



# Oaxaca Times

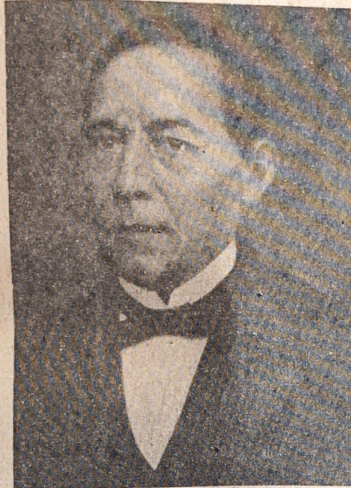
Oaxaca's English Tourist Newspaper

OAXACA, MEXICO

MARCH 1989

## Benito Juárez

Benito Juárez was born in 1806 in San Pablo Guelatao, forty miles from Oaxaca. He was orphaned at a young age but he eventually found his way into a position in a wealthy Oaxacan home, where he worked in exchange for being sent to school. After a false start in a seminary, he attended law school. Before entering politics he made a name for himself by defending the poor against large landowners (which as often as not meant the church) and accepting no fee for his services. His career in politics began in the 1840s when he entered Congress. He went on to the governorship of Oaxaca and in 1860 he was elected President of Mexico (he was the only full-blooded Indian ever to hold that office). His implementation of the controversial Reform Laws, the main target of which was the enormously powerful and wealthy Catholic Church, created a national crisis which led to a foreign invasion. In 1867 Juárez returned to the presidency where his land reform laws, directed primarily at the large church properties, also decimated the communal Indian lands. He was re-elected in 1871, but died the following year of a heart attack.



*It is a privilege to belong to your age...*

**RALF ROEDER**

## Oaxaca

The name Oaxaca is derived from a Naho word, meaning "near the Huajes". Huajes are a type of tree, still common in the Oaxaca Valley, which produce long thin beanpods. These legumes can be seen in the market, where they are sold as a treatment for intestinal parasites. The treatment consists of eating the raw seeds after removing them from their papery shell; the taste is similar to garden greenbeans. Scientists are currently exploring the medicinal

potential of these beans.

The State of Oaxaca has an area of 94,264 square kilometers and its population today is approximately 3,000,000. The territory is remarkably mountainous. The two Sierra Madres, the Easterns and Western, meet to form the famous Knot of Zempoalteped northwest of the capital. There are few extensive valleys. In the center of the state are found, in addition to the Oaxaca Valley, the valleys of Etla, Tlacolula, and Zimatlan. From the mountains rise many rivers; the Coatzacoalcos, the Mixtec, the Verde Atoyac, two rivers called Grande, one in the north and one in the south, the Tehuantepec and others.

### CLIMATE

Oaxaca has a mild climate. The day-time temperatures range from 65 F in January to 85F in July. But any time of year you'll want to have a light jacket or sweater for cooler evening. In the rest of the state the weather varies according to the elevation; in the Etla Valley, only a few miles from Oaxaca, the nights and mornings are decidedly cooler. In the mountains of the Mixteca and there are constant tropical temperatures, making the beach comfortable at any time of year.



## Ethnic Groups

### Part II MIXTECAS

The word "Mixtec" of mixtdan, judging from an Aztec etymology means place of mist and it is a good name, because the towns of the Mixteca Alta are in a mountain range that, being very high, is frequently covered with mist; if one takes a Zapotec etymology. It means wild cat, and that suits the primitive ferocity of the race, who defended their dominions in woods, caves and gorges.

The first capital of the Kingdom of the Mixtec was in Tolanongo and the towns of their principal chiefs were Coixtlahuaca, Achiutla, Teposcolula, Sosola and near the coast Tututepec.

They were great warriors and of steely temper and today, without having lost their energy they are affable and maintain strong racial pride. I



CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

# The oaxaqueño

If all you know of train travel is Amtrack's sorry service, then why not treat yourself to an experience that will change your idea about train travel forever. The Mexican National Railway Company (Ferrocarriles Nacionales de México) has recently revived luxury first-class sleeper car service on a number of routes and the Oaxaqueño (between Oaxaca and México City) is, luckily, one of those lines. Here a comfortable sleeper compartment includes a clean private toilet and sink, a tap that dispenses drinking water (in some cabins the faucet is out of service), and a large comfortable seat by a large window (it would be nice if the window were kept cleaner).

