

SAN MIGUEL de ALLENDE GENERAL INFORMATION



Photo by Nora Weaver

A charming Spanish colonial town in the heartland and highlands of Mexico, San Miguel has preserved its lovely 17th century buildings and its quaint cobblestone streets. In 1926, the Mexican government declared the town a national monument, preserving the visual integrity of the historic downtown area. In 2008, San Miguel was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In 2013, San Miguel de Allende was named the #1 destination in the world by Conde Nast Traveler magazine and, in 2016, was designated the best city to visit in Latin America by Travel and Leisure Magazine.

San Miguel is a town rich in culture, heritage and history. Well known as the home of the Mexican independence movement, San Miguel was the place where the plot against Spain was planned and the revolution began. It's a romantic town filled with music and lovely people; a modern-day artist haven in a town frozen in time from the Spanish colonial period. It's a photographer's paradise and a stroller's delight.

San Miguel is 6,400' above sea level. At this height, the weather is very agreeable. The altitude keeps both the humidity and the temperature down and the air crisp and clear. It can be quite warm in the daytime and cool or cold at night. Mornings are generally glorious and, if it rains at all, it will often be clear and fresh by the next morning or overcast with a very exotic, high desert appeal. (See "Weather" chart below for average highs/lows/rainfall.)

With its superbly sharp natural light and unforgettable blue sky, San Miguel has long been a magnet for artists. In the 1940s, a large art institute, Instituto de Allende, attracted US military

veterans wanting to live inexpensively and use their "new" GI Bill benefits for an education. Word spread, students and others came, and the city of 80,000 now has an international gringo community of ~10,000, depending on the season. Partly because of this international community, the library (bibliotheca) is the second-largest bi-lingual library in Mexico. There are restaurants of ALL kinds and San Miguel has become quite the "foodie" destination. If you want local food, it's lovely here. You'll find Cajun, Spanish, Italian, German, Chinese, Thai, Continental, Japanese sushi—all in San Miguel. There are also many snug cafes and coffee shops that promote a café culture.

You are likely to walk A LOT, so bring practical shoes with tread soles. The ancient streets and sidewalks are cobblestones worn to slickness, so San Miguel is sometimes called "The City of Falling Women." There is a trick to prevent falling, though. You simply have to watch your feet when you walk. You STOP to look at something, and **then** look at your feet again to commence walking. Fashionable, thin soled, backless shoes will be great around the house, but not around the town. Tennies, walking shoes or snug sandals with thick cushion soles are best for walking here. This wandering to discover the secret beauty behind the walls and all the color along the way is one of the main delights of a visit to San Miguel.

In the center of town are the main city square, called the Jardín, and the stunning neo-Gothic parish church, La Parroquia. Just look up from almost any location and you'll see this charming, old-world structure.

You can walk to the town center, el Centro, and invariably SOMETHING will be happening. Check this web cam that focuses on the area in front of the Parroquia:

<http://www.sanmiguelrealestate.com/live-webcam-san-miguel-de-allende.php#>

You may see mariachis playing a bride leaving her wedding in an old fashioned horse-drawn carriage! This city is a favorite of other Mexican citizens because San Miguel residents really know how to celebrate! They blast off fireworks for weddings and celebrations of saints' days and regularly ring church bells all around the town. The town REALLY cooks on national holidays. It is said that people come here for "peace" and not for "quiet". Every day seems to be a holiday in San Miguel. Occasionally, you might think the city was under siege, bombarded by cannon fire. Dashing to the terrace, you will probably see the magic of fireworks lighting the sky to celebrate a festival or a wedding. The fireworks are designed to wake and call the spirits to bless the celebration.

Locals are family-oriented; teenagers walk arm-in-arm with parents; daddies cuddle their children and then dash off to buy balloons and ice cream for them. In general, local people are proud of their heritage and are grateful to be Mexican citizens.

There are many things to do in and around San Miguel. The English language newspaper, Atención San Miguel, sold each Friday in the Jardín for 15 pesos, lists the events of the week. As on a cruise, one has to figure out which activities to eliminate. Here are just a few possibilities of things to do:

- **Tour of Homes** takes you behind the doors into some of the most beautiful homes in San Miguel, benefits the library and funds scholarships for local children. The Biblioteca opens at 10:00 am on Sundays for people to meet and greet and listen to estudiantina groups play live music. The tour leaves at 12:00 noon, costing \$20 USD.

