



Free

# Oaxaca Times

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## DAYS OF THE DEATH



congregate in the evening, to recite the customary prayers. Expenses for these altars are paid by the community to which the saint belongs. The offerings, completed by mid-afternoon on november first, are very colorful. Family altars are composed of prints showing our lady of Guadalupe, San Martin Caballero, San Martin de Porres, and the Sacred Heart of Jesus, among others. In front of these pictures, flowers and a wide variety of foods are placed. On each of the four corners of the table, fresh sugar cane with foliage, is erected. The ones in the foreground form and arch decorated with flowers, mostly the bright yellow cepmpoalxuchitl. With this blossom, and others, known as pata de Leon, Nube, gdiola, cresta de gallo, borla de Santa Teresa and alcátraz flower bouquets are made in vases displayed on the table-or on the floor.

Fruits such as bananas, jicamas, nuts, peanuts, persimmons, apples, annonas, guayabas, limes, oranges and bananas are also put on the table. The foods included are generally plates with mole, chocolate, tortillas, pumpkin candy, tejocote apples in special syrup, glasses of water, mezcal, cigarette packs and matches are also included, as well, of course as candles in candlesticks, vigil lamps and censers, in which copal is burned, especially at night.

On the following day, when the celebration practically reaches its climax, two outstanding events take place: tombs of the departed are visited by their relatives, who decorated the graves with flower and lighted candles or vigil lamps and visits among relatives and friends are exchanged, in order to give each other products taken from the offerings.



Both birth and death, perhaps the most important events in the lives of all the inhabitants of the world, are celebrated according to the historical processes in which different cultures have been formed.

In Mexico the ceremonies performed on the Days of the Death acquire great significance at the beginning of november each year. All the preparations for the elaborate festivities are done in advance, in the month of October or even earlier. During these traditional celebrations, family ties become stronger and socioeconomic relationships are notably enhanced in the community at large and the family nucleus in particular.

### ALL SAINTS' DAY

The celebration of All Saints' Day starts on October thirty-first, when special market days are held in different communities

in the Valley. The inhabitants of Cuilapan journey to the tianguis in the city of Oaxaca or in Zaachila, since this commerce does not take place in their own community.

On October thirty-first, known as the "day of the little angels" the visit of the souls of deceased infants is "expected". Several candles, glasses of water, fruits and other products are placed on the family altar for them.

On the following day, November first, the more formal offering is laid out. Early in the morning the family altar is set up with the products purchased at the tianguis. The same is performed by different religious associations in the community, which proceed to decorate the altars of the images they are in charge of. As a rule, these figures of saints are kept in the home of each mayordomo, where all the members of each group

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# THE NIGHT OF THE DEATH



The reddish, waning sun of the first november sunset traces outlandish shadows on the cemetery's whitewashed walls in the graveyard. Silhouettes, distorted by a remarkable tableau of life and death. clusters of flowers, skulls, candles and mementos herald the "noche de muertos" the night of the death" or All Souls Day ,when the bereaved accompany their dear departed in a ritual where magic and religion are blended together in what is both a memorial ceremony and a festive occasion. Every visitor at this desolate spot has a mission to fulfill. First, the graves are swept and cleaned, the thistles removed and, perhaps, there is a certain feeling of chagrin at not doing this task more often than just once a year. The weeds are deposited wherever possible — usually on a neighboring grave, if it happens to be neglected. The now spotless tombstone is ready to be decorated. The type of decorations vary from one region to another although, for example, a prominently placed grave in a Oaxacan cemetery might display a photo or image of the deceased which may be quite unlike the departed when she or he was alive: wearing a broad smile, nattily dressed in his or her sunday best. Protected by a glass panel framed in wood

and tinsel and surrounded, in turn, by a plethora of decorations determined by the taste and pocketbook of the bereaved: tiny tissue paper banners in orange purple and black in a wide variety of designs, and, if there is a poet in the family, there might be a charming verse extolling the many virtues of the loved one. The finishing touches are provided by the fragrant, yellow cempasuchil flowers. The landscape is tinged with a purple and orange hue, the light from the candles and torches flickering in the distance. At daybreak, the spirits are finally banished and the cemetery is deserted once again. One by one the families take their leave, vowing to return soon.

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 "We only come to dream,  
 we only come to sleep;  
 It is not true, it is not true,  
 That we come to live on Earth."

