



Forest Stewards Guild Tour of Oaxaca, Mexico

PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

How we travel: It is our goal to take you beyond the standard sites visited by tourists and travelers and into the wonderful wilds of Mexico. As a result we will see things that other visitors seldom or never see, and in the process we will be subject to some jolting, dust and other wonders of adventure. We never go anywhere that doesn't have a decent hotel and good food, but these are not five star trips. They are much more interesting than that. We ask our participants to bring with them a willingness to get off the beaten track, a curiosity see the real world in its true and wondrous colors, and the patience to bear the occasional discomfort that that can imply.

Climate and Travel Conditions: This trip will be spent in the Oaxaca valleys, between 5,000-6,000 ft. And in the Sierra Norte between 7,000 -9,000 ft. We can expect cool to chilly evenings and clear, sunny days in the Oaxaca Valley. Temperatures during this time of year average highs of 75 – 90 degrees and lows of 40 – 50 degrees. October weather up in the Sierra Norte will be considerably colder than in Oaxaca, with cool days and very cold nights, with an average low of 41°F and high of 73°F. Rain is possible but unlikely.

We will be making trips by private van on paved or dirt roads in good condition. Most services are close at hand.

Getting Here and First Meeting: This trip begins and ends in Oaxaca City. There is no airport pickup. You will want to arrive in Oaxaca City no later than 6:00 p.m. on the first day of the tour. There are some direct flights to Oaxaca through Houston and many flights that connect through Mexico City. It is also worthwhile to check the websites of Mexican national airlines. Aeromexico, Volaris and Interjet sometimes have very good prices to Oaxaca and they are all good airlines. If you're feeling more adventurous, you can take the bus from Mexico City. Buses leave about every hour from TAPO bus station. First class is excellent, clean, and roomy. (6.5 hours, approx. \$35). A schedule can be found at www.ado.com.mx.

We will be meeting and spending our first night at **Hotel Un Sueño** on the first evening of the trip.

Getting to Hotel: From the airport, you can take a taxi for about \$15 US or a shared airport shuttle for about \$4US. These are the only transport options available at the airport and you will find a ticket booth for the taxis immediately upon leaving baggage claim. If you are arriving close to our first meeting time, take a private taxi because the airport shuttle is much slower.

Hotels: Tour price is based on double occupancy (shared rooms). Hotels are selected for local character, location, cleanliness and safety. In larger cities we use what are called 3 star hotels in Mexico. These are nice without being luxurious and cover all the basics. In smaller places we use the best of what is available. Overnights at the Sierra Norte will be in community run cabins or guest houses.

Select Overnight Hotel Information:

HOTEL UN SUEÑO, Valle de Huajes

OAXACA CITY

Faustino G. Olivera 203

Col. Centro, Oaxaca, OAX, 68070, México

<http://unsueno.com/ciudad/>

HOTEL DON CENOBIO

MITLA

Av. Juarez No. 3, Col Centro, 70430

San Pablo Villa de Mitla, Oax.

01 951 568 0330

<http://www.hoteldoncenobio.com/>

Departure: The trip ends in Oaxaca city the morning of the last scheduled day of the tour. You can plan your departure for any time on the final day, remembering that we will be out late the night before departure.

Extra time: In your journey we will be seeing and doing things that tourists never get to do, but you might also want to take some time to do what tourists do: see the ruins and golden churches, wander the museums, galleries and markets, stroll aimlessly in the amazing central park, visit the woodcarvers, weavers, tinkers, tanners, basket makers, hatters, peddlers, head for the quiet Pacific coast... We highly recommend making the most of your trip and scheduling some extra time here before or after your Forest Stewards Guild tour.

Dress: Some of the villages and homes we will be visiting are very traditional. As respectful guests, it is recommended that you dress conservatively. Leave the shorts, short skirts, sleeveless shirts, tank tops and tight fitting clothes for the beach or when we are in cities where it is less important. Bring comfortable walking shoes. A sun hat is recommended. October weather up in the Sierra Norte will be considerably colder than in Oaxaca, with cool days and very cold nights. Bring fleece vest or jacket, good socks and layered clothes.

