



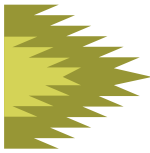
NIGHT OF THE RADISHES: CHRISTMAS IN OAXACA

FESTIVAL TOUR OF MEXICO

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NIGHT OF THE RADISHES: CHRISTMAS IN OAXACA

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Join us on an extraordinary journey to Oaxaca during this southern state's most festive and colorful time of the year. Highlighted by the quirky and one-of-a-kind Night of the Radishes, radish carving contest, we also enjoy the festive Christmas Posadas, where families go door to door in search of shelter, the Calenda Parade, where each neighborhood church decorates a float with angels, sheep, shepherds and more, and they circle twice around the Zocalo before celebrating mass at their respective locations. This journey also includes visits to fabulous local artisans, including weavers, potters, wood carvers and others. To top it off, we enjoy a cooking class where we will learn about Oaxaca's regional delicacies. Join us for this festive occasion!

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Witness the one of a kind, Night of the Radishes Radish Carving Contest.
- Participate in Posadas and Calenda Parades.
- Tour Oaxaca City and surrounding craft villages.
- Explore Ancient Zapotec Ruins of Monte Alban and Mitla.
- Take a Cooking Class to learn of Regional Cuisine.

LOCATION





ITINERARY

Day 1:

December 20: Arrive Oaxaca.

Arrive Oaxaca City, where you will be met at the airport and transferred to our favorite B & B in Oaxaca. Enjoy a welcome dinner at a Oaxaca favorite to explore the world of the famed mole sauces of Oaxaca! (D)

Day 2:

December 21: Oaxaca City Tour.

After breakfast, take a guided walking tour of Oaxaca, a UNESCO Cultural Heritage City, dating back to the 1530's. Highlights of our tour include: The Santo Domingo Church and the Museum of Oaxacan Culture, the bustling Benito Juarez Market, the lively central Zocalo and the lovely pedestrian street, García Virgil. Our "comida" is at the famed Marco Polo restaurant, known for its fresh wood fired fish which is brought in daily. The afternoon is free to explore many of Oaxaca's museums, including The Textile Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art and Art Galleries, Coops, Cafes, Bookstores and colorful dynamic markets. Or you can sit at the Zocalo and people watch or listen to the marimba players. (B, L)

Day 3:

December 22: Ancient Mitla, Tlacolula Sunday Market, Teotitlan del Valle

Today we travel in the Eastern Valley, beginning our day with a guided visit to Mitla, the post classic Zapotec and Mixtec site dedicated to the cult of the dead. We see the finely carved stone frets in various designs and configurations that express the Zapotec cosmology. Since today is Sunday, we'll visit a favorite weekly "tianguis" or market, in the town of Tlacolula. Here, we'll see villagers engaging in trade, much as they have for over 3000 years! We'll enjoy the sights, sounds and aromas of this vibrant market. Leaving Tlacolula, we travel to the weaving and dyeing community of Teotitlan del Valle, where we will visit with some of the master weavers and dyers of this community, to better understand their natural dye materials and processes, and their master weaving techniques. We will enjoy eating hand-made quesadillas and "Hayudas" on their lovely patio! (B, L)

Day 4:

December 23, Monte Alban and Night of the Radishes!

Today is dedicated to exploration of the first urban center (city) of Mesoamerica, Monte Alban. Mesoamerica is a cultural and geographic region that spans from NW Mexico to Central America. Great civilizations emerged and thrived in this region, among them, the Zapotec, who after the Olmec, were among the first cultural groups to develop into a civilization in this region. By civilization, this means they went beyond being nomadic hunter/gatherers and began to develop complex systems of religion, politics and commercial activity. Monte Alban was one of the first cities to develop in Mesoamerica. After we immerse ourselves in this early world, we come back to present day life and refresh ourselves in the on-site cafeteria and museum bookstore. Returning to Oaxaca City, we get in line to admire the fabulous radish carvings! (B, L)



ITINERARY

Day 5:

December 24: Cooking Class, Oaxaca City and Christmas Festivities!

A special treat is in store today, as we will be led in a wonderful cooking class to learn about Oaxaca's regional specialties, such as mole, squash blossoms, tamales and more. Our morning begins with savoring delicious high altitude coffee known as Pluma Hidalgo, from the Sierra Madre del Sur mountain range. From here, we walk to the small local market, to buy our ingredients for our multiple course meal. In the evening, we position ourselves around the now familiar Zocalo to witness the Calenda Parade, where approximately 20 area churches decorate a float carrying children who dress as angels, and Jesus and Mary. These floats and church members parade around the Zocalo before heading to their respective churches for midnight mass. (B, L)

Day 6:

December 25: Ocotlan and the Southern Craft Route, Holiday Dinner!

Today we travel into what is known, as the Southern Craft Route! We begin in the town of Ocotlan, where we'll visit the Rodolfo Morales Museum housed in a lovingly restored Dominican Convent. Oh, and it's market day in Ocotlan, so we will see the ancient "tianguis" market system in action. On the Southern Craft route, we'll visit numerous artisan communities, including: Jalieza, where cotton belts and bags and table runners are woven on backstrap looms; Tilcajete, to visit the famed wood animal carvers; and to Coyotepec, famous for its black pottery, produced by firing in oxygen reduced kilns. Tonight we'll enjoy a special Holiday Dinner together. (B, L, D)

Day 7:

December 26: Independent Exploring!

Our last day in Oaxaca is left open for us to continue as a group or independently to explore many of Oaxaca's museums, including The Textile Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art and Art Galleries, Coops, Café's, Bookstores and colorful dynamic markets. Or, we can sit at the Zocalo and watch people as they amble by, or listen to the marimba players. One thing for sure, we will enjoy a fabulous Farewell Dinner! (B, D)

Day 8:

Wednesday: December 27,

Depart from Oaxaca City or extend your stay in the region. Option Extension: Fly to Huatulco or Puerto Escondido! (B)