COPPER CANYON and 
Chihuahua, Mexico 
April 18-25, 2004

Living within the canyon walls are some of the few remaining Cave dwelling Indians on earth…
"THE TARAMUMARA"
The Copper Canyon Train is World Renowned for the number of bridges it crosses (37)
 & the number of tunnels it passes through (86)...
The Train travels along the face of the canyon rim ... in and out of the canyon walls;
Much like a worm through an apple ... an adrenaline pumping train ride to say the least

Copper Canyon is the name that is used to reference the Canyons. Named for the copper and green lichens that line its valley walls, a more proper name might be "Sierra Tarahumara" after the indigenous Tarahumara people, since the "Copper Canyon" (Barranca del Cobre in Spanish) is but one of six massive gorges in the area covering 64,000 square kilometers or 25,000 square miles in the north Mexican state of Chihuahua. On a map this journey appears like a simple train trip between the Chihuahua and the small city of Los Mochis in Sinaloa near the Sea of Cortez. In fact this adventure showcases not only one of the world's great engineering feats, but also some of the world's most awesome scenery and the most primitive aboriginal culture left in North America.

The area is noted for its diverse wildlife, rugged scenery and improbably steep and winding railroad. Batopilas, at the bottom of the deepest canyon, once had one of the country's richest veins of silver; it was formally established in 1709 and remained a famous mining town for two centuries. Many buildings that were put up in the 19th century remain, and a 400-year-old Jesuit mission was recently restored. Visitors should plan to spend at least two nights in Batopilas, since it takes about five hours by bus or van to get there from Creel. The winding road drops about 7,500 feet in 75 miles. A new road being put in to Batopilas should make access much easier, though some say the town's remoteness is part of its charm.

An Introduction to Mexico in general
Mexico is popular with travelers from all over the world. They go there for reasons almost too numerous to mention: sunshine, blue seas teeming with fish and coral, crystal-white beaches, lofty mountains and volcanoes, jungles full of exotic wildlife, collectible folk art and the breathtaking remains of ancient cultures. And some go for a less lofty reason: Mexico can be cheap, though you may have to get out of the popular resort areas to enjoy big savings.
We're compelled, of course, to remind would-be visitors of Mexico's unevenness. It remains a land of baffling contradictions. Just down the street from a five-star resort, families camp in ramshackle buildings without plumbing. Burros, with rough-hewn carts in tow, amble alongside express highways. Serious pollution problems confront the country, and a huge population strains its resources. There is widespread poverty and a population yearning for a better standard of living. But through it all, Mexico endures.

Official Name: United Mexican States.
Passport/Visa Requirements: Canadian and U.S. citizens need passports or proof of citizenship (and a photo ID). All visitors must fill out a tourist card. Reconfirm travel document requirements with your carrier before departure.
Capital: Mexico City.
Population: 103,400,000.
Languages: Spanish.
Predominant Religions: Christian (Roman Catholic).
Time Zone: 5-8 hours behind Greenwich Mean Time (-5 through -8 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed from the first Sunday in April until the last Sunday in October.
Voltage Requirements: 110 volts.
Telephone Codes: 52 is the country code

Money Matters

Currency Exchange:
Traveler's checks and credit cards are accepted at most tourist-oriented businesses. Use extreme caution when using ATMs: Try to use one that's inside a building (not just in an enclosure facing the street) and avoid making withdrawals at night.

Tipping
Plan to tip 10% - 15% in restaurants and a couple of pesos at gas stations. Taxi drivers are not tipped in Mexico unless they perform some extra service like carrying bags.

Weather

The best time to visit Mexico is mid September-mid May, though some parts still have a fair amount of rain in October and November. (It rains most during the summer, but usually not often enough to spoil a vacation.) Mexico City is chilly in the early morning and at night during the winter. Be prepared for higher humidity in coastal areas and at the inland archaeological sites in the Yucatan peninsula. Summer temperatures there can hover at the 100 F/38 C range with near 100% humidity. The average coastal day temperatures year-round are in the 70s-80s F/23-32 C, with nights in the 60s-70s F/15-27 C. Take a sweater and an umbrella any time of year.
Daytime temperatures in the Copper Canyon range from mid-40s to the mid-90s. Evening temperatures range from the teens to the 60’s. Plan to dress in layers. You will also encounter climates ranging from tropical rain forest in coastal areas to semi-arid mountains.

Transportation

Air
Many international carriers serve Benito Juarez Airport (MEX), which is 4 mi/6 km from Mexico City. Most large cities and big tourist destinations also have major international airports. Several regional carriers, including Aeromexico and Mexicana, offer frequent flights within the country.

Bus
Some U.S. bus companies have been given permission to operate within Mexico, and they now take visitors from several U.S. border towns into the interior. In addition, Mexican bus companies offer efficient first-class
bus service between major cities. Some buses—usually designated as *de lujo, ejecutivo* or *primera*—are air-conditioned, have toilets and might even have movies and food/beverage service. Second-class (*segunda*) service connects smaller towns, makes lots of stops and is generally less prompt and less luxurious.

**Car**

Getting around Mexico by car isn't as dubious an undertaking as it used to be. Rental cars are available in most major cities and tourist destinations, and about 1.5 million North American visitors drive into Mexico each year. If you're considering driving beyond the 12.5-mi/20-km border zone, be aware of the following requirements: A visitor driving his or her own car to Mexico must have proof of ownership (title or registration), a valid driver's license and a Temporary Vehicle Import Permit. If your car is financed, you must also have a notarized letter from the financing institution giving you permission to drive it into Mexico. Under no circumstances may you take someone else's car. You'll also have to provide assurance that you won't be leaving the car in Mexico, which can be done in one of three ways: with a credit-card imprint, with a nonrefundable bond (up to 2% of the vehicle's value) or with a refundable security deposit equal to the car's total value.

*Note:* If you've opted for the credit-card imprint, make sure to get your Temporary Vehicle Import Permit stamped when you leave the country or fines will start mounting up.

Mexican liability insurance is not required by law, but you should have it. U.S. and other foreign insurance are not recognized in Mexico, and should you be involved in an accident without having Mexican insurance, you will face many problems, including automatic imprisonment until responsibility is determined. It's easy to get a temporary policy. Agencies are located in nearly every U.S. border town. The insurance carriers are also good sources of information about document requirements and driving conditions—stop in one before you attempt to drive across the border.

For rental vehicles brought in from the U.S., the rental contract must be in the visitor's name, and you will need written permission from the rental agency to cross the border. Be aware that many agencies do not allow their vehicles to cross international borders, and others may have strict guidelines: Be sure to check first. Although it's not always the case, plan for delays of about an hour at border crossings.

Mexico's highways range from excellent paved (usually toll) roads to pothole-ridden two-lane blacktops and rutted dirt roads. Toll roads can be very expensive, however. Expect to pay roughly the equivalent of US$1 for every 6-12 mi/10-20 km.

Although you will hear tales of banditry on Mexican roads, most visitors drive in Mexico today without incident. Still, you should not drive after dark, and some isolated roads should be avoided altogether—the only other traffic is likely to be drug traffickers (or the army in search of them).

To find out if any roads are considered unsafe when you'll be traveling, consult the Green Angels, Mexico's excellent highway patrol. By day, hundreds of green trucks manned by English-speaking staff patrol the country's main roads. They will not only provide you with accurate, up-to-date information, but also assist you with towing or simple repairs. (There's a charge for parts, but not labor—though a tip is always appreciated.) Local tourist offices in Mexico can provide you with the phone number of the appropriate Green Angels' office.

**Taxi**

Taxis are plentiful and are usually moderately priced, but exercise caution in obtaining a cab. In Mexico City, you should *never* hail a taxi in the street. Always use a radio taxi. Your hotel can provide the phone numbers of reliable companies. In smaller towns, taxis don't use meters. Agree on the fare with the driver prior to getting into the cab. If it's metered, make sure the last fare has been cleared. For traveling between nearby towns, shared taxis are often a good option. These will usually await fares beside the town's main plaza.

**Train**

Rail service from the U.S. and within Mexico does not exist. The only exception is the famous Chihuahua al Pacifico Railroad, which runs through the Copper Canyon area.

**History**

Mexico has been enduring for a long time. The first residents reached the area more than 20,000 years ago. In time, the descendants of these first immigrants produced monumental architecture, incredibly precise calendars and advanced agricultural accomplishments (they gave the world corn, chocolate and tomatoes). Beginning
around 1200 BC, a series of great civilizations waxed and waned in the central and southern portions of Mexico, including the Olmecs, the Maya, the Toltecs and a number of other groups. The Aztecs began their rise to power around AD 1200, establishing their capital at Tenochtitlan (present-day Mexico City) and eventually conquering all other groups in central Mexico. Like some of their predecessors, they were a warrior civilization. Rivals who were forced to pay tribute to the Aztecs were looking for an opportunity to throw off their rule, and that opportunity soon presented itself. Cortes first stepped ashore on the island of Cozumel in 1519, then established the town of Veracruz on the gulf coast. With just 500 followers, the conquistador engineered the downfall of an Aztec empire (though he was aided by the Aztecs’ enemies and greatly helped by the European diseases that overwhelmed the Indians). With Cortes’ victory, a new people, culture and nation arose. The Spanish colonial capital—Mexico City—was literally built from the rubble of Tenochtitlan. For the next 300 years it served as the center of the vast colony of New Spain. Mexican patriots fought for and gained independence from the Spanish crown by 1821. The ensuing decades were turbulent for the new country: Mexico passed through years of dictatorship and instability. From the 1830s through the 1850s, General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna ruled the country. During this period, Mexico lost half of its territory in wars against rebellious Texans (in 1836) and against the U.S. (in 1847). In the 1850s, the country was embroiled in a civil war that eventually resulted in Benito Juarez being elected president. One of Mexico’s most progressive presidents, Juarez instituted a liberal government and the separation of church and state in a political movement called La Reforma. He also led the fight against French invaders, who ruled the country for several years and placed Emperor Maximilian on the throne before they were forced to withdraw. The modern era began in 1910 with the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution. The decade-long conflict produced some of Mexico’s most enduring figures, including the rebel leaders Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata. The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) held power through the next seven decades, giving Mexico one of the longest-lasting governments in Latin America. The 1990s were unstable for Mexico. After years of state control, the government began liberalizing the economy, joining the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994. For a time, the economy seemed to be booming until a massive devaluation of its currency dragged the country back into crisis. That same year, a small group of rebels in Chiapas State, calling themselves Zapatistas, staged a rebellion that drew international attention to the poverty endured by the country’s Amerindians. A series of high profile political assassinations rocked already waning faith in the government. After several prominent victories by opposition candidates in local and regional elections, Vicente Fox was elected president in 2000, breaking the PRI’s hold on power for the first time since the Revolution.

**Geography**

Mexico is a large country with diverse landscapes. Much of the northern part of the country is on a high plateau and is made up of the Chihuahuan and Sonoran Deserts. Two mountain chains—the Sierra Madre Occidental, to the west, and the Sierra Madre Oriental, to the east—extend for a good length of the country. Between these and some smaller mountain ranges are several plains and valleys that hold many of the country’s major cities. Mexico also features arid coastal plains and the Yucatan’s thick tropical jungle. The country has long and alluring coastlines, washed by the Gulf of Mexico, the Pacific Ocean, the Gulf of California and the Caribbean Sea.

**Snapshots**

Historical sites, archaeological ruins, fiestas, beaches, fishing, water sports (scuba diving, snorkeling, surfing), golf, bullfighting, shopping, handicrafts, music, dance, relaxation and moderate prices are Mexico’s foremost attractions. If you’re interested in a unique culture and enjoy sand, sun and surf as well as history, dance and music, you’ll love Mexico. Do be aware that you may fall prey to an upset stomach or other illness that can occur where sanitary conditions are less than optimal. You should also be prepared to see extreme poverty. If you become unhappy when service isn’t prompt and efficient or when things don’t quite go as planned, you should probably avoid Mexico.
The two rebel heroes of the Mexican Revolution, Emiliano Zapata and Francisco "Pancho" Villa, were both treacherously assassinated—Zapata in 1919 (at the direction of then-president Venustiano Carranza) and Villa in 1923.

The Tarahumara Indians, who live in the vicinity of Copper Canyon, are renowned for their fitness and stamina, which have been honed by years of running up and down the region's steep mountains. One of their many festivals includes an all-night run of over 100 mi/160 km.

Bullfighting is a popular sport in Mexico. You can see a bullfight in most large Mexican towns on most Sundays during the season (May-September in the north; November-April in the south).

You can tour a tequila factory in the town of Tequila, birthplace of the quintessential Mexican drink.

Some say the word "jalopy" comes from the 1920s, when old U.S. cars were shipped to the capital of Veracruz for reconditioning and resale. U.S. longshoremen pronounced the destination, Jalapa, as ja-la-pa (rather than with the Spanish pronunciation, ha-la-pa). The mispronounced word evolved into "jalopy."

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Let’s Go to the The Copper Canyon

The Copper Canyon, nestled in the Sierra Madre Range, is actually several large canyons boasting of a grandeur four times larger than the Grand Canyon of the United States, although different in nature; narrower, deeper, and more verdant.

Homeland to the reclusive Tarahumara, the Sierra Madre is rich in history and legend, haunted by the restless shades of fallen warriors, martyred Jesuits and Pancho Villa's army. The Copper Canyon qualifies unreservedly for national park and world heritage status. This world famous canyon system is one of Mexico's natural, cultural and historic wonders.

Located in the middle of the legendary Sierra Madre Mountains of the northwestern Mexico's state of Chihuahua, this immense series of canyons and ridges covers 25,000 square miles of rugged territory.

The Copper Canyon of Mexico remains North America's best kept secret. Consisting of seven canyons, the Copper Canyon region surpasses that of the Grand Canyon in size and depth and equals it in grandeur. This 10,000-square-mile canyon system holds the second- and third-deepest canyons in North America, the Urique and the Rio Verde. The Sierra Madre Occidental, a southwestern extension of the Rocky Mountains, is divided into three main geomorphic provinces in the Copper Canyon. From east to west, these are the Sierra Madre Province, the Province of Parallel Ranges and Valleys, and the Coastal Plain of the Gulf of California. All three are geologically distinct, with their own interesting land forms. The region's varied biotic zones range from 7,000-foot-deep canyons to plateaus as high at 8,200 feet. From the cool plateau pine-fir forests to the tropical riparian zones, a rich species diversity of flora and fauna awaits our discovery.

Rivers born in the high pine forests have carved a 10,000 mile maze of spectacular steep-walled gorges into the volcanic rock of the Sierra Madre Occidental Mountain Range. Standing on a canyon rim surrounded by pine-oak woodland, you look down on giant cactus and tropical trees over 5000 feet below.

To the geologist, this is Las Barrancas del Cobre—the copper canyons. To the anthropologist, it is Tarahumaraland. The Tarahumara Indians, who call themselves the Raramuri, or "Footrunners", migrated to the Copper Canyon country from the high plains around modern-day Cuauhtemoc about 500 years ago. They number about 50,000 people who still live much as did their 16th-century ancestors whom the Spanish encountered. The Tarahumaras are North America's most traditional Native American group. Their nomadic, cave-dwelling lifestyle is still intact, and traditional dress is seen commonly throughout the mountains.

