

Oaxaca 2010 Itinerary

March 5, Friday

You will have the option to spend the night at the Crown Plaza (502-367-2251). It is located near the Louisville Airport and the cost for a double should be \$89.00 (taxes to be added) and is not included in the price of the tour. The hotel is located in south Louisville off interstate 65. If you come into Louisville on Interstate 64 take 65 South to exit 131 B (which is the Fair Grounds exit) The first light comes very quickly so get in the left lane and take the left turn at the light.

March 6, Saturday

Depart Louisville CO5531L 2:40PM, Arrive Houston 3:50 PM

Depart Houston CO2126L 540PM, Arrive Oaxaca 8:10 PM

With our flight leaving at 2:40pm you will be able to drive from Evansville without any problem. Just remember that you need to be at the airport 2 hours early because you have an international final destination. If you chose to arrive later and the flights are over booked seats are allocated on a first come first serve bases. Those checking in the earliest have priority. Also Louisville is an hour ahead of us so you will need to leave Evansville a minimum of 5 hours prior to our departure.

Those choosing to spend the night with park and fly in Louisville will take the hotel shuttle to the airport for our departure for Houston and will be arriving in Oaxaca at 8:10 PM. We will take a cab and check into the hotel. Depending on how soon we can get settled in our hotel there may still be time for a late dinner on the Zocalo, enjoying the beautiful park and some of the best food in Mexico. We are going to have people at two hotels. The first is the Hotel Las Golandrinas, Tinoco y Palacios # 411, Centro, C.P. 68000, Oaxaca, Oax., México and the second will be the hotel Monte Alban located on the park with the cathedral. The Monte Alban is a historic building and in the colonial period the bishop's home.

March 7, Sunday

We will have breakfast at the hotel and pack a water bottle for the morning exploration of Monte Alban considered one of the most beautiful archaeological sites in Mexico. The earliest occupation, Monte Alban I (800-200 BC), is noted for its Danzantes which are a remarkable set of relief carvings with written inscriptions showing Olmec influence from the Gulf Coast. The script from Monte Alban is the oldest know writing system in Mesoamerica. Epigraphers are working with these inscriptions and making progress to reveal the history of this site.

Monte Alban II is noted for the construction of building J, which is thought to be an observatory with an alignment to the star cappella. On its exterior walls are carved reliefs that are site names of towns that were incorporated into the sphere of influence of Monte Alban. It sets on the south end of the 300 meters great plaza.

The remaining visible structures are from the classical period (Monte Alban III and IV, 300-950 AD). At the end of this period the site was abandon and in the postclassical phase the site was used by the Mixtecs to bury their distinguished dead. The remarkable contents of tomb 107 are

in the regional Museum five blocks north of the Zocalo in Oaxaca City. If you should fancy looking at gold work this collection holds the finest examples in Mesoamerica.

The rest of the afternoon you will be free to wander through the shops and galleries. The best are located just north of the Plaza on the way back from the museum. Oaxaca is noted for its contemporary art in all media as well as crafts which include brightly painted woodcarving, tinwork, weaving and ceramics. There are numerous shops as well as park and street vendors with a fine offering. You may also want to investigate the markets. The Mercado Juarez is located south of the Zocalo is the covered market. The larger open market is located near the edge of the old city on its southwest side. It is a great place for photos as well as some crafts.

March 8, Monday

We will have breakfast and take our transportation to Mitla. Mitla is about 32 miles south east of Oaxaca and contains the archaeological site by the same name. There is some debate as to the origin of the architectural style. It has been attributed to the Mixtec but there is some evidence that it may represent a late phase of Zapotec architectural design. It was still in use at the time of the conquest and the palace of the columns is breathtaking. A colonial church has been built over a section of the ruins and is great for a photo session.

