



Reynaldo Cisneros G

My first time in Puebla

Puebla, 2 Days

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Guide Description



really clear, you'll be able to see the tallest peak in Mexico, the Citlaltépetl, also known as Pico de Orizaba, to the east.

AUTHOR NOTE: Puebla is a city of unequalled beauty, famous for its architecture, its cuisine and the wonderful volcano sight you can admire from almost anywhere in the city. If you're still not convinced to come, then you must know that it is worldly known as the City of Angels. Legend has it angels chose and planed the city and originally, it was named Puebla de los Angeles.

But the magnificence of the city deserves that name despite the legend. Downtown Puebla is an architectural spectacle in which most of the churches, squares and little palaces seem to have been designed in heaven above. Of course not everything was made in heaven, the mexican feeling of it was made right here on earth, none of this would have an impact without the sound of the typical marimba filling every square, the sight of dozens of ballon vendors all over downtown and the noisy friendly people.

Puebla is famous for its buildings, crafts, cuisine and history. It's filled with secrets and wonders waiting for you to discover and enjoy, and once you come, you'll find out that the people is another reason you'll fall in love with Puebla.

Probably the most stunning building in Puebla is the Cathedral. It was begun in 1575, and took 300 years to complete. For many centuries, a building in Puebla couldn't be taller than the Cathedral towers, the tallest in México. The main facade, made of gray quarry, is late Baroque and Neoclassical. But the inside is also beautiful; the main altar, the 14 Miguel Cabrera medallions, the two organs and the 14 side chapels are worth visit.

Puebla is also famous for its cuisine. The sauce known as mole is Puebla's main dish, and has become one of Mexico's representative dishes. Another famous dish in Puebla is the Chile en Nogada, a green, red and white dish served around that time of year when mexicans celebrate the Independence from the Spaniards.

Nobody can talk about Puebla without mentioning the marvelous sight of the snow-topped volcanos surrounding the city, since Puebla is located in the middle of the Trans-Mexican volcanic belt. The two most famous volcanos, the Popocatepetl and the Iztaccíhuatl, are west of the city, and according to the legend were two lovers who turned into volcanoes and stayed as a timeless prove of love overcoming everything. The Popocatepetl is the second highest peak in Mexico and it's not unusual to see harmless ash clouds coming out of it. Both of these volcanos, along with la Malinche, a dormant volcano north of the city, can be seen practically every day. But if you're lucky and the sky is

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Puebla

DAY NOTE: We'll start at the Zocalo, the main square. Be sure to walk up and down the Zocalo, enjoy the marimba music, the sculptures and the people. Go to the Portales, the animated covered sidewalks filled with snack bars and restaurants. South the Zocalo is the Cathedral, probably the most stunning building in Puebla. Be sure to visit it and enjoy both the outside and the inside.

Behind the Cathedral is the Casa de la Cultura, go inside and up the stairs. There you'll find the Palafoxiana Library. Be sure to go inside and enjoy.

From the Zocalo to the north, walk up the 5 de Mayo street and you'll find the Santo Domingo church. Go inside, and walk towards the main altar, then turn to your left hand side and you'll see the amazing Capilla del Rosario.

You can walk back down 5 de Mayo street, enjoying the pedestrian area, and finish your day at some café on the Portales, admiring the Zocalo.

can walk and visit some artists studios and enjoy the art pieces displayed there.



Museo Amparo

One of the most important collections of pre-Hispanic, Colonial, Modern and Contemporary art in Mexico



El Parian

The biggest and most beautiful craft market in the city.



Casa del Alfeñique

An unique piece of baroque architecture in Mexico



Zocalo

Puebla's main square



Catedral de Puebla

This is an impressive treasure of colonial architecture.



Biblioteca Palafoxiana

This beautiful baroque library was the first public library in America, and is the only one that has survived to this day.



Capilla del Rosario

This outstanding example of Mexican Baroque style is considered Puebla's jewel.

