



The Culture and Cuisine of Mexico



Summary

Join us on an extraordinary culinary journey to learn of Mexican culture through its culinary heritage. This unique cultural travel experience begins in Oaxaca, where the earliest pre-domesticated corn was found over 6,000 years ago. Known as "teosinte", this precursor to corn was domesticated by means of human engineering. Corn was the crop that provided the means for civilization to develop and flourish in Mesoamerica. Learn about the present-day threats to native corn varieties and travel to villages to make our own masa, tortillas and delicious tamales. In Oaxaca, enjoy a cooking class and learn to make simple and complex moles, so famous in the region. Travel to Puebla to learn of the regional delicacies such as red and green pipian, sopes de tinga, tamales de comino and more. Finally, in Mexico City, we visit the "chinampas" floating gardens and dine at Mexico City's finest contemporary Mexican restaurants. Join us!



Trip Includes:

- Accommodations
- Expert Guides and/or Academics
- Comfortable / Secure Transportation
- Welcome and Farewell Dinners
- Breakfasts
- Meals according to itinerary
- Water on Van/Coach
- Airport Transfers
- Entry Fees

Program Highlights

- Learning about Mesoamerica's first foods, namely CORN!
- Making home-made tamales and tlayudas in the Oaxaca community of Teotitlan del Valle.
- Exploring and making various types of mole sauces in Oaxaca, including the complex black mole and more simple yellow mole.
- Tasting and enjoying mezcal with charming Oaxaca Chef, Alejandro Ruiz of Casa Oaxaca.
- Traveling to Puebla to make pipian, a native pumpkin seed-based sauce and other regional dishes with Executive Chef, Alejandra de la Riva.
- Visiting local markets to encounter the vast variety of peppers, herbs, and other ingredients.
- Traveling by trajinera boats on the canals of Xochimilco to meet with innovative gardeners, dedicated to providing organic produce for area restaurants .
- Savoring contemporary Mexican cuisine prepared by extraordinary chefs, such as Enrique Olvera of Restaurante Pujol.



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Oaxaca: Welcome dinner, Los Pacos: Exploring moles (D)

Day 2: Mitla, Tlacolula, Teotitlan del Valle, Explore the Ancient Ruins of Mitla with Pablo Gonzalez, followed by a visit to the sprawling Sunday market at Tlacolula. We enjoy the day in Teotitlan del Valle, where Rafaela Ruiz, of the Centro de Artes Textiles Zapotecos, Bii Dauu, will show us what nixtamal is and she will lead us in preparing masa to make tamales de coloradito and tlayudas. (B,L)

Day 3: Introduction to Mesoamerican foods and Presentation on CORN: a.)Predomestication, b.)Domestication, c.) Veneration, d.)Legends and Myths, e.) Varieties, f.)Challenges and threats. We visit the Botanical Gardens, followed by lunch at Itanoni where we learn of efforts to preserve and revalue domestic corn varieties and to eat some delicious corn based delicacies. We enjoy a short walking tour, followed by time to explore the city independently. Enjoy an evening with Alejandro Ruiz, Casa Oaxaca, Exploring Chiles, Herbs, Cheeses and other surprises! Mezcal demo and tasting included! (B,L,D)

Day 4: Cooking with regional chef to create mole negro and mole amarillo sauce, followed by visit to Monte Alban. Our morning begins by going to the market to purchase our ingredients and begin our cooking lesson on how to make a complex and a simple mole. There are other culinary surprises in store or us, as we enjoy our afternoon "comida". We make a late afternoon visit to Mesoamerica's first urban center: Monte Alban, with Pablo Gonzalez. Evening is at leisure. (B,L)