The Tula Tree (Tula meaning place of the reeds) was once a swampy marsh land just east of Oaxaca City. Cypress trees grew in these wet lands and there are still some exceptional examples the oldest being about 2000 years old. They are considered sacred by the native people and the Mixtec believed that the first man and woman emerged for such trees. With the conquest the forests on the mountains surrounding the Oaxaca Valley were cut to graze cattle and sheep. The natural watershed provided by the forests held the water that fell in the rainy season and released it over the course of the dry season to the valley below. The cutting of the forest has caused the valley to become drier and the original water table has dropped. The cypress trees that survive in the valley have had to send their roots ever deeper to reach the retreating water table. As a result no new trees are found on this ground.

Yagul is an early post-classical site that is attributed to the Zapotec culture. A number of the inscription on the tomb doors are written in the Zapotec script. It is viewed as a transitional site between the classical (Zapotec) and post-classical (Mixtec) in the Oaxaca valley. The mosaic stone work that forms geometric pattern on the interior and exterior of builds that you will see at Mitla had its birth place at Yagul. Behind the ceremonial center in a large fortified hill that holds additional tombs. It has wonderful views of the surrounding valley.

March 9, Tuesday

This will be a free day and you may wish to take advantage of the markets, shops and vendors or just sit in a cafe and enjoy the good weather. Also the museums and churches are remarkable. The church of Santo Domingo is north of the Zocalo and is part of the Palace of Cortez which was the colonial administrative center. This complex of buildings now serves as the regional museum and houses the gold and other materials taken from Tomb 107. Other churches of interest will be the Cathedral just off the Zocalo on its north side facing the alameda which is a small park. Those who wish to take a trip to the Apoala Valley may come with me. We will be leaving early at or before 6:00 am. Santiago de Apoala is three hours north and west of Oaxaca

City. The final two hours on dirt roads. It is in the Mixtec Alta and place of origin of their people. There are many cypress trees that grow along the spring fed stream that flows through the valley. In Mixtec myth it is believed that from these trees were born the first man and woman. There are also caves, canyons and waterfalls that make this valley such an exceptional place.

March 10, Wednesday

This is a free day to enjoy the city and its many historic sites or just sit in a café and watch the people. If you like to shop you will not have to even leave your table. They will be coming to you. One of the well known ceramic traditions of Oaxaca is the green ware which is produced in the village of Atzompa a few miles west of the city. Much of this ware is sold in the market of Oaxaca but you may wish to take a cab or bus to where it is made.

Another possible excursion is to the village of San Bartolo Coyotepec and the Dona Rosa Pottery which is famous for its black ceramic ware. It was founded by Dona Rosa in the early part of the 20th century and her family still operates the workshop. The pottery is famous worldwide and now emulated by my other Mexican craftsman. It has no glaze but an almost reflective black surface. This finish is achieved by burnishing the clay and when I observed Dona Rosa's son some years ago he was using the same quartz crystal to burnish his pots that his mother had used during her life time. The burnishing is done when the pottery is leather hard and then allowed to fully dry before it is fired. The wood fired kilns are dampened down at the end of the firing which holds in the carbon from the smoke of the wood. The carbon penetrates the clay body which gives the pottery its black coloring.

March 11, Thursday

For those interested in another excursion we will tour the weaving village of Teotitlan del Valle. The artisans of this village spin their own wool and use natural dyes for their yarn. Many of the dyes are grown and harvested in the region which includes indigo and cochineal. The yarn is then woven into rugs that us traditional designs some that date back to the pre-conquest culture. Your rugs can also be purchased in the shops of Oaxaca City but it is fascinating to visit the workshops and view the artisans at work.

March 12, Friday

This will be a free day but if you are interested wood carving you may wish to go with me to the village of Arrazola. This is the home town of Manuel Jimenez, one of Mexico's best known artisans, who was the creator of the brightly colored wooden animals that now rank among Mexico's most sought after handicrafts. In the afternoon there are the markets or just sit in a cafe and enjoy the good weather.

March 13, Saturday

We will depart for the airport at 6:30 for our flight to Houston with connections to Louisville and say goodbye to the beautiful City of Oaxaca.

Depart Oaxaca CO2125L 8:30AM Arrive Houston10:59AM
Depart Houston CO5558L 12:35PM Arrive Louisville 3:44PM