

# From the Ground Up: Architecture in San Miguel de Allende

**S**an Miguel de Allende was an epicenter for silver mining in the 16th and 17th centuries. Silver mining led to rapid economic and cultural growth. As a result, several religious and civil buildings were constructed in the Mexican Baroque architectural style, and many still stand today.

Over the centuries, the architectural styles transitioned from the Mexican Baroque style to neoclassical, and in the late 19th century, also included the Neo-Gothic style. San Miguel de Allende models how various kinds of architecture can exist homogeneously.

Today, San Miguel de Allende is still known for its cobblestone streets, Spanish colonial-style buildings, creative architecture, and extravagantly painted murals. The city won The World's Best Cities Award in 2017 and 2018. Here is our list of the ten must-see sites of San Miguel de Allende.

## 1. The Sanctuary of Atotonilco

This Jesuit sanctuary, designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, dates to the 18th century. The temple is a fine example of Mexican Baroque art and architecture. It consists of several small chapels and a larger sanctuary, each decorated with a mural of intricate oil paintings.

## 2. The Parish of San Miguel Arcangel

The Parish of San Miguel Arcangel, initially constructed in the 16th century, is an exquisite example of Baroque architecture. Local stonemason Zeferino Gutierrez created the pointed

pinnacles in the late 1800s, inspired by European cathedrals. Builders used distinctive pink quarry stone, common to the region, and the building also features a 16th-century crypt that houses the remains of Mexican war heroes.

### 3. Church of San Francisco

UNESCO listed this church as a World Heritage site. It was built in 1778 and took 20 years to complete. Wealthy local families financed the temple, along with profits made from bullfighting. The structure is known for its Moorish features and ornate façade. The excessively intricate Churrigueresque design contains carved stone figures and plunging columns. However, the bell tower is in the neoclassical style of 1779.

### 4. The Municipal Palace

The Municipal Palace was constructed in 1736 and mixed the neoclassical and Baroque styles. Here, officials held the first City Council meeting following Mexico's independence. Little of the original construction remains today, but the building remains a cultural artifact, housing art gallery exhibits from local visual artists.

### 5. Ignacio Allende House Museum

This museum was the former home of Ignacio Allende, who was the principal figure during the Mexican War of Independence. He commissioned the two-story home construction in 1759 with Baroque and Neoclassical features. The complex stonework and intricate wrought iron designs represent Spanish influence in colonial Mexico. The museum now houses exhibits from the War of Independence and other historical and archeological finds.

## 6. Angela Peralta Theatre

The Angela Peralta Theatre was initially constructed from 1871-1873 to be an opera house for the acclaimed Mexican soprano Angela Peralta, who was affectionately named the "The Mexican Nightingale." After 130 years, it has become an elegant venue for performers of all kinds.

## 7. Ignacio Ramirez El Nigromante Cultural Center

This cultural center is in an 18th-century Baroque-style convent. This San Miguel de Allende landmark is adorned with impressive murals by various artists and boasts a gorgeous courtyard fountain as its centerpiece. The building previously served as housing for the Calvary during the revolution.

## 8. Church of the Conception

Near the Ignacio Ramirez El Nigromante Cultural Center is the Church of the Concepcion. Affectionately known as "The Nuns," the two-story dome, completed in 1891, is one of the largest domes in Mexico. It features Corinthian columns and pilasters adorning its drum. It is said to have been inspired by the dome at the Church of Les Invalides in Paris, France.

## 9. The Canal Mayorazgo House

This neoclassical mansion is the former home to the wealthy De La Canal family. The enormous 18th-century wooden carved main entrance is a testament to the skill of the colonial artisans. It's an exemplary representation of New Spanish civil architecture, with elements of Italian and French customs combined with local Mexican culture.

## 10. The Aurora Factory

One of the main attractions of San Miguel de Allende is a staple in Mexican history. The Aurora Factory's walls were an essential part of the labor and textile industries for nine decades. It opened in 1902 and reopened in 2004 as an art shopping mall. The busy arts center has a central archway with metal lettering and a wrought iron gate that serves as a monument to Mexico's industrial era.

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