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ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Reynaldo Cisneros G

# Kid-friendly Puebla

## **Puebla, 3 Days**

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# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** Puebla is well known for its churches, its amazing Colonial architecture, its local food and the beautiful volcanos view. Normally this would sound like a great trip for adults, but the truth is that there are some fun places where kids can enjoy themselves and learn at the same time.

So, if you have a weekend, I invite you to come to Puebla and enjoy a fun three days trip with your kids along.

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - Puebla

**DAY NOTE:** We'll spend the first day together in Puebla walking around downtown. The Zocalo is a great starting point and a fun sight for kids and adults. Enjoy the gardens, the music, the balloon vendors and the amazing building surrounding the square, specially the cathedral.

Walk north 5 de Mayo street. It's a pedestrian street, so just enjoy the buildings and the stroll. Go into the Santo Domingo Convent and visit the Capilla del Rosario (Rosary Chappel). Kids usually love this chapel, they stare in awe at the glided stucco that looks like gold. When you're done, walk east along the 6 Oriente. This street is fondly called "the candies street" for this is where you'll find all kinds of typical candies. Just one block away is the Casa Hermanos Serdán, or the Revolution Museum. In it you'll learn about Mexican Revolution and you'll admire documents, furniture and paintings depicting the motives and the battles. And for the kids, be sure to point them that those holes in the facade are not there because this is an old building, but they are actually bullets from the Revolution!

Now go to the corner of 6 Norte and 4 Oriente and admire the Alfeñique House with its facade that appears to be made out of sugar. Go to the Parian, that's the traditional crafts market in front of the Alfeñique House, in it you'll find all kinds of typical Mexican toys, more candies and souvenirs.

When you're done, go back west along the 2 Oriente and turn left on the 2 Norte. In the middle of the block you'll find the Casa de los Muñecos (Dolls House), you'll recognize it because of the images on the facade. In this museum kids will see all kinds of instruments formerly used by the University for all kinds of scientific experiments and measures.

We'll end on the starting point, at the Zocalo, so you can enjoy a little bit more of Puebla's downtown life!



### Zocalo

Puebla's main square



### Capilla del Rosario

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



### Casa Hermanos Serdan

Museum of the Revolution. This is probably the most important building in the Revolution History in Puebla.



### El Parian

The biggest and most beautiful craft market in the city.



### Museo Universitario Casa de los Muñecos

This amazing building houses the Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla's art and science museum.

## Day 2 - Puebla

**DAY NOTE:** Today is a great day for kids, for we are going to Africam Safari! If you have a car, ask at your hotel front desk for a map to get there. If you don't, busses leave the Zocalo straight to the park, just ask at the front desk for the time table.

You'll have a great time at Africam Safari, it doesn't matter how old are you. But this is a whole day activity so be sure to leave early so you can enjoy the animals and the activities with enough time.



### Africam Safari

This is the most important safari in Latin America. The animals are free, you are the one who'll be locked up on your car!

## Day 3 - Puebla

**DAY NOTE:** Today we'll visit two forts that made Puebla and the Cinco de Mayo battle worldwide famous. The Guadalupe Forth is almost in ruins, but it hasn't lost its importance and power. The downtown and volcano views from there are amazing, and those could be sole reasons to go to the Forts, but luckily, there's more to see.

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The forts are close to downtown, but you need to get a taxi there. The front desk can call it for you, and it shouldn't be expensive since its a five minutes ride.

After you're done there, call another taxi (there are taxi sites in the forts) and ask to be taken to the Trains Museum (Museo del Ferrocarril). This is a fun place for kids, for they'll see and board old train engines, passenger cars and a even a presidential car.

You're just a block away from downtown, but not the good part. So walk south along the 11 Norte and go to the Paseo Juarez, a big garden where you can stroll or enter downtown again (to the east).

Hope you and your kids had a great time in Puebla!

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife



## **Fuerte de Loreto**

One of two historic forts that famously defended the city from the French troops on the "Cinco de Mayo" Battle in 1862.



## **Fuerte de Guadalupe**

One of two historic forts that famously defended the city from the French troops on the "Cinco de Mayo" Battle in 1862.



## **Museo Nacional del Ferrocarril**

In this museum you will find several trains engines, passenger cars, a dining car and even a presidential car. The cars can be boarded so you can admire the designs and details of different periods.

# 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.

© NileGuide



Ybidau

### location:

5 de Mayo 409  
Puebla Puebla 72000

## 2 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.



rainy city

**DESCRIPTION:** Santo Domingo church houses the impressive Capilla del Rosario (Rosary Chapel). Built in 1690, the chapel is a 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 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

**contact:**  
tel: (222) 242 10 76

**location:**  
6 Oriente 206  
Puebla Puebla 72000

## Casa Hermanos Serdan

### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

The facade is not neglected. Those holes you see on it are actual bullets holes from the Revolution.

**DESCRIPTION:** In this museum you'll get the know the motives and how the Revolution was fought. Some documents, furniture, paintings and photographs of the time stand in this historic building as witness of history.

