



## **FRIENDSHIP FORCE EXCHANGE 12735**

### **HOME HOST – TUXTLA GUTIERREZ, MEXICO**

**Tuesday, November 1<sup>st</sup> to Monday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016**



Ambassadors will be graciously welcomed and treated to a six night stay hosted by members of the Tuxtla Gutierrez Friendship Force Club. Tuxtla (as commonly called) is in the southern part of Mexico bordering Guatemala at an elevation of 1725 feet above sea level. It is the biggest city in the Chiapas region, Mexico. Beyond the bustling activity in this Chiapas regional center of government and commerce, the area features many outstanding natural and historic sites, notably the Unesco acclaimed Mayan city of Palenque.

### ***Highlights***

- Explore the awe inspiring waterfalls at Agua Azul, Misol-Ha and El Chiflon.
- Enjoy boat rides along the Grijalva River, passing beneath the dramatic cliffs of the Sumidero Canyon.
- Discover two UNESCO historic sites, i.e., Palenque a Mayan city hidden in the depths of the rainforest plus and the Biosphere Reserve.
- In the plaza ... view the Cathedral de San Marcos which houses a kitsch merry-go-round of apostles' images and dance at the Jardin de la Marimba's nightly free concerts!
- Experience Zoológico Miguel Álvarez (Zoomat), known for its work in preserving the quetzal, being the first to breed the bird in captivity in the 1970s.
- And more on the marimba ... Visit the Museo de la Marimba, a small museum which showcases 100 years of the instrument.
- Share time with our hosts at the Welcome and Farewell celebrations.

## *What You Can Expect*

Ambassadors will be greeted and home-hosted by members of the Tuxtla Gutierrez Friendship Force Club. Tuxtla Gutierrez is the capital and the largest city of the Mexican southeast state of Chiapas. It is the only metropolitan area and the most developed, populated and therefore the state's most important municipality. A busy government, commercial and services-oriented city, Tuxtla (as it's commonly known) had one of the fastest growing rates in Mexico in the last 40 years. Unlike many other areas of Chiapas, it is not a tourist attraction, but a transportation hub for tourists coming into the state, with a major airport and a bus terminal

Originally, this valley was called Coyatoc by the native Zoque population, which means “land or house of rabbits.” The Aztecs intruded into the area and named it "Tuchtlan" which means the same thing. “Gutiérrez” was added to the city's name in 1848 to honor Joaquín Miguel Gutiérrez, a Conservative politician according to a legend.

Tuxtla Gutierrez offers tourists an array of activities and places to visit both in the city as well as in the beautiful surrounding areas. Tuxtla features interesting museums where you can learn about the history and evolution of this land, such as the Regional Museum and the Paleontology Museum. There are also cultural centers, colonial buildings and churches, which are all well worth seeing. Similarly, the surrounding areas feature a variety of eco-touristic trips including the the Cotorras Gorge, Las Nubes Falls and the Rio La Venta, an area where a beautiful river flows at the bottom of a deep canyon.

For extreme sport enthusiasts and adrenaline addicts, Tuxtla has plenty of excellent places for rappelling, crossing canyons by rope bridges, kayaking, rafting and mountain climbing. There is always something exciting and adventurous waiting for visitors to Tuxtla.

Nature abounds! The depths of the Sumidero Canyon certainly exalt your imagination and elevate your spirit. On its rocky walls, running 22 km long, 800 meters deep and eroded by the waters of the Grijalva River, you will find ancient caves with rock paintings, some archaeological remains and other traces of activity by Pre-Columbian society.

Just a 15-minute ride from Tuxtla, at the foot of the impressive Sumidero Canyon on the shores of the Grijalva River, lays Chiapa de Corzo, a historical city linked to Pre-Columbian times, the Spanish conquest, and the Independence of Mexico. Chiapa de Corzo was the first Spanish settlement in the region and is one of the most beautiful colonial cities in Chiapas. Even though it is a rather small city, it is rich in history, customs and traditions which have been lovingly preserved throughout the years.

The Tuxtla Zoo, also known as ZooMAT, is located 5 minutes from downtown Tuxtla in the heart of the Zapotal Natural Reserve. Besides being one the most renowned zoos in Latin America, it is also famous for the study, preservation and protection of the region's native

wildlife, which are kept in semi-natural environments simulating their natural habitats. A visit to the zoo is sure to please the young and old alike.

### ***Fees & How To Apply***

\$375 includes FFI ambassador fee and Tuxtla Gutierrez club program fee. \$150 deposit required with application. Final payment is due by August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016. Cancellations: No refunds after August 15, 2016.

To apply, complete the Exchange Application Form and mail it with your deposit check payable to *Friendship Force Florida Suncoast*. Mail application and check to the Exchange Director, **Rudy Michalek, 855 Bayway Blvd. # 707, Clearwater Beach, Florida 33767**. You will receive an email confirmation once your application and check are received. Your check will NOT be deposited until you have been formally accepted into the Exchange. **Questions? Call 214-923-6549**. For best consideration, apply by April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016 as we will notify selected ambassadors by April 30<sup>th</sup>. Ambassadors must have passport and obtain travel insurance.