

Zacatecas: We are the new "Happy Place" in Mexico Tourism

ZACATECAS CITY, ZACATECAS, MEXICO, October 2, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Destinations from around the world competed for the French Tourism EURO in exhibiting at Top Resa, but Zacatecas clearly stood out. The Vice Minister explained to eTurboNews why: "Zacatecas is known as the "happy place". We are not a mass destination, and we love to engage with every visitor and make them feel like our guest."

The Hon. Gabriella Ibarra, Vice Minister of Tourism for the State of Zacatecas, had a message to France and the rest of the world: "We are the new "Happy Place" to visit in Mexico, untouched, safe and with a lot of history and good food." It was a first for Top Resa to welcome Zacatecas as a destination showcasing their tourism product.



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Hon. Gabriella Ibarra, Vice Minister of Tourism for the State of Zacatecas

The 40th edition of the IFTM Top Resa travel trade event just concluded in Paris on September 28. Also for Zacatecas Tourism, it was the first time to reach out to European visitors.

Zacatecas, with so many taverns, has a laid-back atmosphere, historic buildings, many small streets with colorful alleys, and it is so safe that security challenges in some other Mexican cities seemed to be far away and a non-issue here. "I many times walk outside in Zacatecas

after 11 pm and feel perfectly safe," said Minister Ibarra. "Of course, you don't want to showcase your Rolex walking in a side street at 3 in the morning."

Nightlife is relaxed and starts late. Some of the local drinks:

- Bulque -- mildly intoxicating drink made by fermenting the sap, or aguamiel, of the maguey agave
- Mezcal -- distilled from pulque
- Colonche -- fermented macerated cactus fruit and sugar

Zacatecas is a state in north-central Mexico, northwest of Mexico City. It contains La Quemada archaeological site, a large pre-Columbian settlement with a museum, hilltop pyramid and columns. The state's high-altitude capital (2200 meter, 7000 feet) is a true historical city and also called Zacatecas. It is home to the Mina El Edén, an old silver mine with an underground train that passes unique rock formations, displays of mineral deposits and antique mining machinery.

General Leobardo C. Ruiz International Airport, also known as Zacatecas International Airport, is an international airport located in Morelos, Zacatecas, Mexico. In 2016, the airport handled 349,453 passengers, and in 2017 it served as a direct gateway from many U.S. cities with nonstop flights including Chicago, Dallas, San Jose, and Los Angeles. Two more airports are in neighboring states in a 2-3 hour driving radius.

The minister said driving the 7 hours from Mexico City is a favorite for many visitors, but anyone wanting to fly directly has plenty of options.

Zacatecas has 2,500 hotel rooms at the 3-4 star level. Visitors will always find some unusual in Zacatecas. Hardly any hotel is more than \$100.00 or EURO 90.00 - and you get a lot of history on a silver plate for this.

Let's take for example the Quinta Real Zacatecas: Transforming the iconic San Pedro bullfighting ring into luxury accommodations, Quinta Real Zacatecas is a historic destination in Zacatecas, Mexico preserving the character and beauty of its original 19th-century structure. Hosting its last corrida in 1975, the San Pedro bullfighting ring now represents and celebrates its lively past and significance through vibrant facilities and gracious service. Blending the opulence of modern amenities and the grandeur of a cultural pastime, Quinta Real Zacatecas reflects warm Mexican hospitality in a truly unforgettable setting.

Surrounded by a charming fountain, paved with cobblestones, and landscaped by lush gardens, suites at this Colonial-style property afford a romantic setting, while the refined restaurant and bar encircle and commands a stunning view over the stately El Ruedo, the former bullring. Ideally located in the heart of Zacatecas, this historic treasure artfully combines its spirited heritage with the crafted splendor of its architecture and the comforts of contemporary luxuries.

Quinta Real Zacatecas, a charter member of Historic Hotels Worldwide since 2013, dates back to 1866.

You often find evaluations like this one on websites like Tripadvisor: "We stayed 3 nights at Hotel Santa Rita in beautiful Zacatecas. The hotel is very central located, we walked to all the attractions and restaurants. The city is very safe, also at night."

Amazing boutique hotels, spas and a large number of smaller hotels as well as unregistered Airbnb accommodations are found everywhere in Zacatecas.

Zacatecas is the home of a convention center where mostly domestic events are held. It has 5,000 square meters of exhibition space and can be set up for up to 1,500 people.

Visit Mexico said this on its website about why to visit and what to do in Zacatecas:

"If you are looking for a beautiful place for a visit in Mexico, Zacatecas is your choice: a colonial treasure declared a World Heritage Site for its architecture, its urban layout and the irregular alignment of its streets. The city of beautiful pink quarry stone encompasses magic, tradition, and charm.

"It has a large variety of tourist attractions, too numerous to mention since it offers religious, historical and cultural venues, ecotourism, bull routes, mezcal routes, in addition to the festivities and traditions that surround this unique destination. When visiting Zacatecas be sure to ride in a cable car, connecting the Cerro de la Bufa to the Cerro del Grillo and offers you an unmatched view of the beautiful city.

"If what you are looking for is fun and high-energy activities, visit the Sierra de Órganos National Park where you can go hiking, camping and mountain biking."

The vice-minister told eTN that part of a new campaign to attract tourists is to promote "The 5 Magical towns of Zacatecas." These are communities that, because they have preserved their original architecture, traditions, and customs, have been found worthy of this distinction.

1. Jerez de García de Salinas

This peaceful municipality was designated in 2007 as the first Magical Town of Zacatecas.

Its old houses with spacious courtyards and eclectic architecture contrast with the provincial atmosphere that is enjoyed while touring its colonial streets.

