Each year, millions of monarch butterflies (Danaus plexippus) make the journey from North America to Mexico’s Sierra Madre Mountains, flying thousands of miles to their winter home. The migration is one of nature’s most amazing phenomena. Stand amid the fir-covered mountains and witness this awe-inspiring spectacle firsthand as the monarchs flutter, dip, and swoop overhead. You’ll see countless millions on the roosts in the early morning, as well as in flight at midday, feeding on wildflowers, and watering at streams.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Hike or ride horseback to three monarch sanctuaries, where millions of individual monarch butterflies hang in clusters from the trees, drink from streams, and swirl in the air above.
- Learn about the monarch life cycle, their migration journey, the conservation of these colony sites, and the biology of the species.
- Immerse yourself in local culture and cuisine during an intimate cooking experience with a local family in Angangueo.

WHAT’S INCLUDED?

- Expert naturalist guide
- Accommodations
- Activities & entrance fees
- In-country transportation
- Meals & beverages
- Carbon offsetting
- All tips/gratuities
FEBRUARY 14 - MEXICO CITY
Depart from the U.S. and arrive in Mexico City. Upon arrival you will be met and transferred to your hotel, which is situated near the Paseo La Reforma. This evening receive program orientation at the hotel and meet your guide before transferring to La Unica Restaurant for a welcome dinner. Check-in begins at 3 pm. Overnight at Zócalo Central or similar. (D)

FEBRUARY 15 - ANGANGUEO
After breakfast check out and depart for the colonial town of Angangueo, located high in the mountains in the state of Michoacán, at approximately 8,400 feet elevation and about 100 miles west of Mexico City. Upon arrival, check in at Hotel Don Bruno. After lunch venture on a walking tour to photograph the interesting scenes and people of this beautiful little town. Founded in 1792 the town served as a main mining center providing wealth for the area. Today the town derives its income from butterfly tourism and agriculture. As you explore the cobblestone streets your guide will share sites of interest and the importance of butterfly conservation to the town. After dinner at the hotel gather for a briefing to help prepare for tomorrow’s activities. Overnight at Hotel Don Bruno. (BLD)

FEBRUARY 16 - ANGANGUEO
Today, ascend into the mountains by walking trail to approximately 10,000 ft elevation to visit Sierra Chincua, one of several nearby monarch sites, more isolated than El Rosario. With a simple picnic lunch on-hand, you’ll have the entire day to enjoy and photograph the spectacular monarchs. Horses will be available to ride as an option instead of walking a portion of the trail to today’s site (rent cost is about $100 Mexican pesos, cash only). This day among the monarchs is typically the most spectacular and moving experience. At the end of the day, visit the market at the site entrance to purchase monarch crafts and food if desired. Meet with a local family to enjoy some traditional Mexican food and learn about their lifestyle. You can also join in on the cooking experience and learn a local recipe. Return to Hotel Don Bruno. Dinner at the hotel this evening. Overnight at Hotel Don Bruno. (BLD)

FEBRUARY 17 - ZITÁCUARO
Early this morning check out of the hotel and visit the monarch site of El Rosario, the one most generally accessible to the public. The journey begins with a taste of colonial Mexico as you walk along a path through a small market where vendors sell a variety of food and handicrafts. Continue on an excellent trail system winding through the fir covered slopes of the mountain. It is here that this large overwintering colony is located and typically contains well over 100 million adult monarchs. Additionally, there is a nearby stream where the butterflies may fly at midday to drink water. Trail horses are available for rent to ride up the mountain if needed. Have a simple picnic lunch while enjoying this spectacular phenomenon and watching the butterflies go through their daily cycle of activities. At this time of year, they may take flight for an hour or more to water, nectar, etc., before returning to their roost on tree limbs or trunks. Rest rooms are located at the bottom of the mountain and not in the reserve. In the late afternoon continue on to Hotel Rancho San Cayetano located near Zitácuaro. The hotel is located on 13 acres of beautiful Mexican countryside that are surrounded by gardens and views of surrounding mountains. After dinner gather for a briefing on Cerro Pelón and what to expect in the morning. Overnight at Rancho San Cayetano. (BLD)

FEBRUARY 18 - ZITÁCUARO
Today, visit the Cerro Pelón Butterfly Sanctuary, the second most populous monarch butterfly roost after El Rosario. This less-visited site will provide us an intimate, pristine opportunity to marvel and observe the butterflies. It will also be a bit more challenging than the previous days with a steeper hike and altitudes starting at about 10,400 ft. Horses will be available for rent for the beginning portion of the hike and may be required due to trail conditions. Depending on the location of the colony, a 30-minute steep uphill hike may follow the horse ride. For those who wish, you may relax at Rancho San Cayetano, 13 acres of manicured grounds with...
This program includes optional carbon offsetting with ClimateSafe. Learn more at holbrooktravel.com/climatesafe

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Cost includes meals and non-alcoholic beverages, accommodations, and activities as indicated in the itinerary, in-country transportation, full-time guide, bottled water on bus, all tips/gratuities, donation to Cincinnati Zoo, carbon offset, and departure tax.

Does not include international airfare or items of a personal nature.

**MEET YOUR LEADER**

David Orban currently serves as the Animal Excellence Manager at the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden. He and his team help to bring forth an evidence-based and strategic approach to understanding and enhancing animal welfare for the Zoo’s diverse residents. While originally from Michigan, over the last few years David has enjoyed exploring Cincinnati and traveling to many national parks across the US. Outside of work, David enjoys being in nature (hiking, camping, kayaking, birding) and spending time with family and friends. David is elated to lead a program that visits the wintering grounds for the annual monarch migration – an incredible natural phenomena!

**THE FINE PRINT**

Cost is based on double occupancy; for a single room, add $555 per person. A $200 per person deposit and enrollment form are required to reserve your space on the trip. This deposit is refundable excluding a $100 cancellation fee until November 11, 2020, at which time non-refundable final payment is due.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Contact Christina Anderson at c.anderson@cincinnatizoo.org
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