

MEXICO'S COPPER CANYON

October 22, 2021 - 14 Days

Experience one of the world's most spectacular train journeys!

Excite your senses with this wonderful tour of Mexico's Copper Canyon, full of cultural riches and activities. We start our journey in Mazatlan and drive north along the coastal plain to Los Mochis for a 2-night stay. We board the Chihuahua Al Pacifico Railroad's first-class train for the awesome all-day trip into the canyon through 86 tunnels and over 39 bridges. Stay at Divisadero Barrancas, perched on the rim of Copper Canyon, and gaze over 2,000 metres down into one of the world's deepest canyons. A visit with the local Tarahumara Indians, a walk to 30-metre high Cusarare Falls, a ride on the aerial tramway with magnificent views, and a walk across the hanging bridge and glass floor are all thrilling experiences.

Activity Level: 2



TOUR
25

33 Meals Included:

11 breakfasts, 10 lunches, 12 dinners

Fares per person:

\$6,050 double/twin; \$7,090 single; \$5,870 triple
Please add 0.2% GST.

Early Bookers:

\$200 discount on first 8 seats; \$100 on next 4

Experience Points:

Earn 132 points on this tour.

Redeem 132 points if you book by July 20, 2021.



ITINERARY

Day 1: Friday, October 22

Transfers are provided this afternoon to Victoria airport. We fly to Calgary and stay overnight at the Marriott Hotel in the airport. Get acquainted with your fellow travellers during a welcome dinner.

Meals included: Dinner

Accommodation: Marriott Hotel

Day 2: Saturday, October 23

Our WestJet flight departs in mid-morning and is non-stop to Mazatlan. **Welcome to Mexico!** After clearing immigration, we meet our Mexican guide and driver. We stay two nights at the Holiday Inn in Mazatlan, located beside the beautiful sandy Pacific beach.

Meals included: Dinner

Accommodation: Holiday Inn Oceanfront



Day 3: Sunday, October 24

A sightseeing tour around **Mazatlan** includes the Cathedral, Aquarium, El Faro Lighthouse, Shrimp House, Plaza Machado with its beach mansions, and the daring **cliff divers** at Malecon. The afternoon is free to enjoy our hotel and the beach.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Holiday Inn Oceanfront

Day 4: Monday, October 25

We drive north along the coastal plain, nicknamed the "Bread Basket of Mexico" because of the fertile farmlands growing corn, wheat, sorghum, beans, oats, chile peppers, tomatoes, and many other crops. We cross the Tropic of Cancer

and pass through cities such as Culiacan and Guasave. We visit the **Las Labradas archeological site** where ancient drawings or petroglyphs have been chiseled on volcanic rocks. They date to about 4,000 years ago, and this is the only petroglyph site in a beachside location in the Americas. We stay two nights in **Los Mochis**.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Best Western Plus Hotel

Day 5: Tuesday, October 26

Los Mochis is located on the west coast of mainland Mexico, a few miles inland from the Sea of Cortez. Sugar beets are one of the important crops here. This morning, we take a cruise on **Topolobampo Bay**, the largest and deepest natural harbour on this coast. The bay is home to many dolphins and they invariably leap and play close to the boat. Sea lions and many kinds of birds can also be spotted. Later there is a sightseeing drive around Los Mochis and free time to enjoy shopping and bargain-hunting in the nearby bazaars.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Best Western Plus Hotel

