Day of the Dead Oaxaca, Mexico, 2010

Day of the Dead is the most time-honored and expressive holiday of Oaxaca. It is an example of the harmonious relationship between Christianity and the Pre-Hispanic traditions found in the state of Oaxaca.

Although Día de los Muertos is recognized all over Mexico, Oaxaca has become known for its ornately rich celebrations venerating the return of their deceased loved ones on November 1st and 2nd. In the state capital, Oaxaca City, the festivities of Día de los Muertos begin a week before the 1st and 2nd of November with the commencement of the “Plaza de los Muertos.”

This elaborate initiation takes place in each city market, but principally in the Mercado de Abastos. In each plaza one may find all the necessary items to prepare for the arrival of the dead including the ingredients for traditional dishes such as mole negro, pan de yema, and Oaxacan chocolate. One will also find a grand assortment of flowers used to decorate the sacred altars dedicated to the deceased.
The Oaxacan altars are most commonly built on October 30th and October 31st in the homes of the Oaxacan people. The altar is generally set on a table, and then it is wrapped with a tablecloth, white sheet or with perforated tissue paper. Sugarcane is bound to the foot of the table and run high over overhead into the shape of a triumphal arch. On the morning of October 31st the offerings are placed on the altars; these offerings consist of exquisite dishes that the relatives will come to savoir the aromas of. Among these offerings are the delicious Oaxacan mole, freshly seasoned by the women, the delicious nicuatole (corn jelly), pumpkin with black sugar, sugarcane, tejocotes (small wild apples), the delicious pan de muerto (bread of the dead), and the exquisite chocolate ground by stone. There is also an endless medley of regional fruit consisting of oranges, limes, bananas, jicamas, wild apples, nuts, peanuts, medlar, pineapples, and also cooked chayote.

The flower of the dead – the sweet-smelling “cempasuchil” (marigolds) - as well as the oil lamps and the white or yellow bees wax candles adorned with black tissue paper are the final decorative accents. It is an old belief that the dead, after their long pilgrimage from the other life, arrive on earth tired and thirsty. Because of this belief, a gourd or glass filled with water is placed on the altar for them, as well as the other food offerings. The dead are welcome and expected to bask in the essence of this splendid fervor.

On the last day of October, the procession of souls begins with the children. They visit the altars in the late afternoon and, upon their arrival, they feast upon the food laid out for them. November 2nd is reserved for the souls of the adults who have passed on, but now return. They too shall have their fill.

You will find that there is much to see and do in the city of Oaxaca and in the outlying villages. For this reason, we offer you the opportunity to partake in a number of different tours to villages, but also encourage you to stay in the city to experience the altars and comparsas with us.

This freedom enables you to design your own days, yet guarantees an all-encompassing series of events sure to deliver the diverse wonders of Oaxaca’s Dia de los Muertos celebration.
Itinerary Day of the Dead 2010

Tuesday October 26th

We will receive you at Oaxaca’s International Airport; from there we will take you to the Hotel Casa de Sierra Azul located in the heart of the city center of Oaxaca, just a few blocks away from Oaxaca’s main plaza, the Zocalo. After arrival introductory walking tour of Oaxaca city.

Wednesday October 27th

We will start the day with an Oaxacan breakfast served in the hotel restaurant, then move on to Oaxaca’s Institute of Culture where we commence with a hand-on mask-making workshop. The Dia de los Muertos are very important in the celebration of the day of the dead, particularly in the comparsas because the masks are the most distinct influence of the Venetian Carnival in the Day of the Dead’s comparsa parade. After this workshop we will visit the archeological site of Monte Alban, once considered the capital of the Zapotec people between the years of 500 B.C. and 800 A.D. After visiting Monte Alban we will visit Arrazola, town of the Alebrijes (or animal woodcarvings). Then Dinner at La Biznaga.

