

Volcanoes of Mexico

Elevation: 18,850 feet and 17,343 feet

Guide Service: Alpine Ascents International (AAI)

Fundraising minimum: \$7,500.00 USD

In the heart of Mexico, about 800 miles south of the United States border, rise the third and seventh highest mountains in North America. El Pico de Orizaba (also known as Chitlalcotepetl, 18,850 feet) and Iztaccihuatl ("Izta," 17,343 feet) rise impressively above the central plateau. These two ascents are by far the most attractive climbs in Mexico.

Physical conditioning

Climbers should have successfully completed an AAI training course or have had a strong performance on an equivalent climb. Climbers must be able to carry an average of 50 pounds or more, be physically and mentally prepared to deal with strenuous situations at high altitudes and have basic knowledge of progression on snow and ice, self-arrest, crevasse rescue and glacier travel.

Volcanoes of Mexico Itinerary

Day 1: Flight to Mexico City, early afternoon arrival (not evening). After arrival we spend the evening visiting Mexico City's Central Square, which includes the Metropolitan Cathedral and various federal buildings. We have a nice dinner near the square and spend the night in Mexico City, where we prepare for our first climb. We also have a thorough equipment check and orientation, including discussion of Leave No Trace practices.

Day 2: We travel by 4x4 to the small town of Amecameca (8,200 feet). Situated in the highlands, Amecameca rests at the base of Volcanoes National Park along the foothills of the mountains. We have lunch and spend part of the afternoon enjoying this beautiful traditional Puebla town. The people in this region are known for their warmth and hospitality. The marketplace is filled with foods and spices indigenous to the area, while the surrounding countryside is covered by rich vegetation. After final preparations we drive to La Joya (12,200 feet), our base camp for our first objective, Iztaccihuatl (Sleeping Lady), and overnight in tents during this first phase of acclimatization.

Day 3: We actively begin our acclimatization today by climbing to the Las Cruces hut on the normal route at just over 14,000 feet and then returning to spend the night once again at La Joya. We spend the rest of the day relaxing and prepare to move to our high camp.

Day 4: We break camp, load our packs, and slowly climb above 15,000 feet, where we establish a high camp and prepare for our summit bid and early morning summit departure.

Day 5: We depart for the summit of Iztaccihuatl in the pre-dawn hours via the Ayaloco Glacier. On clear mornings, the sunrise has proved to be exquisite and finds us climbing high on the mountain. We don crampons and ice axe for the upper regions of the volcano where we encounter an easy rock ridge, navigate across ice cliffs and finally traverse into a couloir just before our final push to the summit. Viewing the terrain, it is easy to visualize the geologic cataclysms that created these giant mountains and look across to Popo keeping watch over the sleeping lady. By late afternoon, we return to La Joya and drive to Amecameca for a much-deserved rest, showers, and a good night's sleep.

Day 6: Our second objective is Mexico's highest mountain, known as Citlalcotepetl or El Pico de Orizaba. (Mountain of the Star) At 18,850 feet, it stands almost 1,000 feet higher than legendary Popo. Our day begins with a drive through the colonial town of Puebla for a nice lunch on the town square. We then head to Tlachichuca, where we load our gear into 4x4s for the drive to our base camp at Piedra Grande (14,000 feet) on the lower slopes of Orizaba, where we spend the night.

Day 7: We pack up our camp and move to 16,000 feet, furthering our acclimatization and putting us in a better position for a successful summit attempt. We set high camp and prepare ourselves for an early morning departure for the summit. We spend the rest of the day relaxing and preparing for tomorrow's climb.

Day 8: Our ascent of Orizaba is similar to Izta. We begin before dawn to take advantage of optimum snow conditions and provide ample time to complete the climb before dark. En route we climb through a rock ravine, make a moderate roped ascent and traverse a series of crevasses. On the final stretch we maneuver the ridge along the crater's edge. From the summit, we scan the Gulf of Mexico to the east and the central plateau to the west. We descend and drive to the town of Puebla for the night.

Day 9: We return to Mexico City and spend the night.

Day 10: We begin our journey in the cultural center of Mexico City where (time permitting) we visit the world-renowned National Museum of Anthropology (Museo Nacional de Antropología) situated in Chapultepec Park. Its 22 rooms house relics dating from the beginning of civilization through the present day. There may be time to take in Mexico City's wonderful collection of colonial buildings from the Spanish era, epic murals by the likes of Rivera, Orozco and Siquieras, exquisite museums of art and archeology, and outlying pre-Hispanic archeological sites. Depart for U.S.

Special Notes:

- International round-trip airfare to Mexico City not included.
- Travel visas not included.
- Meals and lodging outside the listed itinerary not included.
- Excess baggage charges and airport taxes not included.
- Charges incurred as a result of delays beyond the control of AAI not included.
- Single room supplement not included.
- Tips and gratuities not included.
- Climbers will be responsible for all items on the [AAI gear list](#).
- Meals and all group climbing equipment (climbing ropes, technical hardware, and tents) will be provided by AAI.

Volcanoes of Mexico Climb Gear List

For a current list of required gear please visit <http://www.alpineascents.com/mexico-g.asp>.