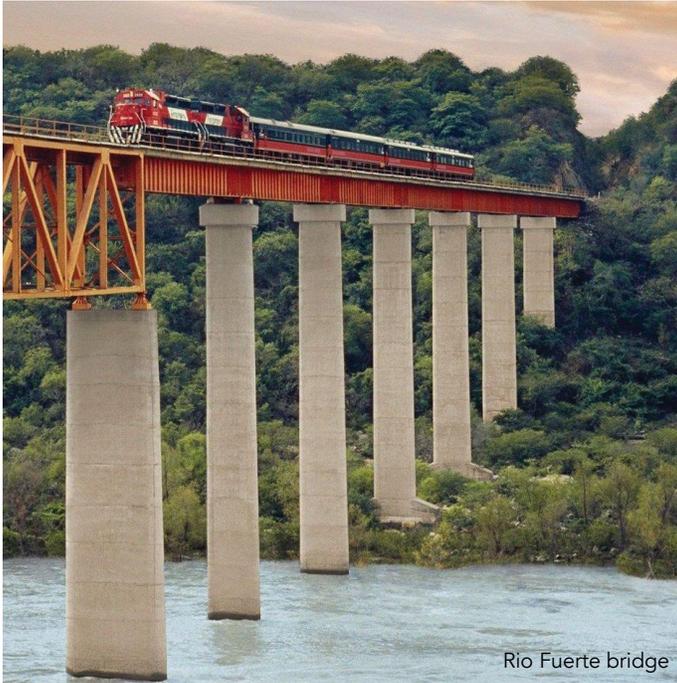
Day 6: Wednesday, October 27

We board the **Chihuahua Al Pacifico Railroad**, riding on the new first-class El Chepe Express train. Thrill to the engineering wonders of this amazing railroad during our eight-hour journey high into the Sierra Madre. Planning and construction of the railroad took 90 years and it opened to traffic between Los Mochis and Chihuahua in 1961. After crossing the coastal plain, the train begins to climb steadily along the canyon of the Rio Fuerte. Once into the Sierra Madre, it corkscrews higher and higher, hugging steep mountainsides and squeezing through narrow gorges. At the Temoris switchbacks, three levels of track are visible at the same time. In all, there are 86 tunnels ranging up to a kilometre long and 39 bridges of which the highest is 100 metres. Divisadero station is at the rim of **Copper Canyon (Barranca del Cobre)**

and we leave the train on arrival about 4 pm. We stay two nights at the Hotel Divisadero Barrancas which literally perches on the edge of the cliffs. Thrill to the stunning views during a stroll along the precipice where the rock walls drop over 2,000 metres from the hotel to the river.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Hotel Divisadero Barrancas



Rio Fuerte bridge

Day 7: Thursday, October 28

Five times larger than the Grand Canyon and 1½ times deeper, Copper Canyon slices into the Sierra Madre to form a vast wilderness that has never been penetrated by roads. The native people in this rugged canyon are the shy and primitive **Tarahumara Indians** who inhabit caves along the canyon walls. Today, we experience Copper Canyon in several ways. We ride the remarkable **Teleferico Aerial Tram** nearly 1,000 metres down from the rim. Built in 2010, the cablecar is up to 200 metres above the ground and the 4.3 km trip from upper to lower stations is one of the longest in the world with no supporting towers. Back at the top, thrill to the **hanging bridge** and the glass-bottom floor. If you are under age 65, you can buy an exciting ride on the zip lines (one is over 2 km long). An afternoon visit is planned to a **Tarahumara school** where the children perform



Aerial tram

dances and races (subject to change). You may want to browse the bargains in the Tarahumara craft shops. We hope to arrange a visit with a Tarahumara family, but this is often a last-minute opportunity.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Hotel Divisadero Barrancas

Day 8: Friday, October 29

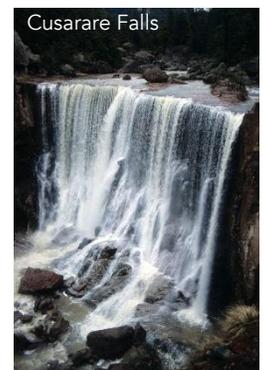
The morning is leisure time. We leave Divisadero by motorcoach after lunch and drive through the Oteros Canyon to the town of **Creel** (pronounced cree-EL). It was founded in 1907 as a logging town, and for many years it was the final stop westbound on the railway from Chihuahua. It is inhabited mostly by indigenous people of the Rámuri ethnic group, and the use of their native language is widespread. Today, Creel is a gateway to Copper Canyon and tourism is most important for the economy. We stay two nights here.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Best Western Plus The Lodge

Day 9: Saturday, October 30

We visit the **Jesuit Mission** of San Ignacio and the Boarding School, view a Tarahumara cave dwelling, and admire nature's handiwork on the weird balancing rocks of Mushroom Valley. The Mission Store stocks English language books about the



Cusarare Falls

Tarahumaras and Copper Canyon. An optional walk to 30-metre high **Cusarare Falls** is offered as well.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Best Western Plus The Lodge

Day 10: Sunday, October 31

We board the **El Chepe Express train** in Creel for the return journey down the western slope of the Sierra Madre. The trip takes 7½ hours with views of the canyons and foothills in the opposite direction. We disembark at **El Fuerte** and stay two nights at Hotel Torres, an enchanting centuries old building with a tree-filled courtyard.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Hotel Torres

