

Cortés & The Spanish Conquest of México

This is an educational 10 day **Journey into History Tour** which follows the 250 mile route of conquistador, Hernán Cortés, his mistress and interpreter, La Malinche, and his soldiers of fortune as they began their ruthless march to divide and conquer the fierce Aztecs, take their land, and steal their wealth.

From México's Gulf Coast (now Veracruz state) to **Tenochtitlán** (now México City), you will travel through some of this country's most beautiful scenery - from tropical lowlands to high misty cloud forests, arid plateaus, over an 11,000 foot mountain pass, and into the valley where México City is now located.

However, unlike the Spanish invaders who marched on foot this entire route, you will be riding in a nice comfortable air conditioned vehicle.

Your trip leader will be Cuauhtemoc Benitez Patino. He is a certified México tour guide and is a leading authority on the history of the Spanish Conquest.



2019 Tour Date: 6/5-6/14 | 7/10-7/19 | 9/4-9/13

Trip Difficulty: Moderate

Group Size: 8-18

Suggested Minimum Age: 12

Tour Fee: \$2497 USD/person (double)

Single: add \$430 USD

Attn: Put together a private group of 10-18 people and your tour package is free! (see "Not included" items below)

Includes: Historian trip leader, Airport pick-up in Veracruz, All ground transportation, Activities per itinerary, All entrance fees, 9 nights of hotel lodgings, 9 breakfasts, 8 lunches, 1 dinner, Filtered drinking water each day, All taxes

Not included: Airfare, Transfer to México City Airport on day 10, Meals not listed above, Alcoholic drinks, Trip interruption insurance, Travel medical insurance, and Guide gratuities

(Trip prices are subject to change until the date your deposit is received)

Trip Itinerary

- Day 1: Arrive in the city of Veracruz
- Day 2: Meet your historian guide, Cuauhtemoc Benitez Patino
Boat Ride to reenact the arrival of Cortés
Quiahuiztlan archaeological site
Cempoala archaeological site
City of Veracruz
- Day 3: La Antigua—first coastal municipality
Ex-Hacienda Zimpizuaaha
Pueblo Mágico towns of Xico & Coatepec
- Day 4: Tzompantepec - Tlaxcalan battle
City of Tlaxcala
- Day 5: Cholula massacre site
Great pyramid of Cholula
City of Puebla
- Day 6: Franciscan Ex-Convent in Calpan, Puebla
Horse Trail Ride (optional)
Scenic ride over Cortés Mountain Pass
- Day 7: Palace of Cortés in Cuernavaca, Morelos
Hacienda de Cortés
- Day 8: Meeting place w/Montezuma, México City
Templo Mayor, México City
National Palace / Metropolitan Cathedral
- Day 9: Paseo de la Reforma - México City
Site of the Noche Triste (Sad Night)
National Anthropology Museum
National Museum of México
Farewell dinner
- Day 10: Travel Day Home

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Make plans to reserve your space TODAY!



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Detailed Trip Itinerary

July 11-20 2018

Day 1: Upon your arrival at the Veracruz International Airport (VER) you will be welcomed by one of our staff members who will escort you to the elegant *Gran Hotel Diligencias* which is located right across the street from the main plaza in the city of Veracruz.

Day 2: On your first morning in Veracruz, you will have breakfast at one of the oldest traditional restaurants in the city, the *Gran Café del Portal*. This is where you will meet your trip leader, **Cuauhtemoc Benites Patino**. During breakfast, he will give you some background history about the arrival of the Spaniards and an overview of the route you are about to embark on.

Afterwards, you will travel up the gulf coast to where your group will board a motor boat to take you on a short ride further north up the coast to the beach adjacent to the village of Villa Rica where Cortés and his men came ashore. In this way, you will get to experience the same view of the tropical coastline as the Spaniards did in 1519 as they were rowing to shore. This then is the starting point for what we now know as *The Spanish Conquest of Mesoamerica*. Your historian trip leader will keep a running narrative of the events which took place throughout your journey.

Continuing inland, you will explore the nearby ruins of **Quiahuiztlan** (*Key-ah-weezt-lan*) which sits on a high bluff overlooking the bay of Villa Rica. On a clear day, this vantage point gives you a superb wide-angle view of the Gulf of México. It was here that probably the local Totonac people would have first spotted the Spanish ships. It was also here where Cortés first made contact with the local native people, the Totonacs.

After a box lunch back on Villa Rica's beach, your small group will continue this historical tour of the Spanish Conquest by visiting the archaeological site of the city of **Cempoala**. This is the place where Hernán first met the leader (the Cacique) of the Totonacas and made an alliance with these people to partner together to help fight the Aztecs.