<http://bibliotecasma.com/house-and-garden-tour-2/>

- **Fabrica La Aurora** is a restored cloth factory that has now become a design and art center. Open from 11:00 am-5:00 pm, it has over 50 galleries and two good restaurants. The artists host open studios on Thursdays and sometimes on Fridays. One of my favorite artists, Juan Ezcurdia has his studio there and is seen painting every day except Sunday. Fabrica La Aurora is an art and antique lover's paradise.
- **The Mask Museum** is Bill Levasseur's beautifully curated private collection, open by appointment only. It is a joy to see the many masks and the regions and dances to which they belong. <http://www.maskmuseumsma.com/>
- **La Esquina Mexican Toy Museum** is a fabulous collection—with everything from corn husk dolls to hobby horses to a miniature train that winds its way around a glass atrium. The museum, on three levels, has a roof-top view of the town. The collection of folk art and the gift shop are an artistic feast. Photos are not allowed. Open Wednesday through Sunday. <http://www.museolaesquina.org.mx/>
- **Museo de San Miguel de Allende** is on one corner of the Jardín (main square) in a building that was the home of Ignacio Allende, the primary instigator of the independence movement from Spain. Allende's statue stands high in a niche on this corner. Entry is free for seniors.
- **Walking tours** – Joseph Toon conducts the highest-rated walking tour of San Miguel, leaving the Oratorio at 9am on Thursdays and Fridays. The tour is approximately 2 hours and costs _____. (catholicSMA.com, 415 151-9553/C and 717 889-5916/US)
- **Walking tours** (2 hours) of the historic city center leave from the Jardín, M-W-F at 10:00 am. They fund medical and dental care for needy children, \$200 pesos. http://www.patronatoproninos.org/index.php?lengua=eng&pagina=main&seccion=010_walking_tours
- **El Charco del Ingenio Botanical Garden**, overlooking the town, is a lovely place to hike. Here, away from the friendly bustle of el Centro, you'll see many birds, butterflies and impressive rock cliffs full of cacti, bromeliads and other interesting plants. http://www.elcharco.org.mx/ing_creating_garden.html
- **El Santuario de Atotonilco**, a real “must-see,” is 15 minutes away by cab or bus. The church, a U.N. heritage site, figured prominently in the history of Mexican independence and is covered with amazing murals executed entirely by an Indian artist. A pilgrimage site, it is sometimes called the Sistine Chapel of Mexico. <http://www.experience-san-miguel-de-allende.com/atotonilco.html>
- **Cañada de la Virgen Pyramid tour** covers a pyramid complex dating from 540 CE (AD). It can be toured with Dr. Albert Coffee, (acoffee@live.com.mx) an American archeologist who worked on the excavation and restoration of the pyramid. The site is a 30-minute drive from town and then a 7km drive in a van, plus a 2km walk to the pyramid. It's best to go early in the day and wear comfortable shoes.
- There are options for **day trips** with a guide to Pozos, a defunct mining-town-turned-art-community, and Dolores Hidalgo, a historically important town that is a manufacturing center of Talavera pottery. Santa Rosa also has beautiful Tuscan-style pottery. Day trips to the colonial towns of Guanajuato and Queretaro are also fun and historically interesting.
- Just **wandering around** the town is a great adventure, in and out of shops and arcades, lovely public buildings and gardens. Watch your step!
- Chasing great **live music** all over town is an entertaining diversion!
- **Here is the most important one: people watching in the jardin, the town's living room.**

PACKING TIPS

Dress code: Dress in San Miguel is casual. Jeans, capris, slacks, t-shirts, blouses are all appropriate for the daytime. You might be more comfortable in slightly dressier clothes for dinner in some of the nicer restaurants, e.g. long skirt, nice slacks, blouse or shirt. Evening temperatures range from the mid-40s to mid-50s, depending on when you come, so bring a sweater and/or jacket (jeans jackets are popular with the local gringos). Someone here said, "Every day has four seasons: it's spring in the early morning, summer arrives about 10am, fall comes at sunset, and at midnight it feels like winter. One would typically wear a long-sleeve cotton t-shirt until about 10am, change to a short sleeve blouse or t-shirt for the daytime, and then change back to long sleeves and a sweater or shawl for the evening. The sun can be very bright, so wearing a cap or hat is advised.