Day 11: Monday, November 1

El Fuerte was founded by the Spaniards in 1564 and is full of historic buildings. A walking tour includes the picturesque square bounded by the cathedral and a 200-year old hacienda, now the city hall. We also visit a **Mayo village** to learn

about this regional indigenous culture and daily living. The afternoon is leisure time.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Hotel Torres

Day 12: Tuesday, November 2

We drive to **Mazatlan** along the coastal freeway and stay overnight again at the oceanfront Holiday Inn. A farewell dinner is a chance to reminisce with fellow travellers about our memorable experiences in Copper Canyon.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Holiday Inn Oceanfront

Day 13: Wednesday, November 3

The flight schedule homeward will be available later. We expect to stay overnight at a connecting airport hotel.

Meals included: Breakfast

Accommodation: To be advised

Day 14: Thursday, November 4

We continue home with a flight to Victoria. A transfer is provided to your pickup point.

TRAVELLING IN MEXICO

In the last ten years, you have probably seen stories in the media about the dangers of travelling in Mexico. The Mexican government has made heroic efforts to counteract this bad press and salvage their vital tourism industry by showing that Mexico is as safe to travel in as many foreign countries. Tourism has rebounded, but many people still pay attention to what they see in the media. Mexico still has some dangerous places to visit, but so do many countries including Canada and the USA. This tour was redesigned in 2014 from previous Copper Canyon tours to avoid Chihuahua and Juarez, and the 2021 itinerary stays west of the Sierra Madre where travel is much safer. A change made in 2019 was to fly in and out of Mazatlan, giving time to add Los Mochis and Topolobampo Bay to the itinerary, and that continues in 2021. The El Chepe Express train was introduced in 2019, serving primarily tourists instead of locals. After two years experimenting with train schedules, the company set up the 2021 times to allow all daylight travel in both directions. The scenery in Copper Canyon and Urique Canyon is awesome, and the train ride is among the world's most spectacular. Major attractions such as the aerial tram down into Copper Canyon, the hanging bridge, and glass floor are thrilling experiences. Come and enjoy this amazing region!



WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Transfer to/from Victoria airport
- Flight from Victoria to Mazatlan and return
- Current air transport taxes and security fees
- Airline luggage fees for 1 suitcase per person
- 13 nights of accommodation & hotel taxes
- Coach transportation in Mexico for 8 days
- Transfer from Mazatlan airport to hotel
- Half-day sightseeing tour of Mazatlan
- Malecon cliff divers
- Mazatlan Cathedral
- Las Labradas archaeological site
- Locally-guided tour of Los Mochis
- Topolobampo Bay cruise for wildlife viewing
- Transfer from Los Mochis hotel to train station
- First class ticket on Chihuahua al Pacifico Railroad El Chepe Express train from Los Mochis to Divisadero
- Teleferico Aerial Tram into Copper Canyon
- Walk on the Hanging Bridge
- Glass-bottom overlook of Copper Canyon
- Walking tour along rim of Copper Canyon
- Tarahumara school and family visits (if possible)
- Guided walk of Tarahumara Indian land and Cusarare Falls
- Transfer from Creel hotel to train station
- First class rail ticket on El Chepe Express from Creel to El Fuerte
- Walking tour of historic El Fuerte
- Transfer from Mazatlan hotel to airport
- Wells Gray tour director throughout tour
- Bilingual Mexican guide
- Gratuities for Mexican guide and drivers
- Luggage handling at hotels
- **33 meals:** 11 breakfasts, 10 lunches, 12 dinners

TOUR NOTES

Currency & Expenses: Two currencies are used on this tour, the US dollar and Mexican peso. In cities and towns, the US dollar is used extensively in hotels, shops, and restaurants. Visa and Mastercard are accepted most places, but ATMs are common and you will need a 4-digit PIN. Markets generally accept either currency. Purchases from the Tarahumaras are typically in pesos. As of December 2020, the exchange rate is approximately \$1 CDN = 15 pesos. Gratuities have been included for all meals, and for the Mexican guide, local guides, and drivers.

Changes: Pricing with the Mexican ground operator is in US dollars. As this tour has been planned and priced 10 months before departure, it is possible that exchange fluctuations could affect the fare, in which case you will be notified of the increase or decrease. The flight to Mazatlan is confirmed with WestJet, but the return flight is not available yet, and cost is estimated. This could result in a fare adjustment.

