



MOC Adventures

Day of the Dead, Oaxaca 2008

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 savour 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 fervour.

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 Día de los Muertos celebration.

Itinerary Day of the Dead, Oaxaca 2008

The production of this itinerary involved extensive research and careful planning. It is sure to prove an enlightening and pleasant experience for all!

Please scroll down for the specific daily activities and events.

Monday, October 27th

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 3 blocks away from Oaxaca's main plaza, the Zocalo. After arrival Introductory walking tour of Oaxaca city.

Tuesday, October 28th



We will start the day with a Oaxacan breakfast served in the hotel restaurant, then move on to [Oaxaca's Institute of Culture](#) and a comprehensive seminar concerning the history of Oaxaca and its many monuments. After this lecture 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.

Wednesday, October 29th



For your second day, breakfast is served at the Hotel, with the days adventures re-convening at the Instituto Cultural de Oaxaca. Here 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 the workshop we shall 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. After the exotic garden, we shall move 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. Next, an informative walking tour of the city will be conducted, followed by 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!

Thursday, October 30th

Another delicious breakfast shall be served at Hotel Casa de Sierra Azul, followed by 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 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 patio,” a restaurant situated in the pleasant valley of Tlacolula. 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. Later on Salsa night at Candela.

Friday, October 31st

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 Tuesday, 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.



The world of the living must celebrate and honor the world of the dead! During the Evening , Dinner and Guelaguetza at Hotel Camino Real. 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!

Saturday, November 1st

In the afternoon we will visit the comparasas of Etna and the city of Oaxaca.

Sunday, November 2nd

Excursion to Ocotlán de Morelos, Jalietza, and San Bartolo Coyotepec, the capital of the Barro Negro (Black Pottery).

Cemetery of San Felipe del Agua for more Day of the Dead revelries!



Monday, November 3th

Transport to the airport and fly home.

Price

\$1500 usd (per person, double occupancy)

\$1650 usd (per person, single occupancy)

Our group tours are limited to a maximum of 20 people and prices don't include 15% IVA (local sales tax)

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