

# Puebla, history and sights



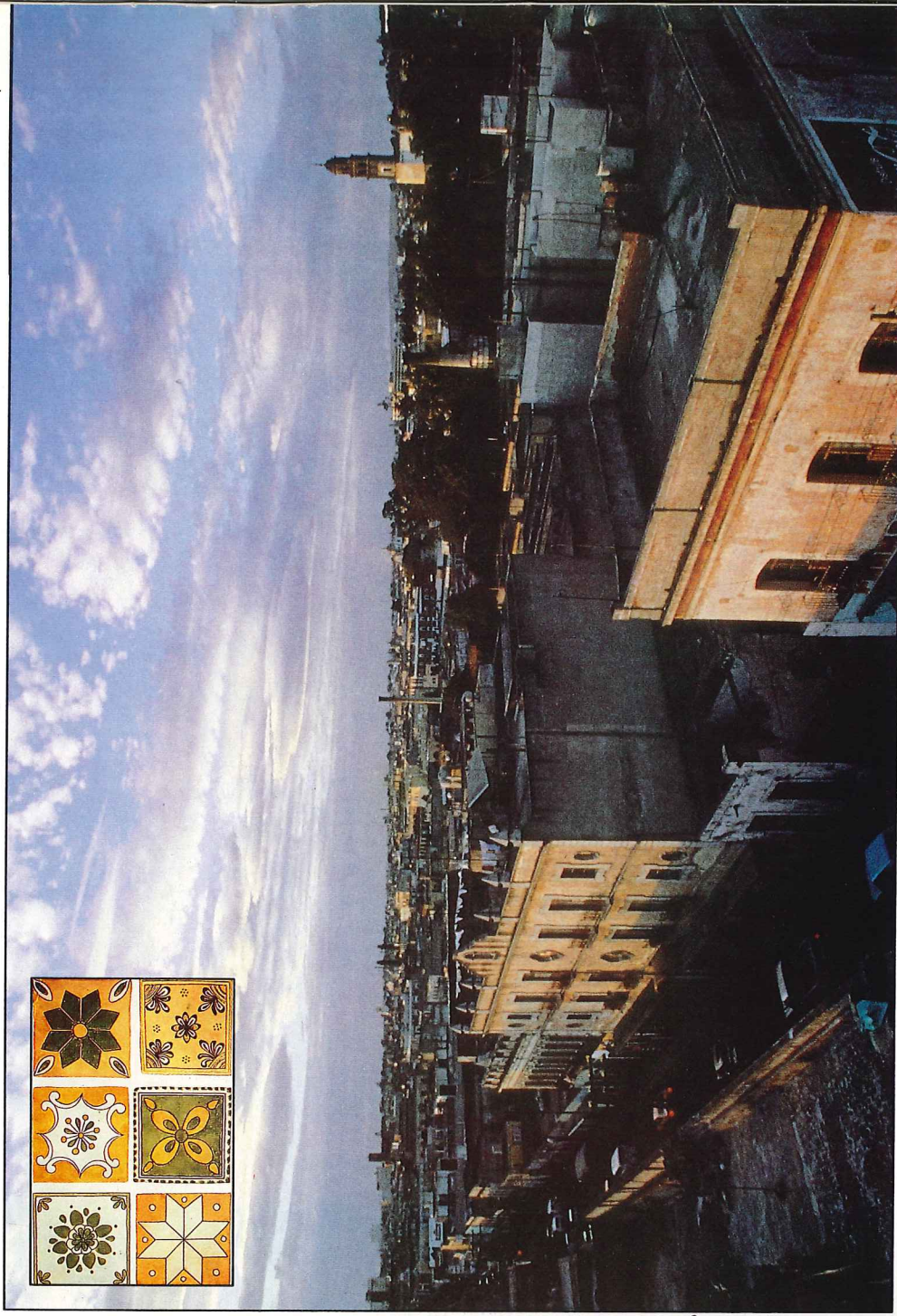
**W**ithout doubt, Puebla is Mexico's best-preserved colonial city. Built on a plain, the three great volcanoes - Pico de Orizaba, Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl as well as the smaller La Malinche volcano - are visible from every direction as you approach the city.

Its brick, mortar, and tile buildings give Puebla a special polychromy, enriched by its numerous churches with walls and vaults covered with golden plasterwork decoration. The beauty of its houses and streets makes Puebla a feast of light and color. Puebla's illustrious past is reflected in the present day character of this distinguished city.

### Historical notes

The city of Puebla de los Angeles was founded in 1531 on a spot known as Cuetlaxcoapa, which in Náhuatl means "snake river." It was the first city built as part of a plan prepared by the Spanish Crown which chose a strategic spot from which the important indigenous cities of Tlaxcala, Cholula, Huejotzingo, and Tepeaca could be controlled.