WEATHER:

Averages	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
High	73	77	83	86	87	84	81	81	79	79	78	73
Low	42	45	50	54	57	58	57	57	56	51	50	43
Rain	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.8	1.7	4	4.9	3.7	3.7	0.6	0.2	0.3

To Bring:

- Practical walking shoes
- Sun glasses, for sure
- Slides, flip-flops and/or house shoes for wearing around the house; the tile floors can be very cool at night
- Sweater, shawl and/or light jacket for evenings
- Moisturizer and eye drops (if it doesn't rain, it can be very dry in the high desert)
- Hat or cap
- Curling iron or electric curlers, if you use them (electric current is same as US)
- ATM card with appropriate pin numbers (Let your bank know you'll be in Mexico.)
- A personal check or two.
- Copies of passport and credit cards (front and back)
- Favorite snacks
- Exact change in USD or pesos for your ground transportation and tip
- Just enough pesos to get started; we'll go to the ATM quickly after your arrival
- Camera with extra memory card and charging chord (it's a photographer's paradise)
- Bubble bath if you enjoy
- Small gifts for the housekeeper and a gift bag for them. (Just look around your house for sweet items you don't need)

We have:

- Ear plugs, for sure (People come to San Miguel for PEACE, not quiet!)
- White-noise machine
- Sleep mask
- Shampoo, conditioner and hair dryer

- Umbrella
- Sun screen
- Tote bags
- Hats
- Bubble wrap

How to stay healthy:

- Drink only bottled water, brush your teeth and rinse only with bottled water unless your house has a whole-house water purifier
- Don't eat street food
- Wash hands frequently. Money carries germs!
- Use hand sanitizer

Safety: San Miguel has always been a very safe town, especially in el Centro. However, being cautious gives you an extra margin of safety. You should think of San Miguel as you would any tourist city that attracts rich tourists.

- Don't walk alone at night.
- Avoid flashy jewelry and don't display large amounts of money.
- Carry **only** the money, keys and documents you need for that day rather than large amounts of cash and important documents. Leave your passport at home unless you are going to exchange currency.
- Carry money in more than one location and keep purses within eyesight at all times (not on the back of your chair or on a bench in the jardin). It is best to use a shoulder purse that crosses your torso and be sure all your valuables are inside securely zipped areas.
- Put contact identification on your camera and put the phone number of your SMA guest house in your wallet.
- If you are out late at night and need to go down a dark street to get home, ask the restaurant or bar to call a "radio cab" for you or store the radio cab phone numbers on your cell phone:

152-0124 and 152-0396, 152-5993, 152-4086, 044-415-103-2961

- Notice your taxi number (take a phone picture?) from the side of your cab for identification in case an issue arises or you lose something in the taxi. If you feel the least bit uncomfortable alone in a cab at night, call, or pretend to call, someone to advise them of your imminent arrival.
- Exit your cab on the street side rather than the traffic side.
- Be aware of your surroundings. At night, walk on well-lit streets or on the side of the street that is absent of cars. It's prudent to walk in pairs at night.

Taxis: Taxis around town are plentiful. Plan to pay 35-40 pesos for a taxi within the town center. To go farther out, at night or if there are several in the cab, the price should be 40-50 pesos or slightly more. To call and reserve a taxi costs more depending on the trip, usually double the price for a pick-up taxi. In this case, it's a good idea to settle on a price before the taxi departs. No additional tip is expected. Be prepared with the correct change. Drivers often say they don't have change for a 100 or 200 peso note. It is considered rude to slam the taxi door very hard, so be a bit gentle-handed.

Tipping: Tipping is extremely important to the economic survival of the local people. In restaurants, tip the normal percentage you would tip at home based on quality of the service you receive. **Always leave the tip in cash**, even if you pay for the meal with a credit card. (Around town we play the “change game” trying to acquire as much paper change as possible for tipping and for taxis.)