Completion of the Chihuahua al Pacifico Railway in 1961 made the Copper Canyon region accessible. A masterpiece of engineering, the railway stretches for 420 miles from the city of Chihuahua to Los Mochis and climbs from sea level to over 8,000 feet, crossing 39 bridges up to 1,638 feet in length and traveling through 86 tunnels up to 6,000 feet long.
To the traveler, Las Barrancas del Cobre presents vistas of breathtaking majesty. Multi-hued canyons stretch as far as the eye can see. Coniferous forests adorn the heights. There are deep gorges, fantastic rock formations, and sparkling waterfalls. Beauty surrounds us as we explore not only by train, but also by motorcoach and on foot. Watered by summer thunderstorms, the canyon country is a virtual pallet of greens highlighted by the reds and yellows of the deciduous oaks in spring and fields of wildflowers in autumn.

Experience the great diversity of this splendid region

MUST SEE IN THE COPPER CANYON

The Copper Canyon, Barranca del Cobre is a region in Northwest Mexico's deserts, which hosts some of the most spectacular and stunning scenery in Mexico's inland territory. The area known as Copper Canyon is actually a series of 20 canyons, formed over the years by six rivers. The area is sometimes compared to Arizona’s Grand Canyon, although the Copper Canyon region is at least seven times the size, and has different topography, flora and fauna to the Grand Canyon. A system of very deep canyons (deeper than the Grand Canyon), Copper Canyon is carved into the rugged Sierra Madre Occidental Mountains in northwestern Mexico.

Although the area, also known as Sierra Tarahumara can be reached by bus or car, and you can see the Copper Canyon by hiking, biking, four-wheeling or driving (although roads in some areas will require a 4x4), by far the best and most popular way is to take the Chihuahua al Pacifico Railroad, a truly spectacular train journey.

Here you are near the top of the Sierra Madre range at 8000 feet elevation.

Six of the major canyons in the system are:

- Urique Canyon ················· 6136 ft. deep
- Sinforosa Canyon ············· 5904 ft. deep
- Copper Canyon ················ 5770 ft. deep
- Tararecua Canyon ············ 4674 ft. deep
- Batopilas Canyon ·············· 5904 ft. deep
- Oteros Canyon ················· 3225 ft. deep

All Copper Canyon trips are on the historic Chihuahua al Pacífico Railroad. The Chihuahua/Pacifico Railroad —Chepe— as we know it today, was first the dream of Albert Kinsey Owen, a member of the Utopia Socialist Colony of New Harmony, Indiana. Most tours travel through the most exciting part of the railroad, from sea level at Los Mochis, Sinaloa, to the highest portion of the line at Creel, Chihuahua. Here you are near the top of the Sierra Madre range at 8000 feet elevation. Railroad trips go all the way to Chihuahua City. The train winds its way from the Pacific Ocean up into the heart of this scenic splendor. Built over a 90 year period at a cost of 90 million dollars, this world-famous railroad is an engineering masterpiece. It has been called "the most dramatic train ride in the western hemisphere."
Working on the Railroad

The Chihuahua al Pacifico Copper Canyon rail journey through the Sierra Tarahumara is one of the world's most dramatic train rides. Spectacular in scenery and engineering, the line spans 37 bridges, passes through 86 tunnels and rises 8,000 feet in the 410 mile trip from Los Mochis to Chihuahua City.

This amazing rail line owes its creation to the farsightedness and creativity of two nineteenth century American visionaries—Albert Kinsey Owen and Arthur Edward Stilwell (as seen in photo).

A Pennsylvania-born civil engineer, Owen saw the enormous potential of the huge natural harbor at Topolobampo and conceived the idea of a Pacific to Atlantic rail route through Mexico’s rugged Sierra Madre as a land bridge connecting markets in the Far East with Europe. He had worked as a surveyor on the Laredo-Mexico City Railroad and knew that another line could be built through the seemingly impenetrable Sierra. At this time the French had failed in their attempt to build a waterway across Panama so a binational railroad seemed a more viable alternative. But Owen was a dreamer and turned his efforts to founding a utopian American colony at Topolobampo. The colony failed after only five years.

Another man, who had practical business skills as well as vision, carried on the quest for the railroad. He was Arthur Edward Stilwell, scion of a wealthy Rochester, New York family, who, at age 32, became the nation's youngest railroad owner.

Stilwell planned his rail line to run from Kansas City to Presidio, Texas, then join a Mexican line across the Rio Grande at Ojinaga, which would run through the state of Chihuahua and cross the Sierras to reach Topolobampo—several hundred miles shorter than the Union Pacific's Kansas City to San Francisco line. Financing was obtained in the U.S. from local communities and oil companies, and in Mexico by the government of Porfirio Diaz promising land and cash concessions to wealthy entrepreneurs including Enrique Creel and Luis Terrazas.

Construction began and the tracks pushed forward throughout the 1890's. The Topolobampo-El Fuerte segment was completed in 1903, followed by the Chihuahua-Creel section in 1907.

Then the Mexican Revolution began in 1910 and over the next ten years put a stop to the project—the Mexican government could not meet its economic commitments, and Pancho Villa attacked the trains. Villa was miffed at being snubbed by Luis Terrazas at a ceremony celebrating the completion of a portion of the route. Terrazas correctly believed that Villa had been rustling his cattle. Because of all this, the Stilwell interests were forced into receivership.

Plans to complete the railroad languished for the next twenty years. Then, in 1940, President Lazaro Cardenas nationalized Mexico's railroads and announced that the government would complete the several hundred kilometers that still remained to be built. In 1941 the remaining route was surveyed and, on November 22, 1961, the first train arrived in Los Mochis from Chihuahua—almost a century after Owen first had his vision. The railroad was completed by the Mexican government at a cost of over a billion pesos, without foreign aid. A colossal project far beyond the capacities of most developing nations. Engineering marvels abound: the El Descanso Tunnel extends over 6,000 feet; the Chinipas Bridge is 355 feet high; the Rio Fuerte Bridge is over 1,600 feet long. The gentle curvature of the rails, the gradual grades never exceeding 2.5%, and widespread use of 6-mile long spans of rail make for a smooth and comfortable passage.

History of Railroad

In 1871, Owen arrived in Mexico and started down the Pacific Coast in search of an ideal location for a new socialist colony. He selected a site at the Bay of Ohuira and organized a Mexican-American company that—among other projects—desired to build a railroad that would connect his new colony with the mid-eastern section of the United States.

In 1880, General Manuel Gonzales—President of Mexico—granted Owen a concession to build a railroad between Piedras Negras and Topolobampo, with side trunks to Mazatlan, Alamos and Ojinaga. The contract specified that the project would be completed within ten years. In 1886, Owen established a new colony at Topolobampo with some 600 people from New Harmony, but sickness, poverty, lack of organization and communication soon reduced this number to 150.
In 1890, dissension divided this group into three colonies. That year, Owen secured a more favorable contract from the government and organized a new company, but this venture was also doomed to failure. In 1894, the colonists returned to Indiana, and Owen accepted defeat. His contract was cancelled in 1899. At that time, no track had yet been laid. Other efforts to connect Chihuahua with the Pacific were begun as early as 1887, but after some construction and a series of mergers, these attempts also proved to be unsuccessful.

In 1899, realizing the railroads to be of first importance to the Nation, the government enacted the Railroad Law of April 29, 1899. An earlier contract to a group headed by Enrique Creel and Alfredo Breedlove now came under this authority and were subsidized under a contract to complete a section of 124 miles from Chihuahua City to Minaca within two years. These rights were later sold to a new company founded by Arthur E. Stillwell, who — along with his partners — operated the Chihuahua-Minaca line until late 1906.

In 1900, Stillwell and associates also acquired a concession to build a line between Ojinaga and Chihuahua. By the end of 1910 there were three lines in operation; Chihuahua to Marquez, 87.5 miles; Minaca to Sanches, 83.7 miles; and Topolobampo to Hornillos, 85.5 miles. Even with the government subsidy, these isolated operations brought Stillwell to bankruptcy. However, under a new administration, Stillwell's company, the Kansas City, Mexico y Oriente, completed the line between Ojinaga and Chihuahua between 1910 and 1914. Due to the high cost of construction and the technical difficulties encountered, construction in the mountainous areas was never undertaken.

In 1940, the Federal Government bought the Kansas City, Mexico y Oriente. A route through the difficult portion of the mountains from Creel to Hornillos was designated and construction was started in 1943. In 1952, the Federal Government acquired the Mexican Northwestern Railway Company, Ltd. and this, along with the Kansas City, Mexico y Oriente and the Ferrocarril del Rio Mayo, were merged to form the Ferrocarril Chihuahua al Pacífico. The various links were finally completed and joined in 1961 and Albert Owen's dream was finally a reality.

The completion of the Chihuahua-Pacifico — ChP — brought about significant changes in the northern section of Mexico. Tremendous changes were brought about in the socio-economic fields in the areas. Population quickly increased far above the national level. The resultant effect on the economy increased educational levels and brought about greater prosperity to the people. Accessibility into the previously unreachable portions of the Sierra Madre Mountains expanded the mining activities in an area rich in minerals of all descriptions, and added stimulus to the tourist industry, which is one of the largest factors in the Mexican economy.

Past towering peaks and over dizzying gorges, you roll across the backbone of the continent — surrounded by the treasures of Mexico's Sierra Madre.

All Copper Canyon trips are on the historic Chihuahua al Pacífico Railroad. The train winds its way from the Pacific Ocean up into the heart of this scenic splendor. If you take the train east to west, the route begins in the desert at Chihuahua, cuts through the mountains and ends up at the sea at Los Mochis. The train not only passes through amazing scenery, but also stops at small mountain towns where you can overnight to get a better look at the mountains and the canyon. It's possible to descend into the steep canyons, but you'll have to arrange a hike or other transportation (bus or car).
The Copper Canyon is in Mexico's wilderness.

The Tarahumara people, descendants of the Aztecs still live a simple life in these canyons, as they have done for thousands of years. Today, they also sell their crafts and food to visitors who take the Copper Canyon Train Ride.

The Copper Canyon railway is a stunning piece of engineering achievement. Opened after decades of construction in 1961, the railway was designed to connect the Pacific Ocean with Mexico's central desert territory and Chihuahua. The route is a major freight connection between Chihuahua and the coast.

The Copper Canyon line is over 650 km (390 miles) in length, crosses 39 bridges (the longest bridge is over 500m long) and 86 tunnels (the longest over 1,500 meters long). The track starts at sea level in Los Mochis, and will rise to an altitude of around 2,500 meters before descending into Chihuahua City at around 800 meters altitude. The line crosses some of Mexico's most rugged terrain; hugging the edge of mountains, and crossing deep ravines on its bridges. The scenery it travels through is truly breathtaking. The journey on the first-class express takes around 14 hours. It is a spectacular journey, and well worth doing - but you MUST book in advance. This is not a place you can just arrive at and expect to find a hotel room and a train ticket - especially during the busy times.

The First Class Express train makes 7 stops before its final destination. You can elect to stay at any of the places the train stops at, and spend a night or two there while you explore the local area; and perhaps take a horseback ride into the canyons for a closer look.

A journey through Copper Canyon is one of the most enthralling journeys you can take in Mexico. The train ride itself is remarkable, the scenery is amazing, and the whole experience will become a life memory for you and those traveling with you.

A journey through the canyon can be done independently or on a tour, but I highly recommend a tour. Tours usually incorporate stays at hotels along the way and may also provide opportunities for hiking, car tours, horseback riding and rafting. The start/finish points are in the Cities of Los Mochis and Chihuahua City. Two trains, one at each end, begin their journey at the same time each morning - 6am. They meet in the middle, at the stop known as El Divisadero (the Divider), where the wait is longest - about 20-30 minutes, allowing passengers to get off, and look down into the deep Copper Canyon itself.

It is generally accepted that is better to start the Train Journey from Los Mochis, and travel towards Chihuahua, instead of the other way around, if you are just riding the train to see the sights by rail. If you are stopping off in the Copper Canyon for a few days, then it probably won't make much difference to you, either way, except that logistically, you will either end up on the coast (if you travel from Chihuahua) or inland northern Mexico (if you travel from Los Mochis) by the time you finish your journey.

Most rail itineraries follow this basic route: The train leaves Chihuahua very early in the morning and the first stopover is at Creel, where you can take hikes or a horseback ride to several destinations, including a local mission school and some hot springs.

From Creel you can also travel to the town of Batopilas, which lies at the bottom of one of the canyons at the end of an incredibly steep and unpaved road (plan on at least five hours of driving in each direction). You can usually line up a driver and a vehicle in Creel's main square to take you there. Some of the trucks have seats welded to the roof for an excellent view of the precipitous valley below, though they're not for those with weak stomachs.

The next day's train takes you to Divisadero, where you'll get some of the best views of the canyon. Several upscale rim-side hotels are in the tiny town if you decide to overnight there. Or you can continue on to Bahuichivo, about an hour's ride south of Divisadero and transfer to a hotel in Cerocahui. Hotels can pick you up by prior arrangement.

The final ride on the rails is to Los Mochis, near the Gulf of California. The gulf is an hour away, at Topolobampo, which has beautiful beaches but is not really prepared to offer sanctuary to tourists.

You can also start the trip from the Los Mochis end, where the train leaves just as early in the morning. In either direction, reservations are essential, so make them well in advance.
The First Class train makes seven stops, although only 5 of the seven will hold much interest to most travellers. Most Stops only last a few minutes - not enough time to get off and wander around, except for the one at El Divisadero, where the train stops for 20-30 minutes.

All stations have ambulant vendors, often Tarahumara Peoples - selling their fine handicrafts, so be sure to have cash with you. Tarahumara women, dressed in bright full skirts with several children in tow, sit along the trails and at the entrances to hotels making small, intricately woven baskets from six-inch pine needles.

**NOTE:** Although the Copper Canyon is generally safe and the people friendly, tourists should be aware that you are entering a different culture, in fact two different cultures: Mexican and Tarahumara. By treating the canyon's people with respect and thoughtfulness, your vacation should be carefree.

### Route map of the Copper Canyon railway

#### The ChePe

**Ferrocarril Mexicano Railroad**

Traverse the most rugged railroad in the Western Hemisphere onboard the First Class ChePe Train, which departs daily from Los Mochis and Chihuahua.

The Tables show the schedules for First Class and Economy trains. Times are approximate, and the Economy train often runs behind schedule.
Schedules are subject to change without notice.

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<th>From LOS MOCHIS</th>
<th>First Class</th>
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<td>Chihuahua</td>
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Lots of people like to spend a few days - perhaps up to 10 days - exploring the Copper Canyon region, by riding the train through it, and stopping off at various points en route, taking up lodgings for the night and spending the next day or two exploring the land locally before boarding the train to the next stop. This is a great way to see the Copper Canyon, as you'll experience a lot of features and attractions that are not accessible from the train. The other advantage is that you'll get time to take in the scenery around you. If you see something you like, you can stop to absorb it, instead of watching it disappear into the distance!

What is there to do in the Copper Canyon?

**Horseback Riding**
Most of the Hotels inside the Copper Canyon region can arrange for you to take a horseback ride into parts of the Canyon. Some of the hotels are actually ranches, and the hotel itself provides the horses. Regardless of your horseback riding experience, you'll have the opportunity to experience this great region on horseback - a very eco-friendly and exciting way to see the Copper Canyon wilderness!

