

the latest in a long series of uprisings. It took the Spaniards, led by conquistador Diego de Mazariegos, four years to pacify the area enough to establish a town here in 1528. The so-called Villareal de Chiapa de los Españoles was more widely known as Villaviciosa (Evil City) for the oppressive exploitation exercised by its colonists. In 1544, Bartolomé de las Casas was appointed bishop, and he promptly took an energetic stance in defence of the native population, playing a similar role to that of Bishop Vasco de Quiroga in Pátzcuaro (see box, p.348). His name – added to that of the patron saint of the town – is still held in something close to reverence by the local population. Throughout the colonial era, San Cristóbal was the capital of Chiapas (at that time part of Guatemala), but lost this status in 1892 as a result of its continued reluctance to accept the union with Mexico. This spirit of rebellion was revived by the Zapatistas in 1994. Although it was the main focus of their attack, the town was only occupied for thirty hours, and no tourists were harmed.

Arrival and information

The toll highway from Tuxtla Gutiérrez to San Cristóbal (M\$38) rises quickly from the plains, breaking through the clouds into pine forests. As the modern parts of the city sprawl unattractively along the highway, first impressions of San Cristóbal itself are not the best, but the centre has none of this unchecked development. Whether you arrive by first- or second-class **bus**, you'll almost certainly be just off the Carretera Panamericana (Hwy-190), which becomes Bulevar Juan Sabines Gutiérrez at the southern edge of town, though if you've arrived from Bochil, you'll be just north of the market area. For the centre, turn right out of the OCC **first-class terminal**, and it's seven blocks north on Insurgentes to the plaza. Most **second-class** services stop along the highway to either side of the OCC terminal. **Taxis** within the centre should cost no more than M\$20.

The helpful **state tourist office**, in the Palacio Municipal (Mon-Fri 8am–8pm, Sat 9am–8pm, Sun 9am–2pm; ☎967/678-1467), has free city maps, up-to-date lists of hotels, bus times and event information, as well as English-speaking staff. The **municipal tourist office** (daily 8am–8pm; ☎967/678-0665) is just next door; it also staffs kiosks on both plazas.

Accommodation

Vast numbers of visitors and competition for business mean that San Cristóbal has some very good-value **hotels**. There are a few reliable places around the OCC terminal, but walking up Insurgentes to the plaza, you'll pass more establishments in all price ranges. Most of the best **budget options** are found in the streets east of the plaza, particularly along Real de Guadalupe and in its vicinity. An ever-larger proportion of hotels here call themselves "**posadas**", and most live up to the convivial ambience this is presumably meant to convey, but it's always worth seeing your room before you pay. Even the most basic places now have hot water, though not necessarily all of the time. Nights can be pleasantly cool in summer, but cold in winter, so make sure there are enough blankets.

For **longer stays**, check out the many notice boards in the bus stations, language schools and popular cafés, where you'll find rooms and even whole houses for rent. The closest official **campsite** is at *Rancho San Nicolás*, 2km east of the centre along the extension of Francisco León (☎967/678-0057; M\$60).



Barón de las Casas Belisario Domínguez 2
☎967/678-0881, @hotelbaron@hotmail.com. Well-run budget hotel with a bit of colonial charm, one block east of the plaza. Rooms are simple, with tiled floors and spotless bathrooms

with plenty of hot water. TV is M\$20 extra. The owners speak English. ③



Casa Na-Bolom Vicente Guerrero 33
☎967/678-1418, @www.nabolom.org.

Very comfortable rooms with fireplaces and private