Day 5: Transfer from Oaxaca to Puebla, Welcome to Puebla: regional Poblano appetizers presented by Alejandra de la Riva of Mural de los Poblanos: Enjoy a cooking class with Alejandra to receive instruction in the preparation of green and red pipian and other regional specialties. Following our cooking, we enjoy our meal with Alejandra and Luis Javier Cue de La Fuente, restaurant owner and lifetime "foodie". After lunch, we walk off our food by taking a brief walking city tour to learn of Puebla's history and see its highlights, including the Main Cathedral and the Temple of the Rosario. Later, we spend a fun and relaxed evening in the company of Jose Luis and Hector, the talented architects, designers and proprietors of Hotel El Sueno, where we will enjoy contemporary regional appetizers and innovative cocktails. We overnight at the dreamy, Hotel El Sueno. (B,L,D)

Day 6: Atlixco, Cholula, Transfer to Mexico City: Depart for Atlixco, a small community on the outskirts of Puebla, where we meet Armando who will treat us to the delicious regional tamales de comino and atole. We visit the local Convent and learn of other local points of interest in this town that lies at the foothills of the imposing Popocatepetl volcano. We pay a visit Porfirio to enjoy cecina and to learn of this tradition of processing thinly sliced and cured beef. Similar to beef jerky, cecina was how meats were cured and dried prior to refrigeration. Porfirio will fire up his charcoal grill for a sampling of delicious tacos! Moving to Cholula, we visit the indescribable regional churches of Tonantzintla and Acatepec, where we can see a fusion of prehispanic beliefs and catholic tradition. We visit a wonderful talavera workshop, Talavera Sta. Catarina, to learn about the tile tradition and process. From here, we visit the massive pyramid of Cholula, the largest pyramid in Mesoamerica, where we learn of the extended period of occupation and phases of Cholula. We have a light supper / buffet and one of Cholula's charming B&B's , before departing for Mexico City. (B,L,D)

Day 7: Zocalo and Mexico's Historic Center, Cooking with top Mexico Chef, Our day in Mexico City begins with getting our first impression of this metropolis by visiting the Zocalo, the largest city square in the Americas. It is here that we can see the clash of cultures that occurred in the 16th Century with the arrival of the Spaniards. We will see the ruins of Tenochtitlan the former capital city of the Aztecs and we spend some time reviewing the Diego Rivera mural cycles in the National Palace. From the Zocalo, we stroll through the Historic Center, arriving at the Palace of Fine Arts, to view spectacular murals of Rivera, Siqueiros, Orozco and Tamayo. We will spend the late afternoon/early evening with one of Mexico's leading chefs. (B,L,D)

Day 8: Museum of Anthropology, An evening with Enrique Olvera of Pujol: A national treasure, we visit the Museum of Anthropology, where we can see the artistic expressions of the Mesoamerican cultures depicting important gods of corn, water, sun. A very special treat is in store, as we are lead in an extraordinary culinary tasting event with master chef and culinary artist, Enrique Olvera. Here, we will experience innovative food creations that defy description. We enjoy a Mexican wine paring, as well. (B,D)

Day 9: Xochimilco, Dolores Olmedo, UNAM, Ricardo Munoz: Today, we travel to the southern region of Mexico City, to explore the ancient hydraulic and agricultural masterpiece of the Aztecs, the chinampas or floating gardens. This system allowed for agricultural production to be sustained in the middle of a lake! Today, innovative farmers are using this land to grow organic produce to supply area markets and restaurants; we visit some of these growers. From here, we visit the sprawling former Hacienda and home of the patroness of the arts, Dolores Olmedo, to see an important collection of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo masterpieces. Then, we visit the UNESCO Cultural Heritage site of the UNAM campus, the largest public university in the Americas. Here we see innovative artistic and architectural masterpieces of Juan O'Gorman, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and Diego Rivera. On campus, we are treated to an evening with Ricardo Munoz of Azul y Oro. (B,L,D)

Day 10: Depart



Transportation: Licensed, insured, comfortable and safe vans or coaches



Hotels: Centrally Located and Charming properties in Oaxaca, Puebla and Mexico City



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