**Helicopter Rides & Adventure**
Helicopter rides above the canyon wilderness are available from certain places. Organised Adventure Experiences can be arranged in Copper Canyon with specialist operators locally. Most of the Hotels in the Copper Canyon region will arrange local excursions and tours in the area. You can buy them when you arrive, or book in advance. There are also a number of adventure experience specialists, as the local topography and natural resources in this area, provide excellent natural facilities for some great outdoor adventures! The stunning scenery also makes and excellent backdrop to the whole activity!
When Night Falls

Nightlife in the Copper Canyon revolves around resting, relaxing and reflecting on the day's activities - with friends, round a fire, with good food and drink; out in the night sky, stirring the stars and admiring the moon. Chihuahua City has some night-life - mainly concentrated around hotel lobbies and bars.

Local Climate

The climate in this region changes with the seasons, and heavily influences the times when most people travel through the Canyon. March & April and October & November are the two busiest times at the Canyon. This is because it's the time of the year when the temperatures are at their equinox; at other times the Canyon sears in sweltering heat, or freezes under ice and snow. If you plan to travel through the Canyons during these months, you MUST book in advance - it's the time when most people travel through this location.

Basically, Los Mochis and El Fuerte is warm year round. Chihuahua can be warm in summer, windy almost any time and freezing in the winter. The canyon rim may experience freezes from November to through March; the bottom of the canyon may get cool enough for a sweater. In the other half of the year, it’s hot below and cool above.

Daytime temperatures in the Copper Canyon range from mid-40s to the mid-90s. Evening temperatures range from the teens to the 60’s. Plan to dress in layers. You will also encounter climates ranging from tropical rain forest in coastal areas to semi-arid mountains.

If you don't want to be amongst the high number of visitors here, then you should travel in July through September. This is the rainy season, but the rains will be monsoon-like: thunder, lighting, drenching downpours, and then... it's gone. They cool down the hot days perfectly. The other big advantage of these rainy months is that the water makes the Canyon come alive - its vegetation is lush and green, its rivers deep and rushing. April, May and June are generally dry months. Water shortages are common; the land is arid, dry and less inspiring. It's best to avoid the area in these months, unless you have been before and want to see a contrast!

What to Wear in the Copper Canyon?

Bring Layers:

- Sweaters and long-sleeved shirts
- Sturdy walking shoes or boots – the canyon’s terrain is rough, with uneven walking surfaces
- Lightweight rain coat or overcoat
- Mid to heavy weight jacket for potentially freezing temperatures
- Insect repellent and cortisone cream or calamine lotion if you do get bitten

Point to consider:

Compare apples to oranges!

# 1 Even though the Copper Canyon train ride is one of the most beautiful in the world you CAN'T see the Canyon from the train. "You need time in the Copper Canyon itself to see it".

Therefore, I have arranged 2 nights at each stop inside the canyons.

# 2 Count the number of days you get in the Canyon itself from your tour company.
# 3 Cities "ARE NOT" in the Copper Canyon. They are called soak up days because it is much less expensive to house clients in cities instead of in the Copper Canyon itself.
# 4 Be sure that you know and get pictures of the lodges you will be staying at.
# 5 Make sure that most transfers, meals, train tickets and lodging are included in the price.
# 6 There are some tour companies offering 8 night and 9 night tours of the Copper Canyon but they FAIL TO TELL YOU, that YOU ONLY GET "ONE" DAY AND "ONE " NIGHT IN THE COPPER CANYON!! All the rest are in outlying areas not close to the canyon system.
Here is the detailed information for our trip
I marked the elevation for your information.

Sunday, April 18th, 2004

Lv  Seattle   830am   Alaska Airlines 872
Ar  Phoenix   1116am
Lv  Phoenix   205pm  Aeromexico 465
Ar  Hermosillo 310pm
Lv  Hermosillo 430pm  Aeromexico 2277
Ar  Los Mochis 640pm

Terminus West: Los Mochis
km 78, elevation 75 feet

Los Mochis (Meaning "Place of Turtles") is situated on Mexico's Pacific Coast, about 500 km Northwest of Mazatlan. From a tourist's viewpoint, there's little to see and do here. Its primary tourist functions are to provide a ferry to La Paz, and act as the Western Terminus for the famous Copper Canyon Train Journey. Most people use Los Mochis as a stop-over point, and enjoy some of the tastiest seafood available anywhere in Mexico during their stay.

Los Mochis is the agricultural center of the state of Sinaloa – technical progress and infrastructure combine with excellent soil & weather to produce extensive vegetable, corn, bean, and sugarcane crops in the valley of the Fuerte River. Adventurous travelers will find their visit to Los Mochis exhilarating!

Near Los Mochis, the Port of Topolobampo (approx. 15 miles from Los Mochis) is one of the most important in the Mexican Pacific, famous for its great fishing activities. It is well known, not only for its superb shrimp but also as a thriving commercial and industrial center.

If we follow the course of the Fuerte River through the irrigated fields, we come upon an arid, barren region, uninhabited by humans. From Los Mochis to the sea the area is totally flat, and where the fields end, the marshes begin. Beyond these marshes, a deep green tract of land unfolds before us: a thicket filled with mangroves, bushes and trees. At the mangrove's end, there are huge lagoons and estuaries parallel to the coast teeming with groups of marine and land fauna. These regions are precisely the natural habitat of the yellow cocodrile (Crocodylus acutus). They actually live in the water, and vary considerably in size and weight, since these species can range anywhere from 3.3 feet in length and weight 660 pounds to 38.8 feet and weight over a ton. If nature is your hobby, in the city itself — in the Parque Sinaloa, to be more precise— you can admire the most complete collection of palm trees in Mexico, including rare species brought in from distant corners of the world. It is the perfect setting for a stroll through its delightful lanes flanked by palm trees or for resting on a bench under the shade.

Upon arrival at Los Mochis, we will transfer from the airport to El Fuerte
- 1 night Hotel Posada Hidalgo (no meals)

“ALLLLLL....ABOARD!!!”

A whistle blows, and a conductor shouts the Spanish equivalent of “All aboard.” The diesel engines rev up, people relax in their seats, and off they go on one of the most famous and spectacular rail trips in the Western Hemisphere—the Copper Canyon train trip.
Officially called the Chihuahua al Pacifico Railroad, the rail line runs 406 miles from Los Mochis, on the Gulf of California, to the inland City of Chihuahua. Enroute, the train passes through the incredibly scenic area of rugged mountains and deep canyons in Northern Mexico's Sierra Madre Occidental.

The rail line was first conceived in 1872 as the Kansas City Topolobampo Railroad by an American entrepreneur named Albert Kinsey Owen. By building a railroad from Kansas City across Mexico to the Pacific Coast, he could shorten the distance of the existing route by half, saving over 400 miles. Agricultural products from the interior of the United States could be transported over this shorter route to Topolobampo Bay, a natural seaport, and then carried on by ship to the Orient and western South America.

Construction of the railroad began in 1885. The project faced numerous difficulties, including lack of funds, poor management, some of the most rugged country in North America, the Mexican Revolution, and the building of the Panama Canal.

The rail line was finally completed in November of 1961, almost 90 years from its conception. The trains never did make it all the way to Kansas, but by this time improvements in U.S. domestic transportation had eliminated the need. It did, however, open up one of the most remote areas of Mexico and is still the only method of reliable transportation through the western Sierra Madres.

In order to complete the route, 86 tunnels and 37 bridges were constructed, totaling almost eleven miles of tunnels and 2 1/4 miles of bridges. The train climbs 8000 feet, plunges into a series of canyons and clings to sheer rock walls. At one point along the route it makes a 360 degree loop. At another point it enters a tunnel, makes a 180 degree turn, and exits the tunnel with the canyon now on the opposite side of the train. The views made possible by this masterful engineering feat, considered to be one of the most outstanding achievements of railway engineering in the world, are truly spectacular.

Pack your bags and join us on this remarkable journey. Along with experiencing this spectacular train ride, you will meet the people who make this area of Northern Mexico their home, including the cave-dwelling Tarahumara Indians, who have managed to preserve their traditional life-style despite the encroachment of Spain, Mexico, and the coming of the railroad.

**Station: EL FUERTE**

km 839; elevation 600 feet

Located about an hour's drive northeast of Los Mochis, El Fuerte (The Fort) was founded in 1564 by the Spanish conquistador Don Francisco de Ibarra, the first explorer of the lofty western Sierra Madre Mountains. The town was an important centre in colonial times, and for some years it was the Capital city of Sinaloa, the state in which it resides today. In 1610 a fort was built to ward off the fierce Zuaque and Tehueco indians, who constantly harassed the Spaniards. El Fuerte was the gateway to the last frontiers of northern indians of Sonora, Arizona and California. After subduing warring Sinaloa Zuaque and Tehueco indians, the settlement flourish. For three centuries it was the most important commercial and agricultural center of the vast northern region of Mexico. El Fuerte became a major trading post for silver miners and gold seekers from the Urique, Batopilas and Rain of Gold mines in the nearby Sierra Madre. In 1824, El Fuerte became the capital of what are now the states of Sonora, Sinaloa and part of Arizona. It remained so for several years.

This quaint village set along the banks of the Rio Fuerte and surrounded by large vegetable farms and orchards, does double duty as an alternative departure point for east bound Copper Canyon visitors, and as a tourist destination for sportsmen.

El Fuerte is either your first stop of your train journey or your last stop before your journey's end. Only a replica of the fort that once stood here exists now and you can find it atop the Mirador (Lookout) - which you'll get to by climbing the hill there. The climb is well worth the view.
The cobbled streets and colonial buildings, the Plaza, Palace, Church and colonial atmosphere make this one of the nicest towns on the train's journey and is well worth a stopover for a day. Some people choose El Fuerte as their boarding point for the train, as it is very accessible, since the town is not inside the Sierra Madre wilderness, and doing so means that you don't have to get up excruciatingly early to catch a 6am train from Los Mochis ... that extra hour in bed can make all the difference to some people! :-) Yes!

There is much rich history in and around El Fuerte. You can be sure that a historical walk around this picturesque colonial city of 30,000 people is very rewarding.

- Take the Colonial Walk Tour for historical delight. Visit the colonial church, the municipal palace, the plaza and various old mansions. Ask at the hotel for the booklet with the guide walking tour and map (takes about 1-2 hours).
- Ride to the Tehueco (Blue Sky) Mayo Indian Mission, about 9 miles or 1 hour away. It is the center for Mayo religious fiestas. Tehueco was founded in 1648 and the mission church was built in 1650. The present structure — next to the 1650 ruins — was built in 1811. You can also visit the ancient Indian village of Capomos.
- Go into an exciting raft ride through the Fuerte River, watch the birds and enjoy pure nature!
- Take a taxi or van ride — 9 miles — to see the Nahuatl Petroglyphs, up to 1500 years old. Or you may cross the river by boat and hike 1 mile to the petroglyphs and return (3 hours) and visit Bird Island on the same trip (15 minutes more).
- White-winged Dove and Quail hunting are offered in various areas. You may go horseback riding along El Fuerte River, or even go kayaking.
- Ride to the historical silver mining town of Alamos, 110 miles away (allow 3 hours each way). In the foothills of the Sierra Madre Mountains, you will be delighted with the history, culture and natural wonders in this lovely old city.

HOTEL POSADA DEL HIDALGO

Posada del Hidalgo is a beautiful colonial mansion, built in 1890. The charming open air restaurant features Mexican cuisine with appealing dishes such as broiled freshwater lobster and freshwater black bass, a popular "Anahuacalli" tortilla soup and Mexican shish kebab. There is a fine selection of Spanish heritage Mexican table wines as well. This attractive structure was built in 1890 by Señor Rafael Almada, a wealthy and influential "alcaldé" (mayor) who spent five years and 100,000 gold pesos on its construction. The wooden trim was made from 285 Canadian red pine beams. Don Rafael's mansion was the largest and most beautiful in El Fuerte. It was built just below the old fort, and has four layers of brick and adobe construction. The iron work was brought from Mazatlan.

The hotel has 54 rooms with three styles. One style is the old high ceilings with 240 Amapa wood beams and two story balconies which are the original bedrooms of the mansion. The newer style rooms face the spacious and breathtaking garden, typical of the old tropical colonial houses. All of the rooms are air-conditioned and all have private tile baths. There is an inviting swimming pool, a curio shop and a meeting or convention room. The newer style rooms face the spacious and breathtaking garden, typical of the old tropical colonial houses. The "Casa Vieja" section has 12 beautiful rooms with thorough modern amenities in the colonial design, surrounding tropical garden and beautiful ramada.

Things to do:

- Colonial Walking Tour: A detailed Guide with a Map is available at the Posada del Hidalgo Hotel.
- The Tehueco Mayo Indian Mission: Built in 1650, now the center for Mayo religious fiestas.
- Tour of Ancient Petroglyphs: A one-mile hike to 1,500 year old Nahuatl Petroglyphs.
- Bird Island: A boat ride across the River, to a fantastic estuary – home to a wide variety of thousands of birds
The Father of Mexico

He was a 57 year old priest whose parish was in the city of Dolores, Guanajuato. The date was September 16, 1810. Early that morning Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla had the church bells rung to summon the townspeople to the church, where he told his followers that the time had come to expel the Spaniards who had misgoverned Mexico for so long. His speech, known as the Grito de Dolores, the "Cry of Dolores," set off the Mexican War of Independence, which resulted in Mexico's becoming an independent country.

Hidalgo was born in 1753 on the hacienda where his father was administrator. At twenty years of age he received his Bachelor of Theology degree and lectured in philosophy and theology at San Nicolás Obispo and, after being ordained as a priest, became rector of the school. His ideas and conduct were extremely liberal, which led to his being dismissed from that post, and twice being investigated by the Inquisition, who accused him of reading prohibited books, advocating doctrines of the French Revolution, doubting the virgin birth of Mary, gambling, and keeping a mistress. His last clerical position was that of parish priest in the little town of Dolores. Hidalgo worked hard to improve the lives of his parishioners, mastering their Indian language and teaching them crafts and skills to improve their economic condition. He also introduced winemaking and silk culture, two industries which the government declared illegal in the colonies, and one day government officials came to the village and destroyed the vines and mulberry trees.

Late in the eighteenth century it became fashionable among cultured criollos, persons of Spanish descent who were born in Mexico, to form literary societies, which met for tea and cakes and discussed the classics. They also smuggled into the country books which were banned by the Church, such as the works of Rousseau, Voltaire, and Descartes. The literary societies gradually became political societies. Father Hidalgo belonged to one of these societies whose members were plotting a revolution to separate Mexico from Spain. The group selected Hidalgo to lead the movement, and thus on the morning of September 16th, 1810, Hidalgo, with his "Cry of Dolores" launched the revolution, and the rebel army set forth, armed with machetes, swords, knives, clubs, axes, and a few muskets. As they passed through each town they opened the local jails and recruited the prisoners for their cause. Eventually their numbers grew to sixty thousand. After six months of fighting, Hidalgo fell into a royalist trap and was captured. Because he was a priest, he was subjected to a lengthy hearing by the Inquisition, after which he was found guilty of heresy and treason, defrocked, and, on July 30, 1811, executed by a firing squad in the city of Chihuahua. His head, along with those of three other revolutionary leaders, was cut off and sent to Guanajuato, where it was put on a pole and displayed for a decade.