Day 2 - Puebla

DAY NOTE: We'll start the second day in Puebla with a visit to the Amparo Museum. Inside you'll find a vast collection of pre-Columbian, Colonial, Modern and Contemporary art. After the visit to the museum you can walk down 2 Sur street till you arrive to the Zocalo. You can have lunch there and then keep on walking north along 2 North street and then turn right on 2 Oriente street. Walk up this street until you get to 6 Norte. You'll have arrive to the traditional crafts market El Parian. Walk along the market, and the go to the southwest corner of 6 Norte and 4 Oriente and admire the Alfeñique House, an unique piece of architecture in Mexico. You can either go inside, or go back to the market, and cross 4 Oriente street. This part of the market is known as El Barrio del Artista (The Artist District). There you

Day 1 - Puebla

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location:

16 de Septiembre at Av. Juan de Palafox y Mendoza
Puebla Puebla 72000

1 Zocalo

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

This is a great place for kids, because of all the Balloon Vendors and the beauty of the place. But it's a really big square, so don't lose sight of them!

DESCRIPTION: This is Puebla's heart. Here you can enjoy the marimba music, sit by a tree and just watch people walk by. There are plenty of sculptures to admire here, so just walk up and down, and I guarantee you a great time!
The Zocalo is in front of the Cathedral, so there's no way you'll miss it.

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Ybidau

location:

Av. 16 de Septiembre
unnumbered
Puebla Puebla 72000

2 Catedral de Puebla

DESCRIPTION: Puebla's Cathedral is the second largest in México. Its construction began in 1535 and was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception in 1649. In 1575 a new project by the architect Francisco Becerra made it larger and more elaborated. The new cathedral was completed in 1664. Legend says that this cathedral was built following the plans for the Lima's Cathedral, in Peru, the other Viceregal Capital. But somehow, on the ship that came from Spain the plans got mixed. Maybe that is why Puebla's Cathedral is considered the most beautiful in America.

Though the exterior is austere, the interior is a marvelous spectacle of effusive decoration. It has 14 chapels, and an unusual octagonal altar, designed by Manuel Tolsá in 1797, which is the highlight of the cathedral. The dome is inspired on that of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.



RussBowling

The cathedral was built in a Baroque style in transition to the Neoclassical style with some Renaissance details. Its twin towers are the tallest in Mexico and from top of them the view of the city and the volcanoes is excellent.

The facade may seem austere due to the dark stone, but is decorated with statues of saints and some reliefs of four Spanish kings.

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contact:

tel: (222) 232-10-67

location:

5 Oriente 5
Puebla Puebla 72000

3 Biblioteca Palafoxiana

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

The library is open tuesday thru sunday from 10 to 17 hrs. But the truth is that since the 1999 earthquake, the library is constantly being worked on, so be sure to ask at the information center, right there on the first floor of the Casa de la Cultura, if it'll be open.

DESCRIPTION: The Palafoxiana Library was founded in 1646 by the Archbishop Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, viceroy of New Spain, for the Seminary of Puebla. It was the first public library in America, and is the only one that has survived to this day. This stunning Baroque library contains over 42,000 books, some of which date back to the 15th century. It has well preserved unique manuscripts, and at least 9 incunabula. In 2005 it was submitted in the UNESCO's Memory of the World Register.

To visit the Library, you have to enter the Casa de la Cultura (the Cultural Arts Center) and go to the second floor. The library is right ahead of you, but the ticket office will be at you left hand side.



miguelão

location:

5 de Mayo 409
Puebla Puebla 72000

4 Capilla del Rosario

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

The church opens everyday from 7:30 to 14:00 and from 16:00 to 20:00. If you happen to go while a mass is being celebrated, just be quiet and go to the aisle on your left hand side to get to the chapel without interrupting the congregation.

DESCRIPTION: Santo Domingo church houses the impressive Capilla del Rosario (Rosary Chapel). Built in 1690, the chapel is an unique example of Mexican Baroque style. Its strong ornamentation in gilded stucco and onyx stonework has amazed visitors from all over the world for centuries. On the vault one can see the three theological virtues, according to the Catholic Church, framed by foliage. On the copula, the Grace is accompanied by the Holy Ghost and 16 saints of the Dominican Order. José Rodríguez Carnero painted



rainy city

the six large canvas on the wall allusive to the Virgin Mary. Many other figures, vegetation, flowers and cherubs can be found all over the golden stucco. This magnificent church was considered the "Eight Wonder of the World" when finished. It's an superb spectacle you can't miss. © NileGuide