In 1862 the French Army, led by General Lorencez, attacked Forts Loreto and Guadalupe at Puebla. The French were badly beaten by the forces of General Ignacio Zaragoza, who died shortly thereafter. For this reason,



Michael Calderwood/Editorial Ilguero

The city of Puebla de los Angeles.

President Juárez ordered Puebla to adopt the name of its defender. On March 16th, 1863, the French General Forey laid siege to the city; the forces of General Jesús González Ortega fiercely defended the town, fighting from house to house, but they were finally forced to surrender for lack of supplies and ammunition. On the 20th of May, one year and 15 days after the first attack, the forces of General Forey occupied Puebla.

### The city

Though the *Plaza Principal* is not among the largest squares in Mexico, it is one of the most distinguished. From the higher areas of the city, the tall, well-proportioned towers of the cathedral are prominent. This is the most slender of the Herreran-style churches erected in New Spain. It was begun in 1575 and finished during the time of Bishop Juan de Palafox y Mendoza.

The Palafoxian Library in the Bibliographic Museum occupies a splendid hall. Its walls are covered



*Baroque salon at the Autonomous University of Puebla.*

Antonio Mercedy/Editorial Jilguero

by wooden book shelves with baroque decoration carved by order of Bishop Francisco Fabián. In 1773 the bishop selected this hall in the Tridentine School for the seat of the library donated by the Bishop of Puebla and

former Viceroy of New Spain, Juan de Palafox y Mendoza. In the initial donation there were 5,000 volumes. The library later reached 40,000, making it the most important in Latin America on theology, philosophy, holy scriptures, Christian doctrine and languages such as Latin, Greek, Sanscrit, Hebrew, and Chaldean.

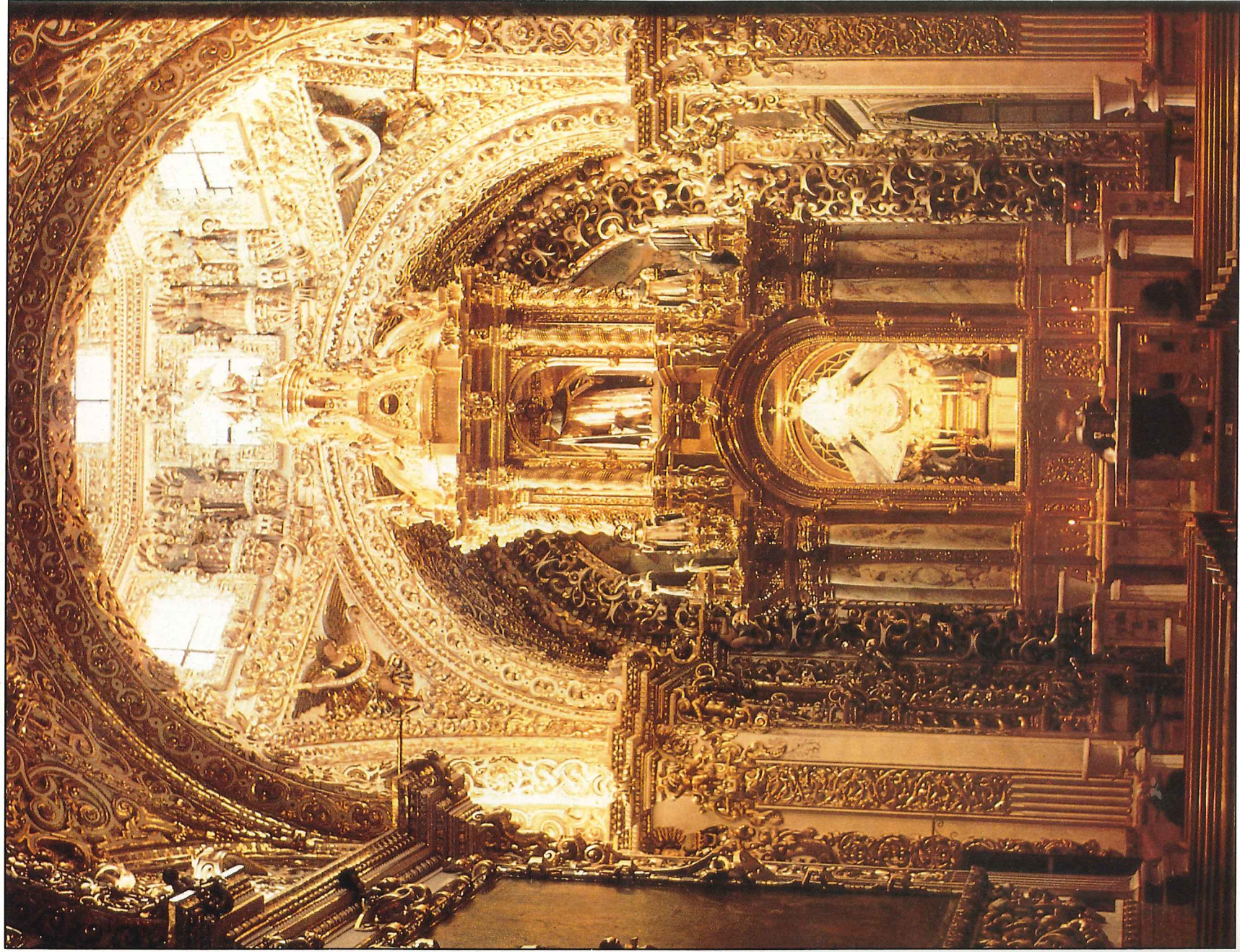
Since its opening for public worship on the 16th of April, 1690, the Rosary Chapel has been called the Eighth Wonder of the World because of its ornate and colorful plasterwork. From the entrance it resembles a grotto, due to the quantity of decorations on the ceilings and walls. Amidst the foliage, there are animals, angels, children, saints and the young martyrs accompanying the Virgin who is sheltered by the canopy on the high altar.