If you stay in a rental house or a home that has domestic staff, it is normal for each guest to tip. The recommendation for our house is \$250 pesos (~19.50USD) per week per bedroom for each maid. If a house-staff member stays beyond normal hours, an extra tip would be appropriate and expected.

Charity: It is thoughtful to carry some coins to put in the hands of beggars on the street, many of whom obviously are not able to support themselves. We prefer to give money on weekdays rather than holidays or weekends to be sure they are “our” local poor.

A bit of history:

The town was founded in 1542 as a garrison for troops who protected the great silver-mine mule trains. Banditos, Chichimeca Indians and missionaries roamed the hills questing for treasures and souls.

San Miguel is the seat of Mexican independence from Spain. In Colegio (college) de San Francisco de Sales progressive ideas fomented rebellion. The French Rights of Man, the America Bill of Rights and Cartesian philosophy were studied. Ignacio Allende, the Aldama brothers, the governor of nearby Queretaro and his wife, Josefina, formed a cabal that planned an uprising against Spain. The group was betrayed, and the Spanish commander came to see the Governor, or Corregidor, not knowing the governor was part of the plot. The governor was ordered to take troops to San Miguel to arrest the rebels. Scared for his neck, the governor agreed and was preparing to leave, over the vehement protests of his wife Josefina. He locked her in her room, but she got word to a friend to ride like hell and warn the San Miguel contingent. It is no surprise that Josefina is a heroine of the independence movement! When the rider arrived, he found that Allende’s group had already gone to nearby Dolores, where they had recruited Father Hidalgo to the cause. At dawn the next morning, September 16, Hidalgo rang the church bell to gather the locals and issued his famous “Grito,” a rallying cry, a call to arms.

Then Hidalgo, Allende and Aldama started toward San Miguel, their ranks swelling as peasants came across the fields to join them. Armed with pitchforks and hoes, they stopped at the church at Atotonilco, where Father Hidalgo grabbed the banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe and announced that she would lead them. Eleven years and much bloodshed later, México was free of Spain.

The commander of the local troops in San Miguel, Narciso de la Canal, was a wealthy man from a prominent family. He had been ordered by royal authorities to arrest Allende and quell the revolt. What he did instead was renounce his command, allowing the revolution to continue. He was later punished and exiled, but he is considered a hero of the revolution. His beautiful family home is now the Banamex building on the Jardín. Be sure to take a look at the enormous old carved wooden doors that opened wide enough for carriages. A museum is now open here.

Helpful Spanish words and phrases:

Being polite

Please	por favor
thank you	muchas gracias
you're welcome	De nada
Pardon	perdon!
Hello	Hola
good morning	buenos días
good afternoon	buenas tardes
good night (after dark)	buenas noches
Goodbye	Adios
nice to meet you	mucho gusto
How are you?	Como esta usted?
I'm well, thank you.	Muy bien, gracias
bless you	Salud
by your leave (to go past someone; same as pardon me)	con permiso
excuse me	Perdon
Come in!	adelante!
May I introduce....?	Le presento a
See you later!	Hasta luego!
Have a good trip.	Bien viaje.

Eating out

water with ice, please	agua con hielo, por favor
well done	bien hecho
the check, please	la cuenta, por favor
separate checks, please	las cuentas separadas, por favor

Directions

Where is ...?	Donde está...?
Where is the bathroom?	Donde está el bano?
straight ahead	Derecho
on the left side	a la izquierda
on the right side	a la derecho
forward	Adelante
backward	Por atras

Communications

I don't understand	no entiendo
my name is...	Me llama...
What is your name?	Como te llamas?
Can you help me?	Puede ayudarme?
Do you speak English?	Habla usted ingles?
Please speak more slowly.	Por favor, hable mas despacio.
Please write it for me.	Por favor, escribame.