Day 2 - Puebla

QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: We'll start the second day in Puebla with a visit to the Amparo Museum. Inside you'll find a vast collection of pre-Columbian, Colonial, Modern and Contemporary art. After the visit to the museum you can walk down 2 Sur street till you arrive to the Zocalo. You can have lunch there and then keep on walking north along 2 North street and then turn right on 2 Oriente street. Walk up this street until you get to 6 Norte. You'll have arrive to the traditional crafts market El Parian. Walk along the market, and the go to the southwest corner of 6 Norte and 4 Oriente and admire the Alfeñique House, an unique piece of architecture in Mexico. You can either go inside, or go back to the market, and cross 4 Oriente street. This part of the market is known as El Barrio del Artista (The Artist District). There you can walk and visit some artists studios and enjoy the art pieces displayed there.

contact:

tel: (222) 229 38 50

<http://www.museoamparo.com/index.html>

location:

2 Sur 708

Puebla Puebla 72000

hours:

Wed-Mon 10am-6pm

1 Museo Amparo

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

This is a big museum, so if you don't have enough time, you probably should decide beforehand what do you wanna see. The temporary exhibitions are great too, but most of the time they're big, so just consider those among the other exhibitions when you decide what to see. Be sure to ask for headphones at the ticket office, because all along the museum, you'll find computers with information in many languages. This is great if you have kids, because it's a tactile system, so it allows them to play AND learn at the same time. And be sure to look at the big portrait of a woman at the main entrance. Most people pass it by, but it was painted by Diego Rivera. That lady is Amparo Rugarcía de Espinosa Yglesias, wife of Manuel Espinosa Yglesias, an important banker and philanthropist and the founder of this museum, which was named after his wife.

DESCRIPTION: The Museo Amparo was opened in 1991, and since then, it's become one of the most important museums in Mexico. It's set in a complex of beautiful colonial buildings remodeled to accommodate this beautiful museum.

There are plenty of things to see here. This museum has the second largest pre-Hispanic pieces collection in Mexico, only after the National Anthropologic Museum in Mexico City. The Colonial Art rooms are beautiful, being in a Colonial building sure helps. In there you can see how'd a regular Colonial house be displayed. After admiring the pre-Hispanic art, to see the many religious and civil works of art shown here, sure can give you and idea of the transition this country had to go through since the arrival of the Spaniards. And the transition is still on. The Museo Amparo has an important modern and contemporary art collection that shows the newest and most



kudumomo

important movements in Mexican and world art. In this museum there's also a big temporary exposition area, and they're usually pretty good, so ask at the ticket office about who is exhibiting and if you still have time, go check it out.

location:

6 Norte, between 2 and 4 Oriente
Puebla Puebla 72400

El Parian

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

You won't find a better place than this for souvenirs, so if you see it here, buy it. Just make sure you've seen all the stands before buying something, because this is a big market.

DESCRIPTION: El Parian is the famous craft market established in 1801 in downtown Puebla.

It was originally intended to be a food market for the Colonial residences, but eventually other markets closer to the Zocalo became more important and the government decided to turn El Parian into a craft market.

It's a great place to buy Talavera, Onyx and typical Mexican toys and candies. If you don't want to buy anything, this is still a great place to admire Mexican creativity and crafts history.

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Vica Amuchastegui

contact:

tel: (222) 232-42-96

location:

4 Oriente 416
Puebla Puebla 72000

2 Casa del Alfeñique

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

This building is next to the Parian (the traditional crafts market) and the Artist District, so you can enjoy it while you get some souvenirs.

DESCRIPTION: This beautiful building gets its name from the stucco-work on its facade reminiscent of a meringue-type candy called "alfeñique". The legend says that a young Spanish man, Juan Ignacio Morales, fell in love with a beautiful Poblana girl who was very fond of meringue, so in order to make her marry him, he built her this house as a wedding gift. It was built in 1791 by Antonio Santamaría de Incháurriegui, an Architect graduated from the Academia de San Carlos, the most important art and architecture academy in the country at the time.

Nowadays this building houses the Regional Museum of Puebla, in which through 500 pieces the history of the city is depicted. You can also admire some period furnishings, two old carriages, a nineteenth century China Poblana dress and the family chapel among many other things.

The museum is open Tuesday thru Sunday from 10:00 to 17:00 hrs. © NileGuide



Vica Amuchastegui

Puebla Snapshot

Local Info

The City of Puebla is just 128 km (79 miles) east of Mexico City. It sits in a valley between some of the tallest mountains and volcanoes in the country. It's 2,150m (7,052ft) above sea level.

Puebla was founded by the Spanish to be the resting place for those who had to travel back and forth Mexico City and Veracruz, the closest port. It became the most important city, just behind Mexico City, mostly because it was mainly inhabited by Spanish. This is why the city was built with such elegance and class.