Different sizes of sleeper compartment are available for one, two or more passengers. In both directions the schedule is identical - the train leaves promptly at 7 pm so be sure to arrive early. Soon after departing the station the conductor announces dinner service in the dining car. A choice of

four entrees is offered. The T-bone steak is the better of the beef dishes - a thin but flavorful cut. If you're very hungry the roasted chicken is the largest portion. There's also a fish entree if you want something lighter. The service may be less than gracious but it's competent. The meals are included in the price of your ticket but additional glasses of wine, milk, beer, and soft drinks are extra. A tip of 1,000 pesos per persona is polite.

When you return to your cabin the beds will be made up. For me there is no more comfortable place to sleep - cotton sheets, feather pillows and the slow clacking of the train make the night pass quickly. Be sure to open the shade on bright moonlit nights to watch the desert landscape as it passes slowly by your window.

In the morning the conductor's bell announces breakfast service; the menu includes various styles of eggs (served with ham or bacon), hotcakes or oatmeal. Back in

your cabin the bed is again a seat and landscape continues its show outside the window (one unfortunate result of the meal, service is the litter of styrofoam containers lining the train tracks). You'll arrive in the station in the morning wishing your trip hadn't passed so quickly.

**Location:** In Oaxaca the train station is Calzada Madero; in México City at Estación Central de Buena Vista.

**Hours:** In both directions the train leaves at 7 pm and arrives the following morning 9 pm - 7 days a week.

**Phone:** In Oaxaca 6-22-53 and 6-25-64; Mexico City 5-91-61-77.

**Price:** 43,000 pesos for a camarín for one, 87,000 for an alcoba for two (includes dinner).

## The samaritana

One of the oldest traditions in Oaxaca, the Samaritana, is celebrated on the fourth Friday of Lent (this year it will fall on March 3rd). On that day, all through the afternoon, in the churches, in the streets, and in their homes, the people of Oaxaca will give out fruit waters in honor of the woman who gave water to Christ he carried the cross. Dozens of kinds of water will be made for the occasion, among them melon, lemon, papaya, watermelon, prickly pear fruit, tamarind (a kind of legume), chilacayota (which is made from a kind of pumpkin with molasses, lemon peel, and pineapple), and orchata (an unlikely mixture of rice, melon, almonds, and cinnamon).

### ETHNIC.....

asked a young man who came to the square in Nochixtlan with his wife and child, "Of what race are you?" and he answered proudly "We are Mixtecs; the Mixtec rule".

The members of his tribe devote themselves, among other things, to mining, jewelry and pearl fishing. It is said that they know of a plant that softens metals and makes it easy to mould them. In the Regional Museum of Oaxaca, there is a jewel made in one piece without solder, of two different metals joined together. In the tombs and palaces of Montalban, that were Zapotec and afterwards conquered by the Mixtecs various proofs of their culture have been found.

The Mixtec language, with its ten dialects, is harmonious and sweet sounding and with some resemblance to the Zapotec.

The first apostles of this race were Fray Benito Fernández and Fray Gonzalo Lucero. In Coixtlahuaca, in Tamaulapa and in Yanhuitlan there are beautiful baroque churches, worthy to be admired. That of Coaxtlahuaca is dated 1576.



**Indian from Santa María Tachixio in the State of Oaxaca.**

# Survival hints

Make plane/train/bus reservations well in advance. They can be cancelled if necessary. Reservation lists fill rapidly holiday seasons and Mexico has holidays that you never heard of before. There are many excellent travel agents around the Zocalo and in major hotels.

Plane/train/bus schedules and tickets in Mexico are written on a 24 hour clock. Non't do like I did and arrive 12 hours late - 7:00 is in the morning.

Xerox your passport ID page and your Mexican tourist card (look for a sign that says COPIAS) and use these copies when you need identification to cash travelers checks or pick up tickets. This way you can keep the originals in a safe place. You would not believe the red tape you face if you loose your papers.

Change can be a problem in Mexico. A 50,000 peso note may be a \$20 to you but don't expect the young woman selling eight oranges for 1,000 pesos to be able to change it. You'll do well if you start out with some smaller bills when you change money (ask for chicas). In the market make big purchases first in order to have some smaller change to buy things at the small stands. Plan ahead when traveling and have some small change for buying snacks out the window.