Interesting web sites regarding San Miguel:

<http://accesssanmiquel.com/>

<http://www.sanmiguelevents.com/>

<http://www.experience-san-miguel-de-allende.com/>

<http://visitsanmiquel.com/>

http://www.terrazassanmiquel.com/heart_of_mexico.html

<http://www.atencionsanmiquel.org/>

<http://portalsanmiquel.com/>

<http://www.accesssanmiquel.com/category-art-galleries.html> (124 art galleries)

<http://san-miguel-house-rentals.com/blog/>

<http://www.mexconnect.com/MEX/mxc/sma.html>

<http://www.sanmiquelguide.com>

http://vivasanmiquel.com/festivals_%20fiestas_sma.htm

<http://www.thiswaytoparadise.com/san-miguel-de-allende-restaurants-cheap-eats/> (Cheap Eats)

<http://paulmerriman.com/retire-here-life-in-san-miguel-de-allende-mexico/>

<http://weather.cnn.com/weather/forecast.jsp?locCode=MXGO0501&zipCode=336366562333>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aiB6n1R2QxA&noredirect=1> (video – living in SMA)

<http://www.atlantamagazine.com/travel/gogo-ferguson-guide-san-miguel-de-allende-mexico/>

Nora's photo album: <https://goo.gl/photos/5KV1EpP8msvSpNrg6>

SAN MIGUEL ACTIVITES

On Fridays, buy *Atención San Miguel* newspaper, sold in the Jardín for 15 pesos. Look in the centerfold “Que Paso” (What’s Going On) for a list of activities of the week. Also, check:

<http://www.sanmiguelevents.com/>

<http://accesssanmiquel.com/> and

<http://www.sanmigueldellendeevents.com/newsletter/>

Here are a few other activities that may interest you. It is also, VERY OK to float through the week without plans and act spontaneously on your desires; it’s the San Miguel way!

These may require appointments: (* indicates “Not to be missed”)

- _____ ***Piedras San Miguel** - jewelry studio (by appt) Bill Harris, Tonque #14, 154-9193
- _____ **Mask Museum** at Casa de la Cuesta (154-4324)
- _____ **Massage** (makes housecalls) – Monica Ruiz 154-7394 or 044.415.153.5170
-or-
Luis 044.415.101.5336 or 103.0605, about \$26 + tip
- _____ **Spanish lessons (private or class)** Griselda Robles 044 415 149 2279
- _____ **Hot air balloon ride** – Jay Kimball - Recreo #68; 152-6735
- _____ **Tai Chi, yoga, pilates, water aerobics**
- _____ **Golf** – Malaquin Country Club, Road to Celaya, 152-0516
- _____ **Tennis** - Weber Tennis Club, Hotel Aldea, (~\$6/hr)
- _____ **Horseback trail ride** - Beth Kaestner, horsebackridingsma@gmail.com
- _____ **Atotonilco**, a UNESCO site
- _____ **Cañada de la Virgen pyramid** – Albert Coffee, archeologist/anthropologist
- _____ **Day trips** to nearby towns, e.g. Pozos, Patzcuaro, Dolores & Santa Rosa (pottery), Guanajuato, Apaseo el Alto (wood carvings) (Horacio Miquel \$25/USD/hr, 107-4198/C)

These require no appointment:

- _____ ***Organic Market** – Saturdays 9^a-4p, Ancha de San Antonio @ Cardo
- _____ ***Toy Museum** - Nuñez 40, @ San Francisco, Wed-Sat 10-6/ Sun 10-3
<http://www.museolaesquina.org.mx>
- _____ **House and Garden Tour** - Sunday, 12n @ the Biblioteca (\$20USD or \$250 pesos)
- _____ **Walking tour** of historic center, Joseph Toon, 415 151-9553/C/MX, 717 889-5916/US
- _____ **Historical Walking tour** – Mon-Wed-Fri 10a, meet in Jardin, \$200p benefits Patronato Pro Niños which gives medical, dental and psychological care to needy children
- _____ **Architectural Walking Tour** – Thur, 10a, 2.5 hours, \$250p benefits Patronato Pro Niños
- _____ **Markets**, e.g. city market, artisans market, Tuesday market
- _____ **La Fabrica la Aurora**, 50 artist and design studios in an old fabric factory
- _____ **Botanical Garden** (250 acres), great for walking, hiking and bird watching
- _____ **Art galleries**

_____ **Museo de San Miguel de Allende** (Jardin @ Cuna de Allende)
_____ **Hot springs spas**, La Gruta, Taboada or Escondido
_____ **Live music** in restaurants, bars and concerts
_____ **Dance**, free salsa lessons
_____ **Yoga class**
_____ **Sunset cocktails** at the Rosewood Hotel, Antonia Bistro, La Azotea, MX
_____ **Shopping** for: _____