Thursday October 28th

For your second day, breakfast is served at the Hotel, with the days adventures re-convening at the Instituto Cultural de Oaxaca. We will continue with hand-on mask-making workshop. After the workshop we will participate in an insightful and educational lecture on the importance on the Day of the Dead. This seminar will discuss the importance of the Day of the Dead celebration, as well as its traditional practices in great diversity and detail. After lunch we will go on to the market “Benito Juarez” to gather ingredients for our traditional cooking class on Mole Negro, (Black Mole) which will take place on the following Friday. Next we will dinner at the Restaurant Catedral, where you will eat the best Oaxacan mole negro (Black Mole) in the all of the city. An evening of freedom. Explore any of the wonders that may have caught your eye throughout your guided tour, or simply relax in preparation for the next day!
Friday October 29th

After breakfast at the hotel, we will meet at the Instituto Cultural de Oaxaca to partake in the anticipated cooking workshop. You will discover the secrets of the traditional Mole Negro (black mole), which is considered the most traditional dish of the Day of the Dead celebration. After creating this delightful dish, with the mask you made on Wednesday and Thursday, you will participate in the Instituto's traditional comparsa parade and construct your own altar. In this construction, it is customary to include pictures of your own departed loved ones, so be sure to bring them along if you choose to partake in this. Participating in such a ritual is an important aspect of embracing the culture’s reverence of life and death. Dinner at Casa Oaxaca

Saturday October 30th

Another delicious breakfast shall be served at our Hotel. After the lecture, an excursion including many surrounding villages is offered. This trip is comprised of Mitla, Teotitlan del Valle and El Tule, home of the infamous, grand Tule tree. In between Mitla and Teotitlan, lunch will take place at “El Milenario,” a restaurant situated in the in Santa Maria el Tule, town where the famous Tule tree is located.

Sunday October 31st

Visit the Santo Domingo Cultural Center (museum) and Church. In the afternoon we shall visit Santo Domingo’s Ethno-Botanical Garden and receive a special tour by its designer and creator Alejandro De Avila. In the evening, we will eat dinner at a restaurant called Asador Vasco, located in the lively Zocalo center of Oaxaca. El Asador Vasco is situated in a beautiful historical building, once the Oaxacan headquarters of Don Jose Maria Morelos y Pavon, one of the most important leaders of the Mexican Independence. After dinner we will visit the cemetery of Xoxocotlan. This cemetery is very traditional and will be teeming with Día de los Muertos decorations and activities.
Monday November 1st
Our Grand Masters’ visit to Ocotlán de Morelos, the hometown of Rodolfo Morales a XX Century Oaxacan painter, Santo Tómas Jalietza (backstrap weavers town), San Bartolo Coyotepec, the capital of the Barro Negro (Black Pottery), and San Martin Tilcajete (wood carving figures) will give us the opportunity to meet world class artisans and the producers of some of the most beautiful Oaxacan handcrafts.

After the visit to the artisans we will go for lunch in San Martin Tilcajete to the gallery and restaurant owned by Jacobo Angeles, Famous contemporary Oaxacan Wood Carving artist.

In the afternoon we will visit the comparsas of Etla and the city of Oaxaca.

Tuesday November 2nd
Free day to enjoy Oaxaca and other possible shopping. In the Afternoon visit to the Cemetery of San Felipe del Agua for more Day of the Dead revelries! (Optional)

Farewell Dinner at Los Danzantes

Wednesday November 3rd
Transport to the Airport and Fly Home!
MOC Adventures 2010 Prices

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<th>Items Included</th>
<th>USD</th>
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<td>Price per person (Double occupancy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Price per person (Single occupancy)</td>
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**Items Included**

8 nights lodging in Oaxaca at a boutique hotel, with all gratuities included.

Meals:
- Breakfast in our hotel (American or Oaxacan)
- These restaurants represent the most distinctive tastes of real Oaxacan flavors (gratuities at these restaurants included):
  - La Biznaga
  - Restaurant Catedral
  - El Patio (Mitla)
  - El Asador Vasco
  - Casa Oaxaca
  - Los Danzantes

Classes:
- Oaxacan cuisine
- Salsa dancing
- Mask Making Workshop

- Airport transfers and land transportation within Oaxaca.
- Entrance fees to museums and archeological ruins mentioned in the itinerary.
- English speaking guides in Oaxaca.

**Items Not Included**

Air Fares and Airport Taxes.
Beverages and Alcoholic drinks.
Personal expenses, meals not included in the itinerary, tips and gratuities and other independent tour guides.
Any other incidentals not listed under “included”.

*A non refundable deposit of $200 usd to reserve your trip. Final payment is due 45 days before departure.*

* Cancelation at least 45 days before departure will need to cover an administrative and operational of $200.00 USD.*
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