

Mexico's indigenous and folk art comes to Chapala



Each year Experience Mex-ECO Tours promotes a trip which we call the 'Chapala Artisan Fair', but this is much more than just a shopping trip; so what's it really all about?

The **Feria Maestros del Arte** (Masters of Art Fair) is the name given to this annual event in Chapala, and also the name of the non-profit organization which puts in an incredible amount of work to make it happen. In 2002 an amazing lady called Marianne Carlson came up with the idea of bringing some of the artists and artisans she came across in rural Mexico to Ajijic to sell their high quality traditional work. After a successful first fair, with 13 artists being very well received by the public, Marianne decided to make this an annual event. Providing an outlet for traditional Mexican artists and artisans to sell their work, the Feria Maestros del Arte has provided many families with the opportunity to continue creating

their important cultural representations by allowing them to pursue this as a career, rather than seeking alternative employment.

Here is their mission as a non-profit organization:

“To preserve and promote Mexican indigenous and folk art. We help preserve these art forms and the culture that produces them by providing the artists a venue to sell their work to galleries, collectors, museums and corporations. We promote regional and international awareness to the value of these endangered arts.”



The efforts made by the Feria committee and its many volunteers mean that the artists and artisans not only have a chance to generate more income in a few days than they may otherwise generate in a year, but also the chance to be recognized by buyers and collectors from around the world. On top of this, there are no fees to partake in the fair, no percentage of sales to be paid, transport costs are covered and local families provide accommodation for participants.

Although this concept sounds relatively straight forward, this is one immense task to undertake. Indigenous and folk art in Mexico originates in rural areas and the process of selecting potential participants requires research, time and a lot of dedication. The selection committee and state representatives look for high quality hand-made products, whose production requires skills/techniques passed down from generation to generation. Some of the artists at the fair are already nationally, and some internationally,



recognized and others are there to be discovered. One thing is for sure, there is bound to be something that will catch your eye, and with a shipping company on-site, you can go as big as you wish!

Products at the fair this year include Oaxacan alebrijes (wooden carvings of mystical animals painted with natural dyes), baskets from the state of Sonora, ceramic figures (including catrinas from Michoacán and Puebla), ceramics from 7 different states (including talavera from Puebla), textiles/clothing, cloth dolls from the Women’s Prison Project, wooden furniture, hand-blown glass (including Christmas decorations), Huichol art and jewelry, silver, Lacandon art from Chiapas, hand-crafted leather products, masks, metal work, paintings, paper maché, woven footwear, Tarahumara

baskets (Copper Canyon), woven toys from Chiapas, Oaxacan rugs, wooden carvings and more. Click here to see the full list of participants: <http://www.mexicoartshow.com/2017maestros.html>

By attending the fair your \$70 pesos entry fee goes towards the continuation of this fantastic event, and you can also support the Operation Feed project by purchasing raffle tickets, with prizes donated by the artists and artisans. Other ways the event is funded include a sponsorship program for individual artists, general sponsorships/donations and through the Feria's "cash for trash" partnership with TerraCycle.

The dates of the feria this year are November 10th to 12th; it is always in November, but the dates vary slightly from year to year. The event is held in the Lake Chapala Yacht Club, with a fantastic view over Lake Chapala. Experience Mex-ECO Tours offers 2 nights' accommodation (November 10th and 11th) in the 5 star Hotel Morales, a tour of Guadalajara's historic centre, transport to and from the fair on November 11th (9am – 5pm) and shopping/free time in Tonalá and Tlaquepaque, all for just \$4,200 pesos per person (based on double occupancy), with departures from Melaque, Manzanillo, Puerto Vallarta and Bucerías.



Please note that the photos are from previous ferias, and not necessarily representative of this year's participants.



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