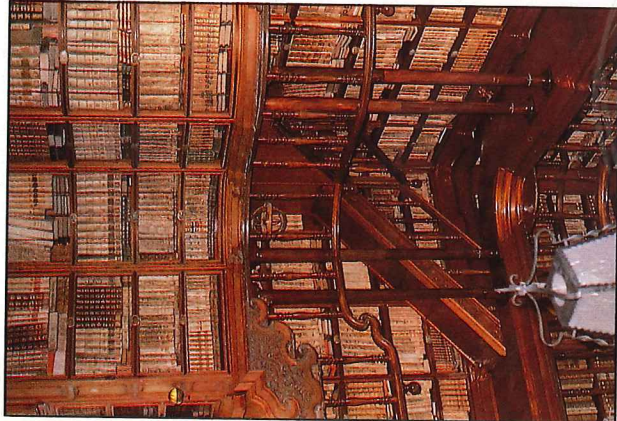
In the Puebla Popular Art Museum in the Convent of Saint Rose can be found the most beautiful Mexican colonial kitchen. The beguine convent - for devout women who did not take the vows- was



*The colonial kitchen at the Convent of Saint Rose.*

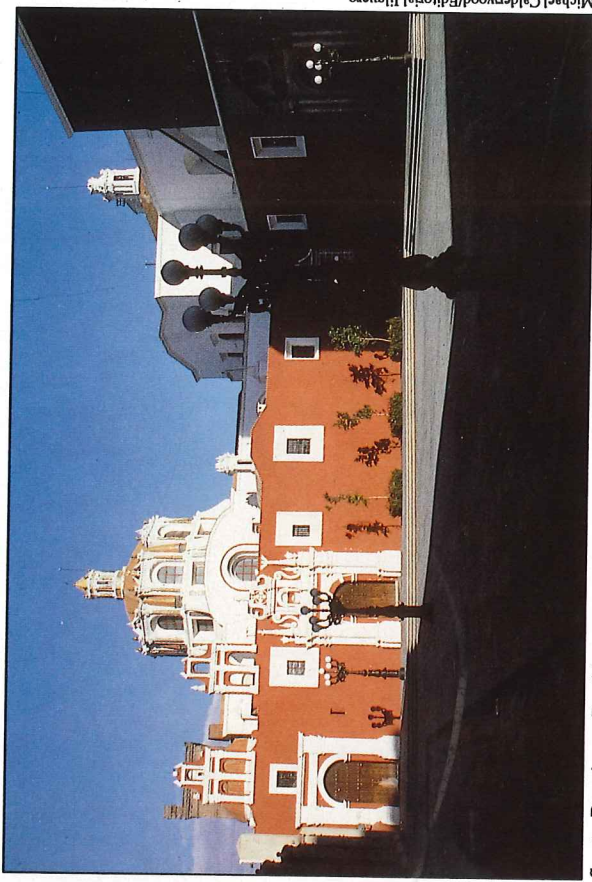
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*The Palafox y Mendoza library.*



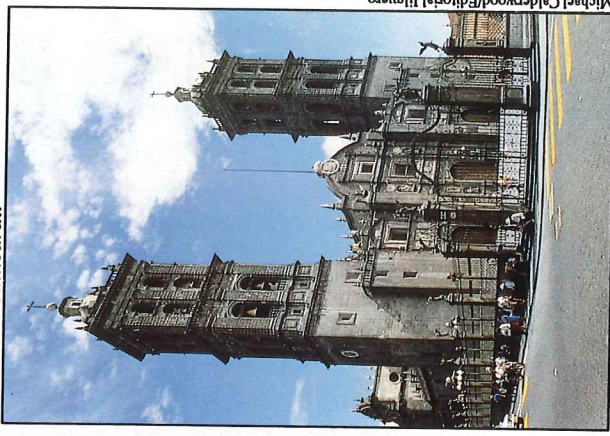
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*Santo Domingo, Puebla.*