Nowadays, it's the fourth largest city in Mexico and one of the most attractive for the tourism. In 1987 Puebla has been part of the UNESCO Cultural World Heritage List. The amazing Colonial architecture, the unique use of Talavera in walls, floors and ornaments, the lively plazas and the massive beautiful churches have cast spells in thousands of people who every year come to visit and admire this beautiful city. The famous Puebla's food (Cocina Poblana) is another reason to come. Mole, Chalupas, Chiles en Nogada, Cemitas, everything cooked here is considered an important part of the world wide famous Mexican Cuisine.

The famous, beautiful and millenary Cholula is just 15 km (9.3 miles) west of Puebla, and is a must visit.

Of course, another amazing thing about about Puebla is the marvelous sight of the snow-topped volcanos surrounding the city, since Puebla is located in the middle of the Trans-Mexican volcanic belt. The two most famous volcanos, the Popocatepetl and the Iztaccíhuatl, are west of the city, and according to the legend were two lovers who turned into volcanoes and stayed as a timeless prove of love overcoming everything. The Popocatepetl is the second highest peak in Mexico and it's not unusual to see harmless ash clouds coming out of it. Both of these volcanos, along with la Malinche, a dormant volcano north of the city, can be seen practically every day. But if you're lucky and the sky is really clear, you'll be able to see the tallest peak in Mexico, the Citlaltépetl, also known as Pico de Orizaba, to the east.

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History

Legend has it Tlaxcala's bishop Julián Garcés dreamt one night with angels, and they were taking him to a beautiful field with three rivers running in the middle. He watched as the angles pointed to where he should build a city and then they drew it and delimited its borders.

The very next day, Garcés told a group of Franciscans about his dream and together, they started looking for that unique field. They found it, and some time later, the city was founded. That's how this beautiful city got the name "Puebla de los Angeles".

Originally, the city was created for wealthy Spaniards who needed a place to live between Mexico City and the main port Veracruz, therefore the richness you can admire walking through Puebla. It was during the sixteenth and seventeenth century when some of the most beautiful buildings were built.

Around 1550, a group of wealthy Spaniards realized that clay was abundant in the region, and asked some Spanish potter from Talavera de la Reina, a municipality in Spain, to come to Puebla and teach the natives some European techniques so they could have fine ceramics to decorate their palaces. This glazing technique in blue and white, known simply as "Talavera", combines European methods with local designs, and became rapidly famous. Some of the most beautiful buildings have tiles of talavera on the facade, the floor, the indoor walls and the patio. The patterns created by the tiles are hypnotic and beautiful.

The talavera became the distinct of the city, and was also used to make pots and plates. This kind of objects can still be found at the traditional markets and plazas where artisans, some of them descendants of a long line of talavera makers, sell this and many more traditional products. You can't come to Puebla and not visit the main craft market, you won't get tired of admiring the amazing textiles, the onyx crafts, the typical mexican toys and of course the never-ending variety of typical candies. I guarantee anybody with a sweet tooth will feel, once again, in heaven.

Puebla is also famous for its cuisine. The sauce known as mole is Puebla's main dish, and has become one of Mexico's representative dishes. Though there are many legends of where it comes

from, there's no doubt it most come from divine inspiration. Mole is made with chili peppers, spices, chocolate and many more ingredients, and is poured over turkey or chicken meat. Another famous dish in Puebla is the Chile en Nogada. Again, how anybody came with it can only be explained by mixing many legends, but it is a known fact that it was first served at a banquet for Agustín de Iturbide, the first Mexican emperor, to celebrate his birthday. This colorful dish, representing the Mexican flag, is made of poblano chili pepper filled with minced meat, and with walnut sauce and pomegranate seeds on top.

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Hotel Insights

Hotels

Except for two small properties in Cholula, all these establishments are in Puebla's city center. Staying in Cholula is a bit more relaxing because it still feels like a small town. From late March through May, the area can experience heat waves. Consider getting a room with air-conditioning for those months. Prices quoted include the 17% tax.

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Restaurants Insights

Restaurants

Puebla is known throughout Mexico for mole poblano, a spicy sauce with more than 20 ingredients, including chocolate. Another regional specialty, pipián, is somewhat like mole but based on ground, toasted pumpkin seeds. From July to September, it's the season for chiles en nogada, and the city goes crazy for them. You'll see them as daily specials on all the menus. This is a dish of contrasts involving a poblano chile; a spicy-sweet filling made of pork, chicken, and sweetmeats; and a walnut cream sauce.

