There's a stop at the corner of Venustiano Carranza, near the Juárez statue.

## Zamora

☎ 351 / pop 125,700 / elevation 1560m  
Zamora, a pleasant agricultural town known for its strawberries, is about 115km northwest of Uruapan and 190km southeast of

Guadalajara. Pedestrian promenades meander around the lively plaza, which is the hotspot on Sunday nights when live music plays in the bandstand. The high-energy market sells the city's famous and delicious *dulces* (sweets).

For local information head to the **tourist office** (☎ 512-40-15; Morelos Sur 76; ☎ 9am-2pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun). There are plenty of banks with ATMs around the plaza.

Founded in 1574, Zamora has more than its share of churches, including the large, neo-Gothic **Catedral Incondusa** (5 de Mayo Sur & Cazares Ote), started in 1898 and still not quite finished. Fifteen kilometers southeast of town at Tangancicuaro is the spring-fed and tree-shaded **Laguna de Camécuaro**, a sweet picnic spot

There are a few hotels downtown, which is just a short bus (M\$5) or taxi (M\$20) ride from the bus terminal. Sleep well at the quiet and good-value **Hotel Ana Isabel** (☎ 515-17-33; hana.isabel\_01@hotmail.com; Guerrero 108 Pte; s/d M\$250/350; ☐) or the **Hotel Ram Val** (☎ 512-02-28; www.hotel.ramval.com.mx; Amado Nervo 40; s/d M\$356/616; ☐ ☒). Zamora's ultra-cheapies are fleabags.

The bus terminal has regular connections to Guadalajara (M\$128, 2¼ hours), Colima (M\$210, five hours), Uruapan (M\$105, two hours), Pátzcuaro (M\$91, two hours), Morelia (M\$112, 2½ hours) and Mexico City (M\$392, six hours).

## VOLCÁN PARICUTÍN

On February 20, 1943, Dionisio Pulido, a Purépecha farmer, was plowing his cornfield some 35km west of Uruapan when the ground began to quake and spurt steam, sparks and hot ash. The farmer struggled to cover the blast holes, but he quickly realized his futility and ran. Good thing, because like some Hollywood B-movie, a growling volcano began to rise. Within a year it had reached an elevation of 410m above the rolling farmland and its lava had flooded the Purépecha villages of San Salvador Parícutín and San Juan Parangaricutiro. Thankfully, the lava flowed slowly, giving the villagers plenty of time to escape.

The volcano continued to grow until 1952. Today its large black cone whispers warm steam in a few places, but otherwise appears dormant. Near the edge of the 20-sq-km lava field, the top of the ruined **Templo San Juan Parangaricutiro**, San Juan's stone church, protrudes eerily from a sea of black lava. Its tower and altar are the only visible traces of

the two buried villages. It's a one-hour walk from where the bus lets you off in nearby Angahuan. Cross the highway and go down the street framed by the wire arch; after 10 minutes turn right at the main plaza, then after 200m go left at the fork. Keep on this road, which eventually leads out of town to the Centro Turístico de Angahuan (right). The easy trail, flanked by cattle fences, starts here. Alternatively, hire horses and a guide (M\$250 to M\$300 per person). Footing around the church site can be tricky and the black volcanic boulders are sharp, so be careful.

You can visit both the crater and the ruined church during one long, beautiful and bizarre day trip from Uruapan.

Arrive in Angahuan (35km from Uruapan) before 10am if you want to climb Paricutín. Once you step off the bus, guides with horses will offer their services to the ruined church, volcano, or both. Horses and a guide should cost M\$400 to M\$500 per person per day. Don't be nervous when the man you thought was your guide stops, dismounts and asks his 12-year-old son to lead you. Yes, it's strange and disorienting and it's also normal protocol. The volcano is a 14km round-trip that takes up to eight hours – of which you'll spend nearly six in an evil, unforgiving, wooden saddle – so your legs may cramp, your ass will bruise and your spine will tingle when the horse trots. You'll have to scramble the last few hundred meters up to the summit at 2800m. The view of the massive lava flow is mind-blowing, you'll hear faint announcements from the Angahuan PA system warbling on the wind and feel the steam rising from the earth. It's a rugged hike up, but you'll get to run, jump and slide down the deep volcanic sand on the descent then hit the San Juan church on the way back. The altar is almost always blessed with colorful offerings of candles and flowers and at the entrance you'll see **Maria's Café**. María is a Purépecha woman in traditional braids and colorful dress fixing fresh, blue corn quesadillas on an old, wood burning, oil-can skillet. Bring enough water, wear decent shoes (trainers will suffice) and a bum-pad perhaps and you'll have a good time.

If wooden saddles intimidate you (they should), you can walk to the volcano, but you'll still need a guide (M\$300) as the trail through the pine forest can be hard to find. The relaxing hike through avocado groves, agave fields and wildflowers takes about eight hours.

## ANGAHUAN

☎ 333 / pop 3000 / elevation 2693m

Angahuan, the nearest town to Volcán Paricutín, is a typical Purépecha town: there are wooden houses, dusty streets, more horses than cars, braided women in ankle-length skirts and colorful shawls and loudspeakers booming announcements in the Purépecha tongue. Greet locals with 'nar erandisti' (good morning) or 'nar chuscu' (good afternoon).

### Sights

On the main plaza is the sensational 16th-century **Iglesia de Santiago Apóstol**. Candles and incense burn, fresh flowers crowd the altar and the detailed doorway was carved by a Moorish stonemason who accompanied the early Spanish missionaries here.

### Sleeping

**Centro Turístico de Angahuan** (☎ 203-85-27; in Uruapan 523-39-34; angeles1946@hotmail.com; Camino al Paricutín s/n; campsites per person M\$40, cabañas M\$600/night; (P)) This 'tourist' complex feels like an old elementary school or summer camp. There's a cafeteria that shows a video about the eruption and terrific views of the lava field, the protruding San Juan church tower and the volcano itself. The basic, concrete cabañas sleep up to five people but are overpriced.

**Cuartos Familiares** (☎ 203-85-27; Camino al Paricutín s/n; s/d M\$180/250; (P)) This is the best of the few sleeping options in Angahuan. The rustic cabins have adobe fireplaces and lovely tiled bathrooms and the saloon-like café has a full bar and serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. Look for the orange sign saying 'Cuartos Familiares' on the road to the ruined church, about 1km from the bus stop.

### Getting There & Away

Angahuan is 35km from Uruapan. Galeana 2nd-class buses leave the Uruapan bus terminal for Angahuan every 30 minutes from 5am to 7pm (M\$16, one hour). Alternatively, flag down a bus marked 'Los Reyes' on Calz Juárez (at Venustiano Carranza, near the Juárez statue) in Uruapan; this will save you backtracking to the bus terminal. Taxis charge M\$220 for the same trip.

Buses return to Uruapan every 15 minutes until about 7pm and few cabs are available in town, so unless you've made previous arrangements you may have to hop a bus back.

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