

## **Oaxaca City Trip Report**

By Linda and Chuck on s/v JACARANDA

December 30, 2012 - January 7, 2013

Oaxaca City - Capital of Oaxaca, one of Mexico's poorest states  
Oaxaca City and Monte Alban are UNESCO World Heritage Sites (1987)  
Population: 265,000

### WHY GO:

One of most vibrant, dynamic cities in Mexico  
Beautiful, colorful, colonial atmosphere with a small, manageable centro  
Some architecturally stunning buildings and a bustling zocalo  
"Culinary capital of Mexico" - awesome gastronomy  
Mecca for internationally celebrated folk art and craft  
Rich cultural heritage - Mixtec and Zapotec indigenous groups with own traditions  
Surprisingly sophisticated because of the interplay of indigenous with cosmopolitan  
university town - good music (traditional and contemporary), cafe scene, art  
(both indigenous and contemporary), poetry  
Several archeological ruins to explore - Monte Alban, Mitla, Yagul  
Unique fiestas - Day of the Dead, Night of the Radishes, Guelaguetza  
Oaxaca is the hub of easily visited artisan villages

### GETTING THERE (from Huatulco where we left the boat in Marina Chaue)

We flew up there and took the bus back

Aerotucan (Huatulco office - Ricardo - 958-587-6066; [ricardo@aerotucan.com.mx](mailto:ricardo@aerotucan.com.mx))

\$165.00 each (cash; a little more if you use a credit card)

Small turbojet - Twelve seater

What a luxury if you can afford it - Plane trip is only 30 minutes and you have a spectacular view of the Sierra Madres and landscapes

Departs at 11 a.m. or 2 p.m.

ADO (OCC) Bus - First class bus

About 8 1/2 hours via Salina Cruz through the Sierra Madre mountains up to 10,000 feet and then back to 5,000 feet to the Oaxaca plateau.

302 pesos/person; 9:30 a.m.

Cacaluta(?) transport van - this is what we heard:

about 6 hours through the Sierra Madre mountains. Nicknamed the "Vomit Comet". At the mercy of drivers of varying "sensitivities". Some friends wrote: Although not advisable, we couldn't resist the price; so we took the 11 pm van, which got us to Oaxaca at about 6 am. There wasn't a threat of motion sickness, but leg room was nonexistent. The only advantage to the darn thing was that when we got on a bus to go home, we felt like we were traveling in the lap of luxury!"

## ORIENTATION

We use Lonely Planet Guides and Tripadvisor.com

Remember you are now at an altitude of about 5,000 feet - if you are feeling a bit fatigued that may be a contributing factor

Zocalo

Church of Santo Domingo - go inside

Alcala - pedestrian walkway

Markets

Comment - pay in cash rather than credit card for discounts

Our artisan community trips were tailored to our particular personal interests by our guide - your personal interests will be different and can be tailored also

## ACCOMMODATION - there are A LOT of options

El Quijote Hostal - we stayed here and enjoyed it a lot - very clean and secure

Mina 509-5 (south west of zocalo in market area)

\$39.00 US/night for double with shared bath/coffee but no breakfast

\$50.00 US/night double with private bath

Emilio and Martha, owners, live on the main floor

951-516-6486

Mina could have been called the Street of Chocolate

Parador San Augustin - this was recommended by several cruisers

Armenta y Lopez #215

951 516 2022

Mexonline.com

Hotel Principal - recommended by cruiser friends

Good location near zocalo and next door to the Mujeres Artesans shop

Bugambilas - this is a mid-range BandB where I wanted to stay but it was booked

Reforma 402

951-516 1165

[www.lasbugambilas.com](http://www.lasbugambilas.com)

Upscale: Marques de Valle - high end hotel on the zocalo; Portal De Claveria s/n, 68000; <http://www.hotelmarchesdelvalle.com.mx>; tour groups stay here; may be noisy.

EATING (\* indicates it was recommended but we have NOT eaten there)

On the Zocalo:

TerraNova

Catedral

Casa Oaxaca\* - Constitucion 104-A. 951 516 8889. [www.casaoaxacarestaurante.com](http://www.casaoaxacarestaurante.com)

Pitonia\* - 6 course tasting dinner

Zandunga

Origen - contemporary - Hidalgo #820; flamboyant nouvelle cuisine; Rodolfo

Castellanos is the owner/chef; 951 501 1764; [www.origenoaxaca.com](http://www.origenoaxaca.com)

Las Danzantes - contemporary - Alcala #403

La Biznaga\*

Cafe La Olla - Reforma 402; 951 516 6668; [www.laolla.com.mx](http://www.laolla.com.mx)

Casa Crespo\* - also have a cooking school

Black Coffee Galleria - Alcala #316 in little plaza; artsy - "art and coffee made by artists"; [www.blackcoffeegallery.com.mx](http://www.blackcoffeegallery.com.mx)

Ice cream plaza at Soledad Basilica - Niagra was the place we ate at; try leche quemada, tuna (which is like pitahaya - not a fish).