You will return back to the city of Veracruz and see some of the main sites in a driving tour. Later, everyone will travel back to the *Gran Hotel Diligencias* to enjoy dinner on your own and the warm tropical evening in this historical port city. (B,L)



Day 3: This morning your tour agenda will include a buffet breakfast at your hotel, check out, and a short ride to the harbor fortress, San Juan de Ulúa. Cortés met two emissaries there from the Aztec leader, Moctezuma II. Afterwards, your group will travel to the riverside town of **La Antigua**. This is actually the site where Cortés decided to create their first permanent base of operations on the gulf coast. Remnants of the customs house built by the Spaniards can still be viewed as well as one of the first Catholic chapels constructed in *New Spain*.

Continuing your historical journey, you will travel inland (as the Conquistadors did) to the higher and milder climate near to what is now the capital city of Veracruz state; Xalapa. Just south of the city, everyone will stop at the **Ex-Hacienda Zimpizuhua** where you will have lunch. This ex-hacienda was built in the mid 1500's by Antonio Reinoso, a soldier who fought with Cortés. The grounds are a mixture of old buildings and lush tropical vegetation. Interestingly, there is a huge ancient aqueduct with a big water wheel which is still operational to this day.

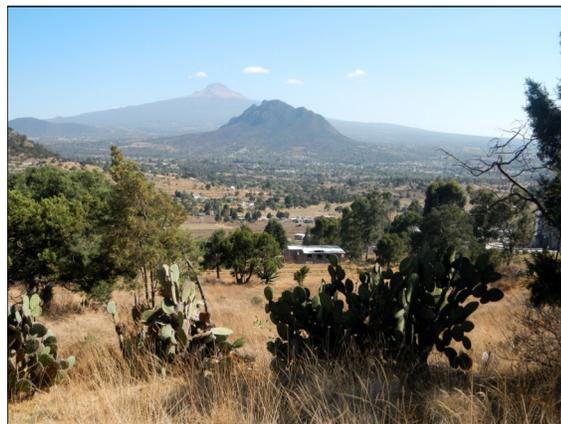
Later, just a short ride down the road, you will explore the pre-Hispanic **Pueblo Mágicos** (Magic Towns) of **Coatepec** and **Xico**. According to historical records, the Spanish invaders did pass through near to these towns. At around 3,000 feet in altitude, this area is in what's considered a **fog forest**. It is also one of the best places in México to grow coffee which was introduced later by the Spanish immigrants. Overnight at one of the local hotels. (B,L)

Day 4: After breakfast, your group will check out and travel west through the state of Puebla and enter the smallest state in México; Tlaxcala. Keep your camera ready as there will be some great scenic views to enjoy out your window.

A multi-day pivotal **battle between the Spaniards and the fierce Tlaxcalan warriors** took place on a hill near the small pueblo of Tzompantepec. Cuauhtemoc will vividly paint the picture of the battle from the viewpoints of Cortés as well as from the Tlaxcalans. You will also be invited into the municipal government building in Tzompantepec to view the colorful murals painted on the conference room walls depicting historical scenes of this battle.

The capital city of the state of Tlaxcala is also called, **Tlaxcala**. It is here that Cortés and the leaders of the Tlaxcaltecas forged a very important alliance which proved to be a huge benefit to the outcome of this conquest story. Of particular interest is the newly restored and very colorful mural depicting the history of the city, including the arrival of the Spaniards, which is located in the municipal building.

Dinner will be on your own. Overnight in a local Tlaxcala hotel. (B,L)



Day 5: Today it's breakfast and then checkout to travel an hour south to the **city of Cholula**. Your historian guide will continue this epic conquest adventure story by taking you to the plaza where thousands of Cholulans were slaughtered by Cortés and his men.

Adjacent to the site of this horrific massacre is the largest pre-Hispanic structure in the world in terms of volume. It is an enormous pyramid which is still mostly unexcavated. A beautiful Catholic church was later built on top to dramatically symbolize the religious conquest of this new land. Interestingly, Cortés and his soldiers never saw this massive structure because at the time, it had already been covered over in dirt, grass, and trees. To the Spaniards, it just looked like a big hill. However, this **hidden pyramid proved to be four times the size of the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt**.

At the time of the conquest, the city of Cholula was the second most important city after the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán. The present day capital of the state of **Puebla is the nearby city** by the same name which was not there when the Spaniards arrived. In the evening, your group will temporarily divert from the conquest story to have dinner in the beautiful Spanish-built city and later, take a short walking tour of the downtown area.