This building used to be the Serdan Alatraste family house. Manuel Serdan and his wife Carmen Alatraste bought it and left it to their kids Aquiles, Carmen and Maximo. All three of them enlisted when the Revolution began. By 1910 Aquiles was the president of the Revolutionary Movement in Puebla and one of the driving forces of the movement in the Country. On november 18th 1910, while the siblings were sleeping, the government forces broke into the house and after a long battle, the two brothers Aquiles and Maximo were killed. Carmen and her mother, who was in the house as well were imprison. The Serdan Siblings, specially Aquiles, are among the most important figures in Puebla's History and celebrated nationwide. The museum was open exactly 50 years after the shooting. © NileGuide



Hector Garcia

**location:**  
6 Norte, between 2 and 4  
Oriente  
Puebla Puebla 72400

## El Parian

### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

You won't find a better place that 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 Conlonial residences, but eventually other markets closer to the Zocalo



Vica Amuchastegui

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. © NileGuide

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**contact:**  
tel: (222) 246-2899  
<http://www.museo.buap.mx/>

**location:**  
2 Norte 2  
Puebla Puebla 72400

## Museo Universitario Casa de los Muñecos

### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

The scientific area is great for kids, since they can learn many things about physics, nature and history from many old objects that were used by the university.

### DESCRIPTION:

This beautiful building is unique in the city because of the figures in the facade that give it its name "La Casa de los Muñecos" (The house of dolls). It was built in the XVIII century by the Count of Castelo, the heir of one of the conquerors who would later be the city of Puebla. In 1984, the Benemerita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP) bought the house and spent three years rebuilding it and rescuing the ornaments in it in order to open a museum. But in 1999, due to an earthquake that damaged many historic buildings in the city, the museum had to be restored again.

Nowadays this is the main art and science museum of the university, and has a large heritage of colonial, religious and modern art, as well as many scientific objects.

The restaurant of the museum serves delicious Mexican and Poblana food. © NileGuide

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# Day 2 - Puebla

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### contact:

tel: 01 222 281 7000  
<http://www.africamsafari.com.mx/english/index.php>

### location:

Km 16.5 Blvd. Cap. Carlos Camacho  
Puebla Puebla

## 1 Africam Safari

### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

During the winter, the Night Safari is a unique opportunity to admire animals with night habits. You can see lions eating, tigers running and many more!

**DESCRIPTION:** Africam Safari is the perfect place for people looking for adventure. Here you'll see more than 2500 animals from all over the world roaming free in habitats that encourages development. This park was created in 1972 by Captain Carlos Camacho Espiritu, a well known pro-environment benefactor, with the purpose of educate people about the protection of endangered animals.

In Africam Safari you will drive among giraffes, zebras, elephants, lions, deers, tigers, ostriches, bears and many others along for different sections designed to resemble their natural habitats. In here you won't see animals trapped in cages, you'll be the one confined to your car.

After the vehicular safari, there's a zoo with many activities like pony rides, a butterfly sanctuary, a cave full of bats and much more animals. It's impossible to depict here the amazing experience that Africam Safari is. Whether you're a kid or not, this is a once in a life experience.

All along the safari you'll also be able to admire the amazing volcanoes that surround Puebla. The Popocatepetl and the Iztaccihuatl are always there, unless it's really cloudy. The Malinche can be seen from there to, but if you're really lucky and you visit the park on a really clear day, you'll see the tallest volcano in Mexico, the Citlaltépetl.

Africam Safari is about 11 miles (17 kilometers) from Puebla. If you don't have a car, there are many bus rides from many places all over Puebla.

Ask at your hotel or send an email to the park asking about the many rides they have to Africam Safari on the day you want to go. This is a whole day activity, but believe me, you won't regret it!

© NileGuide



RussBowling

# Day 3 - Puebla

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## QUICK NOTE

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Hope you and your kids had a great time in Puebla!

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### location:

Centro Cívico 5 de Mayo,  
Calzada de los Fuertes  
Puebla Puebla 72260

## Fuerte de Loreto

### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

The forts are open from tuesday thru sunday from 10 am to 4:30 pm. They're not downtown, but there're not that far away, so a taxi shouldn't be too expensive. Or, if you prefer, the hop on - hop off sightseeing buses take there, and you can spend the whole day in there.

**DESCRIPTION:** The Loreto Fort is a famous fort that along the Guadalupe Fort defended the city from the French Army on the famous "Cinco de Mayo" Battle on May 5, 1862 - called the Puebla Battle.

Originally these forts were temples dedicated to the Virgin of Loreto (this one), and the Virgin of Guadalupe (the other one), but in 1816, during the Revolution were fortified to resist the Insurgents forces. While the Guadalupe Fort is almost a ruin -because it's older-, this one stands as a reminder of the threats the city has survived.

Nowadays, in the fort you can admire the War Museum. In it there are many documents, paintings, uniforms, and other objects that narrate the history of the French Intervention and the Puebla Battle. An old and beautiful chapel on one side of the building is the only remainder of this being a religious site originally, and in it is an exposition of many flags and important figures of Latin America and México. © NileGuide



Sachavir\_BR

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This is the actual place where the "Cinco de Mayo" Battle took place, and though both forts are celebrated because of the winning, this is the one that really defended the city. © NileGuide



monterd

**contact:**

tel: 222/232-4988

**location:**

11 Norte 1005  
Puebla Puebla 72000

**hours:**

Tues-Sun 10am-5pm

## 1 Museo Nacional del Ferrocarril

**OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:**

Kids usually love this museum and its engines.

**DESCRIPTION:** This museum was created to rescue and spread the railroad history, evolution and historic importance in Mexico. There are at least 60 units of various classes and periods. 5 steam engines, one electric engine and many cars. Among those you'll find a sleeping car, two presidential cars, four regular passenger cars and more.

The cars and engines are placed along the original tracks of the city. The museum is a reconstruction of the railroad station, that closed in 1974. © NileGuide



[mequetrefe]

# 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.

© NileGuide

## 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.

© NileGuide

## 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](http://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](http://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 *avisitador*(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](http://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 Vénetom 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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