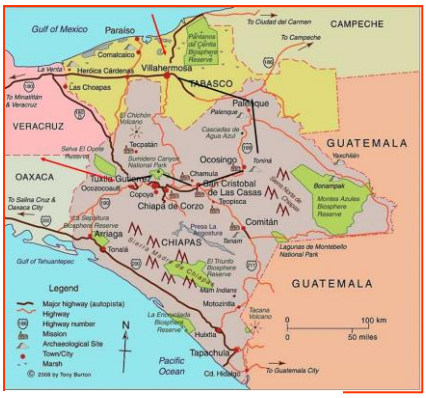
Día de los Muertos
Chiapas, Mexico
Oct 28 - Nov 5, 2027

Journey with us to the state of Chiapas, Mexico, which is never more alive than during **Día de Muertos** *(the Day of the Dead). It is a time to focus on family and friends, and to pray for and remember those who have died. Celebrations take place on October 31, November 1 and 2 throughout the world, and particularly in Mexico's colonial cities and indigenous villages. Far from somber,* **Día de Muertos** *is a festival, and JB Journeys offers the only itinerary specially designed to witness centuries old traditions of Chiapas, Mexico, in an authentic manner.*

We begin in ***Palenque*** *for a visit to one of the greatest of the Maya sites. This is a prime example of a Mayan sanctuary of the classical period, at its peak between AD 500 and 700. The elegance and craftsmanship of the buildings, as well as the lightness of the sculpted reliefs with their Mayan mythological themes, attest to the creative genius of this civilization.*



En route to San Cristobal de las Casas, we will visit Toniná, another Maya city. The layout of ***Toniná*** *is quite different, having been built on terraces with grand staircases leading to the Acropolis. The vista from the top is a beautiful valley, and in the distance you will see what appear to be hills, but are probably more temples awaiting discovery.*

San Cristobal de las Casas *is one of the most beautiful of the colonial cities, and many of the former colonial homes are now boutique hotels. Using 'San Cris' as our base, we will visit some of the surrounding villages and peek into homes of the locals, as well as visit cemeteries to see how they celebrate the very Mexican tradition of* **Día de Muertos**. *You'll have a chance to learn about the many different Maya costumes, which differ from village to village, and visit artisan workshops. You will share traditional meals with the Maya, and participate in building an altar. Additionally, we have enough time for you to get to know San Cris, shop for textiles and other gifts, maybe look at real estate!*

Finally, we will end up boating through spectacular Sumidero Canyon. Truly, the state of Chiapas is diverse in its history, culture, people, and nature.

Much of movement will be on foot, and you should be able to walk 2-3 miles per day, total, but not continuous. Often, we are on cobble-stone streets.

Day 1 - Oct 28 - Thursday – arrive Villahermosa

Fly to Villahermosa airport and we will be met for the transfer to the city of Palenque and our hotel, Maya Tulipanes or similar. Depending on arrival time, we may have dinner together, but it's possible we'll have our 'welcome dinner' on day 2. *From Villahermosa, the ride is 2 hours.*

Overnight at Hotel Maya Tulipanes (or similar) for 2 nights

Day 2 - Oct 29 - Friday - Palenque (B,L,D)

After breakfast at the hotel, we will head to the ruins. Palenque was believed to be one of the most important cities of its day. The setting is no less impressive than the architecture; they complement each other perfectly. Surrounded by lush tropical

forest and jungle, this site has a serene, mystical atmosphere. From the moment you enter, you feel engulfed by a sense of history, timelessness and awe. There is an important thing to keep in mind when you're wandering around these ruins: everything you see was built without the benefit of metal tools, the horse or the wheel. This place was created with nothing but the tenacity of human labor. The surrounding forest is home to a huge variety of wildlife, such as the colorful toucan and boisterous howler monkeys.

Palenque contained tombs of ancient leaders and rulers, and still today, excavations are ongoing to uncover more of the mysteries and enigmas surrounding the ancient civilizations of the Maya. Some of the site is still roped off to visitors as work to uncover the hidden treasures, reclaimed by nature over centuries of disuse, continues. A relatively small number of the estimated 500+ buildings have been excavated.

In the afternoon we'll visit the beautiful waterfalls Misol Ha, where we'll also have lunch. This evening we will have our welcome dinner together in the town of Palenque.

