

Your Guide to Guadalajara, a Rising Destination in Mexico

DESTINATION & TOURISM | ALEX TEMBLADOR | MAY 08, 2022



Life centers around the plazas of Guadalajara which often have lovely fountains, greenery, and historic churches. (photo by Alex Temblador)

As the second-largest city in [Mexico](#), Guadalajara has long been known for mariachi music, ceramics, and tequila, but as of late, travelers are starting to realize that this destination is rich in so much more.

Guadalajara is teeming with historic buildings, plazas, and churches, but the city continues to expand with modern development and renovations of historic buildings into boutique hotels with pools and stylish rooms, unique cafes, and restaurants and bars with lovely courtyards and innovative menus. Whether you stay for four days or a few weeks, you'll quickly see that the city is thriving and producing enthralling art, fashion, music, and design.

We want all types of travelers to experience this phenomenal city in Mexico so we've created a guide that breaks down all that you need to know. Just read on to see what a trip to Guadalajara has to offer in history, art, the outdoors, nightlife, and culture.

Getting There

The [Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla International Airport](#) is about a 30-minute drive from the central zone or historic city center of Guadalajara. Roundtrip flights from the U.S. to Guadalajara can cost about \$300–\$400 on American Airlines

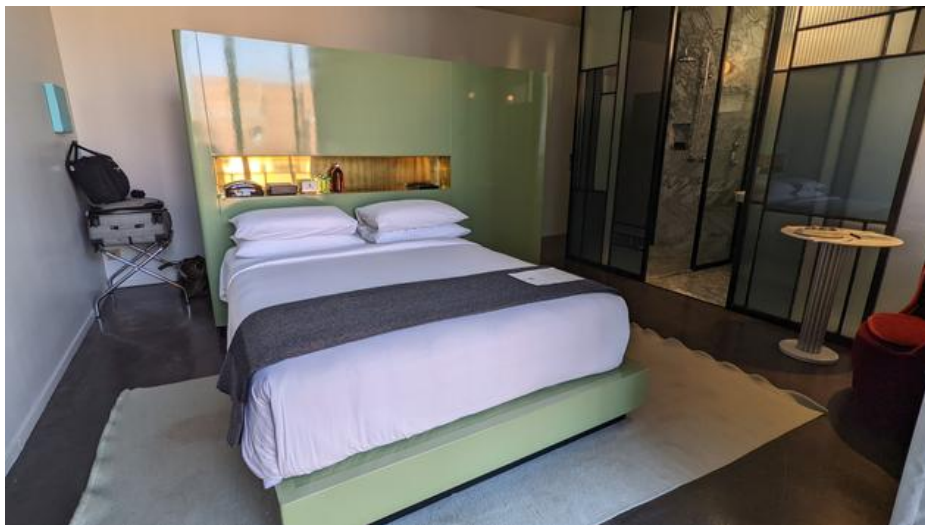


Guadalajara's churches and plazas are a sight to behold. (photo via Alex Temblador)

and Volaris, though the cost can range depending on the date and airline.

Where to Stay

Guadalajara has diverse accommodations, although small boutique hotels are especially popular. [Casa Habita](#), an Arts Deco-inspired hotel with a pool, restaurant, and bar, is a great choice for the design-loving traveler. Some of the rooms have balconies with great city views. For something more romantic and traditional in style, [Villa Ganz Boutique Hotel](#) is the right choice. Set in a renovated 1930s mansion, it features a dreamy courtyard, great restaurant, and lovely rooms. Both hotels are located in the popular and hip Colonia Americana neighborhood which is within walking distance of the historic city center.



The rooms at Casa Habita are Art Deco-inspired. (photo by Alex Temblador)

Travelers who enjoy a modern hotel with a restaurant, pool, bar, and contemporary rooms should check out [Hilton Midtown Guadalajara](#). From here, travelers can reach the Bosque Colomos and the Basilica of Our Lady of Zapopan on foot.

If you want to treat yourself to an exceptionally unique hospitality experience, drive about an hour out of the city and stay at [Hotel Defranca](#). This 17th-century property has been restored into an elegant hotel with a church, pool, restaurant, and rooms that look out onto a massive canyon. Book the 'Jacuzzi experience' and enjoy drinks and snacks in a Jacuzzi that sits on the edge of the canyon.