"Where are we to go from here?  
 We came here only to be born,  
 As our home is beyond,  
 Where the fleshless abide."

"Perchance, does anyone really  
 live on Earth?  
 The Earth is not forever, but  
 just to remain for a short while."

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## HOW TO CHOOSE A LANGUAGE SCHOOL

In the wintertime there seem to be a lot of schools offering Spanish classes to foreigners. Beware ! many of these schools are out to make a fast money. low prices do not necessarily mean quality education.

When choosing a school, be sure to select one where teachers are university trained to teach Spanish as a second language.

In Mexico university degrees are very much a status symbol but having a degree in foreign affairs chemistry or anthropology does not qualify one to teach Spanish. The Institute of Communication and Culture meets all the requirements for quality education at a fair price. Please contact us at 6-3443 or visit our school at

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# TOURISTIC PRECAUTIONS

Welcome to the State of Oaxaca. You have chosen without doubt one of the most exciting tourist destination México has to offer. Oaxaca is famous for its charming people, its culture and colorful tradition. However a word of caution must be given. Like anywhere, if you act carelessly you'll probably end up crying on the shoulder of your consular representative, complaining bitterly. Take note and enjoy your vacation.

- 1.- Don't accept invitations lightly, however tempting they might appear.
- 2.- Don't deal, carry or consume any kind of drugs. Mexican jails are notoriously known to assure you the worst time of your life. Stay away from anyone who tries to sell drugs to you, those Zócalo boys, as they are known, are also informants. Dealing with that kind of persons is your first step into trouble.
- 3.- Don't leave valuables unattended. It takes only a second to turn your vacation into a nightmare. Make copies of your passport, visa and if you carry travelers cheques, keep a record of the numbers and report any loss as soon as possible.
- 4.- When confronted with an attempt of robbery, don't resist. Valuables can be replaced, not so your health.
- 5.- If taken to prison, don't despair. Insist of seeing your consular or your embassy representative. They will send someone over to see about your rights.
- 6.- Don't walk around the beaches during the evening, not even company. This goes especially for ladies. This is something you should not forget, ever. This is serious.
- 7.- Don't trespass on any property and by no means shoot pictures close to military installations or of persons who resent pictures taken.
- 8.- If you buy a good or hire a service, be sure that the product is in good condition and request a receipt or invoice for the payment of such service or good. The Procuraduría Federal del Consumidor (Federal Consumer's Protection Office) is the authority responsible to assist you if the product or service presents defaults. When it is a touristic service provided by hotels, travel agencies, car rentals, tourist guides or restaurants in touristic areas, the Tourism Secretariat is in charge of surveying the compliance of the services offered.

# BEYOND THE CITY

Attractions are listed according to their direction from Oaxaca.

**MONTE ALBAN:** 10 km. (6 mi) west, on an artificially flattened mountaintop. One of the most important archaeological sites in México. Large ceremonial plaza surrounded by the ruins of religious and public buildings. Small museum, cafeteria, shops. Tues-Sun. 8 am - 6 pm

**SANTA MARIA ATZOMPA:** (Or Atzompa) About 8 Km (4½ mi) northwest, a short distance off Hwy. 190. The village produces a green-glazed pottery and unglazed pottery figures.

Note: Here, and at other craft-oriented villages, stop at any home or shop that gives indications that the craft is practiced within, or simply ask the way to artisans' homes

**CUILAPAN DE GUERRERO:** About 14 km (9 mi) southwest on the Zaachila road. Contains what was once the Dominican Monastery of St. James the Apostle, begun in 1555 but never finished. Much of the structure stands roofless Daily 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

**ZAACHILA:** 5 km (3mi) beyond Cuilapan, Zaachila was the Zapotec capital when it fell to the Spanish in 1521 Little of the archaeological Zone has been explored, but a palace and 2 tombs can be visited. Daily 8 am 6 pm.

**SAN BARTOLO COYTEPEC:** (or Coyotepec) About 15 km (9½ mi) south, on Hwy. 175. The village is famous for its potters and their black pottery. Valente Nieto, the son of Doña Rosa, who is credited with having originated the black pottery, still practices the craft and gives demonstrations for visitors Fri. 9am-2pm.

**SANTO TOMAS JALIEZA:** About 10 km (6 mi) beyond Coyotepec, off Hwy. 175. A center for the weaving of cotton belts, sashes, table runners, place mats, and other items. The products are sold from a central location across from the village church.