Day 3 - Oct 30 - Saturday - To San Cristobal(B,L)

Today we journey to San Cristobal de las Casas, a long day of travel. Depending on what ruins are open, we may visit the ruin site of Toniná on the way. **Toniná** may have been built as early as 350 AD, but one of its distinctions is having an inscription with one of the last recorded dates of the Maya long count. The building technique is unique in its use of small rocks verses the larger stones used at nearby sites. It also has a very well preserved, somewhat macabre, fresco. Although not far from Palenque, it has had less in the way of research and thus is much less visited. *Approximate driving time: Palenque - - Toniná – about 3 hours. Toniná - San Cristobal - 3 hours.*

Dinner on your own. Overnight at Hotel Sombra del Agua for 5 nights

Day 4 - Oct 31 - Sunday - San Cris Market, Altars, Zinacantan (B,L)

This morning we will take a walking tour to the local market. You'll be surprised by the sheer variety of items sold, including items specially sold for making *ofrendas*, or altars. When we return to our hotel, we'll make our own altar, so bring pictures of loved ones lost.

In the afternoon, we will go by van (*15 minutes*) to **San Lorenzo Zinacantán,** another small village in the southern part of the Central Chiapas highlands, where about 98% of its population are Tzotzil Maya. We will see some demonstrations on weaving and other traditions, and partake of a traditional lunch, prepared especially for us, with special *Día de Muertos* foods. Return to San Cristobal in the afternoon. Late afternoon we will visit the house museum of a man who has worked bringing medicines to local Maya villages, and in return, he is repaid with the regional costume of many small places. It's an important collection, and in hearing his story, it is a unique experience.

Dinner on your own.

Day 5 - Nov 1 - Monday Cemeteries - Día de Muertos (B)

We'll visit 3 cemeteries today. In San Cris, it is called the city Pantheon. As in life, where you lie in death is all about real estate. Small crypts are built along 'streets and avenues' and the architecture of these tiny buildings is all over the place. Gothic, mid-century modern, country, and gaudy. Each family cares for their loved ones' resting place, and this time of year, they come to clean up, paint, weed, and decorate the

crypts. The place is truly alive, and musicians walk around waiting to be hired. Some put up tents and bring food and drink to celebrate.

Next we visit the cemetery at **El Romerillo**, (*about 30 minutes from San Cris*) which sits atop a large rise that is covered with huge, blue wooden crosses. The whole town turns out, cleaning and decorating the graves, setting up areas to eat and drink. You can identify the locals by their traditional dress. The men wear black or white wool tunics called *chujes* that are belted around the waist. The women dress in embroidered *huipiles* (blouses) made of cotton or satin blouses, shawls and long black woolen skirts.

The third is the cemetery in the town of **San Juan Chamula**, a small town located 6 miles northwest of San Cristobal de las Casas. It is a colorful site, as graves are decorated with pine needles and marigold petals, with singing and dancing, food and drink. You'll see native dress here, again with the men in their wool tunics and the women in embroidered *huipiles*.

We will return to San Cristobal for lunch on your own.

You are encouraged to walk around town on the central plaza and the *andadores*, pedestrian zones, to see how *Día de Muertos* and Halloween are celebrated.

Dinner on your own.

Day 6 - Nov 2 - Tuesday – Amatenango del Valle (B,L)

The women from **Amatenango** learn the art of pottery by an oral tradition that has remained unchanged for centuries. The secrets of their craft have been handed down from mother to daughter for generations, and there is not a single woman in Amatenango who ignores the art of making pottery. Meanwhile, most of the men are dedicated to farming. We will visit the home of one of the potters and learn more about this amazing tradition. And then we will lunch with them, eating a traditional meal which includes some foods created for this time of year. *San Cris to Amentenango about 45 minutes.*

Return to San Cristobal in the afternoon, dinner on your own.

Day 7 - Nov 3 - Wednesday - Textiles and Chamula Cathedral (B, D)

A walk through town takes us to the ***Centro de Textiles del Mundo Maya***, a world class collection and exhibit of the many different costumes worn by the Maya.

Then we will meet our driver and return to **San Juan Chamula**, home to a fiercely independent Tzotzil community. The Tzotzil Maya are one of the largest indigenous groups in Chiapas, making up roughly one third of the state's indigenous population. The town also serves as the main hub of religion and commerce for the Tzotzil Maya in Chiapas.