Packing: We have limited storage space in our travel van. Please pack lightly. In addition to your main piece of luggage you will want to bring a day bag for carrying your water, camera, money, etc. When we are traveling, all our luggage goes on the roof rack and is not accessible until we get to the hotel in the evening. We have heard from tour participants over and over again that *it is wise to only pack half of what you selected to bring on the trip.* It is a common mistake to over-pack.

Noise: Bring ear plugs! Mexico is a noisy place and there is no way around it. Barking dogs, braying donkeys, blaring brass bands and revving diesel engines may keep you awake if you don't have earplugs.

Language: Knowledge of Spanish is not necessary, as a translator is always on hand. If you speak a little Spanish it will enhance your visit. Mexicans are extremely hospitable and patient. This is a great place to work on your Spanish.

Food and Vegetarian Meals: At our first meeting, we will make suggestions about which foods are safest and which are riskier, and let you know what we recommend to stay healthy during the tour. During our meals together, we will translate the menu for those who need it, and do our best to help you make good choices. We will recommend good, safe restaurants for those meals we do not eat together. Those of you who are vegetarian will not go hungry in Mexico, as there is an abundance of bean, cheese and egg dishes. Vegetarian clients on past trips have had no problem finding delicious meals to order.

Coffee!! Outside of Oaxaca City only traditional Oaxacan style coffee or Nescafe is available in the morning. Oaxacan style coffee, called café de olla, is very mild and sweet. For those of you who need a strong coffee to begin your day, we highly recommend bringing single cup coffee travel packets sold by Starbucks and many others. These can be added to a mug of hot water at breakfast and make you happy about being alive again.

Shopping?! On many of our tours we visit the homes of artisans. They enjoy your visit and are happy to show you how they work. They also make a living from selling their product and are thrilled if you purchase from them. Visiting artisans with us is not so different from open studio visits anywhere and there will be an opportunity to look at finished products in a "sales room". Enjoy! But please know that you needn't buy if you are not interested. We compensate all the artisans we visit and have long standing relationships with them. That said, if you have any inclination to buy, do. There is no "fair trade" fairer than buying directly from traditional artisans. And the income makes a real difference in their lives.

Polite Visitors. We visit many private homes on our tours. It sometimes happens that people who travel with us forget their manners or somehow think the private home is a museum. It is not; we are invited guests. We ask that you behave as you would visiting anyone's house. Please don't go off exploring the courtyards and

rooms, camera in hand. And remember the manners your mother taught you, greet people as you enter, say good bye as you depart.

Cash and Money exchange: Cash, in the form of Mexican Pesos, is the way to go here. Outside of banks, other currencies aren't accepted. The best way to get that cash, hands down, is using your debit card at ATM machines. These are found in the airport, and in most of the towns we overnight in and are open 24/7. They also give the best exchange rates you'll find anywhere. Few places take credit cards or traveler's checks, and no one will take a personal check.

Remember to contact your ATM's bank and your credit card company to let them know that you'll be traveling in Mexico so they do not freeze your card. It's a good idea to bring along a second ATM card as a back-up if you have one. PLEASE MAKE YOUR MONEY ARRANGEMENTS IN THE MORNING OR EVENING WHEN WE ARE NOT TRAVELING AS A GROUP SO THAT THE WHOLE GROUP DOESN'T NEED TO WAIT WHILE ONE PERSON GETS THE PESOS THEY NEED.

Passport Information: U.S. Citizens traveling to Mexico are required to carry a current passport, valid for three months after your reentry to the U.S. It is your responsibility to obtain proper documentation. If you are not a U.S. Citizen, contact the embassy, consulate or national airline of the country you are traveling to for entry requirements.