Spend a few hours in the Jacuzzi that overlooks a canyon at Hotel Defranca. (photo via Alex Temblador)

Things to Do

Upon arriving in Guadalajara, head to the historic city center to wander for hours admiring the architecture and grandness of the [Guadalajara Cathedral](#), Rotonda de los Jaliscienses Ilustres, historic buildings, and plazas. The historic city center is full of museums like the [Regional Museum of Guadalajara](#) and various interconnecting plazas with stunning fountains, sculptures, shops, historic churches, museums, and indoor markets. While you're down there, enter [Museo Cabañas](#) to see fantastic murals by famed artist Jose Clemente Orozco on the ceiling of a dome. He has another mural in [MUSA](#), a free art museum with an extensive and engaging exhibit by Mexican artists.



Travelers can see the only known circular pyramids in Guadalajara. (photo via Alex Temblador

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Mexico is well-known for its pyramids, but Guadalajara is the only place in the world with circular pyramids at [Guachimontones](#). Built 2,000 years ago by the Teuchitlán people, these stepped circular structures are a sight to behold. Guachimontones is just as interesting as [Museo Panteón de Belén](#), a historic cemetery in Guadalajara with beautiful architecture, above-ground tombs, and famous 'residents' like the Jose Cuervo family. The tours are in Spanish, but it doesn't take away from the experience.

Outdoor enthusiasts will find plenty of greenery and adventure in and around Guadalajara. First, explore [Bosque Colomos](#), a forested park with a wide range of activities and gardens, like a stunning Japanese Garden. For rigorous hikes, check out Barranca de Oblatos and Barranca de Huentitan, which are canyons located on the outskirts of Guadalajara. Just an hour away, book a rappelling trip across multiple waterfalls in the San Cristóbal de la Barranca with [Descender](#). Nearby, Lake Chapala offers kayaking experiences on the largest lake in Mexico, as well as some great hikes to waterfalls, like El Tepalo Falls near Ajijic.



Have a rappelling adventure in the canyons surrounding Guadalajara. (photo via Alex Temblador)

You can't visit Guadalajara without doing a day trip or two. Tlaquepaque, a suburb of Guadalajara, is a great destination full of shopping, artisans, and restaurants that's easily accessible by Uber. The streets are colorful, and people line up selling wares for tourists to buy. You could also take a trip to Tequila to see how the drink of the same namesake is made. You can get there by the [Jose Cuervo Express Train](#) and make it a full-day experience.

While Tlaquepaque and Tequila are great, we encourage you to check out places around Guadalajara that are off-the-beaten-path. Etzatlán is a charming town

with a colorful woven canopy that covers four different streets. It's so large that it won a Guinness World Record!



See the world's largest fabric pavilion in Etzatlan, Mexico. (photo via Alex Temblador)

A cooking class with Maru Toledo and her organization [Las Mujeres De Maiz](#) in the El Teuchiteco community makes for an interesting (and tasty!) experience. Through a cooking demonstration, you'll learn about how she's reviving ancient Jalisco dishes made of corn (and get to eat them afterward!).

If you'd rather not drive in and out of the city so much, book a stay at a hacienda or casona that's part of the [Hacienda y Casonas de Jalisco association](#). These haciendas are spread across Jalisco, in and around Guadalajara and are great jumping off points to some of these day-trip destinations. Take [Hacienda El Carmen](#) for example. It was built in 1727 and offers a restaurant, pool, amazing spa, bar, and activities like horseback riding. The hacienda provides a unique vacation experience and is only 20 minutes from Guachimontones.



Stay in a 17th-century hacienda at Hacienda El Carmen. (photo via Alex Temblador)

Food and Drinks

You can't visit Guadalajara without tasting two breakfast staples: a torta ahogada, a pork sandwich drowned in a flavorful sauce, and birria, a local stew made from goat meat. Traditional drinks in the area shouldn't be passed up either, especially tejuino, a cold fermented corn beverage, tepache, a fermented cold beverage made from pineapple, and pulque, an alcoholic beverage made of fermented sap from the maguey plant.