If you haven't learned this lesson yet - don't carry anything you don't care to loose in your back Pocket. And while we're talking about carrying things - canvas bags with a handle over the shoulder and clutched under your arm are not so secure as you might hope. We've heard a number of stories of those bags being sliced open with a razor and wallets removed from behind while the owner navigates a crowded market. The tip off is often a woman fumbling to block your path with dropped change or a similar guise. Why not do like Mexican women do and pin your cash in your bra?

# Saving long distance charges

Reach out and touch someone but think twice before doing it by long distance. Telmex, Mexico's government owned phone company, adds a steep surcharge to all calls outside the country, plus, your hotel may add another. Here's how to avoid being bankrupted by Ma Telmex.

1.- Call the U.S. during the discount hours (7 p.m. - 7 a.m. daily, all day Saturday, and midnight until 7 p.m. Sunday?).

2.- Call just long enough to give family or friends your hotel/apartment phone number and ask them to call you back at a pre-agreed time. Be sure to synchronize your watches to compensate for time zone differences. (Mexico's country code: 52; and Oaxaca's area code: 951).

3.- Call collect. Talk just long enough to give your phone number and ask them to

call you back. To call collect, dial 09 for the Internacional Operator. They speak English.

4.- The above steps apply if your room/home has a phone. If it doesn't, you're at the mercy of the caseta de larga distancia. Take plenty of extra pesos and time your call with your watch. One man didn't and he had to leave his Rollex as collateral while he rushed out to the Zocalo to cash a traveler's check. Caseta de larga distancias are found in farmacias and small grocery stores, indicated by "Larga Distancia" signs outside. Near the Zocalo, the most popular ones are located west at the corner of Hidalgo and 20 de Noviembre, south at Trujano 312 and east Guerrero 417. Hours are normally 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. but be aware that they usually close during lunch (2-4 p.m.) and all holidays.

## Village markets-Days and specialties

There are several villages outside of the city of Oaxaca, which are famous for their markets. Even if you do not intend to buy anything, just going to any of these villages can be a fascinating experience, as each village is unique and has something different to offer.

There are various ways to get to the villages. You can catch a bus at the second class bus station, which is located next to the Mercado de Abastos, or, you can take a Colectivo taxi for 1,000 - 3,000 pesos. (Collectivos are also located at the Mercado de Abastos). Every day of the week, there's a market in one or another of the nearby villages. The following is a partial list.

Monday: Miahuatlan, which is known for its leather and Mezcal.

Wednesday: ETLA, is known for its excellent meat and cheese.

San Pablo and San Pedro ETLA, both of these districts are known for their ceramics.

Thursday: Zaachila, known for its excellent meat.

Friday: Ocotlan, famous for its beautiful hand-made clothes.

Saturday: Oaxaca, where Mercado de Abastos is the largest market in Oaxaca.

Sunday: Tlacolula, known for its ceramics.



### OAXACA.....

#### LANGUAGES

Besides Spanish, there are over a dozen indigenous languages spoken in the state of Oaxaca. The most common are Zapotec, with seven dialects and Mixtec, with ten dialects. From these two tongues there seem to have been born seven languages so different that they cannot be called dialects at all; these are Mazatec, Popoloca, Trique, Cuicatec, Amizgo, Chatino, and Chinantec. There are also four other tongues of a quite different type the Zapotec/Mixtec group; these are mixe and Zoque which share some resemblance in their vocabularies and Chontal and Huave, both apparently of South American origin.



**Doña Rosa, demonstrating the making of pottery by hand without the use of a potter's wheel.**

# Cultural events for March

- March 1-13 Oaxaca Museum, first floor, gallery #2.  
M - F, 10 am to 2 pm, 6 pm to 8 pm.  
Exhibition of Popular Oaxacan Culture;  
"SIERRA JUAREZ - TAUHEUA'S CERAMICS"
- 1-6 Main Gallery.  
Exhibition of Cuban Art;  
"CARIBES 1989" by Juan Pablo Villar
- March 1-30 Rodolfo Nieto Gallery, Garcia Vigil #602.  
M-F, 10 am to 2 pm, 6 pm to 8 pm.  
Art show of the students of the Rufino Tamayo Works  
shops.
- March 1-31 Nundehui Planetarium, Fortin Hill.  
Tues. - Sat. at 10 am, 11 am, 12:30 pm, 5 pm, 6:30 pm,  
& 8 pm.  
Movie: "THE SOLAR SYSTEM"  
Admission: 500 pesos (250 with student ID)
- March 1-31 The Kiosk in the Zocalo,  
M, W, F, and Sat. at 7 pm.  
Musical performance; THE OAXACAN STATE  
MARIMBAS.  
  
