

MEXICO

Mystical Migration of the Monarch

7 DAYS | Choose your dates | Best season to travel: FEB

*One of the most amazing phenomena in nature is the annual migration of monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) southward from their breeding grounds in the United States and Canada to overwintering sites high in the mountains of southern Mexico. Hundreds of millions of monarchs fly along the Gulf Coast, or across the Gulf of Mexico, to eventually reach the belt of high volcanic mountains which stretches across the southern end of the central Mexican plateau. At about a dozen isolated places within the high-altitude forests of this zone, monarchs pass the winter in aggregations that can exceed 2 billion individual butterflies. Stand amid the fir-covered mountains and witness this awe-inspiring spectacle firsthand as the monarchs flutter, dip, and swoop overhead.*

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Hike or ride horseback to three different monarch reserves in Michoacán, where millions of individual monarch butterflies gather.
- Photograph the dramatic colors of the butterflies as they hang in clusters from the trees, drink from streams, feed on wildflowers, and soar in the air above.
- Visit the pyramids at Teotihuacán, one of the most architecturally significant Mesoamerican sites of pre-Columbian times.
- Spend time exploring colonial Angangueo, which was once a mining town but now derives most of its livelihood from butterfly ecotourism and agriculture.

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Bilingual local guide
- Driver
- Accommodations
- Activities
- Private transportation
- Meals
- Beverages with meals
- Carbon offsetting



PHOTO BY IAN SEGEBARTH



TEOTIHUACÁN BY IAN SEGEBARTH

ITINERARY

BLD = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

DAY 1 - MEXICO CITY

Depart from the U.S. and arrive in Mexico City. Upon arrival, you will be met at the airport and transferred to the hotel located on the Zócalo, in the heart of the historic city center. Check-in time is 3 pm. This evening, meet in the hotel lobby at 7 pm for a program orientation and welcome dinner. *Overnight at Zócalo Central Hotel. (D)*

DAY 2 - ANGANGUEO

Begin today with a short exploration of Mexico City, with a brief walking tour of the Zócalo, Cathedral, Templo Mayor, and National Palace. A boxed lunch will be provided. Depart for the colonial town of Angangueo, located high in the mountains in the state of Michoacán, about 100 miles west of Mexico City. Check in at Hotel Don Bruno. After settling in, enjoy a delicious Mexican dinner. (Please note that it can get cold at night and in the early morning. It is recommended that you bring warm sleeping clothes.) After dinner at the hotel, gather for a briefing to help prepare for the next day. *Overnight at Hotel Don Bruno. (BLD)*

DAY 3 - ANGANGUEO

This morning, visit Sierra Chincua. This is one of several nearby monarch sites and is more isolated than El Rosario, which will be visited tomorrow. The journey starts with a hike up the mountain to about

10,000 feet. Horses will be available to rent for a portion of the trail. The cost is about 100 Mexican pesos, payable in cash only. Some walking will be required, but it can be done at your own pace and with stops and rest as needed. Once at the site, you have the day to enjoy and photograph the spectacular colony with a boxed lunch to be eaten at your leisure. Please note that restrooms are located at the bottom of the mountain and not in the reserve. You will



ANGANGUEO BY PELIN KARACA

have a short time to buy souvenirs at the craft market at the bottom of the mountain. If time permits, visit the Alternare Center, which has more than 20 years of experience working with rural communities with the goal of helping conserve butterfly habitat. They also teach sustainable farming techniques, the construction of adobe houses, wood-saving stoves, and water conservation practices. Later this afternoon, take a walking tour through the town of Angangueo with your guide. Founded in 1792, the town served as a main mining center, providing wealth for the area. Today the town derives its income from butterfly tourism and agriculture. As you explore the cobblestone streets, your guide will share sites of interest and the importance of butterfly conservation to the town. Dinner is at the hotel. *Overnight at Hotel Don Bruno. (BLD)*

DAY 4 - ZITÁCUARO

Early this morning, check out of the hotel and visit the monarch site of El Rosario. This large overwintering colony normally contains well over 100 million adult monarchs. An excellent trail system winds through the fir-covered slopes on which the colony is located. Additionally, there is a nearby stream where the butterflies may fly at midday to drink water. At this time of year, they may take flight for an hour or more for water, nectar, etc., before returning to their roost on the tree limbs or trunks. The hike to reach the colony may again reach up to 10,000 feet and will require hiking up the mountain. The hike is at your own pace, and birding can be done along the way. A portion of the hike can again be done by horseback rental. Once at the site, the day will be spent enjoying the colony with a boxed lunch to be eaten at your leisure. Restrooms are located at the bottom of the mountain and not in the reserve. In the late afternoon, continue on to Hotel Rancho San Cayetano near Zitácuaro. The hotel is set on 13 acres of beautiful Mexican countryside, amid gardens and views of the surrounding mountains. After dinner, gather for a briefing on Cerro Pelón and what to expect in the morning. *Overnight at Rancho San Cayetano. (BLD)*



