



EXPLORED

# Through the Maze

In between colorful walls and refined sierras, Mexico's Mesoamerican legacy lives on

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*Opposite page:*  
After a day of exploring, travelers can lounge in the hot pink pools at Merida in the Yucatan.

*This page, clockwise from top:* Colorful pottery from Hidalgo, found at a shop in San Miguel de Allende; a home converted into a boutique hotel in the Yucatan; a Zapotec woman weaving in Oaxaca.



"Mexico is a visual feast, with incredible history, culture, and people," shares A2A Journeys creative director Tracie Anglo Dizon. From pyramids of the ancient civilizations to museums with pieces by Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, Mexico offers more than a mariachi band welcome. From Dizon's own adventures, which include jumping into a 20-meter deep cenote, three lesser known places provide travelers new reasons to visit.

### Guanajuato

Founded in 1559, the UNESCO World Heritage site with its silver and gold mines recalls the past with its colonial-era architecture. Surrounded by the Sierra de Guanajuato Mountains, Guanajuato is infamous for being what they call "the place of frogs," with its frog-like terrain. Long walks bring travelers to colorful houses and baroque buildings, cobblestone streets lined with museums, theaters, and cafés evoking Europe's old-world air. There's also the Alhóndiga de Granaditas, a monument recalling the country's first victory over Spain in 1810, the Callejón del Beso, a narrow alleyway where couples are close enough to kiss from opposite balconies, and the Museo

Iconográfico del Quijote, a museum dedicated to Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. Travelers can then take their fill of Baijo cuisine, known for the local dish *pacholas guanajuatenses* (ground beef with spices).

### Oaxaca

It has the layout of a traditional colonial town: there's a town square or *zocalo* surrounded by cathedrals, government buildings, houses, and schools. According to Dizon, "Oaxaca has a strong artistic tradition, with a large variety of handicrafts produced around the state." Aside from its black pottery and woven textiles like the *tapetes*, *rebozos*, and *huípiles*, among many others, which are made into shawls and handbags, Oaxaca city is known for their *alebrijes* or figurines of mythical creatures carved from the wood of the copal tree. Hand painted with natural dyes, each figurine features traditional *zapotec* designs with varying patterns of dots, stripes, and geometric shapes.

### Yucatán

During the days of the Mayans, one of the indigenous civilizations of the Americas, Chichén Itzá and Uxmal, two of the greatest

ancient cities, were established. A visit to the Yucatán peninsula will put any traveler at ease as the ruins, the scenic views of the forests that still stand as sacred destinations for their religious history, and the archaeological sites all embody the country's Mesoamerican past. The yellow town of Izamal, on the other hand, is one of the country's two Pueblos Magicos or Magic Towns. For a town to be considered magical, it must have a rich historical tradition and interesting sites; the yellow-colored town is nothing short of magic especially when toured in a *calesa*.

As for travel advice, Dizon says, "Go with an empty stomach and suitcase, and a curious mind. The food is unlike any Mexican food you'll have anywhere else in the world, the history is mind-boggling, and the culture is rich, varied, and colorful. And don't even get me started on the shopping."