Thues., Thur., & Sun. at 7 pm.  
Musical performance; THE OAXACAN STATE  
MUSICAL BAND.
- March 3 Ex-convent of Carmen Alto, Garcia Vigil #708.  
12 noon and 5 pm.  
TRADITIONAL SAMARITANA with the State  
Marimba Band.  
  
Marquesado, Jalatlaco, La Merced, and La Soledad  
Churches.  
Beginning at 12 noon.  
TRADITIONAL SAMARITANA.
- March 3,10  
& 17. Ocotlan de Morelos Village  
Lentón Spanish Market.
- March 3,10  
& 17. Paseo Juarez Park, 7 am.  
TRADITIONAL LENTON PROMINADE with the  
State Marimbas.
- March 5 Plaza de la Constitution, 12:30 pm.  
Musical performance; The State Marimba Band.
- March 5,12  
& 19. Benito Juarez University, Athletic Field, 3 pm.  
KITE FLYING CONTEST.
- March 8-31 - Oaxaca Museum, second floor, galleries 1-4.  
M - F, 10 am to 2 pm, 6 pm to 8 pm.  
Exhibition: "PROFILE OF MEXICO CITY" by  
Alberto Bellon.
- March 10-31 Galleries of the Rufino Tamayo Workshop, Murguía  
#306.  
M - F, 10 am to 2 pm, 6 am to 8 pm.  
Openinf March 10, 7 pm.  
"OILS AND ENGRAVINGS" by Fernando Alba  
Aldave.
- March 10 Etla Town, in the market, all day long.  
SPECIAL LENTON FRIDAY CELEBRATION.
- March 11 In front of the Cathedral, 7:00 pm.  
Musical performance; THE OAXACAN STATE  
MUSICAL BAND.
- March 14 Oaxaca Museum, 8:00 pm.  
Musical performance, BAROQUE FLUTES.
- March 15-31 Mexican Red Cross, Armenta y Lopez #700.  
All day long.  
Commercial and Handicrafts Exhibition.
- March 16-31 Oaxaca Museum, first floor, gallery #2.  
M - F 10 am to 2 pm, 6 pm to 8 pm.  
"DECORATED OBJECTS OF BRASS AND SIL-  
VER PLATE" by Aaron Velasco.
- March 16 Gallery Alfredo Canseco Feraud, Garcia Vigil # 620.  
5 pm.  
Show opening; SCULPTURES AND ETCHED  
GLASS.
- March 18 In front of the Cathedral, 7 pm.  
Musical performance; THE OAXACAN STATE  
MUSICAL BAND.
- March 19 Patio of the ex-convent of Carmen Alto, Garcia Vigil # 708.  
7 pm.  
Musical performance; THE PRIMAVERA  
ORCHESTRA.  
Admission free.
- March 19 Plaza de la Danza (in front of the Soledad Church)  
Musical Performance; THE OAXACAN STATE  
MUSICAL BAND.
- March 24 Soledad Church, 7 pm.  
A traditional ceremony in honor of the Madonna of  
Loneliness.
- March 30 Macedonio Alcalá Theater, Independencia and Armeta y  
Lopez.  
8 pm.  
Dance performance, Contemporary Dance.
- March 31 Maceconio Alcalá Theater, 7 pm.  
Music concert.  
8 pm. Contemporary Dance.

## Bienvenidos amigos

Welcome, reader, to the OAXACA, TIMES.  
Oaxaca, is a beautiful, clean, colonial  
city with friendly people and a nearly  
perfect climate. OAXACA TIMES aims to  
provide you, the English-speaking  
visitor, with valuable information which  
will enhance and enrich your stay. Write,  
call (6-34-43), or come by our office  
(Guerrero 311) with your tips and  
recommendations about Oaxaca. Our office  
is 2 1/2 blocks east of the Zocalo at the  
Institute of Communication and culture,  
A.C. Come by and get acquainted. But,  
above all, enjoy our beautiful Oaxaca.

Yolanda Garcia C.  
Publisher

## Enjoy learning SPANISH

### Instituto de Comunicación y Cultura, A.C.

Guerrero 311/ Ph 6-34-43  
(2 1/2 blocks from Zocalo)

Enroll  
Today!



311