The best things in life are free:

- **Sit in the Jardín** (town's living room) people watching
- **Walk** around town discovering the beauty behind the doors
- **Photograph** beautiful things, scenes and people
- **Sip sunset cocktails** on your roof terrace, in your garden or around town

SHOPPING

San Miguel has one of the biggest and best concentrations of craft shops in Mexico, selling folk art and handicrafts from all over the country. Most of these crafts are traditions going back to the 18th century and quality is high. Local crafts include:

- Silver
- Bronze
- Brass
- Tin ware
- Molded aluminum, e.g. San Miguel pewter (about ¼ the price of Williams Sonoma)
- Wrought iron
- Leather
- Glassware
- Pottery/ceramics
- Textiles, especially napkins and table cloths

The Mercado de Artesanias is a collection of handicraft stalls where the prices can be lower than in San Miguel's smarter shops, but the quality is variable.

SHOPPING IN CENTRO:

Make sure, before you've "shopped till you drop", that you have wandered up and down:

East/west streets: Mesones, Canal, San Francisco, Umaran, Correo and Cuadrante
North/south streets: Reloj, Hidalgo, Jesus, Hernandez Macias, Zacateros and Ancha de San Antonio (especially Zacateros and Hernandez Macias)

In general, stores are open from ~9am-2pm and 4pm-7pm and half a day on Sunday.

For more information, see "Insider's Guide to San Miguel, pages 171-196.

AMONG MY FAVORITE STORES ARE:

- ✓ **Piedras Custom Jewelry** – the best unique jewelry – Tanque #14 – 154-9193 (by appointment)
- ✓ **Diva** – linen clothing made near San Miguel; expensive and very high quality
- ✓ **Girasol Boutique** – women's clothing – San Francisco #11 – 152-2724
- ✓ **San Miguel Shoe – Zapateria Martha** – shoes made in San Miguel, including the famous "cocktail combat boots" – Reloj #27 (near Mesones) – 154-4702
- ✓ **La Alfonsina** – some clothing, pillows, napkins – Hidalgo #36 @ Insurgentes – 152-1429
- ✓ **Arte en Cobre** – hand-made copperware made in Santa Clara del Cobre in Michoacan – Zacateros #55
- ✓ **La Antigua Casa Canela** – napkins galore, décor – Umaran #20 @ Hernandez Macias – 152-1880
- ✓ **Casa de Vidrio** – outlet for glass products made in San Miguel – Correo #11 – 152-0102
- ✓ **Joyeria David** – silver, very large showroom, good prices – Zacateros #53 @ Pila Seca – 152-0056

- ✓ **FAI – Save The Children Mexico** – rustic, handmade items benefiting FAI, working in rural communities to improve the lives of children, notice the hand-embroidered T-shirts – Hidalgo #13 – 152-3686
- ✓ **La Europa** – wine and liquor – Canal #13 – 152-2003
- ✓ **El Petit Four** – scrumptious European pastries, cakes and hand-dipped Belgian chocolates, yummy croissants – Mesones #99 (between Hidalgo and Hernandez Macias) – 154-4010 (closed Mondays)
- ✓ **Chocolates JOHFREJ** – Jesús #2-A, 512-3191 – fabulous chocolates www.johfrej.com
- ✓ **Panaderia el Maple** – fabulous bakery – Salida a Celaya #51
- ✓ **Botica Agundis (aka “Chelo’s”** – drug store – Canal #26 – 152-1198
- ✓ **Fabrica La Aurora-** Large open studios of art work and furniture in a historic manta factory. Artists are generally in their studios Thursdays 10a-4p – Calzada de la Aurora, just past bridge
- ✓ **Casa Michoacana Gallery** – Calzaa de la Aurora #23, 154-5008
casamichoacana@gmail.com