After Hidalgo's death, the revolutionary movement continued until September 28, 1821, when Mexico finally became an independent nation. In Mexico, Hidalgo is credited with arousing the spirit of rebellion against the Spanish oppression. Because of his patriotism, his championing of human rights and his personal courage, he is considered by Mexicans to be the father of their nation and the symbol of Mexican independence. Each year on September 15, Independence Day is celebrated throughout Mexico, with parades, fireworks, and the cry of "Mexicanos, Viva Mexico!"
Monday, April 19th

CEROCAHUI
km 669; elevation 5,550 feet

Transfer hotel/train station
-2 nights Mision de Cerocahui (3 meals per person)

After a quick breakfast, you'll hop on the Chihuahua-Pacific Railroad for the train ride of your life!! This morning will definitely be one of the finest. You will enjoy first-class seats and service to Cerocahui, Chihuahua. Drinks will be readily available, as will scenery and some real photography opportunities. Riding the train from west to east guarantees that the most exciting and scenic part of the trip, the 150 miles from the Rio Fuerte Bridge, about 18 miles east of El Fuerte, to Creel, a kind of frontier town along the way, is made during daylight hours, especially since delays are endemic. Those going east to west risk making this part of the trip after dark.

For the best views it is essential to sit on the south, or right-hand, side of the train as it travels east. Having a cloth to wipe off the windows is another good idea.

Station: BAUHICHIVO

Bauhichivo isn't a town, it's a train depot. The place never existed before the train line was built. However, just 10 km from this stop is Cerocahui (pronounced "Seroh-Kah-Wee"), a small village with less than 1,000 inhabitants, and 3 luxury hotels. Guests are transported by hotel buses from Bauhichivo to Hotel Mision along a picturesque mountain road. Unusual rock formations and beautiful streams help make the 35 minutes ride enjoyable.

Cerocahui is the first village inside the Canyon wilderness, and apart from being a quaint little place to see and explore, it's a great place from which to explore deeper into the Canyon. Urique is an old mining town from the days when Silver was a major trade in this part of the world. A wonderful virgin landscape setting in the middle of the mysterious Tarahumara Indian country, the charming village of Cerocahui is located at the edge of Urique Canyon — the deepest canyon in the Sierra Tarahumara, in a valley dotted with apple orchards. Cerocahui is built around a historic old mission church, with rambling unpaved streets. Constructed in the late 1600s, the Church of Cerocahui was renovated in the 1940’s by Padre Andres Lara – the man credited with founding Cerocahui. In 1941 the good Padre founded the Tarahumara Indian Boarding School, which continues operation today. He also built the first road to Bauhichivo during the mid-50s and brought the first vehicle to the area — a 1958 Ford pickup he called his "Niña" (little girl). The Padre died in Guadalajara in 1976 and his remains were taken to the religious cemetery in Sisoguichi. On March 11, 1997 his remains were returned to Cerocahui where they presently rest in the walls of his beloved church.

You will arrive in early afternoon to find the spectacular Hotel La Mision waiting for you with beautiful, Mexican-Indian style, suites and a grand lunch to replenish you after the trip. This afternoon will be spent in and around Cerocahui. Dinner will be served at the Hotel, which is notorious for some of the finest cuisine around.

Hotel Mision

The Hotel Mision is a comfortable and very picturesque place to stay. We invite you to visit the bar for before or after dinner drinks and completely relax while you take in all that this popular part of Mexico has to offer. The Hotel is located across from the old Mission church dating back to the mid-1500s. The hotel offer spectacular views and arrange excursions into the canyons. The Hotel Vineyard, planted in 1986, produces the Table Wines.
Horseback rides take you through stunning scenery, marvellous waterfalls and secluded areas of natural beauty. Across the street from the hotel is the historic old mission church, with the original altar dating back to the mid-1700s still intact. The village was actually founded in 1694 by Jesuit missionaries. Highlights of a visit include the Mission School, hotel vineyards and a tour to the spectacular Urique Canyon. Hikers will enjoy trekking to the nearby Cerocahui Waterfall in a secluded canyon.

Hotel Mision is a charming, well-run picturesque inn with its own on-site vineyard. Here you will find only 42 comfortable rooms, a spacious lobby-lounge with a cozy fireplace, bar, gift shop and fine dining. Enjoy the comfort of home in the landscaped gardens, orchards, and charming Spanish style courtyard. Spacious rooms with attractive Mexican decor have private baths with wood stoves. Listen to and enjoy nightly music the way it has been played in this exciting and remote part of the world for centuries.

**The Little Village of Cerocahui**

Nestled in a picturesque valley surrounded by Mexico's magnificent Sierra Madre Mountains, is the little village of Cerocahui, the most beautiful of all the mountain villages of southwestern Chihuahua State. Cerocahui, with its old mission church, was founded in 1680 by the Italian Jesuit, Juan Maria de Salvatierra. It is said that Father Salvatierra, who founded many missions in the area, considered this to be his favorite. Over the centuries, the 300-year old church, with its lovely stained glass windows, fell into disrepair. In 1948 it was extensively reconstructed. Services are now held there for the towns people and the local Tarahumara Indians, and the church also operates an Indian orphanage and boarding school.

Walking around Cerocahui, which has a population of around 600, you can find people with skills which seem to belong to a bygone era. There are cowboys, prospectors, blacksmiths, and a man who makes rawhide lariats.

Just a mile from "downtown" Cerocahui is the Paraiso del Oso Lodge, located in a picturesque valley, surrounded by large rock formations. The lodge is owned and operated by American Doug Rhodes, who takes pride in the delicious Mexican food served at his lodge and in the fine horses he offers to guests who wish to ride.

From the lodge, Doug offers a one-day tour down to the bottom of the canyon and the old silver mining town of Urique. Established in 1612, Urique was active eight years before the first pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock.
Tuesday, April 20th
Tour to Cerro del Gallego Peak

Today, we will take a special great five-hour bus tour of El Gallego at 7,500 feet to look down over a mile into Urique Canyon on a journey that takes us past high mountain vistas and remote ranchos. We'll see the Urique River and the mining town of Urique below. Urique is an old mining town from the days when Silver was a major trade in this part of the world. Urique Canyon is the deepest canyon in the Sierra Tarahumara. The Cerro del Gallego Peak provides an outstanding panoramic view, with horizons full of ravines and blue skies. Tours to the bottom of the Canyon and the Tarahumara Indian Caves along with hiking into the canyon depths and optional horseback riding are also available from the hotel.

Wednesday, April 21st

Transfer hotel/train station

2 nights Hotel El Mirador de Posadas Barrancas (3 meals per person)

You will rise to eat a leisurely breakfast and do some more sight-seeing on your own. This will give you a chance to go at your own pace and visit any of the numerous historic churches and buildings in town. The Plaza de Artesanias will, most likely be high on your list of places to go. At about 1:00pm you will catch a ride to, arguably, the most magnificent accommodations of the trip. I'm referring to your stay at La Posada Barrancas Mirador. The hotel is perched on the side of the Copper Canyon itself, which is expansive. It is a perfect setting-out point for views of Urique, Copper, and Tararecua Canyons. Other features of the area include a pristine alpine lake, numerous interesting rock formations, and spectacular bird-watching opportunities, including Hummingbirds galore! Dinner will be served in the wall-windowed dining hall, overlooking the canyon, and will be perfect for your night's meal in the Copper Canyon area.

Station: BARRANCAS EL DIVISADERO
km 622. elevation 7,400 feet

The midway point between Los Mochis & Chihuahua, El Divisidero offers some of the Copper Canyon’s best vantage points. Many large natural caves in the region provide habitat for the Tarahumara Indians – some are considered sacred places were ceremonies and festivals are still held. The Tarahumara women weave their baskets in front of the Hotel Mirador, and the best "made on the spot" baskets in the whole canyon system are sold here. These two stations have been grouped together, as they are less than 4 km apart. If you are just taking the train ride and not stopping en-route, then this is your only chance to get out and see a spectacular view of the Copper Canyon, as the train stops long enough to get and see the scenery standing still! This stop leaves you about 2,400 metres above sea level, on par with Creel - and for this reason - the views are breathtaking. If you buy a package tour across the region, it's likely to include a stop here, as the hotels offer stunning views and horseback excursions into the canyon, which are very popular and come highly recommended by all who have experienced them. If you're travelling from Los Mochis, you'll arrive at Barrancas first. If you are travelling from Chihuahua, then you'll stop at Divisadero first - this is where the train stops for 20-30 minutes, and the place where you'll get the views described above.

The Tarahumara Indians will be here selling their fine handicrafts, wood-carvings, pine baskets and dolls - much more besides - don't miss the opportunity to buy something really unique and really special from these people. Cash only, of course, so make sure you come prepared. All of the main hotels at Barrancas & Divisadero have mini-buses that pick up guest from the train.
The Mirador Hotel is poised like an eagle's nest at the canyon's edge. Near the highest point of the canyon, the Mirador Hotel overlooks awe-inspiring scenery from the rim of Copper Canyon. This beautiful structure is unique in architecture and decor and each of its 48 luxurious rooms and suites has a private terrace where you can enjoy one of the finest views of the canyon. It is a bird watchers paradise. Spacious rooms, each with a fireplace and private terrace, make the most of the spectacular vista. The glass-paneled main foyer, dining area, and cozy bar all overlook the canyon. Decorated in style reflecting the Tarahumara Indian culture, the hotel has a bar, restaurant, conference room, and gift shop.

The Tarahumara women weave their baskets in front of this hotel, and the best “made on the spot” baskets in the whole canyon system are sold here, including unglazed clay pots, leather thong sandals and simple musical instruments, at some of the most reasonable prices in the region. Accommodations have special style and design reflecting the Tarahumara Indian influence and culture of the state of Chihuahua. Each room has a private bath, two double beds and authentic custom-made furniture. A restaurant and bar, conference room and a gift shop add to the visitor's enjoyment. Demonstration of Tarahumara dancing and racing is available for groups. Enjoy a Happy Hour Fiesta with live music in the afternoon, followed by dinner.
The hotel has stone paths to different nearby sites for the comfort of the guests. You might take a horseback or jeep excursion to a Tarahumara Indian village, wander down a path to an inhabited Tarahumara cave dwelling located in the cliffs beneath the hotel, or—if you are really adventurous— hike down to the canyon floor.

Just 400 yards away, daily bus transportation is provided from the train station to the hotel.

• A moderate to difficult hike on a new trail takes you to the Tarahumara Ranch of Wakajípare. Approximately 5 miles round trip, or 4 hours.
• For the more adventurous, a difficult hike will take you to the Urique River, at the bottom of Copper Canyon. Arrive at Wakajípare village first and then go on to the river. Approximately 12 miles round trip — it takes about 16 hours with overnight camping.
• Visit the church and school at the nearby village of Areponapuchic. Visitors are welcome. A one hour easy walk on a gravel road.
• One hour of easy switch-back walking takes you to a Tarahumara Home called "Cueva del Chino".
• Trek to El Puerto Overlook of Cooper Canyon and Tararecua Canyon for Tarahumara rancho sites and spectacular views of the canyon — 3 miles round trip, about 2 hours. Adding 2 and a half hour to this, you may arrive at a superb view of the Urique River. A moderate hike, approximately 5 miles round trip to the river view.
• Visit the Divisadero Overlook of the Tararecua and Copper Canyons. Crafts from all over Mexico are sold here. The village of Areponapuchic is included in the 2 hours tour. Divisadero is also a 4.8 mile round trip walk on the road — 2 and a half hours, moderate hike.
• Ride to the town of Creel and the valley of the Mushroom Rocks, Lake Arareko, Cusárare Mission, Cusárare Falls and Tarahumara cave homes — 6 hours on all pave roads.

Thursday, April 22^nd^  
EXCURSION TO CREEL  
km 564 elevation 7,708 feet

Creel is a frontier village built to house railroad workers in the early 1900’s. The town has the feeling of a late 19th century lodging town and is set high in the mountains in a valley surrounded by pine forest.

With a population of less than 4,000, Creel (pronounced "Krehl") is a small town with a high elevation, at the heart of the Copper Canyon train journey. The town is surrounded by pine forests, and is in fact, a lumber town - the town's mill is still there today, and during the summer months, the sweet, natural aroma of pine fills the air around you.

Head to the city’s hilltop Mirador for a great view of the valley and surrounding granite rock formations. Two churches flank the city’s small main square next to the rail station. Next door to the Nuestra Señora de Lourdes church is the Mission store, featuring an excellent collection of Tarahumara crafts.

The town is worth a stopover in order to be able to take advantage of the excursions available from here. They include:
• A day trip to Cascada de Basaseachi, Basaseachic Falls: At 890 feet – the waterfall is especially dramatic during fall months. This waterfall is claimed to be the tallest falls in North America.
• Recohuata Hot Springs Excursion.
• Batopilas - an old silver mining town is about 140 km away from Creel, so an overnight stay will be required there.
~ The Village of Cusárare: An easy walk to the spectacular 90 ft tall Cusárare Falls, as well as numerous Indian Cave dwellings, cave paintings, rock pillars with balancing stones, and the Cusárare Jesuit Mission which dates to 1744.

~ Lake Arareco: A lovely lake with excellent trail leads around the lake’s shore, near the Jesuit Mission of San Ignacio.

~ Creel Helicopter Tours: View the Copper Canyon from a bird’s eye view – breathtaking! Many of these tours will be very long days, and could involve hiking. Creel will afford you the opportunity to do a bit of shopping at some of the craft shops there, as well as to replenish your cash supply at the ATM in town. In Creel you'll find lots of places to purchase local crafts. The largest store is the Artesanias Mission, located near the train station. The prices are reasonable and the profits go to a Mission Hospital serving the Tarahumara Indians.

What to Buy in Copper Canyon
Don't miss the opportunity to buy fine art and craftwork from the local Tarahumara Indians in the canyon. Their specialties include pine baskets, dolls, violins, rugs and blankets, flutes, pottery and traditional clothing and wood carvings. Everything is unique and hand-made. Don't miss the opportunity to buy some stunningly unique pieces of Tarahumara craftwork on your way through the Copper Canyon! Stock up with plenty of Pesos before you set out on your journey!

Plan your currency requirements carefully when you're travelling in the Copper Canyon. Banks with ATM machines can be found in Los Mochis, Chihuahua and Creel (inside the Canyon area), but very few places otherwise. During business hours, they and the Casas de Cambio will buy traveller's cheques and cash from you as well.

Copper Canyon Crafts
Visitors to the Copper Canyon area are always pleasantly surprised by the wide variety of craftware and folk art available for purchase. The remote life and character of the Tarahumara Indians has fostered a tradition of crafts making as a part of their life-style. While traveling through the region you will find very inexpensively priced baskets, belts, dolls, pottery and musical instruments.

The baskets are made out of the leaves of the agave as well as pine needles and range in size from tiny to large. Visitors purchasing baskets find that they can pack them one inside the other to conserve space during their trip. Once at home, the baskets of pine needles hold their scent of pine forests and become a wonderful reminder of the trip, and they are utilitarian as well as beautiful. The Tarahumara pottery is quite sturdy and is designed to be more functional then decorative.

Music is an important part of the Indians daily living and also plays an important roll in their ceremonies and festivals. Their musical instruments include violins, drums and wooden flutes. They learned the art of violin making from the Spaniards in the 18th century.

