

# **San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chiapas Trip Report**

By Linda and Chuck on s/v JACARANDA

January 17 - January 26, 2013

Exchange rate: 12.7 pesos = \$1

## **WHY GO:**

Wonderfully preserved colonial mountain town at 7000' elevation

In 2003, the city was named a "[Pueblo Mágico](#)" by the Mexican federal government; In 2010, President Felipe Calderón recognized the city as "the most magical of the Pueblos Mágicos (Magical Villages)" of Mexico.

Indigenous populations in town and in surrounding villages; the diversity of cultures makes it like no other place on Mexico

Amazing handwoven textiles

Eclectic food

Mayan Ruins

Cool mountain terrain (7000' elevation so it was cold in January)

## **GETTING THERE**

We left the boat in Marina Chiapas and went to Tapachula (Estacion Cristobol Colon) to take the OCC First class bus. We purchased our tickets the day before to guarantee the seats we wanted so we wouldn't be stuck in the back of the bus (Linda tends to get motion sick on hilly rides)

Getting there we took the coastal route (MEX 200) through Tuxtla Guitierrez. We left on the 11:00 a.m. bus and arrived in SCDLC precisely at 8:02. A nine hour ride that was relatively flat; the first part of it was warm - even on the bus. It didn't get mountainous until the last hour when we left Tuxtla Guitierrez. Cost: about 367 pesos/person.

Returning, we took an 11:30 a.m. bus from SCDLC which took the MEX 190 route through Comitán southeast along the Guatemala border. This was a 9 1/2 hour ride, the latter part through the mountains. Cost: 276 pesos/person

## **ORIENTATION**

Iglesia Santo Domingo and the outdoor artisan market

Zocalo

Cathedral and the Cross in front of it

Two perpendicular walking streets - Real de Guadalupe (East-West) and 20 de Noviembre/Av. Miguel Hildago (N-S)

Taxis are 30 pesos for in-town destinations

## **ACCOMMODATION - there are A LOT of options**

Bela's BandB

2 Doctor Navarro

967-678-9292

Double room with shared bathroom \$65/night US

Balcony room with view - \$95/night US

Actual fare for us - \$90 /night - 10% for one week stay (12.7 exchange rate)

5 nites@90=\$450-10%=390=4960 pesos. had paid deposit of \$65 for 1st night and \$90 for another night thru paypal.

Bela, a US expat is a wonderful hostess. She is loved by her guests who come back year after year and gives great recommendations for places to see and do; she can arrange Ricardo (wonderful guy who speaks no english) to drive you anywhere. She has four small dogs who have the run of the place. Her staff is her Mexican family - Teresa gives great massages; manuela is a wonderful cook - see if Bela will arrange for her to make her chicken mole and pan de sopa one day for lunch.

A hearty breakfast of fruit, granola, yogurt, toast, juice and eggs if you ask. Coffee and tea throughout the day.

Each room has a towel warmer, mattress topper, and electric blanket - Yummy for those cold mountain nights!!!!

Warning: don't stay here if you don't like dogs or are a diehard Republican who likes to talk politics

Na Bolom - hacienda with botanical gardens, museum, library, rooms, restaurant, shop  
We stayed in the room called La Cueva - 1525/pesos/night (but it was discounted at 1153/pesos/night). This was Trudy Duby Blom's office. Fireplace and jacuzzi tub in the bathroom.

There are cheaper rooms there (Diego Rivera stayed in the Harvard Room)

Meals are not included in the price; dinners are served family style - you could rub shoulders with researchers, scientists, and Lacandon Maya.

Other Option:

Parador Margarita - more upscale but beautiful hacienda with garden area.

(also runs a cheaper alternative called Casa Margarita at Real de Guadalupe #34)

Jose Felipe Flores #39

967-116-0164

730p/night for double includes breakfast

## **EATING**

El Caldero - Hearty Chiapeneco soups great for a cold day!

Napoli - Romeo makes fresh pasta and sauces (try the pesto and his cannelloni).  
Straight from Italy!! Molto buono!

Oh La La - French pastries and croissants - Straight from Paris! Oh la la is right!

La Casa Mexicana (El Maguey) - Sunday brunch buffet (all you can eat)  
Calle 28 de Agosto #1  
678-0698  
429p. for two with non-alcoholic drinks

## **TOURS**

Toniná Ruins: We visited the Mayan Ruins of Toniná because they were closer and we did not have the time to go to Palenque. It took 2 hours each way and we had the ruins all to ourselves. Very nice small Museum also. We hired Bela's driver for a private trip. We stopped at a local village along the way to look at textiles.

We took a public tour (meet at the Cross in front of the Cathedral at 9 a.m.) to San Juan Chamula and Zinacantan (both of which were having festivals)

We took another public tour to Tenejapa

We took a private tour with Bela's driver to a pottery village (Amatenango del Valle?) and Chiapa de Corzo (which was having a festival)

## **MUSEUMS**

Na Bolom Cultural Center - Research center of Mayan culture; extensive library; original home of archeologist/photographer couple

\*\*\*\*\*MUST DO - Museum de Trajes Regionales - private collection of Don Sergio includes artifacts, display of indigenous clothing, etc.

Don Sergio is often called a Mother Teresa figure for his work with burn patients in rural and indigenous communities who do not have access to medical care. When you call him, arrange for an appointment to have him take you through the collection personally and ask him about his work. A small entrance fee helps fund his medical work. \*\*Buy some wound dressings and burn cream to donate to him.

Call Don Sergio 967-678-4289 at 3 p.m. or after 7 p.m.

## **SHOPPING**

Outdoor Artisan Market near Santo Domingo - fantastic!

Sna Jolobil -

Award-winning women's textile cooperative in an upscale shop.

High quality textiles; higher prices.

With some sleuthing, you may be able to find comparable textiles in the market just outside their doors.

It is next to a very good museum.

J'pas Joloviletik

Av. General Utrilla 43  
(Union Regional de Artesanas de Los Altos de Chiapas)  
[JpasJoloviletik@hotmail.com](mailto:JpasJoloviletik@hotmail.com)  
967-678-2848

Eklektik - upscale jewelry/crafts/textiles - high quality stuff at higher prices.  
Jewelry is custom designed by the owner.  
Av. 20 de Noviembre #21  
967-678-1701

Museo del Ambar de Chiapas (museum and store)

Amber Museum (private collection and store) - Galeria de Ambar Mexicano  
[ambarmexicano.com.mx](http://ambarmexicano.com.mx)

Museo de Jade

EZLN store - T-shirts, handmade embroideries, other objects go to support the work of the zapatistas

Casa de las Artesanias de Chiapas

Lagrimas de la Selva - amber store

Mercado de Dulces y Artesanias - indoor market - Sweets, textiles, amber

Taller Leñateros  
Calle Flavio @ Paniagua #54  
Papermaking, artists books, prints

**Next Time:**

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

Palenque - friends used guide Raul Morelos Castro (916-108-3951); [www.palenguguidedtour.com](http://www.palenguguidedtour.com)

Cañon de Sumero

Additional Outlying villages