Mayordomo - Mina 23 - watch them grind the chocolate; we ate hot chocolate and pan de yema (sweet egg bread that you dunk) EVERY morning with the locals for breakfast.

MARKETS - great place to eat breakfast or lunch

Benito Juarez- mostly food stalls and other things; try the grasshoppers (chapulines)

20 de Noviembre - mostly comedores and pan de yema stalls

Artisan Market

SHOPPING

During holiday seasons, many artisans come in from the surrounding villages and sell their wares at "Exhibitions", cooperative shows held in various locations around the city.

Etnico - good selection of textiles - especially Istmo - Isthmus style clothing and textiles (3 locations)

Sierra Morena - good prices and selection, esp. Istmo textiles and clothes; Plaza de Virgenes; Labastida 115 - 516 4265

Fe y Lola - located in a lovely courtyard; Family run (Chavez Santiago) weaving galeria; nice textiles and rugs; 5 de Mayo #408; also in Teotitlan del Valle;

[www.oaxacaculture.com](http://www.oaxacaculture.com)

Artesanias San Antonino - wonderful hand embroidery Oaxacan style; Independence #7, San Antonino Castillo Velasco; 951 113 3578; Sra. Severa Santiago Paz

JAH Taller de Orfebre - nice jewelry, esp. Oaxacan filigree style; Alcala #205

Arte Seda - silk textiles - Av. Juarez #4 Teotitlan del Valle; Reynaldo Sosa;

[www.artseda.com](http://www.artseda.com) 951 524 4119

Knives - Angel Aguilar - Ocotlan - 951-571-0784; [angel.cuchilleriaart@hotmail.com](mailto:angel.cuchilleriaart@hotmail.com)

Alebrijes - Jacopo&Maria Angeles; Olvido #9; San Martin Tilcajete, Ocotlan;  
951-524-9047; [www.jacoboymariatilcajete.org](http://www.jacoboymariatilcajete.org)

El Nahaul - Erasto Mendoza Ruiz - exquisite museum quality rugs and weavings; local  
apron. 5 de Mayo #402-A - 951-516-4202 [www.elnahualfolkart.blogspot.com](http://www.elnahualfolkart.blogspot.com)

#### MUSEUMS and GALLERIES:

MACO - Museum of Contemporary Art - Alcala 202; 20 peso donation; nice store with  
Francisco Toledo art; [www.museomaco.com](http://www.museomaco.com)

Museo textil de Oaxaca

Postal Museum (MUFI) - Beautiful building; great graphics; A block of colorful stamps  
makes a great, inexpensive and lightweight souvenir of the countries I've visited!

Galeria Quetzalli - contemporary art

Belber Jimenez - Matamoros 307 - 951-514 4996; Museum and store - jewelry/  
textiles/antiques; [www.museobelberjimenez.org](http://www.museobelberjimenez.org). Looking for a William Spratling  
original? Earrings from the designs that Frida Kahlo wore? Turquoise jewelry in  
Native American style; Hard to find China Poblana skirts? Antique Palestinian,  
Romanian clothing? I LOVE this store.

Arte de Oaxaca Galeria - Murguia 105 - contemporary art

#### GUIDES (\* indicates recommended to us but we don't have any first-hand knowledge)

\*Juan Montes-Lara

[jmonteslara@yahoo.com](mailto:jmonteslara@yahoo.com)

Juan Montes-Lara

Prol. Eucaliptos 303

68050 Oaxaca, Oax. Mexico

Home: (951) 513 0126

Office: (951) 51 3 51 92

Mobile: 9511703239

My artist friend who teaches an annual workshop in Oaxaca for the Day of the Dead  
festival always uses Juan but he was booked for the time were there

Alvin Starkman (Casa Machaya Oaxaca Bed and Breakfast)

[<oaxacadream@hotmail.com>](mailto:oaxacadream@hotmail.com)

\$50 deposit and \$25/hr.

Canadian ex-pat - Very knowledgeable and good community contacts.