DAY 5 - ZITÁCUARO

After breakfast, visit the Cerro Pelón reserve. This visit will be a little more challenging than the previous days, with a steeper hike and altitudes starting at about 10,400 feet. Horses will be available for rent for the beginning portion of the hike and may be required due to trail conditions. Depending on the location of the colony, a 30-minute steep uphill hike may be required after the horse ride. Cerro Pelón is the least-known monarch reserve, and because of the rougher conditions is also the least visited, making it a more intimate experience. As on the previous days, you will take a boxed lunch and there will be no restrooms in the reserve. Those who choose not to visit Cerro Pelón will be able to enjoy Rancho Cayetano and the surrounding areas. The hotel property is great for birding, and a short

walk takes you to the market in Zitácuaro and to Coatepec de Morelos, which is home to the 16th century church Iglesia de San Pancho. If you wish to venture further, you can visit the archaeological site at San Felipe Los Alzati (45 minutes from the hotel). Return to the lodge for dinner. *Overnight at Rancho San Cayetano. (BLD)*

DAY 6 - MEXICO CITY

After breakfast, depart for the Mexico City area and the pyramids at San Juan Teotihuacán. After a delicious lunch near the pyramids, you'll have the afternoon to explore this world-famous archaeological site, which covers 32 square miles and contains many structures, including two large pyramids. The Pyramid of the Sun, at a height of more than 200 feet, is one of the largest structures created in the pre-Columbian New World. After time to explore the ruins on your own, return to your hotel on the Zócalo for a farewell dinner. *Overnight at Zócalo Central Hotel. (BLD)*

DAY 7 - DEPARTURE

Breakfast will be included depending on your departure time. Airport shuttle service transfers are included and will be coordinated based on flight times. Check-out time at 12 pm. (B)

PROGRAM PRICING

\$2,245 (15 participants + 1 leader)

\$2,485 (10 participants + 1 leader)

Price includes accommodations, meals, entrance fees, and activities as indicated in the itinerary, private transportation unless otherwise noted in itinerary, non-alcoholic beverages with meals, local guides in each region for duration of program, and carbon offset.

International airfare, gratuities, and items of a personal nature are not included. Valid for travel in 2021.

TRAVEL PROTECTION

Holbrook Travel purchases Travel Protection on behalf of all participants. These plans help provide coverage once the trip has departed and offer benefits for Baggage/Personal Effects, Accident & Sickness Medical Expenses, Emergency Evacuation and more. Refer to the Plan Document for more details.

Optional additional coverage is available in the form of the Group Deluxe Plan, which offers benefits for Trip Cancellation/ Interruption, in addition to many other insurance benefits and non-insurance assistance services. If interested in this optional plan, we can provide you with rates and plan details.

THE FINE PRINT

A \$200 per person deposit and enrollment form is due upon booking and no later than four months prior to departure. This deposit is refundable until 95 days prior to departure excluding a \$100 cancellation fee. Final payments are due no later than 95 days prior to departure. Cancellations received less than 95 days prior to departure are not refundable.



PHOTO BY DEBBIE JORDAN



This program includes optional carbon offsetting with ClimateSafe. Learn more at holbrooktravel.com/climatesafe



ACTIVITY LEVEL

5

STRENUOUS

WHAT TO EXPECT

This journey is for fit and active nature enthusiasts who wish to observe the billions of migratory monarch butterflies that overwinter in the Mexican highlands between November and March. You'll explore their habitats from two different bases in Michoacán, with overnight stays in Mexico City bracketing your 7-day trip. Daily activities last for 5 or more hours. Three are challenging excursions to butterfly colonies at altitudes of up to 10,400 feet. These involve steep uphill hikes of 30 minutes or more (hiking at your own pace), and require horseback riding for part of the way. Restrooms are only available at the base of the mountain. Also included are walking tours in provincial towns and in Mexico City. Here, at the Teotihuacán archaeological site, you can choose to climb two pyramids: the largest is over 200 feet high with 248 steep steps. November through March is the dry season, when temperatures fall between 68–77°F. Land travel is aboard private, air-conditioned motorcoaches.



PHOTO BY IAN SEGEBARTH