Besides the restaurants listed below, try the one in the **Mesones Sacristía**. I've enjoyed themole there. Also, I've eaten well in the museum restaurant at **La Casa de los Muñecos**. It has a good reputation

Puebla Snapshot continued

and a menu that features several local foods. For a steak, try **Chimichurri**(tel. **222/249-1534**), at the corner of Avenida Juárez and Calle 27 Sur, in the restaurant district(take a cab).

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Nightlife Insights

Nightlife

Mariachis play daily, beginning at 6pm, on **Plaza de Santa Inés**, Calle 11 Poniente and Calle 3 Sur. They stroll through the crowds that gather at the sidewalk cafes. Another square where you can hear live music is **Plaza de los Sapos**, Calle 7 Oriente near Calle 6 Sur. To get there, walk 2 blocks south from thezócalo and take a left onto Calle 7 Oriente, toward the river. The plaza will be on your left, spreading out between Calle 7 and Calle 5 Oriente just past Calle 4 Sur. If you take Calle 5 Oriente from the cathedral to reach the Plaza de los Sapos, you'll pass several local hangouts where students and artists gather for conversation, coffee, drinks, snacks, and live music.

Another place to hear live music is down the block from Los Sapos at **Mesón Sacristía de la Compañía**, Calle 6 Sur 304. A singer/guitarist entertains with popular ballads from 9pm to midnight. The moderately priced restaurant serves a complete selection of Puebla specialties.

Teorema, Reforma 540, near Calle 7 Norte(tel. **222/242-1014**), is a good coffee shop and bookstore that features guitarists and folksingers every evening. It's open daily from 9:30am to 2:30pm and 4:30pm to midnight.

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Things to Do Insights

Attractions

Puebla is a city full of stories and anecdotes that color the colonial houses and convents of the historic district. For historical tours of the city or a tour of the surrounding area, you might want a guide. One I can recommend is **Carlos Rivero Tours**(tel. **222/304-2855**; www.riveros.com.mx). He

speaks English, knows his city, and is very capable. For a quick sightseeing tour of the city, you can hop on one of the buses that park on the street between thezócalo and the cathedral(Calle 3 Oriente). Tours are in Spanish, depart every half-hour, and cost 55 pesos. Or you can climb on to one of the new **Turibus**(www.turibus.com.mx) open-air double-decker buses, with narrative in several languages. Your ticket(110 pesos) is valid for the entire day and allows you to get off at any location and board the next bus that comes along. The circuit of both buses includes a quick view of the site where the Battle of Cinco de Mayo was fought.

Churches

If you were to stop to examine every church you pass in Puebla, you would be in for a long stay. Still, it is something I enjoy doing, even with the smaller churches. Many have simple, austere interiors that express a sweetness and humility that I like. But three churches in the Puebla's historic district require special mention.

The **cathedral**, completed in 1649, has the tallest bell towers in Mexico. Its dark-stone exterior and severeHerrerian(Spanish Renaissance) design lend it a lugubrious appearance that may befit a cathedral but takes a little while to warm up to. The inside is worth a peek. Near the front doors, you can usually find guides(or they'll find you) who offer a short tour.

The **Iglesia de Santo Domingo**, on the corner of 5 de Mayo and 4 Poniente, was originally part of a Dominican monastery completed in 1611. Lining the walls of the nave are some exquisite baroque altars. In the left transept you'll find the **Capilla del Rosario**, built in 1690. It is a masterpiece of gold leaf and plaster convolutes dedicated to the Virgin of the Rosary. Some point to it as the epitome of Mexican baroque architecture. Note, too, the intricate Talavera wainscoting.

The massive **church of La Compañía**, built by the Jesuits, is where La China Poblana worshipped and was briefly entombed. Look to the right of the church doorway, and you'll see a curious bit of text in Talavera. It marks the date of the execution of a con

man, who arrived in Mexico on a boat from Spain carrying papers identifying him as a *avisador*(papal emissary and inspector). He was wined and dined by the bishops in the capital and in Puebla, and lived the good life for several weeks before being found out. As the text notes, he was executed, and his head was hung above the doorway. The message, I guess: It's not nice to fool the mother church.

Near Cholula are two other intriguing churches: Santa María Tonantzintla and San Francisco Acatepec. See more about them later in this chapter.

