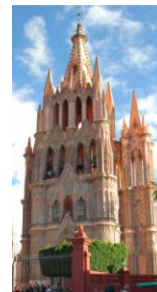


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‘La Parroquia’ Church

SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE: THE CROWN JEWEL OF COLONIAL MEXICO

Located in the central highlands of Mexico about 170 miles from Mexico City, San Miguel de Allende is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is internationally known for its spectacular Spanish colonial architecture and Old World ambience that remain virtually unchanged from centuries ago. It is arguably Mexico’s most engaging and beautiful destination. For many savvy travelers, San Miguel de Allende conjures up magical images of graceful arches, beautiful bell towers, ornate churches, cobbled lanes and walls aflame with red bougainvillea.

Founded in 1542 by Franciscan monk Juan de San Miguel, it quickly gained importance as a hub of the silver trade, a legacy of the great wealth that flowed in the region when the Spaniards extracted and sent home huge amounts of silver from the nearby mines. During the Mexican War of Independence, ignited in nearby Dolores Hidalgo in 1810, San Miguel’s General Ignacio Allende led the revolutionary army to several important victories. He became a national hero and the town, originally called San Miguel el Grande, was renamed San Miguel de Allende in 1826 in his honor. Today, San Miguel calls itself the “Forge of National Independence.”

San Miguel de Allende in 2010 straddles Mexico’s past and present: It harbors the nation’s most intact architectural legacy of the Spanish era, but at the same time is beloved for the critical role it played in the revolution to gain independence from Spain. It remains a religious hub – with nine historic churches from the 1600s and 1700s in just a three-square block area in the center – but at the same time is open-minded, care-free and welcoming to all. Indigenous peoples live side-by-side with thousands of Americans, Canadians and Europeans who have become residents. A 200-year-old convent remains cloistered to this day among internet cafes, hip restaurants and art galleries.

It was in the 1950’s and 1960’s when San Miguel de Allende’s star as a tourist destination began its steady rise. Awareness of the destination’s charms and special attractions – from the historic and architectural legacy to the mineral-rich natural hot springs – was fueled during these years by world-famous Mexican comedian Cantinflas, who became a regular visitor bringing with him an entourage of entertainers and hangers-on; by Ken Kesey and the beat-generation writers who gathered around him and became known as the Merry Pranksters, who came here to party; and by American GIs, who discovered that their post-World War II education grants stretched further in Mexico at San Miguel’s many art schools. The town has been an art center since 1938 when the first art school opened.

The nascent expatriate community of the 1960’s has grown today to an estimated 8,000-10,000. They have been attracted by the charming and genteel ambience, the tranquil and affordable lifestyle and the art scene, as well as by the ideal climate often described as “eternal spring.” The many foreign residents, as well as the growing number of tourists in recent years, have spawned very lively dining and shopping scenes – which in turn have greatly enhanced the appeal of the destination.

**On Travel + Leisure’s
“World’s Best ” list 2010, San
Miguel de Allende was named
the #1 city in Latin America
& the #4 city in the world.**