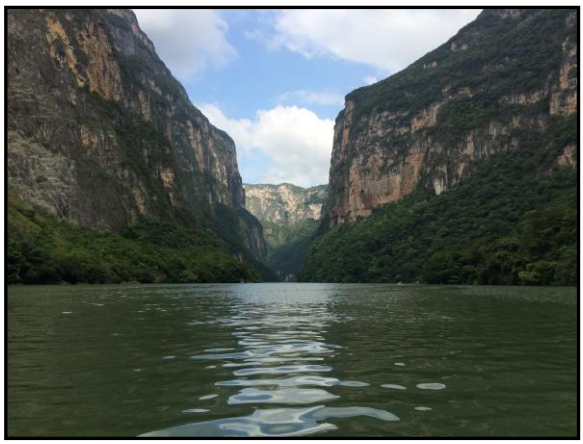
We will spend some time in San Juan Chamula's church, the Cathedral San Juan Bautista. Tzotzil Maya of this area practice some interesting religious rituals that blend pre-Hispanic traditions with Catholicism. There are no pews and no altar inside their church. Instead, worshippers kneel on the floor, light candles and chant. The rituals include drinking Coke and *pox*, an alcoholic beverage made from sugarcane. They practice several ancient healing rituals, some of which use eggs, bones and live chickens that are sacrificed in the

church and later buried in front of the homes of the sick. You are welcome to observe, **but it is forbidden to take photos inside**.

Tonight we'll have final dinner together at a typical restaurant.

Day 8 - Nov 4 - Thursday - Sumidero Canyon & Chiapa de Corzo (B, L)

Today we'll leave San Cris and head towards Tuxtla Gutierrez. We'll spend a few hours on a boat ride through Sumidero Canyon. *San Cris to Sumidero about 1 hour.*



Sumidero is a geological fault that was formed millions of years ago, where the Grijalva River lies, and it is considered as one of the most spectacular places in Mexico. Its walls are over 900 meters high, and beautiful features can be seen, such as *Cueva de Colores* (cave of colors) and *Cascada Árbol de Navidad* (Christmas tree waterfall). Birds and monkeys are often seen in the area, and you may see crocodiles on the banks of the river.

We will then visit Chiapa de Corzo, the oldest colonial town in the state of Chiapas, for lunch and a little touring. Marvel at the colonial *mudejar*-style La Pila fountain in the town's main plaza. This monumental red-orange brick fountain with its octagonal design, arches, flying buttresses and domed roof date back to the 16th century and is thought to have been built to resemble the Spanish crown.

Overnight at Hilton Garden Inn, Tuxtla Gutierrez or similar

Day 9 - Nov 5 - Friday (B) We'll depart for the airport about 3 hours before flight.

Itinerary subject to final revision, based on flight schedules, number of participants, weather, etc.

Lodging:

Maya Tulipanes Palenque - Located in the historic district, the hotel features a restaurant, an outdoor pool, and a bar/lounge. Maya décor throughout. Rooms have 2 beds, AC, room safe, TV, hair dryers. Wifi in public areas.

Hotel Sombra del Agua San Cristobal- A beautiful old hotel fully updated and modern yet classic. The building dates back over 100 years. Located centrally and near the pedestrian zones and main square of San Cris. Rooms have 2 beds, TV, bath with hot water, and free Wifi.

Hilton Garden Inn Tuxtla Gutierrez - Rooms have 2 beds or 1 king, cable TV, room safe, AC, hairdryer, ironing board, fridge. Hotel has pool and fitness center. Wifi throughout the hotel. We stay here for convenience to the airport.

Note: Hotels in Mexico do have hot water showers but may not have hot water in the sink. Also, they may not have washcloths, so if you are used to using one, we suggest you bring your own along with a Ziplock bag to carry it.

These hotels are available at the time of printing, but others may be substituted due to reasons beyond our control

Chiapas, Day of the Dead, Oct 28-Nov 5, 2027

- Limited to 11 people. (A minimum of 6 is needed)
- Escorted by Jean Warneke of JB Journeys with a local bilingual licensed guide.
- Cost: $2350* per person in double occupancy with minimum 8. (with 6, $2450 per person in double)
- Single supplement $400. *A single will be either a smaller room for one or a double room at single rate.*
- **To confirm your spot, please compete this reservation form.**
- **Deposit is $500 per person and final payment will be due August 1, 2027**
- **Cancellation:** After 30 days, deposit is non-refundable. Inside 60 days, non-refundable. Name change may be allowed.
- There is no refund for unused parts of the tour.
- Note: Lots of walking, possibly up to 3 miles throughout the day on cobbled streets.
- **NOTE – these prices will be finalized in early 2027.**

Included:

- Transportation as listed by van (note much of our visits will be walks)
- 8 nights' hotel with taxes included
- Local bilingual guide
- Listed excursions with any entry fees
- Basic gratuities for group meals at restaurants and drivers
- Meals as listed

Not Included:

- International airfare (to Villahermosa, from Tuxtla Gutierrez)
- Meals not listed
- Drinks during meals
- Personal Insurance
- Tips for guide (suggest $15 per person per day) or hotel maids (suggest $1-2 per room per night)

Suggestions: swimsuit (Palenque & Tuxtla hotels have pools), sunscreen, good walking shoes, walking stick, Dramamine (some roads are hilly and winding), hat, bug spray, camera.