Carved wooden dolls dressed in typical Tarahumara fashion are for sale in a variety of sizes and portray the various activities of Tarahumara life—mothers wearing shawls while carrying babies on their backs, ladies weaving on hand-loom, and men carrying tools or musical instruments and wearing their traditional headgear.

Crafts can be purchased from the Indians who set up their merchandise on rocks along the trails and in all sorts of unlikely nooks and crannies. Crafts are also available in stores, and one that we recommend is the Mission Store in Creel, located right on the town square. Profits go to the hospital which serves the Tarahumara Indians.
Who Are the Tarahumara?

In the summer of 1993, two of our California Native guides, Doug Stewart and Lynn Reineke, escorted a small group of Indians from the depths of Mexico's Copper Canyon to Leadville, Colorado, where they astounded the world of marathon racing by coming in first, second and fourth place in a 100 mile ultra-marathon race, wearing their native garb and sandals made out of discarded tires. Who were these strangely-dressed people, who came from obscurity to outpace hundreds of experienced runners?

They call themselves the Rarámuri, the Runners, and they inhabit the rugged and remote area of mountains and canyons in Mexico known as the Barrancas del Cobre or Copper Canyon. They are known to the outside world as the Tarahumara. No one knows how long the Tarahumara have lived in their rugged homeland. Archaeologists have found artifacts of people living in the area three thousand years ago, but it is not known if they were the ancestors of the present day Indians.

There is no recorded history of the Tarahumara prior to the coming of the Spaniards in the sixteenth century. Their first European contact may have been with Coronado's expedition as it passed through the Sierra Madres searching for the legendary Seven Golden Cities of Cibola. In 1607 the Jesuit missionary Father Juan Fonte established the first Jesuit mission in their territory. During the next one hundred and fifty years, the Jesuits built twenty-nine missions and introduced the Indians to Catholicism, domestic animals, the plow and the axe. Their influence came to an abrupt halt in 1767 when the King of Spain expelled their order from the New World. The Franciscans took over from the Jesuits, but their influence on the Tarahumara was minimal and the Indians were pretty much left alone until the Jesuits returned in 1900.

The Tarahumara have traditionally lived in isolated family units and small settlements. The Spaniards tried to bring them into more concentrated communities but the strong-willed Tarahumara managed to resist these efforts, and today a large number still live in small, isolated groups. During the time of the Jesuits, mineral wealth was discovered in the region and many Indians were forced to work as slaves in the mines. This and the encroachment of the Spaniards upon their lands, led to many bloody revolts throughout the seventeenth century. Today the Tarahumara number around 50,000. They still inhabit the same region they have for centuries—the rugged Sierra Madre Occidental of northern Mexico. They live in caves and small wood or stone cabins and practice subsistence farming. The majority practice a form of Catholicism liberally inter-mixed with their traditional beliefs and ceremonies.

Among the peoples of North America, the Tarahumara are considered to be the most primitive, the least touched by modern civilization. They are also the most unmixed of any of the Indian tribes of Mexico. Many of the men and most of the women still dress in their traditional styles. The ladies wear wide multiple skirts, full sleeved blouses, a head band or bandana, and a shawl for carrying a child or other objects on their backs. The little girls dress the same as their mothers and often carry a little brother or sister on their backs. The men wear a breech-cloth held together by a wool girdle wrapped around the waist, a cloth head band, and a loose cotton shirt.

Running up and down the steep canyons is an important part of the Tarahumara culture, not only as a means of transportation and communication in this rugged area, but as a sport in which villages compete against each other. From the time they are small children the Tarahumara take great pride in their running skills. In the Rarámuri philosophy, respect for others is of prime importance. They give greater value to persons than to objects, and business matters take second place to respect for human beings. On our monthly trips through Copper Canyon we also learn to respect other people, especially the Rarámuri, as we meet them, discover their unique culture and perhaps adopt some of their philosophy into our own lives.
Tarahumara Indians

In addition to being richly endowed with rock formations, stunning vistas and excellent hiking terrain, Copper Canyon country is also the land of the Tarahumara, a pastoral, semi-nomadic tribe first documented by Spanish missionaries in the 17th century. They fled into these mountains from the lowlands initially to escape the Spaniards and then, about 100 years ago, to flee persecution by the regime of the dictator Porfirio Diaz. It is the largest tribe in North America after the Navajos.

The dignified and reclusive Tarahumara Indians are a tribe, who has chosen to live apart from modern western culture. They live primitively, subsisting on corn, beans, and their livestock. In the winter they live in caves, moving into small log cabins in the summer. The Tarahumara — like most Native American tribes — have suffered since the arrival of the conquistadors.

They are excellent weavers and produce fine wool blankets to provide warmth during the harsh winters of the canyon. Though they were not hit as hard as some other tribes by smallpox and other European diseases, many Tarahumara suffer from tuberculosis; and their lifespan is, on average, fairly short. Jesuit missionaries have helped to alleviate the effects of disease and have encouraged some of the Tarahumara children to attend school. There are tours available from Creel which will take you to a Jesuit mission and into a Tarahumara cave house. The tours can give you at least a fleeting glimpse of the Tarahumara culture.

According to the legend of the ancient dwellers of the sierra, the world was created by Rayenari — Sun God — and Metzaka — Moon Goddess. In their honor, in the present times they dance, sacrifice animals and drink "tesguino". There, where the western Sierra Madre becomes rough and uneven, the Tarahumara — who call themselves Raramuri (Light Feet) — live. The most important activity among them is growing corn and bean and some raise cattle. Due to the fragility of their economy some look for work in the wood mills. The life of this group has changed; the ancient Raramuri had a balanced diet, besides eating regional fruit and vegetables, they hunted wild animals. In the present, industrialized products in their diet might not provide them with all the nutritional ingredients. At present, the Tarahumara constitute the largest indigenous group in the state of Chihuahua. The number varies from 50,000 to 75,000 although is difficult to determine precisely because of the inaccessibility of the mountains, and the deficient communication links.

The mountainous region is divided in two large regions called Alta and Baja Tarahumara, corresponding the first to the part dominated by the Sierra Madre Occidental dominates and the second to the area west of the same sierra, including the zone of the canyons that forms the warm lands of the state. The men are svelte, with strong muscles, recognized as the best long distance runners.

The women are shorter, with oval faces, black and oblique eyes and straight nose. The men wear a hair band known as "kowera", huaraches, and loose shirt. The women wore a wide skirt and loose blouse, the hair usually covered with aawl, and a wool waistband known as "pukera". Their language is sweet and with abundance of words referring to customs and their environment, with polite words like: "I greet you, as the dove that warbles; I wish you health and happiness with your loved ones." Each house has a hearth and in the bowls they make they cook maize and beans that were harvested during the season. Among the Tarahumaras everything belongs to everybody, private property does not exist, so they share food and housing. They elect a governor — a man who distinguishes for his services to others and his intelligence — who in turn elect "governadorcillos": priests, shamans, and sages. These go all over their corresponding towns preaching the pride of being Raramuri, the customs and morals to uphold; function as judges in problems and are in charge of prayers.

As for clothing, there are innumerable styles of "serapes" of beautiful texture and very simply adorned, that are never seen except on the backs of natives. Tarahumara serapes are heavy and roughly woven, of natural wool colors, mostly unadorned, which possess that peculiar beauty derived solely from texture and simplicity. A similar trade relationship to the "compadres" exists among the Tarahumaras, but the participants are called «morawas» instead of "compadres", meaning in their language the joining together of two people who have traded together. When the goods are cattle, the buyer and seller touch each other’s shoulder, saying "Dios cuida morawa" — God protect the morawa — And when one morawa visits another, the guests will be honored with a stool or goatskin to sit on in a preferred place near the fire. There is always a great deal of reserve between the sexes, especially in the conservative groups. Among the Tarahumara, a man calling at the home of a friend will make his presence known before approaching the door of the house, and if the woman is alone he does not enter but remains at a distance. Unless there is a close relationship, men and women generally talk to one another only when necessary and then at a respectful distance with averted faces.
Surviving and Thriving in Copper Canyon

Anthropologist Carl Lumholtz predicted that the Tarahumara Indians would disappear within a century. A hundred years later, these gentle people, who inhabit Mexico's Copper Canyon, continue to be the most populous indigenous group in northern Mexico.

Spanish explorers had entered the Sierra Madre Mountains by the mid-16th century. Gold and silver were soon discovered and mines began operating. The Indians were pressed into the labor force, often enduring the harshest conditions.

The Jesuits established their first mission pueblo in 1611. Although many attempted to ease the burden of the Indians, a great deal of prejudice existed. An early Jesuit wrote, "They are inclined to idleness, drunkenness and other vices. They are ungrateful, dull and stupid...very cunning and alert in evil things...They have no sense of personal honor nor the honor of their daughters."

Forced to live in artificially-created communities, the Indians were susceptible to a variety of diseases, and epidemics swept the area. As the demand for labor increased, the Spanish raided the mission pueblos. The Jesuits managed to protect some of their charges, but many Tarahumara fled, hiding deep in Copper Canyon. The expulsion of the Jesuits from the Americas, in 1767, ended their efforts to protect the Indians, and the Franciscans, who succeeded them, were not as effective.

Mexico attained independence in 1821 and soon established huge land grants in Tarahumara country. The Indians were uprooted again, and fled, often onto lands of other indigenous people. Fighting often resulted.

The Revolution of 1910-21 resulted in the re-creation of the pre-hispanic communal landholding system known as the ejido. The Tarahumara received some benefits from this, as much of this land has economic potential for lumbering, agriculture, and tourism. Around 50,000 Tarahumara still inhabit caves and simple dwellings in Copper Canyon.

The California Native has for many years assisted these people, donating clothing, school supplies and money. Some of our travelers have returned to volunteer in local clinics. Tourism is a positive factor, and visitors gain a new appreciation for these noble people who have survived and thrived despite Lumholtz' dire predictions.

Easter in Copper Canyon

Easter in Copper Canyon is the most colorful time of year. Small towns which are sleepy most of the year now are full of tourists—both Mexican and foreign—who have come to see the Easter celebrations of the Tarahumara Indians. The tourists cluster with their cameras in the Indian villages, but most of them have little idea of what is going on.

To begin to understand the Tarahumara ceremonies, one has to have a basic understanding of Indians' religion. The Tarahumaras are outwardly Catholic, but their version of Catholicism is unlike any form we are familiar with.

In 1602, the Jesuits brought Christianity to the Indians, who adopted it, but interpreted and modified it to conform to their own customs and ideas. In 1767, King Charles III of Spain expelled the Jesuits from the New World, and the Tarahumaras, on their own now, continued to develop their religious beliefs and rituals. Their resulting theology is as follows:

God is the father of the Tarahumara and is associated with the sun. His wife, the Virgin Mary, is their mother and is associated with the moon. God has an elder brother, the Devil, who is the uncle of the Indians. The Devil
is the father of all non-Indians, whom the Tarahumara call chabóchi, "whiskered ones". At death, the souls of the Tarahumara ascend to heaven while those of the chabóchi go to the bottom-most level of the universe. The well-being of the Tarahumara depends on their ability to maintain the proper relations with God and the Devil. God is benevolent, but they must not fail to reward His attentions adequately. The Devil is the opposite, and will cause the Indians illness and misfortune unless they propitiate him with food. God is pleased by the dancing, chanting, feasting, and offerings of food and corn beer, that are a part of all Tarahumara religious festivals. The Devil is also pleased because the Indians bury food for him at these fiestas.

Of all the religious ceremonies throughout the year, the Easter celebrations are the most important. Hundreds of men, women, and children converge on the local church from villages as far away as fifteen miles. These celebrations are for socializing and having a good time, but the Indians also expect their efforts to please God so that He will give them long lives, abundant crops, and healthy children.

The Easter rituals concern the relationship between God and the Devil. Although God and the Devil are brothers, and occasionally get along, the Devil is usually bent on destroying God. Most of the time God fends the Devil off. But each year, immediately prior to Holy Week, the Devil succeeds by trick or force in rendering God dangerously vulnerable. The Easter ceremonies are intended to protect and strengthen God so that He can prevent the Devil from destroying the world.

Each of the men and boys of the community takes part in the ceremonies as a member of one of two groups. The first group, the Pharasees, are the Devil's allies, and carry wooden swords, painted white with ochre designs. The second group, the Soldados, the Soldiers, are allied with God, and carry bows and arrows.

The celebrations begin on the Saturday prior to Palm Sunday, with speeches and ritualized dances. The Pharisees, their bodies smeared with white earth, and the Soldados, dance to the beating of drums and the melody of reed whistles. About midnight, a mass is held in the church. Shortly after sunrise, bowls of beef stew, stacks of tortillas and tamales and bundles of ground, parched maize, are lifted to the cardinal directions, allowing the aroma to waft heavenward to be consumed by God. The food is then distributed among the people. At mid-morning the Soldados and Pharisees set up wooden crosses marking the stations of the cross, a mass is held, and the priest leads a procession around the churchyard, with the participants carrying palm branches. Three days later, on Holy Wednesday, the ceremonies resume, and for the next three days there are processions around the church. The point of the processions is to protect the church and, by extension, God and God's wife. On the afternoon of Good Friday, the Pharisees appear with three figures made of wood and long grasses representing Judas, Judas's wife, and their dog. To the Indians, Judas is one of the Devil's relatives, and they call him Grandfather and his wife Grandmother. Judas and his wife wear Mexican-style clothing and display their oversized genitalia prominently. The Pharisees and Soldados parade the figures around the church, dancing before them. The Pharisees then hide the figures away for the night.

On Saturday morning, the Soldados and Pharisees engage in wrestling matches, battling symbolically for control of Judas. The Soldados then take possession, shoot arrows into the three figures and then set them afire. The people then retire to continue the celebrations at the many tesguino drinking parties held in the surrounding countryside.

**Tarahumara Dances**

**Dutuburi Dance**

The simple primitive dances of the Tarahumaras are still vehicles for all their prayers. There used to be the *rutuburi* and *yumari*, but now both are combined in the *dutuburi*, which is danced at all fiestas, on all ceremonial occasions, as well as for curing the sick and dispatching the dead. All Tarahumaras have dance patios near their huts and are constantly giving small and big "tejuinadas" —dancing, drinking, and praying parties. To make the prayers effective, an animal must be sacrificed and his blood offered to Father Sun, who command the people to dance. This dance is always performed out of doors, so that Father Sun and Mother Moon may witness it, and near three crosses, because the dancing and singing is directed to them as well. Another small cross is placed at the edge or just outside of the patio when the *dutuburi* is being danced to ward off sickness. When food is placed on the altar, a small vessel of it is put near the cross with the formula: "Sickness is going to eat; after eating it will go away."
**Peyote Dance**
The Peyote dance is also simple but a little different. About ten men and women take part in it. The women are led into the dance patio by the two assistant chanters, the men following. Then all dance around a fire to a tune played on a violin and a guitar, at intervals slapping their mouths and shouting.