**OCOTLAN DE MORELOS:** About 17 km (10 mi) beyond Coyotepec on Hwy. 175. Market town and the home of the Aguilar

- 9.- If you become victim of any incident during your stay in Mexico and require assistance, you can communicate with the Tourism Secretariat offices or call the "Hot Line" Emergency Telephonic Service 91(5) 250-0123 or 250-0151, which operates 24 hours, 365 days year, where you will receive information and assistance on how to solve your problem.

Family, producers of clay figures painted in bright colors.

**SANTA MARIA DEL TULE:** About 14 km (8½ mi) east-southeast of Oaxaca on Hwy. 190. Its main attraction is a gigantic Ahuehete; or Mexican cypress, in front of the village church. The tree is estimated to be about 2,000 years old.

**TLACOCHAHUAYA:** About 23 km (14 mi) east-southeast of Oaxaca, off Hwy. 190. Sixteenth-century Church of San Jerónimo, decorated by native artists,

**TEOTITLAN DEL VALLE:** 2 Km (1½ mi) beyond Tlacoachahuaya, about 3 km (2 mi) from the highway. Main wool weaving center of the area. Local crafts people produce ponchos, rugs, and tapestries in traditional and modern designs.

**LAMBITYECO ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE:** About 2 km (1½ mi) beyond the Teotitlan turnoff the site contains the ruins of various structures, including 2 tombs.

**TLACOLULA DE MATAMOROS:** About 6 km (3½ mi) beyond Lambityeco. Principal attraction is the 16th-century Church of Our Lord of Tlacolula.

**YAGUL ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE:** About 3 km (2 mi) farther along Hwy. 190 and 1½ km (1 mi) off the road. Large archaeological zone Includes a large ball court and the Palace of the Patios. Daily 8 a.m.-6 p.m.

**SAN PABLO VILLA DE MITLA:** (or Mitla) about 5 km (3 mi) beyond Yagul along Hwy. 190, Then 4 km (2½ mi) down a turnoff. A center for lightweight woolen and cotton weavings, which are sold in a large market area behind the church, and for the production of mezcal, an intoxicating drink distilled from the leaves or the maguey plant. Also in Mitla.

**MITLA ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE:** Remains of a large Zapotec population center that had been influenced by the Mixtec culture by the time of the Spanish conquest. Of several groups of ruins, the most interesting are the Group of the Columns across the street. Group of the Columns open daily 8:30 a.m.- 6 p.m.

Call your country's consular representative as well. Consult the phone book or the "Hot Line" Emergency Telephonic Service of the Tourism Secretariat.

# "ZAACHILA"

This site is quite different from others in Oaxaca. It is in fact the last Zapotec capital from which we know the names of a series of sovereigns. There is an immense, mostly unexplored pyramid in the center of the present town, to one side of the plaza where there is a series of large stones inscribed with figures and hieroglyphs.

In 1962 two interesting tombs were located within the mound. The entrance to the first tomb is decorated with two feline heads and the inside with seven figures modeled in stucco. Six are placed in pairs on the side walls.

In the antechamber there are representations of owls and two people with the 5 flower and 9 flower dates. At the back there is another figure whose head emerges from a serpent and whose body is covered by a turtle shell.

In the second tomb, also Mixtec there were gold objects consisting of rings, one of which was still on the ring finger of a left hand, beads, beautifully engraved discs, jade fan handles, and other objects. Zaachila: 20 Km. South of Oax. City. It was the capital of the



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### Application for Admission

Date \_\_\_\_\_ (month - day - year)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Permanent address \_\_\_\_\_ (city)

\_\_\_\_\_ (family) \_\_\_\_\_ (first) \_\_\_\_\_ (middle) \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: Male ( ) Female ( )

\_\_\_\_\_ (state) \_\_\_\_\_ (zip) \_\_\_\_\_ (country) \_\_\_\_\_ (telephone)

Marital Status: Married ( ) Single ( ) Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Native Language \_\_\_\_\_ Have you ever

Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_ Month \_\_\_\_\_ day \_\_\_\_\_ year \_\_\_\_\_

studied Spanish? \_\_\_\_\_ How long? \_\_\_\_\_ Where \_\_\_\_\_

Present knowledge of Spanish: ( ) none ( ) poor ( ) fair ( ) good

When do you plan to begin? \_\_\_\_\_ How long do you plan to study? \_\_\_\_\_

How did you find out about I.C.C. \_\_\_\_\_

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