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*The colonial panorama of Puebla.*



*The Puebla Cathedral.*

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## The city of Morelia declared a world heritage site

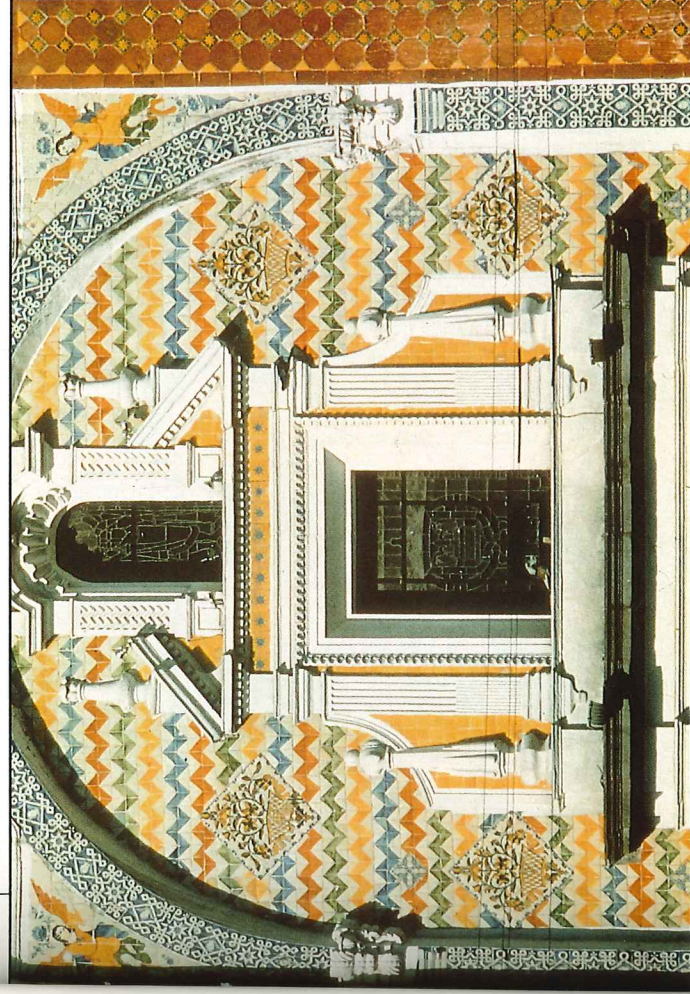
**M**orelia, capital of the state of Michoacán, has been declared part of the World Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. There are now nine Mexican sites with this title: 1) Chichen Itzá, 2) Guanajuato, 3) The Historic Center of Mexico City and Xochimilco, 4) The Historic Center of Oaxaca and Monte Albán, 5) The Historic Center of Puebla, 6) Palenque, 7) Teotihuacán, 8) The ecological reserve of Sian Ka'an, Quintana Roo, and once again, 9) the latest addition, Morelia.

founded in 1740 but in time it became a full-fledged convent. It retains its 18th century patio, covered with bricks and tiles.

Behind an austere facade, a fine museum of colonial painting, mainly by Puebla artists, has been set up in the Santa Mónica Convent. This convent was founded by Bishop Fernández Cruz in 1682 for Augustinian cloistered nuns, who were secularized in 1934. The museum was founded with the

unclaimed objects from the convent. On the second floor of this museum the heart of the founding bishop, donated to the convent by the deceased, is exhibited.

The excellent design of the Saint Francis Church attests to the mastery of the Pueblan ceramists in the 18th century. The side portal of this church dates back to the 16th century and is presumed to be the oldest in the city.



La Villita, Puebla.

Michael Calderwood/Editorial Figuro



Antonio Mercader/Editorial Figuro

Detail of the Rosary Chapel.

Tradition has it that the *Teatro Principal* was the first to be built in mainland America in a horseshoe shape, like that of the Spanish Corral de la Pacheca. On the upper part of the facade the coat of arms of Castille and León have been carved in stone.

The Museum of the Mexican Revolution is located in the Serdán brothers' house. The museum is an interesting reconstruction of a turn of the century Puebla house. The Revolution of 1910 began here on November 8th when a conspiracy was discovered and the house was assaulted by the Federal Army. Two Serdán brothers, Aquiles and Máximo, were killed while their sister, Carmen, was saved. The museum displays photographs of leaders and battles of the Revolution. All that remains of the original structure and furniture are the mirror full of bullet holes and the room in which Aquiles was shot. **M**

Source: Michelin Travel Publications  
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