Museums

There are a couple of smaller attractions worth visiting: The **Biblioteca Palafoxiana** is an impressive colonial library, the collection of the famous 17th-century bishop who went on to become viceroy, Juan Palafox y Mendoza. The library is on the second floor of the Casa de Cultura, next to the state tourism office. The **Casa de Alfeñique** is a colonial mansion and a landmark known for its exterior plaster decoration, reminiscent of cake icing; the museum collection, a hodgepodge of things Poblano, is fun if you have time. It's at the intersection of calles 4 Oriente and 6 Norte. The **Casa de los Muñecos**, Calle 2 Norte 4, is more important for its exterior than for the museum collection inside. The large grotesques that adorn the late-18th-century facade are said to be caricatures of the town council, though this story is apocryphal.

Shopping

Puebla is the home of **Talavera**-- a type of brightly colored, thickly decorated majolica earthenware. The Moors developed the technique for making it and founded workshops in Spain, in a town called Talavera in the 9th century. After the discovery of the New World, artisans brought the method to Puebla. And now, ironically, the making of Talavera has all but died out in Spain, but here it is practiced with great pride and fervor. There is even an association of Talavera makers in Puebla and Cholula that establishes standards and certifies manufacturers. To be officially certified, a workshop must

Puebla Snapshot continued

use only the traditional methods and ingredients (no commercial ceramic mix or glazes); practically everything must be done by hand. There's no restriction on artistic taste, just the methods for making Talavera. So there's a good bit of variety from one workshop to another. The genuine article is not cheap, so you should look around in the showrooms until you learn how to discern the cheap knock-offs from the real stuff and find a piece you prefer over other styles.

If you're interested in watching people make Talavera, consider a workshop tour; several workshops offer one. **Uriarte Talavera**, Calle 4 Poniente 911 (tel. **222/232-1598**), charges 20 pesos for its tour, but other places are free. The factory showroom has an impressive facade made completely of Talavera. And inside you'll see some great pieces displayed. There are 9 or 10 other certified manufacturers. Some use more modern patterns; some are more traditional. A couple of makers are in Cholula. One workshop has a small restaurant in downtown Puebla that serves meals on its own Talavera. It's a pretty little place called **Talavera Celia**, at Calle 5 Oriente 608 (tel. **222/242-3663**). There's one workshop in the Parián area-- **Talavera Armando**, at Calle 6 Norte 408 (tel. **222/232-6468**). If enough people are around, they'll get a free tour. **Talavera de la Luz** specializes in large maps and panoramic views rendered in Talavera tiles. It has shown some of its largest pieces in museums in the United States.

The **Mercado de Artesanías (El Parián)** is a pedestrian-only, open-air shopping area just east of Calle 6 Norte between calles 2 and 6 Oriente. You'll see rows of neat brick shops selling inexpensive crafts and souvenirs. The shops are open daily from 10am to 8pm. Bargain to get a good price. While you're in this area, you can take a look at the **Teatro Principal**.

For antiques browsing, go to **Callejón de los Sapos (Alley of the Frogs)**, about 3 blocks southeast of thezócalo near Calle 4 Sur and Calle 7 Oriente. Wander in and out; there's good stuff, large and small. Shops are generally open daily from 10am to 2pm and 4 to 6pm. On Saturday mornings, there's a flea market in the little square. If

you're there between 12:30 and 5:30pm, stop by **La Pasita**, across Calle 5 from the Plaza de los Sapos, to taste homemade cordials and browse through the owner's humorous collection of Mexicana. Start with apasita, then work your way up to a China Poblana-- a layered cordial of red, white, and green liqueurs.

If you're out walking around Puebla, you might amble over to a short stretch of Calle 6 Oriente between 4 Norte and 5 de Mayo. It has a few picturesque sweet shops selling candies for which Puebla is known, including camotes (sweets made from yams in various flavors), which are very popular with Mexicans but are not to my taste.

There's also a Victorian-era shopping mall made of wrought iron, which has been fixed up nicely: Ex-Mercado La Victoria, which is behind Santo Domingo.

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Travel Tips

Planning a Trip

Getting There & Departing

By Plane-- Puebla has an international airport, but most air travelers still fly into Mexico City because it has more flights. From the Mexico City airport, you can take an express bus directly to Puebla. Look for area E-2 and find the upstairs concourse that spans the passenger pickup area. You'll find ticket counters at the end of the concourse. Buses for Puebla leave every half-hour and cost 180 pesos. They will arrive at either the main bus station (CAPU) or the small downtown bus station.