**Pascola and Matachines**
The Tarahumaras also have Pascola and Matachine dances, which they had adopted at some time in the past, and always perform at Catholic fiestas. The pascolas wear the same rattling «tenabari» and jingling belts and do clogging steps like those of the Yaquis, but there the resemblance ends. On Friday of Holy Week at Samachique one lone pascola, accompanied by two little boys, enters the church to dance in the four directions and then continues to the music of a violin and guitar in the convent patio, where he is given food and tesguino. Later another pascola may join him. The pascolas also dance for the dead. The Matachines dance in greater numbers and seem to be more important, their organization and costumes differing in the various villages. Those of Samachique dress more elaborately than others. They wear a red cloth cape with a blue or white lining, reaching to the knees, over an ordinary white cotton shirt; two pairs of trousers, the red outer ones cut so at the knees that the white pair shows bagging; a belt from which hang red bandannas in front and back; long colored stocking and real shoes of any kind available. The mitote is their sacred instrument and is played only for the corn rites. The players are generally old medicine men. The fathers teach their sons music, as all the other arts.

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**About Batopilas**
For many, one of the true highlights of a trip to Copper Canyon is the village of Batopilas. Just an 80 mile drive south of Creel, Batopilas is a world away. The first half of the drive from Creel to Batopilas is on a two-lane paved road. Traveling through two smaller canyons, this is just the warm-up for the ride to come. The last half of the road is on a single-lane, narrow and steep road to the bottom of Batopilas Canyon. Riders really appreciate the experience of the drivers when the time comes to pass another vehicle with just inches separating the vehicles and inches between the outside bus and the drop to the bottom of the canyon. At times the canyon floor is 3,000 feet lower than the road and you can see the road at the bottom. The area is inhabited by Tarahumara indians living in small cabins and caves in the surrounding mountains. Cows and goats can be seen in the hills along with the wreckage of cars and trucks that failed to negotiate the treacherous road.

The difficulty of the road along with most riders’ wishes to stop and see some of the vistas makes the trip to Batopilas a full day’s drive from Creel. When you finally reach Batopilas you’ll find yourself in a different climate and, seemingly a different age.

Just over 1,000 people live in the town along with many more cows, chickens, goats and horses. With the Rio Batopilas flowing right through town and steep mountains along both sides of the river, there’s room for just one small road through most of Batopilas. The narrow street is made of cobblestones and lined with old stores and houses. The climate is much different than at the rim of the canyon. At about 2,000 feet above sea level, you can see orange and banana trees among the vegetation growing in the village.

Sightseeing highlights include a five mile trip to the small town and lost mission in Satevo, the ruins of the silver mining operation that dominated the region before the Mexican Revolution and the chance to walk deep into the mountains through old mind shafts nearly 100 years old. There are several small hotels in town along with a few restaurants. If Batopilas doesn’t slow down your pace, nowhere will.

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**Copper Canyon is for the Birds**

**By Chuck Rau**
Less than 300 miles below the U.S. border lie some of the most rugged and remote areas of northwestern Mexico—the region known as Copper Canyon.

This part of Mexico has some of the most varied habitats in North America, from the Madrean Conifer Forests at 8,000 feet on the canyon rims to sub-tropical areas in the canyon bottoms. With four distinctly different Biotic communities there is a wide diversity of flora and fauna. This is especially true with respect to bird life.
California Native trips through Copper Canyon travel through all four Biotic communities and participants see a great variety of birds. There are at least 270 species found in the region, many of which cannot be found in the United States.

Traveling on the Copper Canyon train you can see Black-throated Magpie Jays, Mourning and White-winged Doves, and Vermilion Flycatchers. On the tops of the Organ Pipe cactus perch Black vultures, with their wings out-stretched to catch the warming rays of the rising sun, and Crested Caracaras, the bird depicted on the National Emblem of Mexico.

At Divisadero, "The Viewpoint", where a breath-taking view overlooks the deepest part of the canyon, Barn Swallows, White-throated and Black Swifts soar over the canyon rim and walks through the surrounding woodlands turn up exciting birds like Blue-throated and Magnificent hummingbirds, Zone-tailed Hawks, and Hairy Woodpeckers. One time we watched a flock of about a dozen rare and endangered Thick-billed parrots fly by just below the rim of the canyon, right in front of our hotel.

At Lake Arareco, not far from the small town of Creel, are various types of waterfowl including Buffleheads, Ring-necked ducks, Blue-winged teals and even an occasional Osprey. A hike to Cusarare Falls brings sightings of Mexican Chickadees, Red-Faced Warblers, Brown creepers, White-eared Hummingbirds, Dippers, Belted Kingfishers and the rare and elusive Eared Trogon, probably the most beautiful bird of the area.

In the semi-tropical habitat at the bottom of the canyon, at Batopilas, an entirely different array of birds can be seen. Broad-billed, Berylline, Violet-crowned and Lucifer hummingbirds frequent the many flowers. In the fruit trees are Orioles and Tanagers. Along the riverside Riparian areas there is always the chance to see White-fronted and Lilac-crowned Parrots and Elegant Trogons.

One time while visiting the ancient Cathedral at Satevo, 3 miles down river from Batopilas, I looked up to see three Military Macaws flying near by. These large beautiful green and blue parrots are at the most northern part of their range and seeing them is a memorable experience.

With its close proximity to the U.S. and unique blending of varied habitats, Copper Canyon affords a great opportunity to see many unique bird species while at the same time enjoying the spectacular scenery of the Sierra Madres.

Chuck is a Biologist and professional nature photographer. His articles and photographs have appeared in many magazines and publications including Arizona Highways, Birder's World, and Wild Bird. His areas of specialization have led to his work on many diverse projects including his role as a birding consultant for the Nature Science Network.

**Star Gazing in Copper Canyon**

By Chuck Rau

Deep, spectacular canyons, breathtaking vistas, remote mountain villages and the cave-dwelling Tarahumara Indians—these are all great reasons to join us on our Copper Canyon adventures. But in this remote area of Mexico's Sierra Madres the sky itself adds another incentive for making the journey. Far from the lights of cities, the Sierra Madre nights are clear and dark. Looking skyward, you can see wondrous sights—meteorites, planets, stars and, on special occasions, some of the heavens' most spectacular exhibitions.

During the spring of 1997, our Copper Canyon trips provided us perfect sites for viewing the comet Hale-Bopp, called the comet of the century. From vantage points along the canyon rim at Divisadero and Tejaban, and from the bottom of the canyon in the little town of Batopilas, we enjoyed spectacular views of this celestial visitor. One night after dinner we gathered outside of our hotel to view the comet at its closest approach. Many local citizens stopped to join us, and we ended up having an impromptu comet party in the remote mountain village of Creel.

Back in May of 1994 there was a near total eclipse of the sun. As our small group assembled along the canyon rim, I passed out the special glasses which I brought for viewing the eclipse. As the light began to fade, the local Tarahumara Indians came rushing to see what was happening to the sun, and together we all watched this unforgettable event.

What other astronomical shows will we be treated to on future Copper Canyon trips,? Another eclipse, another comet, a meteor shower,
Friday, April 23rd

Transfer hotel/train station
2 nights Hotel Palacio del Sol Chihuahua (no meals)

Today, we continue to the end of the railroad at Chihuahua. We will pass through several tunnels and cross many bridges. Milepost 593 is called the loop because at this point the railroad makes a complete circle and crosses over itself.

After Creel, we pass Bocoyna, a lumber and railroad town. Its name means, "Pine tesin" in Tarahumara and was founded in 1702 by the Jesuit Missionaries with the name of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Bocoyna. Pichachic Station village was established in 1678 by Jose Guevara, a Jesuit Missionary. For the next 30 miles the railroad turns more or less northerly. In this area the volcanic rocks are practically horizontal, covered with oaks.

La Junta Railroad Station, located 6,775 feet above sea level is the round house for the railroad and is a major railroad junction. One track branches north from here to Ciudad Juarez. The river we will cross in a few minutes is a tributary to the Rio Papigochic, which joins the Rio Aros in Sonora and empties into the Gulf of California.

Pedernales is a village with about 1000 inhabitants. Small mercury deposits were discovered nearby in 1914 and worked briefly. The canyon we are passing is called "Malpaso". This is where Pancho Villa used to camp in the beginning of the revolution, stopping trains and hiding with his people. From the top of the tall pine trees, a lookout could see the entire valley. Villa's tactic was to hit and run. At Pedernales he fought and won several battles. He constantly moved his hiding places.

Entering the valley, note the covered apple orchards. These nets are for protection against hail storms. Cross a ridge and into another valley, this is where you cross the Continental Divide for the last time.

Cuauhtemoc: This city is 7,200 feet above sea level and was originally named San Antonio de Arenales. The village grew with the arrival of Mennonites in 1921-1922. In 1927 the name was changed in honor of the last Aztec emperor (Cuauhtemoc). Most of the cheese consumed in the State of Chihuahua comes from this area.

San Andres Station village was founded in 1696 by the Franciscan missionaries and named San Andres de Osaguiqui. In 1932 the name was changed to Riva Palacio in honor of General Vicente Palacios, a writer and hero of the war against the French.

General Trias village was founded by the Franciscan missionaries in 1668 and named Santa Isabel de Tarahumaras. In 1932 the village got its present name in honor of General Angel Trias. General Trias was vice commander of a Mexican force defeated by the First Missouri Volunteers, commanded by Col. Alexander W. Doniphan, at the Battle of Sacramento (north of Chihuahua) on February 28, 1847. In 1862-1863 he and his men fought with greater success against the forces of Maximilian.

Terminus East: CHIHUAHUA City

Chihuahua (pronounced "Chi-Wau-Wah" - the 'h's are silent in Spanish) is Mexico's largest state, and Chihuahua City, its Capital, is Mexico's most prosperous city. Its wealth is built on mining, livestock, timber and more recently, the modern assembly plants known as maquiladoras. When you arrive here, you'll see lots of men in boots and hats - this is Mexico's cowboy country!

As with Los Mochis, most people who visit here stay for a night in-between other places, or just before or just after taking the Copper Canyon Train Journey. The City is well served by road and by air: you can connect to almost anywhere in Mexico easily from here.
The City itself has sprawled out from its colonial center and suburbs have build up and into the desert surrounding the city. The historical center has some handsome colonial architecture, wide roads and fine colonial buildings, and its cathedral, completed in 1789, to admire. Pancho Villa, the famous revolutionary, lived here; you can visit the house which is also a museum about the Mexican Revolution. Chihuahua is interesting primarily for the surrounding desert scenery and the city's historical importance—it played a major role in the Mexican Revolution. Pancho Villa used Chihuahua as a base of operations, and the mansion that served as his home and headquarters has been converted into the Museo de la Revolucion Mexicana. It contains the bullet-riddled car, in which Villa was assassinated in 1923, as well as military artifacts, historical photographs and other items.

The Hotel Palacio del Sol

With its five star category Hotel Palacio del Sol is considered one of the best hotels in town. Situated just a few blocks away from the State Cathedral, banks, government offices, shopping and tourist and attractions, Palacio Del Sol is placed in the heart of downtown and close to everything. 200 luxurious rooms are fully remodeled and offers the best views in town and with the best location will make your stay in Palacio del Sol your best option in town for an unforgettable experience for your next trip to Chihuahua.

¡Ay Chihuahua!

Copper Canyon travelers look forward to the wonders of the train ride into the Sierra Madre, visiting the quaint mining town of Batopilas at the bottom of the canyon, and meeting the elusive Tarahumara Indians, but few give much thought to the sights to be enjoyed at the end of the journey in Chihuahua City. The Quinta Luz, home of revolutionary hero Pancho Villa, is a short ride from our hotel. Here Luz Corral, Villa's widow, lived and held court to thousands of visitors. Among must-see items is the bullet riddled car Villa was driving when he was assassinated. The Government Palace, across from the Plaza Hidalgo, has two claims on a tourist's time. First are the colorful murals of Aaron Piña Mora depicting the history of the state of Chihuahua. Look for the humorous depiction of a mounted Pancho Villa. Here too, is the spot where Miguel Hidalgo, father of Mexico's independence, was executed. A short pedestrian mall connects the palace with the Plaza de Armas, with its statue of Antonio Daza y Ulloa, founder of the city. At the far end of the plaza is the magnificent cathedral, built with donations from the silver barons of the 19th century. Returning to our hotel, we pass by the recently completed statue of Chihuahua native Anthony Quinn. Chihuahua City doesn't rank as a major tourist destination in Mexico, but it makes my short list of great Mexican cities.

Who Was Pancho Villa?

Pancho Villa, so the saying goes, was "hated by thousands and loved by millions." He was a Robin Hood to many and a cruel, cold-blooded killer to others. But who was this colorful controversial hero of the Mexican Revolution and where did he come from? Doroteo Arango, for that was Pancho Villa's real name, was born in the state of Durango in 1878, a share-cropper peasant on a hacienda. According to the legend, one day when he was sixteen, he returned home from the fields to find that his sister had been raped by the owner of the hacienda, Don Agustin López Negrete. Doroteo took up his revolver, shot Don Agustin, and escaped into the mountains on a horse.
He became a cattle rustler and later joined a band of rustlers that was led by a man named Francisco "Pancho" Villa. In one of their many skirmishes with the law, the group was surprised by a group of rurales (mounted police) and Francisco was killed. Doroteo then took command of the gang and also assumed the name of the fallen leader. He may have done this to throw off those who hunted him for the murder of the hacienda owner or he may have done this to insure his authority over the group. Anyway, from that time on it was he who was known as Francisco "Pancho" Villa.

Pancho Villa was a natural leader and was very successful as a bandit, leading raids on towns, killing, and looting. He was also involved in more legitimate ventures, including being a contractor on the Copper Canyon railroad.

In 1910, when the Mexican Revolution broke out, Villa was recruited by the revolutionary leader, Abraham Gonzalez. Villa put together an army of armed cowboys and ruffians and became the revolutionary general who led the war in the northern part of Mexico. His charisma and victories made him an idol of the masses.

In 1916, when an American merchant refused to deliver the arms to Villa's army which they had paid him for, Villa entered the United States and raided the town of Columbus, New Mexico. He was pursued by General "Black Jack" Pershing through the mountains of the State of Chihuahua. Pershing's pursuit of Villa ended in failure, causing him to telegraph back to Washington that "Villa is everywhere, but Villa is nowhere."

The war ended in 1920, and many attempts were made on Villa's life by relatives of persons he had killed. On July 20, 1923, while driving his car through the town on Parral, Chihuahua, he was assassinated. The men responsible were never identified.

**A Visit With Mrs. Pancho Villa**

Sitting in her simple wooden chair, Doña Luz Corral de Villa, widow of Pancho Villa, began a rambling discourse on her life with the famous—or infamous—bandit, general, and hero of the Mexican Revolution.

The year was 1974, seven years before her death, when I first met Mrs. Villa. My father and I were touring Copper Canyon, and we were introduced to her at her home in the city of Chihuahua.

Sharing her memories with us, eighty-two year old Doña Luz told us of her life as a child, living with her widowed mother in the town of San Andres. One day, when she was a teenager, Villa and his soldiers rode in and demanded monetary contributions from the townspeople. Her mother asked to be excluded, and Villa visited her small store to see if she was really as poor as she claimed to be. There he met Luz. The courtship was very brief, and over the objections of her mother, Luz married Villa. The attending priest asked Villa to make his confession. The General refused, stating that it would take days to list all his sins. Luz was not the only woman in Villa's life. He was linked with several in bogus marriages, but later Luz was able to produce a valid certificate proving that she was his only legal wife.

