

## **Urique Burro Assisted Eight Day Trip Copper Canyon Trails**

- **Day One:** Our first day together begins at the airport in Los Mochis, where you will be met by Cathy, your guide. There are convenient flights from Los Mochis to gateway cities in the American West and Southwest. After exchanging greetings and introductions, we'll load our gear into a suburban and head to the tropical town of El Fuerte, about an hour and a half away. Founded in 1564 by Don Francisco de Ibarra, this charming colonial town is steeped in history. We'll stay at the unique Rio Vista Hotel, operated by our delightful host, Chal Gamez. This hotel sits atop a knoll above the beautiful Rio Fuerte, and abuts the historic fort and museum.

- **Day Two:** After breakfast, we'll board the famous Copper Canyon train. The trip from the tropical coastal plain to the Sierra Madre mountains is considered one of the most spectacular train rides in the Americas. The train winds through 86 tunnels and over almost 30 bridges on its journey from near sea level to 7500 feet above sea level. The sight of horse-drawn carts, cowboys on horseback, and wood smoke curling from mud-chinked cabins makes us doubt our senses. In the days to come we'll do our best to share with you some of the information and experiences we've gathered during our years here. We'll arrive after noon at **Posada Barrancas** on the high mesa, and have a late lunch at a rustic lodge where we are treated to traditional Mexican fare and local family friendliness. After settling into your rooms, we'll have a sunset walk to the canyon rim before dinner.

- **Day Three:** After breakfast, we meet our Mexican/Tarahumara trail crew and load the gear onto the burros. Keep a daypack with water, snacks, camera, and a jacket. We've got 6-8 hours of hiking for 7 miles to the **Urique River**. Allowing for the ups and downs of side canyons, the elevation change is over 5,000 feet. Relax, while our crew prepares supper cooked over a wood fire.

- **Day Four:** To keep the muscles loose, we have an ambitious 8 hr, 8 mile dayhike to a hot springs. We ascend 2000 feet, and contour downstream to an adjacent arroyo with a Tarahumaran rancho and orange grove. Then we descend to a vent in the earth issuing boiling water. Bathing pools cool down the water to enjoy a soak. Continuing our descent to the river, we follow the bank back to camp, complete with 3 crossings, the last of which will certainly be a short swim. In the space of a few hours we might see orchards, kapok trees, Strangler fig, cypress, organ pipe cactus, octopus agave, wild grape, and local botanicals. Keep

your ears sharp for Brown-backed Solitaire and Canyonwren. Elegant trogon and thick-billed parrots winter in the dense foliage.

- **Day Five:** Today is more leisurely with only a short dayhike planned to a warm spring pool carved from solid rock. Expect 3 river crossings each way, but today swimming is optional. In late afternoon, we'll hike above camp to another Tarahumaran rancho.

- **Day Six:** We break camp and climb 3000 feet to the puerto where we have lunch. No rush, 3 hours or so and we'll be there. We'll take a short hike with no elevation gain to a vista point before descending to our tents set up on the outskirts of the Tarahumaran village of **Huacajipare**. A few words about the Tarahumara: According to the local people, we are the only outsiders to use this trail in many, many years. Although this particular canyon route passes through country that is very sparsely inhabited, there is always a chance that we'll meet Tarahumara, especially near our higher camps. It is important to know, however, that many of these people are so shy that they may prefer to observe us from a distance. When meeting on the trail, for example, it is not unusual for Tarahumara women and children to slip away as a stranger approaches, or to firmly turn their backs and refuse to speak. Our crew's experience and rapport with the Tarahumara is considerable. To maintain relationships of mutual trust and respect, however, we must never impose by taking photographs or approaching occupied dwelling caves and cabins without invitation. As they come to know us better, the Tarahumara women may offer beautifully woven baskets, dolls, drums and other small handicrafts for purchase. We encourage this, as it provides their families a small but very important cash income.

- **Day Seven:** Our final day on the trail takes us back up the winding "staircase" trail to the top of the mesa. We'll arrive back on the rim in time to take a quick shower, grab a bagged lunch and catch the afternoon train unescorted to El Fuerte. You needn't worry! You are met at the train station in El Fuerte and delivered to your accommodations for the night.

- **Day Eight:** The next morning after breakfast, you'll be driven from the hotel to the airport in Los Mochis.