Tour Director and Guide: A Wells Gray tour director is with you throughout the tour. A bilingual Mexican guide accompanies you on all the days in Mexico. The Mexican guide provides commentary about scenery and culture, and assists with translation at the various stops.

Accommodation: Holiday Inn Mazatlan and Calgary Marriott are the only first-class hotels on this tour. Other hotels are rated as 3 or 3+ stars and are generally the best available. Many are in unique or historic buildings. Don't expect fancy hotels in the Copper Canyon region as this is still a remote tourist area. Hotels named in the itinerary could change, but substitute accommodation will be of similar quality.

Documentation: A passport is required for this tour and must be valid until you return to Canada. A tourist card is also required for Canadian citizens visiting Mexico. It is issued on arrival and must be kept throughout your visit and surrendered when you leave Mexico at Mazatlan Airport. Don't lose this card as there is a fine to replace it. The Mexico tourism tax is normally included in your airline ticket.

Flight upgrades: Please enquire about current prices for upgrades on the flights to and from Mazatlan. Premium economy and business class may be available.



Activity Level 2: Moderate activity including short distances to walk. Expect many stairs and uneven walkways, sidewalks, and trails. Cobblestone streets are common in historic towns. A few hotels have no elevator and there are stairs to access your room. Walking tours are arranged in some historic towns where coach transportation is impossible. Seeing everything mentioned in this itinerary requires active participation. There can be longer walks in the airports; request a cart or wheelchair in advance or at check-in if this could be an issue for you. The coaches and trains cannot carry a scooter. If you are not able to participate in Activity Level 2, Wells Gray Tours recommends that you bring a companion to assist you. The tour director, Mexican guide, and drivers have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance. If you are not capable of keeping up with the group or require frequent assistance, the tour director may stop you from participating in some activities or some days of the tour. In extreme situations, you may be required to leave the tour and travel home at your own expense; travel insurance will probably not cover you.



This is a **Tour 25** departure, meaning the tour is limited to 25 participants, a more intimate travel experience.

TOUR POLICIES

Payments: A deposit of \$600 per person is requested at the time of booking and the balance is due July 20, 2021. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined.

Discounts: Early bookers receive \$200 discount on first 8 seats and \$100 on next 4 seats for booking early with deposit. The discount is not offered after July 20, 2021.

Cancellation Policy: Up to June 18, 2021, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$50 per person. From June 19 to July 20, the cancellation charge is \$300 per person. From July 21 to August 20, the cancellation charge is 40% of the tour fare. From August 21 to September 20, the cancellation charge is 80% of the tour fare. After September 20, there is no refund.

Fare Changes: Changes to taxes or currency exchange rates and surcharges from airlines and other tour suppliers can occur at any time and are beyond the control of Wells Gray Tours, therefore Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes up until the time of departure.

Travel Insurance: A Comprehensive Insurance policy is available through Wells Gray Tours and coverage is provided by Travel Guard. Policies purchased at deposit include a waiver of the pre-existing condition clause for medical and cancellation claims, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details.

Home pickups may be offered in Greater Victoria, depending on the number of people booked and coach size. Decision is made about 2 weeks before departure and you will be contacted about your pickup point and time.

Photo Credits: VisitCopperCanyon.com (1st page, train on bridge, aerial tramway), Hotel Divisadero Barrancas, IHG Hotels (Holiday Inn), Roland Neave (Cusarare Falls), Wikimedia Commons (Copper Canyon 4th page)

Experience Points: This tour earns 132 e-points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn Experience Points, or e-points. One e-point equals \$1. Redeem your points on select tours or accumulate enough points to earn a free tour! Redemptions offered until July 20, 2021.

Consumer Protection BC Licences: Kamloops 178, Vernon 655, Kelowna 588, Penticton 924, Victoria 65842

VICTORIA

102-736 Broughton St.
Victoria, BC V8W 1E1
250-590-7889

Office Hours:

8:30 am to 4 pm
Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri
Wed 9 am to 4 pm

KAMLOOPS

(Head Office)
250 Lansdowne St.
Kamloops, BC V2C 1X7
250-374-0831

Office Hours:

8:30 am to 4:30 pm
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1-800-667-9552