The couple had one child, a daughter, who died within a few years. Luz had no other children, but she took in children Villa had fathered with other women. Perhaps she felt that he would always return to her, knowing that several of his children were with her. Villa built the quinta (manor) during the Revolution, and Luz lived there until her death in 1981. Villa was assassinated in 1923, and several of his "wives" claimed the manor. The marriage certificate might not have been sufficient to safeguard her claim, but Luz had an import ant ally, Alvaro Obregon, President of Mexico. During the Revolution, Obregon had visited the Villas at the quinta. There Villa had plotted to have Obregon killed, but Luz had interceded, saving the future president's life. The favor was not forgotten, and Obregon used his considerable influence to protect Luz's claim.

Eventually the house became a museum, with Luz the resident caretaker, and she tried personally to meet each visitor. Luz traveled through Mexico and the United States, and in Los Angeles received the key to the city.
Shortly before her death she wrote a book about her life with Villa, Pancho Villa: an Intimacy, published by Centro Librero La Prensa, in the city of Chihuahua. In it she loyally defends Villa against most of the accusations against him for his many excesses while leading the Army of the North. While this book must be read with a skeptical eye, her account provides interesting insights into Villa and the Revolution.

**Saturday, April 24th**

City Tour - including The Cathedral, Pancho Villa's house, the Murals and more.

The **Quinta Gameros Museum** houses excellent art-nouveau furnishings. Also be sure to see the cathedral and its collection of religious paintings. Father Hidalgo, father of Mexican independence, was executed in Chihuahua. The dungeon he was kept in is beneath the post office.

**Sunday, April 25th, 2004**

Transfer from hotel to the airport

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**Recommended Guidebooks**

*Mexico* by John Noble, et al. (Lonely Planet).


*Mexico Handbook* by Joe Cummings and Chicki Mallan (Moon Publications).


**Additional Reading**


*Insurgent Mexico* by John Reed (Greenwood Press). Journalistic account of Reed's adventures with Pancho Villa's army in the Mexican Revolution.

*The Labyrinth of Solitude* by Octavio Paz (Grove). The scholarly exposition on the Mexican character by the country's Nobel Prize-winning poet.

*Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel (Doubleday). A novel that relates the fantastic events—and fantastic food—experienced by a Mexican family in the early 1900s.

*The Old Gringo* by Carlos Fuentes (Farrar, Straus and Giroux). A novel by Mexico's pre-eminent fiction writer that concerns a U.S. journalist's experiences in the Mexican Revolution.

*La Capital* by Jonathan Kandell (Random House). A stirring and sweeping history of Mexico City from the time of the Aztecs through the colonial era, the Revolution, to today. As engrossing for its social portraits as for its political analysis.

*Pedro Paramo* by Juan Rulfo (Grove Press). Disturbing psychological tale of a young man's return to a village destroyed by the Revolution. The dead talk to each other in their graves.
Back to Mexico in general information

DINING

Mexican cuisine is much more than just tacos and burritos. Depending on the region, it can share similarities with Caribbean, Spanish and even East Indian cooking. In the coastal states—Yucatan, Campeche and Veracruz, for example—the emphasis is on fresh seafood (shrimp, crab, squid, octopus, redfish, snapper). The Yucatan also boasts wonderful sopita de lima (soup with tortilla strips, chicken and limes) and pollo pibil (chicken marinated in sour orange juice and cooked in a pit in banana leaves).

The state of Michoacan is known for the tart-piquant flavors of such dishes as salpicon de res (shredded beef cooked with pickled serranos, cilantro and tomatoes), while Oaxaca boasts a number of different moles (sauces made with unusual combinations of ingredients such as chocolate, raisins, peanuts and pumpkin seeds).

Elsewhere, poultry, beef and pork dishes are featured. In Colima, try tatemado (pork baked in a clay pot over an open fire); in Tampico, try tampaquina (fillet of beef, usually with refried beans, fried tortilla chips and guacamole on the side). The basic bolillos (crispy bread rolls) and tortillas are magnificent because they're usually prepared fresh daily.

Be sure to try chiles rellenos (poblano peppers stuffed with cheese or meat, then fried in egg batter); crepas de huitlacoche (corn fungus); marlin (a dish of tortillas in pumpkin-seed sauce—its antecedents go all the way back to the Mayan Age); chicharrones (fried pork skin); and the different kinds of tamales (wrapped in corn husks, banana leaves or even Swiss chard).

Among the ingredients you'll find in Mexican markets are recado (a reddish paste flavored with achiote seed and bitter oranges), epazote (the herb that gives black beans their distinctive flavor and de-gases them), avocados, tomatotes verdes (green tomatoes), plantains (a variety of banana that's not sweet and is always cooked before eating), limes, nopalitos (cactus) and, of course, the many, many varieties of chili, ranging from the mild poblano to the smoky chipotle to the hotter-than-Hades habanero.

SHOPPING

The operative law for shopping in Mexico is caveat emptor—let the buyer beware. With that in mind, shop for almost anything you fancy. Mexico has everything from stuffed frogs (in various poses and costumes) to high-quality silver work. Handicrafts, clothing and folk art vary regionally in style: Pottery, woven fabrics, hammocks and baskets are often good buys. Folk art from Oaxaca and Michoacan remains our favorite. Don't ignore the highly popular hand-painted wooden animal figures, called alebrijes. The motifs in their designs usually represent a mix of myths.

Copper, onyx, straw, lacquer and leather goods are also available, but pay close attention to quality if quality is what you want. High-grade silver is stamped "925" (by law)—but learn how to double-check for plated silver anyway. Learn the difference between synthetic colors (bright) and natural colors (more subtle) when buying wool blankets. It's fun to shop for locally made toys, but safety regulations are not particularly strict—make sure there are no loose pieces or sharp edges if the toys are intended as gifts for children. Be on the lookout for good buys on musical instruments (particularly stringed or rhythm instruments).

Use caution if buying designer-name items at very low prices—some are made without the permission of the manufacturer. If that's the case, the items may be confiscated by customs agents when you return home. Turtle, tortoise, alligator and jaguar products will also be confiscated upon arrival in many countries. Products containing quetzal bird feathers or tortoise shells or any derivative from turtles, such as oil, are illegal in Mexico as is any type of archeological artifact. Penalties can include stiff jail terms.

Liquor is cheap, but be aware of your country's duty restrictions before you buy.

Note: Green or brown glaze on pottery often contains lead—don't use any of these ceramics for storing food or drink.

Shopping Hours: Generally Monday-Saturday 9 am-8 pm. Many smaller stores close for a few hours in the afternoon.
Personal Safety

Incidents of both violent and nonviolent crime have increased in the past several years. Robberies of taxi passengers have become prevalent in some parts of the country. To be on the safe side, only get in a cab you've phoned for (be sure to get the driver's name and the taxi's license-plate number from the dispatcher).

While Mexican roadways are safer than they were years ago, robberies can occur along some highways, especially at night and in isolated areas. Using toll roads whenever possible is recommended, and beware of bandits posing as police officers. The same warnings hold true for bus travel. The most notorious highway connects the city of Oaxaca to the southern coast. We recommend that you avoid it.

The southern state of Chiapas continues to be a volatile region. Travelers should check the latest conditions before they visit. Always be sure to carry your tourist visa, as surprise spot checks on the highway are common. Other trouble spots include Mexico City (particularly taxi robberies), Nuevo Laredo (general crime in the red-light district) and Ciudad Juarez (drug-related crime).

Wherever you travel in Mexico, it's best to dress plainly, skip the flashy jewelry and avoid carrying conspicuous big-ticket items such as large, expensive cameras. Nothing draws a thief like a tourist in shorts consulting a map in a less touristy district. When you go out for the day, take along only as much cash as you'll need for that outing (make use of hotel safes for the remainder). If you must use an ATM, choose one that's inside a bank or other business and only make withdrawals during daylight hours.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency.


Health

The one thing most people know about travel in Mexico is that they may get an upset stomach or diarrhea, known as turista in Mexico. To help prevent such problems, wash your hands frequently, avoid food from street stands, don't drink tap water or anything with ice, and be careful with dairy products.

Most hot, freshly cooked food should be safe (especially in restaurants in major tourist resorts), but peel fresh fruit and avoid raw vegetables. Also avoid foods that are difficult to clean, such as lettuce. Make sure meat is cooked thoroughly, and stick with prepackaged or boiled drinks.

Medical facilities in the larger cities are good. Malaria and dengue fever are found in the lowlands and along the coast (though most resort areas are safe): Consult your physician about preventive measures. Protect yourself with insect repellent (preferably one containing DEET). In some areas, stray dogs could carry rabies, so avoid them. If you're even nipped by an animal, get treatment immediately and insist that the animal be inspected.

The sun can be strong, so use sunscreen liberally and wear a hat. Take into consideration that the heat in the desert areas and the Yucatan is particularly oppressive. Don't forget comfortable walking shoes, and take it easy at higher altitudes. Air pollution is extreme in Mexico City and may cause problems for people with respiratory diseases.

For the latest information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.


Dos and Don'ts

If you are a woman, expect to encounter quite a bit of machismo. It can be extremely frustrating, but try to minimize it by ignoring the perpetrator (any attention at all may be misinterpreted). Men will also insist on such old-fashioned behavior as opening doors, paying the bill at a restaurant and walking on the outside, near the curb.

Don't wear T-shirts and shorts in the big cities unless you want to advertise that you are a foreigner.
Overview
Mexico is in a time of change as its society and political structure modernizes and its political leaders seek to deal with the problems of the economy, poverty, the environment, corruption and the role of the country internationally. That makes the country a destination that requires considerable caution. Hundreds of thousands of travelers visit Mexico every year without incident, especially in the high-profile tourist destinations of Cancun, Cozumel and Los Cabos.

In Mexico, it is particularly important to use common sense to avoid a criminal element springing from the country's socio-economic conditions. Being safe is strictly dependent on following precautions. It is very important to remain aware and to follow the precepts outlined below, especially with regard to staying in areas with which you or your acquaintances are familiar and protected. Official corruption, especially among the police, is a serious problem. Therefore, avoiding any behavior that might bring you into an encounter with officials is an important precaution. Likewise, avoid any activity, such as intoxication or visiting unprotected, unfamiliar areas, which might put you at the mercy of criminals. Much of what follows pertains to areas outside the traditional tourist destinations. However, even in tourist areas, it is important to maintain a heightened awareness of your surroundings and the people with whom you come into contact, as well as your own personal demeanor.

In early March 2002, a clash erupted between Indian sympathizers in the municipality of Oxchuc, Chiapas, in southeastern Mexico. Unrest in the state of Chiapas requires that travelers exercise extreme caution. Armed Zapatistas rebels and armed civilian groups are active in some areas of the state. In the mountain highlands north of San Cristobal de Las Casas, the municipality of Ocosingo, and the entire southeastern jungle portion of the state east of Comitan, tension and violence ebb and flow. Furthermore, some segments of the local population resent the presence of visitors and openly express their hostility. Zapatistas supporters seized and occupied a resort ranch owned by a U.S. couple in February 2003.

Two insurgent groups, the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR) and the Insurgent People's Revolutionary Army (EPRI), operate in the states of Guerrero and Oaxaca. Although these groups have been quiet in the last few years, they have attacked police and military targets and have kidnapped civilians in the past. In January 2002, leftist rebels killed the mayor of a small town in this region. In addition, police in July 2003 broke up what they said was an active cell of the Basque ETA terrorist group. There is no evidence that foreign nationals have been specifically targeted. Nonetheless, travelers may encounter military roadblocks while traveling, so be prepared to show identification and have vehicles searched. Army, police, and immigration roadblocks are most common in the states of Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca.

In Mexico City, an average of four kidnappings are reported every day. Nationwide there are 10 kidnappings reported. However, estimates are that only one-in-five kidnappings are reported. Reports of police involvement in abductions are common, with some estimates indicating as many as 50% of all kidnappings involve current or former police officers. So-called "express" kidnappings, an attempt to get quick cash in exchange for the release of an individual, have occurred in almost all large cities in Mexico and appear to target not only the wealthy, but also middle class persons and foreign travelers. Kidnappings occur not only in Mexico City, but also in resort communities such as Acapulco. In September 2002, a woman was seized at her apartment in Cancun by two men posing as journalists. When the kidnappers realized there was no one to pay a ransom, they robbed the woman, stole her car and then released her.

Armed banditry and violent confrontations on the roads of Mexico continue. In March 2002, several people were killed in two ambushes by highway robbers in the southern Mexican state of Guerrero.

Human rights organizations are highly critical of official abuses of human rights in Mexico, including the murder or disappearance of dozens of civil rights activists. Corruption exists at all levels of government, including the military, state and federal police, and public prosecutors. The organization Human Rights Watch has documented official torture, fabricated evidence, kidnappings and executions. In late 2001, Mexico's leading human rights lawyer, Digna Ochoam, was murdered. Every effort should be made to avoid situations in Mexico that would result in the involvement of the authorities. If you are arrested, immediately contact the nearest consulate of your home country.

In some instances, visitors have become victims of harassment, mistreatment and extortion by Mexican law enforcement and other officials. Mexican authorities are concerned about these incidents and have cooperated in investigating such cases. However, one must have the officer's name, badge number and patrol car number to pursue a complaint. Make a note of this information if you should become involved with police or other officials.
Civil strikes and demonstrations occur with some frequency. While usually nonviolent, such events can result in confrontations between civilians and police. Ingress and egress to and from areas affected by demonstrations may be blocked, making an emergency exit difficult or impossible. In March 2002, several armed men attacked the office of Excelsior, a major Mexican newspaper. Violent attacks to settle personal or civic grievances can erupt suddenly and without warning.

Without prior authorization from Mexican authorities, entering Mexico with a firearm or even a single round of ammunition is illegal, even if the firearm or ammunition is taken into Mexico unintentionally. The only way to import firearms and/or ammunition into Mexico legally is to secure a permit in advance from the Mexican Embassy. Vessels entering Mexican waters with firearms or ammunition on board must have a permit previously issued by the Mexican Embassy or a Mexican consulate. Before traveling, mariners who have obtained a Mexican firearms permit should contact Mexican port officials to receive guidance on the specific procedures used to report and secure weapons and ammunition.

At beach resorts, water sports operators are often untrained and unskilled, and equipment often has not been well maintained. Because of the variable quality of medical facilities, use of water sports equipment can be dangerous.

Some volcanos in Mexico are currently active. Beginning in February 2002 the Colima volcano, about 310 miles west of Mexico City and considered to be Mexico's most dangerous volcano, became highly active. The Popocatépetl volcano, approximately 45 miles southeast of Mexico City, last erupted in December 2002. There is a seven-mile danger zone around each volcano – public access to those areas is prohibited. Travelers visiting these areas should exercise caution and remain alert for warnings. There are three alert stages: green, yellow, and red. The current alert level is yellow. Mexico is also located in an active seismic zone and is occasionally subject to earthquakes. You should know the address and telephone number of your embassy in the event of an emergency.

**Crime**

Crime in Mexico continues at high levels, and it is increasingly violent, especially in Mexico City, Tijuana and Ciudad Juarez. Low apprehension and conviction rates of criminals contribute to the high crime rate. Other metropolitan areas have lower but still serious levels of crime. Travelers should leave valuables and irreplaceable items in a safe place, or not bring them. All visitors are encouraged to make use of hotel safes when available, avoid wearing obviously expensive jewelry or designer clothing, and carry only the cash or credit cards that will be needed on each outing. Armed street crime is a serious problem in all of the major cities.

