

Travel and Resorts

Mexico

By Edna M. True
Travel Editor

"There is so much to write that I assure Your Majesty that I do not know where to begin. The land is rich like that from where Solomon took gold for his Temple and of a surprising grandeur, amazing to behold."

So wrote Hernando Cortes in the year 1519, from Mexico, the land of his Conquest, to His Majesty, the King of Spain. Landing in Vera Cruz, the Conquistador and his daring band of "bearded white men," strangely enough fulfilling thus the prophecy of the Aztec god, Quetzalcoatl, surged upwards from the coast, passed over the high mountains to the great plateau beyond, and here established their capital on the ruins of the great Aztec metropolis, Tenochtitlan.

Later, through these same defiles descended trains of pack animals, burdened with uncounted treasures to fill the Spanish galleons. And in the years that followed, these same highways witnessed interminable processions of missionaries, viceroys, adventurers, inquisitors and settlers.

Land of Pyramids

The Mexico that Cortes and his followers saw and conquered had gleaming pyramids and colonnades, and in its Aztec capital there were thoroughfares of water along which glided long - prowed canoes.

The Mexico that the Spaniards built became a land of cathedrals and palaces; for after the conquerors came the missionaries, replacing pyramids with churches and monasteries; and following them, grandees, for whom fine tiles, bronzes, carved woods, and tapestries were brought from Spain to be copied by Indian craftsmen for the mansions of their overlords.

Pleasure Bent Invaders

Today, the invaders of this land are on pleasure bent, carrying away, instead of material treasures, a wealth of priceless memories. By automobile or train they can travel the same route as Hernando Cortes, beginning their journey as did he, in Vera Cruz, which acquired its name from the fact that the Conquistador landed here on Good Friday (1519) and called a "La Villa rica de la Veracruz," the rich town of the true Cross. Tropical lowlands (tierra caliente) stretch ribbon-like along the coast, then the earth rises

in a series of terraces, culminating in high mountain ranges, beyond which lies the immense plateau known as the "Valley of Mexico."

In a distance of 264 miles, the journey takes you from tropic to temperate zone, and from sea level to a final altitude of 7,350 feet. This ascent from the coast, through constantly changing country where the people as well as the scenery are ever different, offers a striking transition from banana fields, palm groves, coffee estates and sugar plantations, to the open fields of the valley under the shadow of the two majestic sentinels, eternally snow-capped, Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl.

Panoramic Grandeur

From rarefied heights come unexpected views and perspectives, affording a panoramic grandeur, difficult to equal anywhere else in the world. On the way, important cities are passed — Cordoba, named for a Spanish Viceroy, with a population of 16,200; and an hour beyond, Orizaba, built on the site of an Indian village, with 42,904 inhabitants; — but of even greater interest are the little Indian villages where the arrival of train or car is the signal for the instant gathering of the natives, colorfully attired in their regional dress and offering the travelers delicious tropical fruits and flowers. Brea del Monte lies at an altitude of 7,924 feet above the sea, and in 42 miles the road has ascended from the coast to the top of the Mexican Alps. The Peak of Orizaba, second highest mountain in North America, comes into view, and now as you begin crossing the Central Plateau, tropical vegetation disappears and in its stead large fields of corn, wheat and maguay are seen.

You are approaching Mexico City, and although you are really only on the threshold of its wonders, you already have some appreciation of the words written by Cortes to his sovereign after having travelled through the length and breadth of the land:

"There are many of my men who have been in Greece and ancient Rome, who have travelled in far places, but never have they witnessed a land so rich, so varied, so surpassingly wondrous. In all Europe there is no region comparable to this New Spain."

GO TO FLORIDA

Mr. and Mrs. Frank A. Simmons, 1040 Ashland avenue, Wilmette, the

parents of Mrs. Frederick Leisch, left December 3 to motor to St. Petersburg, Fla., to spend six months. They are located at the same place where they vacationed last winter.

Holiday Trips

GO WEST CALIFORNIA, leaves December 26, featuring ROSE BOWL game and TOURNAMENT of ROSES in Pasadena New Year's Day; stops Grand Canyon, San Francisco, LOS ANGELES, Catalina Island, Tia Juana and Agua Caliente, Old Mexico, all expense cost \$195.50 and up.

GO SOUTH NEW ORLEANS, December 19 and January 2, return by boat around Florida to New York, all expenses included, total cost \$180.00 and up. For details write or phone.

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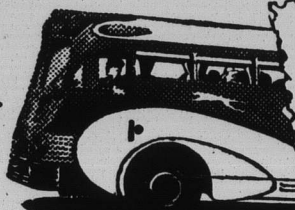
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