



**Facts about Aguascalientes**  
by  
**Jesper Bay Jacobsen, [www.naturewatch.dk](http://www.naturewatch.dk)**  
**2009-09-01**

Aguascalientes (Ags) is located about 500 km north-west of Mexico City on the central high plain. It has a size of about 80 km north-south and some 90 km west-east where it is widest.

#### Landscapes

Ags is, cut down the middle, completely different observing the two halves. To the west one finds a mountainous landscape dominated by the Sierra Fría which relates to the Sierra Madre Occidental, running north-south along the West Mexican coast.

Just crossing the border to Zacatecas the highest point reaches some 3050 meters, but in general the altitude varies between 2000 and 2700 in this part of the state.

The eastern part consists of a rather flat landscape, 1800-2000 masl, though two peaks of about 2600 meters, border the state towards the northeast and southeast.

The city of Aguascalientes lies in the middle of these, in the flat part, closer to the southern border of the state. And in fact: Most people in the state of Aguascalientes, one million + live along this middle axis dividing the state north-south. Most of them in the city of Aguascalientes of course, but several smaller towns are stretched out along the highway leading north towards Zacatecas. Only significant community away from this axis is the town of Calvillo in the southwest corner of the state and the county houses some 50 thousand mortal souls.

In the western part, below the higher altitudes one finds large permanent reservoirs (presas) like presa Calles, presa Rodriguez and presa Niágara. They hold a larger depth and in winter attract larger amounts of ducks, especially the presa Niágara.

At the higher altitudes you find pines and mixed pine-oak forests intermixed with open pastures. The Manzanita tree is also characteristic in this zone, attractive-looking with its dark red coloured bark.

At lower levels a mixture of dry scrubland, Mesquites (acacia like tree) and Nopales (fig cactus) is dominant.

The mountainous zone is mostly used to graze cattle, but the lower-lying south-western corner, around the city of Calvillo, is dominated by a healthy fruit industry. Mostly orchards of the Guayaba fruit.

No permanent large rivers are found in Ags. The river San Pedro which runs south crossing the state at the western edge of the city of Aguascalientes is merely a small stream outside the rainy



season. Continuing south from the presa Niágara though, it holds a permanent significant water level with aquatic vegetation. But throughout the state lots of stream beds and gullies are found, where the vegetation always stands greener and fresher. Towards the north some larger ones, canyon-like, are found.

The flat parts of the middle and the east of the state are predominantly used for agriculture: Corn, Alfalfa and various vegetables.

In this part the natural vegetation mostly consists of the ever present Mesquite and the Nopale. Intermixed with various types of bushes and trees where the deciduous Pirul (tree introduced from Peru) is rather common. It grows to some 20 meters and stands proud and magnificent with its delicate leaves and small red fruits hanging like fine adornments!

The reservoirs found in this part are of a more temporary nature. They normally consist of low-levelled water-bodies used to irrigate the fields. Therefore with only little rain during the rainy season they risk to vanish completely.

But containing water, they prove excellent localities for passing or wintering shorebirds.

### Climate

The climate in general is dry and hot.

The hottest period is the spring months of May and June where the rainy season has not yet begun.

Temperatures will be some 30-40 degrees Celsius during the day, and some 25 during the night.

The rainy season lasts from July till November.

The rain will mostly fall in the afternoon and evening, some few hours and often as powerful thunder showers. Rarely will it rain all through the night, and it doesn't rain every day. On cloudy days the temperature drops to some 25 during the day, but days without clouds can produce temperatures like the hottest days in spring.

From November the dry season starts and with this the cooler climate, often caused by winds coming down from the North American plains, Nortes. With the passage of these wind systems the temperature falls dramatically, and from January they will often cause temperatures below zero (C) during the night. In the daytime though, the temperature normally stays above 20-25 degrees.

Being a semi-desert area sand dust in the air is ever present. But it is not a problem affecting the health or well-being in general. And it provides a steady income for the wide-spread car-washing industry: Some with installations and a regular staff, others just offering their service with a cloth and a bucket of water in the hand. They do an ok job, but since the dust is ever flowing with the air, the next day, the chances are that your car looks exactly like it did the day before. But that's life isn't it?



### Access

Most land in the state is privately or community (ejidos) owned, and therefore has been fenced off. And most thoroughly!

The Chinese Wall of course was an impressive (cruel) challenge to overcome, but I say that the effort shown here in Mexico to fence off property, either with stone walls or barbed-wire, is equally impressive. Never have I seen such an amount of wire spread out through the landscape (in Mexico in general), and often in remote parts as well where one might think, that this is the true wild nature of Mexico.

No, there will always be another wire to cross!

I'm not going to say that it is legal to enter any of these properties without permission. It is not. But I have never experienced any problems when entering a fenced off locality. Of course I behave well, locking gates behind me and so, and every time someone is present I contact them to explain what I'm doing there.

I have a feeling that birdwatchers, among people living in the countryside, are regarded a bit like harmless fools. They don't see a threat towards them from this odd behaviour and accept your presence without problems, probably more so the community owners than the private ones. This is good, since the most interesting localities often are found on these properties.

Physically you will probably be able to access all parts of the state. The flat part without too much difficulty. In the mountainous part with some more difficulty if you're going cross country, because the ground often is uneven and covered with loose stones and rocks, and in addition, walking up and down at this altitude makes it rather strenuous.

### UFOs

Mexico is supposedly renowned for its many observations of UFOs, but sadly enough I have not been able to add any new information to this elusive subject...