



**1** | San Miguel de Allende is home to numerous art galleries. **2** | The distinctive pink cathedral, La Parroquia, dominates the skyline. **3** | The pool at Matilda. **4** | Dine alfresco in The Restaurant's 18th-century Moroccan-style courtyard. **5** | Look out for unusual homewares and artefacts. **6** | Mercado Ignacio Ramírez offers a fantastic selection of souvenirs.

## GREAT ESCAPE SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE



*Architect and interior designer Natalia Miyar is seduced by the innovative cuisine, vibrant markets and colonial buildings of this historic city in central Mexico*



### STAY

I was born in Mexico City, 170 miles to the south, and spent many glorious weekends here as a child and I often return. I like the ambience of **L'Ôtel**, *l-otelgroup.com*, from £192 a night, an intimate boutique hotel with four sumptuous suites – it feels like staying at someone's house. **Matilda**, *hotelmatilda.com*, from £170 a night, has a contemporary vibe enhanced by a collection of modern art. My personal choice is a private villa such as **Casa Heyne**, which can be rented through Premier San Miguel, *premiersanmiguel.com*. This authentic experience reminds me of my childhood in Mexico.

### EAT

This is a proper foodie town and as Mexican food is what I grew up on, I can't get enough of it. I love Donnie Masterton's cooking at **The Restaurant**, *therestaurant-sanmiguel.com*, which is bold and innovative, especially his duck dishes and the local cheeses from Luna de Queso, which he served at my sister's wedding. At Matilda (see left), **Moxi**, *moxi.com.mx*, is worth a visit. It offers classic Mexican cooking reinterpreted by renowned chef Enrique Olvera. **La Azotea**, a rooftop bar on Umaran 6, near La Parroquia, has a lively, energetic crowd. Head here for great margaritas and delicious prawn tacos.

### SHOP

My first stop is always **Mercado Ignacio Ramírez**, a treasure trove of a market, full of silver, pottery, fabrics, paper crafts and heavenly sweets. For a one-of-a-kind Mexican poncho or serape, visit **Recreo San Miguel**, *recreosanmiguel.com*. **Fábrica La Aurora**, *fabricalaaurora.com*, is an art and design gallery specialising in beautiful crafts. I particularly love the black pottery, which is from Oaxaca and terribly smart. For an indulgent souvenir, visit **Casa Dragones**, *casadragones.com*, home to the most wonderful sipping tequila I've ever had. Book a private tour of the distillery and 17th-century stables.

### VISIT

**El Jardín** is the principal square, which is a good place to anchor yourself. The shops here feature simple and colourful crafts, and the plaza's candy pink cathedral, **La Parroquia**, is particularly spectacular lit up at night. The **Centro Cultural Ignacio Ramírez El Nigromante**, *elnigromante.bellasartes.gob.mx*, is one of the most stunning buildings in town. It hosts exhibitions and has incredible murals by David Alfaro Siqueiros. You can organise hot-air balloon rides and other activities during your trip, but I prefer to stay in the city, enjoying the colours, sights and warmth of one of Mexico's loveliest places.