Afterwards, everyone will return to your hotel in Cholula. (B,L)



Day 6: Today is a day of adventure for your group. Once breakfast is consumed, you will check out and head west 45 minutes to the small town of Calpan. This is the route the Spaniards walked and rode on their way to the Aztec capital city. In Calpan, you will take a quick peek at the old **16th century Franciscan Ex-Convent** and then get ready for a fun **2 hour horseback trail ride**. The scenery is dominated by two tall mountains; Popocatepetl and Iztacchuatl. During this horse ride you will get to experience (as Cortés did) the rugged terrain on the east side of these two majestic mountains.

After lunch at a small local restaurant in Calpan, it will be time for your big journey up and over what is now called, **Paso de Cortés**. You may need to dress warm for this ascent through the pass as you will reach an altitude of 11,150 ft/3400 m. At the highest point, everyone will stop to view the now worn plaque dedicated to Hernán Cortés and his men as the original route in which he traveled over to reach the valley of the Aztec empire.

On the western descent, your trip will take another divergence from the Conquistador's original route into what is now México City. There are two reasons for this change. The biggest reason is that your group will hit massive amounts of traffic on the road since you would be arriving into the city during the afternoon rush hour when everyone is heading home after work. Rather than subjecting you to long waits with stop and go traffic, you will head southwest and skirt the city by going into the **state of Morelos and to its capital city, Cuernavaca**. The second reason for going there is that you will be able to visit the *Palace of Cortés*, one of his many homes which has now been converted into a museum. Also, your accommodations for this evening will be at another beautiful hacienda constructed by Cortés. It was a sugar mill hacienda built in 1530 and has now been converted into the *Hotel & Spa Hacienda de Cortés*. Dinner will be on your own. (B,L)

Day 7: At the conclusion of a relaxing breakfast, everyone will travel to the city center of Cuernavaca to tour the **Palace of Cortés**. Today it is officially called the *Museo Regional Cuauhnáhuac*. This museum has artifacts dating back from prehistoric times to pre-Hispanic and all the way into the early 1900's. There are also items related to Cortés and murals painted by Diego Rivera. Interestingly, this building is the oldest preserved colonial era civil structure in México.

Other places you will visit include the **Cathedral of Cuernavaca**, the **first chapel built in Mesoamerica**, and the **Borda Gardens**, an estate built by a wealthy family who earned their fortune from mining silver. Lunch will be at a local restaurant. Later, you will return to the *Hotel & Spa Hacienda de Cortés* to enjoy its tranquil beauty. A short tour of the hacienda and its history will be given. Dinner will be on your own. (B,L)

Day 8: After enjoying a delicious breakfast at the hotel, everyone will check out and travel north to continue the story of the Spaniard's trek as they finally reached and entered the **Aztec capital**, Tenochtitlán (México City). Temo will "set the stage" regarding the events which occurred upon **meeting the Aztec King, Montezuma**. Your first stop will be the actual meeting place (now a hospital) where Moctezuma and Hernán Cortés first met. It is also the place where Cortés is buried.

Your group will then continue on to the **Aztec Temple (Templo Mayo)** adjacent to the main México City plaza. Remains of this structure can still be viewed along with an impressive modern museum containing many artifacts relating to this ancient history. Later, you will visit the **National Palace** with its famous murals of Diego Rivera and also you can marvel at the huge 400 year old **Metropolitan Cathedral**.

On this night you will stay several blocks from the main plaza at the *Hotel Metropol* (or similar). Dinner will be on your own. (B,L)



Day 9: What a great way to conclude your journey to México City. This morning you will travel down the main boulevard called, **Paseo de la Reforma**. It is a wide avenue modeled after the Champs-Élysées in Paris. Your first stop will be to see the spot where legend has it that Cortés wept for his men because ... well ... you will just have to let Cuauhtemoc tell you the story.

The **National Anthropology Museum** is cavernous with thousands upon thousands of artifacts housed in several buildings. It is definitely a must-explore place when in México City, especially if you are a history, anthropology, and/or archaeology enthusiast. And even if you are not, you will still be amazed at the really cool "stuff" you will see. Your group will have a private tour of the section of the museum which most relates to the period of the Spanish invasion.

After lunch at a local restaurant, your history lesson continues by exploring the **castle on the hill in Chapultepec Park**. Over the many years, this impressive mansion was home to a military academy, used as a residence for several Mexican presidents, and was also the location of the final battle in the Mexican-American War in September, 1847. This castle now houses México's **National Museum of History**.

In the evening, everyone will partake in a fun and festive **farewell dinner** to enjoy your final night of Mexican hospitality and to share memories of your last 9 days of travel and exploration. You will overnight again at the *Hotel Metropol* (or similar). (B,L,D)

Day 10: Taxi to the México City International Airport (on your own)
Travel Day Home (B)