Continental ExpressJet (tel. **800/231-0856** in the U.S., or 01-800/900-5000 in Mexico; www.continental.com) has a direct flight connecting Puebla and Houston.

By Car-- There are two roads to Puebla from the capital: **Hwy. 150**, an old, winding two-lane road where traffic is often slow; and **Hwy. 150D**, a four-lane modern toll road that's much faster. From Veracruz, take Hwy. 150D west. From Xalapa, take **Hwy. 140** west to the intersection with 150D. Tolls from Mexico City run 140 pesos; from Veracruz, 300 pesos.

By Bus-- The ride from **Veracruz** to Puebla takes 3 1/2 hours and costs around 240 pesos. From **Mexico City**, it takes 2 hours and costs 140 pesos. Several bus lines have regular departures from Mexico City's **TAPO bus station**, as frequently as every 15 minutes. You can also catch a bus to Puebla directly from the **Mexico City airport**.

You'll probably arrive at a large **bus station**, known by its acronym, CAPU.

To get to downtown Puebla, look for one of several booths marked TAXI AUTORIZADO. Many buses to and from the Mexico City airport use the small downtown **Estrella Roja station**, at 4 Poniente 2110.

Visitor Information

The **State Tourism Office** (tel. **222/246-2044**) is at Calle 5 Oriente 3, across the street from the south side of the cathedral. The office is open Monday through Saturday from 8am to 8pm, Sunday from 9am to 2pm. The city's tourism office is under the archway that runs along Palafox y Mendoza in front of thezócalo (Portal Hidalgo 14; tel. **222/404-5047**). It's open Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm, with shorter hours on the weekends.

City Layout

Puebla's streets are laid out on a Cartesian quadrant. Two main avenues serve as the x- and y-axes, but instead of separating the positive from the negative numbers, they separate odd from even. The role of x-axis is played by **Avenida Reforma/Palafox**. North of it are even-numbered streets, south of it are odd-numbered streets. The north-south axis (y-axis) is **5 de Mayo/16 de Septiembre**. East of it are even-numbered streets, and west are odd-numbered. So if someone tells you that some place is at the intersection of calles 6 and 10, you know it's in the northeast quadrant. Street names also include a direction--norte, sur, oriente, poniente (north, south, east, west). So if someone tells you that a church is on Calle 7 Oriente, then you know what part of town it's in: Oriente tells you that it's the eastern portion of an east-west street, and the odd number indicates that it's south of Palafox (or Palafox y Mendoza, to use the

Puebla Snapshot continued

full name). Each main axis changes names after it passes the center point of the city.

Don't count on taxi drivers to know where certain restaurants, hotels, or attractions are located; keep addresses handy.

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Fun Facts

1. Puebla is the fourth largest city in the country.
2. During the late 19th century large colonies from Europe came to the city. Events such as Oktoberfest(Germany) and Romerías(Spain) are still celebrated.
3. The Cinco de Mayo holiday is not the main celebration in Mexico. It's only considered a holiday in Puebla since it was here where the Mexican Army won a battle over the French Army on May 5, 1862.

4. Eventually the French conquered Mexico and ruled for 5 years, but everybody seems to have forgotten that. We still celebrate Cinco de Mayo.

5. Puebla de Zaragoza is the city's official name(after the General that won the Cinco de Mayo battle), but everybody uses its original name Puebla de los Angeles(legend has it angels planned the city).

6. The smallest volcano on earth is in Puebla. The Cuexcomate's cone rises 43 feet and has a 75 feet diameter.

7. Downtown Puebla is commonly used as location for many national and international films set in Colonial, XVIII and XIX century Mexico or Spain.

8. In 1981 the rock band Queen played in Puebla because the Government of

Mexico City had forbidden massive music concerts. People remembers this as the worst organized event in Puebla's history.

9. La Franja, Puebla's Football Soccer team, is one of the oldest in Mexico.

10. Chipilo is a small city founded just outside Puebla in 1882 by immigrants from Segusino, Italy. They speak a dialect called Vénétom not Spanish.

11. Poblanos' accent(they seem to be singing at the end of every phrase) was born because locals used to mock the accent of the French colony.

12. The Volkswagen manufacturing site in Puebla is the second largest outside Germany and it was the last site to produce the Volkswagen Beetle.

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