Some bars and nightclubs, especially in resort cities such as Cancun, Cabo San Lucas, Mazatlan and Acapulco, can be havens for drug dealers and petty criminals. Some establishments may contaminate or drug the drinks to gain control over patrons. Victims, who are almost always unaccompanied, have been raped, robbed of personal property or abducted and then held while their credit cards were used at various businesses and ATMs. Crimes committed in connection with ATMs are common. If an ATM must be used, it should be accessed only during the business day at large protected facilities (preferably inside commercial establishments, rather than at a glass-enclosed, highly visible ATM on streets where criminals can observe financial transactions). Travelers should be wary of persons representing themselves as Mexican police or other local officials. Tourists should not hitchhike or accept rides from or offer rides to strangers anywhere in Mexico. Don't hike alone in back-country areas or walk alone on lightly-frequented beaches, ruins or trails.

Local authorities have reported an increase in armed robberies in the popular tourist destination of northern Sinaloa, especially near the fishing resorts. Caution should be exercised when visiting this area.

**Mexico City:** President Vicente Fox has expressed personal concern over public safety in Mexico City, which is easily one of the most dangerous cities in the world. According to official estimates, in 2001 more than 470 crimes and two homicides were reported per day in Mexico City. While this number is actually a decrease over the prior year, it is important to note that these statistics are the official record and that many crimes go unreported. In Mexico City, the most frequently reported crimes involving tourists are taxi robbery, armed robbery, pick pocketing and purse snatching. In several cases, tourists have reported that men in uniforms perpetrated the crime, stopping vehicles and seeking money. The area near the Zona Rosa is a frequent site of street crime against foreigners.

Business travelers should be aware that thefts and kidnappings can occur even in what appear to be secure locations. There has been a reported increase of thefts of briefcases and computers at Mexico City's International Trade Center and at business-class hotels. Metro (subway) robberies are becoming more frequent in Mexico City. When riding the Metro, travelers should hold valuables and belongings tightly. Avoid using the
Metro during busy commuting hours in the morning or afternoon. Avoid driving alone at night anywhere in Mexico City.

Robbery and assaults on passengers in taxis are frequent and violent, with passengers subjected to beatings, shootings and sexual assault. Avoid taking any taxi not summoned by telephone or contacted in advance at the airport. When in need of a taxi, telephone a radio taxi or "sito," and ask the dispatcher for the driver's name and the cab's license plate number. If you walk to a "sito" taxi stand, use only a driver known to you. Ask the hotel concierge or other responsible individual to write down the license plate number of the cab that you entered. Passengers arriving at Mexico City's Benito Juarez International Airport should take only airport taxis (which are yellow, with an airport symbol on the door) after pre-paying the fare at one of the special booths inside the airport. Avoid taking taxis parked outside the Bellas Artes Theater, waiting in front of nightclubs or restaurants, or cruising throughout the city.

City buses and microbuses should be avoided. In late July 2003, a rash of bus hijackings raised fears that the notorious "Masking Tape Gang" had resurfaced. The gangs have nabbed several buses, robbing and sexually assaulting passengers.

Border cities: In Ciudad Juarez, as many as 300 women have been murdered or reported missing in the last nine years, including four in November 2002 alone. Many crimes committed in these areas are never reported to officials. In Ciudad Juarez, Nuevo Laredo and Tijuana, drug-related shootings have taken place at busy intersections during daylight hours. The perpetrators of drug violence are not intimidated by local law enforcement because arrests in these shootings are extremely rare. In Ciudad Juarez, several innocent bystanders have been killed in drug-related shootings over the past three years. Some of these shootings have taken place on principal thoroughfares and outside popular restaurants and other public places.

Cancun and Beach Resorts: There has been a significant increase in the number of rapes reported in Cancun and at other beach resorts in Mexico. Many of these have occurred at night or in the early morning hours. Attacks have also occurred on deserted beaches and in hotel rooms. Acquaintance rape is a serious problem. In other cases, hotel workers and/or taxi drivers have been implicated. There also has been a significant increase in the number of pick pocketing incidents, purse snatchings and hotel room thefts. Public transportation is a particularly popular place for pickpockets. Valuables should be left in a safe place or not brought at all. Keep track of your luggage when getting in and out of ground transportation from the airport to the hotel. There has been a noticeable increase in the number of reports of police harassment, abuse, and extortion in Cancun.

Persons bringing private vessels into Mexican waters should be aware of an increase in reported thefts of gear at Mexican marinas.

Medical

Health facilities in Mexico City are excellent, but care in more remote areas is limited, and the standards of medical training, patient care and business practices vary greatly among the medical facilities in beach resorts throughout Mexico. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services. Mexico declared a health emergency in July 2003 as West Nile virus was found in birds and horses. The disease, carried by mosquitoes, can be contracted by humans, as well. Take precautions against mosquito bites, including keeping exposed skin to a minimum and using insect repellent.

Transportation

Avoid excessive speed and, if possible, do not drive at night. Loose livestock can appear on roads at any time. Construction sites, abandoned vehicles or other obstacles are often unmarked or poorly marked. Be prepared for sudden stops. If you are involved in an accident, you will be taken into police custody until it can be determined who is liable and whether you have the ability to pay any penalty. If you do not have Mexican liability insurance, you may be prevented from departing the country even if you require life-saving medical care, and you are almost certain to spend some time in jail until all parties are satisfied that responsibility has been assigned and adequate financial satisfaction received. Motor vehicle insurance is considered invalid in Mexico if the driver is found to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Drivers may also face criminal charges if the injuries or damages are serious. Criminal assaults occur on highways throughout Mexico. Therefore, travelers should exercise caution when traveling on all highways in Mexico and use toll ("cuota") roads, rather than the less secure free ("libre") highways, whenever possible. All bus travel should be during daylight hours and on first-class conveyances. Although there have been several reports of bus hijackings and robberies on toll roads, buses on toll roads have a markedly lower rate of incidents than buses (second and third class) that travel the less secure free highways. Daytime travel is recommended, to reduce the chance of vehicle accidents. Use caution when traveling by bus in the area north of the border.
between the states of Oaxaca and Guerrero (south of Acapulco). Armed robberies of entire busloads of passengers have recently been reported.

Tourism
Tourist facilities in a wide range of quality are available throughout Mexico.

Precautions for All Travelers
In addition to the usual crimes of opportunity (pickpocketing, bag-snatching), there is an increased risk of violent crime in some circumstances. If you're staying in a hotel, choose one that your travel agent or a local associate recommends as being secure. Seek advice from hotel personnel or other local contacts about areas that may be unsafe to visit. Safeguard your valuables, and maintain a high sense of awareness about your surroundings.

In recent years, political terrorism has become a global phenomenon – an attack could occur with little or no warning anywhere in the world, even in locations long regarded as safe. Terrorists do not discriminate between official and civilian targets, and their actions are unpredictable. Travelers should keep themselves informed of developments that could affect their safety, no matter what their destination.

General Precautions
Observe the following High-Risk Precautions:

- Choose accommodations that are as secure as possible. Seek the advice of your travel agent or of a local associate when selecting a hotel.
- Pay attention to local media.
- Inform your local embassy or consulate of your presence and your plans.
- Visitors should maintain a very low profile when alone and travel in a group when possible.
- Exercise caution in visiting crowded areas frequented by expatriates. Such places are sometimes targets for terrorists and other extremists.
- Avoid clothing emblazoned with the logos of global companies.
- Avoid wearing clothing that might be mistaken for a uniform or other military attire.
- Avoid open displays of wealth, jewelry or other possessions.
- Avoid confrontations with locals.
- Do not permit persons you do not know into your hotel room. Keep your door locked. Do not leave valuables in your room unless they can be locked in a safe.
- Observe local laws and customs.
- Avoid illegal drugs, and don't drink alcohol if its use is prohibited. Even if drinking is legal, do not overindulge.
- Avoid crowds, demonstrations or other large gatherings.
- Do not offer your opinion unless it is requested. When you are asked for your thoughts, be respectful and choose your words carefully, especially when discussing political and cultural issues.
- Vary your travel patterns.
- Seek the advice of local people you trust about which areas are safe and which should be avoided. When traveling, plan your route prior to leaving your point of origin. Choose a route that is as safe and as well thought-out as possible.
- Put together an emergency evacuation plan. Establish safe havens that you can use in case of emergency, such as the nearest embassy or consulate.

Etiquette
Since the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Mexico has become an increasingly common destination for international business travelers. Nonetheless, the country's interesting and enjoyable traditions have not been diminished by increased business traffic: The Mexican people and their way of life may well prove the most memorable part of your visit.

Appointments—Having a local contact to put you in touch with the right people is a big advantage. Set your appointments at least a couple of weeks in advance, if possible. Punctuality is expected, but not strictly adhered to—though as a visitor, you should be on time. For dinner parties and other somewhat social occasions, plan to show up about 30 minutes after the announced time.

Personal Introductions—Handshakes are the typical greeting between men. Maintain direct eye contact but not too intensely. When members of the opposite sex meet, the woman should extend her hand to initiate the
greeting. Titles are important, and the title "Doctor" applies for those with advanced university degrees. Last names with the appropriate Spanish title are used. If your acquaintance has a professional title, you will learn it when introduced; if not, senor (male), senora (married female) and senorita (unmarried female) are appropriate. The title and the person's last name should be used until you are instructed otherwise. Note that it is typical for Mexicans to have two surnames, one from their father and one from their mother. The father's surname will be given first during the introduction, and that's the name that is used to address or speak of the person. Thus, "Senor Mario Sanchez Benitez" would be addressed as "Senor Sanchez." Mexicans warm quickly to friendships. Your acquaintances are as likely to hug on a second meeting as they are to shake your hand. This hug is called the abrazo and is common with both male and female acquaintances, although the hug may be accompanied by a quick kiss on the cheek between two women or a woman and a man and a pat on the back between two men.

**Negotiating**—Business in Mexico runs at a slower pace than elsewhere in North America, and is open and relaxed. Typically, junior executives have very little authority, so endeavor to meet with people at as high a level as possible. Relationships are very important to the decision-making process, so spend time getting acquainted with your associates. Mexicans typically dislike open disagreement, but they do like to negotiate.

**Business Entertaining**—Mexicans love to entertain and take pride in doing so. Typically, your host will pay, but you should offer to do so and, when refused, insist on paying "next time." Then, be sure to do so. Mexicans will often prefer to pay an entire bill than enter into finicky discussions of "who ordered what." If invited to an acquaintance's home, don't plan on discussing business: It's an opportunity to socialize.

**Body Language**—Conversations may take place at close quarters. Expect polite conversational touching. Refrain from placing your hands on your hips, as this can be perceived as an aggressive stance. Keeping your hands in your pockets is also bad form. Dress conservatively, particularly in business situations or if visiting a church.

**Gift Giving**—Avoid giving anything purple, the color of death. Flowers tend to have a variety of different meanings in Mexico: In general, avoid red and yellow flowers as these are indicative of death and bad omens. Avoid giving knives as this symbolizes the end of a relationship.

**Conversation**—Learn some Spanish phrases well. It will be highly appreciated and nobody cares if they are pronounced poorly. Be inquisitive about Mexican culture. Do not discuss traveler's health issues such as fear of the water. Don't use the term "American" to refer to someone from the U.S.: Mexicans consider themselves Americans, too.

**Other Information**—You are not likely to encounter many women at the higher levels of Mexican business. However, women can and do conduct business in the country, though they may on occasion encounter some gender-based resistance.

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**For More Information,**

**Tourist Offices**
The national tourism office (SECTUR) in Mexico City provides over-the-phone assistance—in Spanish and English—24 hours a day. Ave. Presidente Masaryk 172, Mexico, D.F. Phone 5250-0123. Toll-free 800-903-9200.

U.S.: Mexican Government Tourism Office, 21 E. 63rd St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10021. Phone 212-821-0313. Fax 212-821-0367. There are also offices in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles and Miami.

**Mexican Embassies**

**Foreign Embassies in Mexico**
U.S.: U.S. Embassy, Paseo de la Reforma 305, Col. Cuauhtemoc, Mexico City, D.F. Phone 5209-9100. Fax 5511-9980. There are also consulates or consular agencies in Acapulco, Cabo San Lucas, Cancun, Ciudad Juarez, Ciudad Acuna, Cozumel, Guadalajara, Hermosillo, Ixtapa/Zihuatanejo, Matamoros, Mazatlan, Merida, Monterrey, Nuevo Laredo, Nogales, Oaxaca, Piedras Negras, Puerto Vallarta, Reynosa, San Luis Potosi, San Miguel de Allende and Tijuana.
REGISTRATION/EMBASSY, CONSULATE AND CONSULAR AGENCY LOCATIONS: Americans living in or visiting Mexico are encouraged to register at the U.S. Embassy or at one of the U.S. Consulates, in order to obtain updated information on travel and security within Mexico. The U.S. Embassy is located in Mexico City at Paseo de la Reforma 305, Colonia Cuauhtemoc, telephone from the United States: 011-52-55-5080-2000; telephone within Mexico City: 5080-2000; telephone long distance within Mexico 01-5080-2000. You may also contact the Embassy by e-mail at: ccs@usembassy.net.mx. U.S. Consulates General are located in:

Ciudad Juarez: Avenida Lopez Mateos 924-N, telephone (52)(656) 611-3000.

Guadalajara: Progreso 175, telephone (52)(333) 825-2998.

Monterrey: Avenida Constitucion 411 Poniente 64000, telephone (52)(818) 345-2120.

Tijuana: Tapachula 96, telephone (52)(664) 622-7400.

U.S. Consulates are located in:

Hermosillo: Avenida Monterrey 141, telephone (52)(662) 217-2375.


Merida: Paseo Montejo 453, telephone (52)(999) 925-5011.

Nogales: Calle San Jose, Nogales, Sonora, telephone (52)(631) 313-4820.


U.S. Consular Agencies are located in:

Acapulco: Hotel Continental Plaza, Costera Miguel Aleman 121 - Local 14, telephone (52)(744) 484-03-00 or (52)(744) 469-0556.

Cabo San Lucas: Blvd. Marina y Pedregal #1, Local No. 3, Zona Centro, telephone (52)(624) 143-3566.

Cancun: Plaza Caracol Two, Third Level, No. 320-323, Boulevard Kukulcan, km. 8.5, Zona Hotelera, telephone (52)(998) 883-0272.

Ciudad Acuna, Ocampo # 305, Col. Centro telephone (52)(877) 772-8661, Fax (52)(877) 772-8179.

Cozumel: Plaza Villa Mar in the Main Square - El Centro, 2nd floor right rear, Locale #8, Avenida Juarez and 5th Ave. Norte, telephone (52)(987) 872-4574.

Ixtapa/Zihuatanejo: Local 9, Plaza Ambiente, telephone (52)(755) 553-2100.

Mazatlan: Hotel Playa Mazatlan, Rodolfo T. Loaiza #202, Zona Dorada, telephone (52)(669) 916-5889.


Reynosa: Calle Monterrey #390, Con Sinaloa, Colonia Rodriguez, telephone: (52)(899) 923 - 9331.

San Miguel de Allende: Dr. Hernandez Macias #72, telephone (52)(415) 152-2357 or (52)(415) 152-0068.