Look on his website (<http://www.oaxacadream.com/articlesmain.html>) for a “library” of astute articles he has written about Oaxaca

We had a great time with him!

(He has a beautiful 1 unit B and B but it is not in walking distance of the centro - altho he will drive you into town we prefer being more independent).

\* Adalbert Lopez - [adalbertguia@hotmail.com](mailto:adalbertguia@hotmail.com) (recommended for Monte Alban - bit more expensive than the guides on site but good and excellent english).

## MORE TO DO

### \*\*\*\*THIS IS A MUST DO\*\*\*\*

Take a tour to the outlying villages and meet the people like you won't be able to any other way. You support a great program and the cultural exchange is priceless.

En Via Foundation - [www.envia.org](http://www.envia.org)

microfinance, educational programs, sustainable tourism

[info@envia.org](mailto:info@envia.org) (Kim is the staff person)

Thursday (1-7) and Saturday (9-3): lunch included

Leave from the Instituto Cultural Oaxaca (Av. Juarez 909)

\$650 pesos/person and 100% used for the micro-loan fund.

Reservations required (confirm by email); prefer payment before the tour.

### • Wonderful Cooking Class with Pilar

Casa de los Sabores Cooking Class

951-516-6668

[casadelossabores.com](http://casadelossabores.com)

Pilar Cabrera; \$80 US/person (\$900 p)

Begins at 9:15 with a market shopping trip (la Merced) and then a taxi ride to Pilar's home and private kitchen. Ends about 2:30.

Reservations required (email, phone) with a deposit (paypal) Joan was helping Pilar.

Another Cooking Class (I only heard good things about Susana but did not take her class; she is located about 40 minutes outside of the city)

Seasons of my heart- susana trilling

[www.seasonsofmyheart.com](http://www.seasonsofmyheart.com)

San Lorenzo, Cacaotepec

951-508-0469

There are a few others who also give Cooking Classes.

## TOUR

[www.discover-oaxaca.com](http://www.discover-oaxaca.com)

Tours - a friend did their Eastern Valley Tour but I don't know anything more about it.

## MONTE ALBAN

We took a bus to Monte Alban rather than a tour

"Autobuses Turisticos", 501 Mina, is a hole in the wall ticket office where you purchase tickets for the bus to Monte Alban. It leaves very regularly beginning at 8:30 a.m. and takes about half an hour to get there. 40 pesos/person roundtrip ticket. We recommend getting there as early as possible to avoid the crowds and the heat.

Entrance fee is 57 pesos/person. Wonderful museum but all in spanish.

Ancient capital of Zapotecs and one of first cities in Mesoamerica

## TLACOLULA MARKET on SUNDAYS

Collectivos for Tlacolula

Each village has its market day but the biggest and best is the Sunday market in Tlacolula. We took a "collectivo" from the Periferico. We waited at a bus stop where people said they passed by and we waited, looking for a small van. But a "collective" here is special taxi that squeezes in as many people as can fit, not a van or truck.

Specialties to taste:

Pan amarillo (good with cheese)

Pan de cazuela - sweet with chocolate inside

pan - pelona

Tejate drink

Nieves: limon, leche quemada con tuna, sanborns

Ate Barbaco lunch in market stall area

Look for Apron stall to buy the beautiful embroidered aprons that the local women wear.

TEOTITLAN - rug weaving village

Casa Santiago - Porfirio Santiago Mendez (rug weaver)

[www.artesaniascasasantiago.com](http://www.artesaniascasasantiago.com)

Av. Juarez Num #70

951-52 441 54

## SAN MARTIN TILCAJETE

Jacopo and Maria Angeles are master alebrije makers - carved wooden animals and figures amazingly painted.

## TO READ/OTHER RESOURCES:

“36 Hours: Oaxaca, Mexico”

By Freda Moon, NYTimes, Jan. 12, 2012 (also read the 92 comments)

<http://travel.nytimes.com/2012/01/15/travel/36-hours-oaxaca-mexico.html>

Viva Oaxaca, An Insiders' Guide to Oaxaca's Charms - Robert Adler and Jo Ann Wexler

Oaxaca Journal - Oliver Sacks

<http://oaxacaculture.com> - interesting blog from Oaxaca Cultural Navigator

### FOR THE NEXT TIME

Because of higher priority personal interests or time constraints we didn't even get to:

Mitla

Black Pottery village

Pottery villages

Other alebrijes villages

Mezcal distilleries

Hierva de Agua

Archeological Museum (Museum of Oaxacan Cultures)

Textile Museum

Etnobotanical Gardens