Among the most emblematic places of Jerez are:

- The Kiosk of the Main Square
- The Hinojosa Theater
- The Parish of the Immaculate Conception
- The Sanctuary of the Virgen de la Soledad
- The Tower Building
- The portals of Inguanzo, Humboldt and Las Palomas

Since 1824, Jerez de García de Salinas has been the headquarters of the Spring Fair, the oldest in Zacatecas.

2. Teúl de González Ortega

In Teúl, natural beauty and colonial architecture combine in a warm, simple, and welcoming atmosphere.

It is the only municipality in Mexico that has 2 Santos Martires and pre-Hispanic monuments of marked relevance such as:

- The Parish of San Juan Bautista de Teúl
- The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Guadalupe
- The Chapel of the Rosary
- The Aqueduct
- The Municipal Presidency

It was declared the second Magical Town of Zacatecas in 2011.

3. Sombrerete

It is one of the most outstanding colonial populations of Mexico. Sombrerete has been recognized from its beginnings for its deposits of gold and silver.

Its main festivity is held in the month of February in the La Candelaria neighborhood where the temple built by the natives is located to venerate the Virgin of La Candelaria.

Other emblematic sites of Sombrerete are:

- The Convent of San Mateo
- The Sanctuary of Solitude
- The Sierra de Órganos

It was designated as the third Magical Town of Zacatecas in 2012.

4. Pines

This population was founded in the sixteenth century.

The characteristic elements of its culture are the crafts, music, and gastronomy that are evident in extraordinary and colorful textiles, the colloquies or popular verses, the dance of the Matlachines, and the distillation of mezcal varieties.

The mining population of Pinos is home to important architectural structures of sacred and regional art:

- The Miguel Hidalgo Garden
- The Public Clock Tower
- The Parish of San Matías

It was declared the fourth Magical Town of Zacatecas in 2012.

5. Nochistlán de Mejía

This municipality is located in the south of the state of Zacatecas.

The historical value of Nochistlán de Mejía is that during the pre-Hispanic era, it was inhabited by the hardened caxcanes, an indigenous tribe that fought against the Spanish conquerors.

The most emblematic sites of this Magic Town are:

- The Temple of San Sebastián
- The Los Arcos Aqueduct
- The Stack of Outside
- The house of the Ruíz
- The Monument to Tenamaxtle

The hallmarks of the locals are mainly the party of the "papaquis" in honor of San Sebastian and the matchless mariachis. It received his appointment as the fifth Magical Town of Zacatecas in 2012.

What about the food?

The minister told eTN: "Zacatecas is known for great food, and this is also different from the rest of Mexico. As one of the largest producers of silver, it is a mining city. Visitors should try the locally -grown and fried chili.

"Zacatecas' has a distinctive gastronomy, including wine and Corona, the largest brewery in Mexico, and our soil is full of minerals which gives this unique taste to everything."

Here are some of the dishes Zacatecas is known for:

- Caldos or Cocidos -- these are general terms for stews, but in Zacatecas the traditional recipe consists of three kinds of meat (beef, pig and chicken), string beans, garbanzos, small squash, sweetcorn, a bit of rice, onion, garlic and saffron. Upon serving, the vegetables are separated from the stew, and then the dishes are eaten with a great deal of chili sauce
- Gorditas -- biscuit-like packages of cooked cornmeal, lard and salt, stuffed with beanpaste and chili
- Condoches -- gorditas made with sweetcorn mixed with cinnamon, milk, sugar and vanilla, cooked atop corn leaves
- Birria -- small chunks of goat or sheep, or both, smothered in chili sauce, garlic, salt, thyme,

cumin, black pepper and cinnamon
•Menudo -- cow rumen stewed with chilies

What about sweets?

- Capirotada -- white bread fried with slices of bread alternating with cheese, peanuts, potato, nuts and preserved biznaga cactus, all bathed in honey or unrefined brown sugar
- Queso de Tuna -- candy made from prickly pear cactus, sometimes prepared with nuts
- Camote -- the word camote means sweet potato; when a sweet is being referred to, it's a candied sweet- potato cut into bars and wrapped in paper
- Biznaga -- candied cactus of the genus Mammillaria
- Gordita de Cuajada or Gordita de Horno -- a gordita filled with goat-milk cheese that is ground with corn, milk, sugar and cinnamon.

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eTN asked the minister why their focus is on European visitors and not so much on visitors from the United States.

She said: "We welcome visitors from the U.S., and there is a lot of cultural and family connection between the U.S. and our state. American tourists without families ties to Mexico seemed to be more interested in beaches. Zacatecas is all about culture and to get a feeling to be in a typical historic Mexican city.

Americans also seemed to be less aware of the geographics in Mexico when it comes to travel advisories. This part of Mexico is still untouched and unexplored in so many ways, and it's safe."

"It makes a lot of sense to us to focus on European guests. Europeans have longer holidays, and we realize Zacatecas is not a single destination. Europeans have the time to enjoy Mexico's beaches, the capital, and spend some additional days in Zacatecas, which is so different than the rest of our country. Europeans enjoy the historic regions and our city center, which has been made a UNESCO World Heritage site."

While attending Top Resa, the Vice Minister spoke with major tour operators including the big companies like TUI/ Thomas Cook, and there was great interest in exploring this hidden jewel of Mexico, she said. In France 59% of all bookings to the area are made by tour operators.

"Zacatecas is a happy place, it's a city of art, and not only because the regions have many cantinas that stay open very late," Minister Ibarra emphasized. "We're planning to attend WTM in London and ITB in Berlin also for the first time, and my team is working hard to get the cooperation of other Mexican regions to work with us and include us when promoting the country.

"We already started reaching out in Asia, but not yet to China. We're excited for our future tourism plans!"

Perhaps the message is to visit Zacatecas before mass tourism gets a hold of the region. Zacatecas has all the ingredients for it.

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