Visa Information: During your flight down or at Mexican Customs you will be given a Tourist Visa which is your permit to be in the country. DO NOT LOSE THIS. Make a photocopy of it and your passport. You must have the Tourist Visa to leave the country. You will automatically be given a Visa for at least 30 days and some times 180 days, the maximum amount of time you can stay on a Tourist Visa.

Health Concerns: Please read the Center for Disease Control's (<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/mexico/>) recommendations for travel in Mexico and consider consulting your doctor about your specific needs. The most common health issue in Mexico for tourists is traveler's diarrhea caused by microbes our guts are not accustomed to. Washing hands before meals is an excellent preventative measure and it is a good idea to bring hand wipes or no-water soap. We generally have pure water available in the van and bottled water is readily available in stores. Dehydration is a common problem with diarrhea. Gatorade is a decent rehydration drink and is available in Mexico. For a better quality rehydrant consider traveling with powdered Hydralite, see- www.gookinaid.com. If you are taking prescription medicine, bring your own supply. Bring an extra pair of glasses if you use them. In case of accident, injury, illness or theft, you may want to consider taking out travelers insurance if your policy doesn't cover such things.

Medical Requirements: Good physical and mental health are essential for the enjoyment of these rural workshops and trips. You may travel in rugged areas removed from modern medical facilities. Good physical conditioning is recommended as preparation for all trips. By forwarding the deposit and signed

Reservation Form, the passenger certifies that he/she does not have any physical or other condition of disability that would create a hazard for him/herself or other passengers. It is essential that any participant with a medical condition requiring regular treatment or which may be affected by moderate physical activity, high altitude, heat, cold, humidity, dust, other natural phenomenon, unsanitary conditions or particular foods, notifies Traditions Mexico and the trip leaders, in writing in advance of travel. Traditions Mexico assumes no liability for medical care nor for special dietary requirements. Participants may be required to furnish a doctor's statement of good health. The judgment of Traditions Mexico or the local operator or guide, shall make the ultimate determination of an individual trip participant's fitness to embark upon, or to continue a trip. All clients are required to complete a Traditions Mexico medical form. Medical circumstances will not be considered as exceptions to our cancellation policy. All participants must be covered by a current medical insurance policy applicable for overseas travel for the duration of their trip. Proof of coverage may be required.

Expenses Covered: Due to many factors beyond our control we reserve the right to change our prices without prior notice, even after you have signed up. This is extremely rare! We do our best to avoid increasing prices without advance notice. Normal price increases are not passed on to participants who have already advanced a deposit. Please check each tour to see what we cover specifically. Most often, our price covers double occupancy accommodations, entrance fees, transportation (once the tour has started) tour leaders and guides, permits, and meals as stated in our itineraries (Breakfast- B, Lunch- L, Dinner-D)

Costs not included in the price are some meals as noted in the trip itinerary, liquor, medical expenses, costs of hospitalization or evacuation, laundry, accommodations en route to the destination, visas, international airfares, non-meal oriented gratuities and insurance.

If a tour itinerary must be altered or extended due to road conditions, weather, medical emergency, lack of transportation, political or civil disputes, or other causes beyond our control, the associated costs including any non-recoverable costs are not included in the trip rates or refunds. In such circumstances it is your responsibility to pay directly for actual extra costs in the field (i.e. food, transport, accommodations, etc.). Carry credit or debit cards in case of changes, and please consider obtaining trip cancellation/interruption insurance.

Travel Insurance

We highly recommend that you purchase travel insurance. Unforeseen circumstances of just getting to a tour could cost you more than you were expecting. We get high scores for tours going according to plan but we do not cover all expenses in the event of a changed itinerary. You can review a variety of travel insurance programs online, such as at squaremouth.com. The following Insurance company has been recommended on Lonely Planet <https://www.worldnomads.com/travel-insurance/>

Liability Form

All Traditions Mexico travelers on group trips must sign a Liability Release Form. You will be asked to sign a copy of it on the first day of the tour. You must be in agreement with the terms of this form to travel on the tour.



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