*Birria is a traditional goat stew dish in Guadalajara that's best enjoyed with a tortilla.
(photo via Alex Temblador)*

Café culture is huge in Guadalajara. Around every block, there seem to be small coffee shops or cafes serving food, like [Manila](#), [Tercio Cocina](#), [Peltre Cocina](#), and [Rintintin café](#). They're set in small, artistically-designed spaces in historic buildings and often have lovely courtyards and outdoor patios full of flowering plants and greenery. We especially loved restaurants like [Jamaica Café and Records](#), a vegetarian-Mexican restaurant, and [Peligro Al Fondo](#) which has a huge courtyard and a delicious menu. For something unique, check out [Xokol](#) and [Alcalde](#). Where Alcalde offers an upscale Mexican food experience, Xokol offers creative dishes made with corn.

Avenida Chapultepec is the center of Guadalajara's nightlife. Pubs, bars, clubs, and restaurants are within walking distance offering a lively destination for all who visit. That said, you may be persuaded to go beyond this avenue and have a drink at [Cantina La Fuente](#), which is Guadalajara's oldest bar.

If you need more insight into the best restaurants and cafes to visit, check out [Antiturista](#), a map that features locally owned restaurants, cafes, bars, hotels, art galleries, and boutiques.

Where to Shop

Guadalajara has some fantastic markets which are locally referred to as 'tianguis.' Mercado Libertad is open daily and is the largest indoor market in



Tercio Cocina is a popular cafe that serves food in Guadalajara. (photo via Alex Temblador)

Latin America. To shop one of the largest outdoor markets in Latin America, head to El Baratillo on Sundays. These two tianguis sell everything from food to clothes, leather goods, music, shoes, wellness products, cookware, and more.



Guadalajara is home to a wide range of tianguis, or markets, like the Antiques Market which is open on Sundays. (photo via Alex Temblador)

Some tianguis have specific items for sale, like the Tianguis de Antiquedades El Trocadero, a Sunday market that sells antiques. To find cool, artsy, and local designer finds, go to Tianguis Paseo Chapultepec or Tianguis Cultural Guadalajara on Saturdays.

The boutique fashion scene shouldn't be overlooked either. The Guadalajara area – specifically Tlaquepaque and Tonalá – is known for its rich ceramic tradition – which makes it a perfect destination to find these crafted wares. [Cerámica Suro](#) will be opening a store soon, but until then, you can stop buy and ask for a tour of their extensive ceramics production.

Most people are not aware that Guadalajara is a rich producer of silver – so if



Tlaquepaque is a popular destination outside of Guadalajara that sells ceramics, artisanal wares, and so much more. (photo via Alex Temblador)

you love silver jewelry, this is where to buy it. Our favorite jewelry shop is [Mackech Jewels](#). The company has been around for decades and is well known as one of the best jewelry designers in Mexico. Better yet, they guarantee that the silver they use is sourced locally (not all silver jewelry in the area is) and is handcrafted by local artisans. They've been awarded and recognized as being ethically and socially responsible in their business practices, too!

For boutique fashion finds, check out [Julia Y Renata](#) and [Amor Apache](#), and [Oxen Concept](#). Vintage shoppers will love exploring the thrifted options at [Bravo Vintage](#) and [Lavanda Vintage](#).

Safety

In terms of safety, Guadalajara is like most big cities in the world – it comes with some risks. Pickpocketing is a concern, especially in high-populated areas. Don't carry a lot of cards or cash on you at any time and keep a low profile – meaning don't wear flashy items that single you out as a tourist, or a wealthy one. As for violent crimes – it's unlikely you'll find yourself in any of those situations. But just remember, don't walk alone at night or get involved with illegal drugs, and if you do rent a car, get insurance.

I traveled in Guadalajara and the surrounding areas for two weeks by myself (I'm a 32-year-old woman) and never had an incident of any kind. In fact, I wasn't even catcalled or harassed, which is something I often experience in the U.S. and in other countries.

[LGBTQ+ travelers](#) will be happy to know that Guadalajara is very progressive and known as the 'gayest city' in Latin America. The state of Jalisco just updated their Civil Code (like a constitution) so that it is inclusive of all types of marriage – no matter the gender identity. At the same time, they added a recognition of