DAY TRIPS

- **Pozos** – 35 minutes away – Quite possibly one of the most mysterious and magical places in Mexico, Pozos was a flourishing silver- and copper-mining town less than a hundred years ago. It was built in the 16th century by Jesuit priests and was abandoned in the late 19th century. Parts of it have become a fledgling art community and there are a couple of lovely B&B's where we can have lunch. We can explore around abandoned mines, marvel at the amazing architecture still standing and listen to pre-Hispanic music. Pozos is a photographer's paradise.
- **Dolores Hidalgo** - 30 minutes away – a town of historical importance where the “Grito” or cry for independence from Spain took place in 1810. Dolores has been a manufacturing center of Talavera ceramics ever since Padre Hidalgo founded the town's first workshop in the early 19th century. We can stop at a couple of pottery manufacturing locations to buy pottery at great prices.
- **Atotonilco** - ~15 minutes away - the Santuario de Atotonilco was founded in 1740 as a spiritual retreat. It took on historical importance when the insurgents marched from Delores to Atotonilco to take the shrine's banner and patron saint as the symbols of their quest for freedom. The sanctuary of Atotonilco has six chapels with colorful statues, folk murals and other paintings. (It's on the road to Delores, so they can be combined or you can simply take a cab to Atotonilco from San Miguel.)
- **Guanajuato** – 1.25 hours away – Guanajuato is a city crammed onto the steep slopes of a ravine, with narrow streets that twist around the hillsides and dive underground into a series of tunnels. Those of you who love the hill country of Italy will have a strong sense of déjà vu. The city was founded in this most illogical place, in 1559 because the silver and gold deposits found here were among the richest in the world. Much of the fine architecture built from this wealth remains intact, making Guanajuato a living monument to a prosperous and turbulent past. It is listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. The University of Guanajuato, known for its arts programs, has over 21,000 students, giving the city a youthfulness, vibrancy and cultural life that are as interesting to the visitor as the colonial architecture and exotic setting. Guanajuato has gained international reputation by hosting the Festival Internacional Cervantino for 2 ½ weeks every October. The festival features music, dance and theatre groups from around the world. Places of interest to visit:
 - the Basilica
 - the magnificent Teatro Juarez with its Moorish interior
 - the Alhondiga de Granaditas, site of the first major rebel victory in Mexico's War of Independence, now a museum of history and art
 - The panoramic overlook of the city near the Pipila statue
 - The Valenciana mines, above the city, which produced ¼ of the world's silver. Nearby, the Templo La Valenciana with magnificent Churrigueresque façade and interior dazzling with golden altars, filigree carvings and giant paintings
 - The pottery studios of Gorky Gonzalez and Casal
 - Diego Rivera's birthplace, now a museum
 - Several other museums

For a good meal, make a reservation in advance at Las Mercedes.

- **Queretaro** – 45 minutes from San Miguel – Less spectacular than Guanajuato, it is filled with elegant buildings and is called “the cleanest city in Mexico”. Historically important to the independence movement, Queretaro is a clean and lively city with many café-filled squares. The baroque patio in the Museum of Modern Art is said to be “the most beautiful patio in the Americas”. One of the city’s most interesting sites, the Convento de la Santa Cruz, built in 1654, provides insight into lifestyle of the period. Ask about the Otomi conversion miracle and the walking stick miracle. Queretaro especially warrants a visit if you’re interested in Mexico’s history.
- **Leon** - 1.5 hours away – shopping for leather goods (do going to/from BJX?)
- **Cañada de la Virgen Pyramid** - 30 minutes away - an important archeological site <http://www.sanmiguelguide.com/canada-de-la-virgen/> - Albert Coffee, anthropologist/archeologist participated in the dig and gives tours: acoffee@live.com.mx
- **Apaseo** – “museum of the dinosaurs”
- **Tula** – (2.5 hours away) – the probable capital of the ancient Toltec civilization, best known for its fearsome 4.5m-high stone warriors
- **Jaral del Berrio** – 2 hours away – a beautiful, historic hacienda
- **Apaseo el Alto** – 1.25 hours away – a woodcarving community with fabulous quality carvings
- **Father Junipero Serra’s missions in the Sierra Gorda** – ~4 hours away, probably requires an overnight as there are 5 locations. <http://www.mexconnect.com/articles/380-the-five-faces-of-god-mexico-s-sierra-gorda-missions>

Driver/guide – Horacio Miquel - \$25USD/hr – 107-4198/C 152-7932/H