



Educator's Express - Mexico Cultural Immersion in Oaxaca

Cultural immersion program (ten days)

Optional post-trip language and culture classes (one week)

Optional post-trip extension to Chiapas (two days)

Optional post post-trip extension to Palenque (two days)

Overview

This trip will be an immersive cultural experience and a wonderful opportunity for exchange and greater understanding between our teacher travelers and the people of Oaxaca and Chiapas.

We've included over half a dozen unique events that emphasize peer-to-peer social exchange and experiential learning for this educator only trip. See signature experiences below for details.

Signature Experiences

- Peer-to-peer educational exchange and picnic with local teachers from Oaxaca
- Visit to a local school in Oaxaca
- Share lodging and meals for five days with a middle class, local host family in Oaxaca
- Two education lectures to help teachers better understand their Mexican students in the US: 1) the educational system in Mexico and 2) emigration: its causes and consequences
- Teacher-teams 'Oaxaca icons' scavenger hunt
- Cultural myths vs. reality roundtable discussion and dinner
- Participate in a local fiesta (not guaranteed, but happens frequently)
- Visit to a natural cosmetics project to learn about conservation efforts in Huatulco
- Intimate group size - limited to a maximum of 12 educators (minimum 8)
- Superb extensions to Chiapas and Palenque or language and culture classes in Oaxaca

Thumbnail Itinerary

Saturday, June 18th (early evening)

You'll be met at the Oaxaca airport upon your evening arrival by Jim Kane and your local trip leader and your respective host families. We'll all meet for a welcome drink, introduce ourselves to each other and discuss the essentials of the days to come.

Lodging in Oaxaca will be with middle class host families. We will work with a limited number of families that speak some English (in some cases, their adult children speak English, but not the host 'parents'). By sharing lodging and meals with host families during our time in Oaxaca, we'll gain a real insider's perspective on daily living and culture.



Sunday, June 19th

After breakfast with your host family, we'll meet at our daily rendezvous point, the beautiful estate and language school of Lucero Topete, our local organizer in Oaxaca. We'll spend much of the day walking through this beautiful colonial city, taking in its plazas, churches, parks and markets.

This afternoon we'll have a seminar with Mr. Misael Vasquez, who works in the secretariat of public education for Oaxaca. He trains teachers in Oaxaca and will bring us insights into the Mexican educational system. Note: Misael will speak in Spanish, but our trip leader will translate both his discussion and teachers' comments and questions.

After Misael's lecture, we'll be joined by some English-speaking teachers for an informal social exchange and picnic on Lucero's shady estate grounds. (Meals today provided by host family, plus our afternoon picnic)

Monday, June 20th

This morning we'll visit Wilamette's sister school in Oaxaca. Although regular classes will have finished for the semester, we'll talk with some teachers and administrators.

Afternoon lecture at Lucero's estate on Mexican emigration in Oaxaca: its causes and consequences. (Meals and lodging with host families)

Tuesday, June 21st

We'll visit some of the diverse craft villages which surround Oaxaca, each one famous in its own right for locally produced pottery, textiles and 'alebrijes' (carved wooden fantasy creatures painted with incredible zest and imagination). We'll talk with some of our artist friends like Jacobo, a master sculptor, while learning about their artistic processes and watching them work.

The afternoon you'll be free to explore, shop or relax back in Oaxaca. (Meals today provided by host family or on your own)

Wednesday, June 22nd

After breakfast we'll drive to the archaeological wonder of Monte Alban. This Zapotec ceremonial center, which pre-dates the Mayan empire, is an awe inspiring site. Bring lots of sun-screen as these mountain-top ruins have plenty of sun and very little shade!

This afternoon we've arranged for a fun scavenger hunt, focusing on Oaxaca cultural icons. We'll form teams, photograph the results and of course, there'll be prizes! (Meals today provided by host family or on your own)



Thursday, June 23rd

We'll travel by private van south to Huatulco on the Pacific Coast. In addition to Huatulco's relaxing and beautiful beaches, there's another side to this story. Formerly a turtle hunting destination, many of Huatulco's inhabitants have had to seek other means of survival as turtle supplies drastically dwindled.

We'll visit one such project, a natural cosmetics company, which received start-up help from The Body Shop. We'll discuss Huatulco's promise and challenges with some residents. Lodging in 3-star hotel. (B, L)

Note: total driving time today is 5 hours.

Friday, June 24th

Today we'll enjoy the lovely bays of Huatulco by boat, stopping for a fresh seafood lunch. Lodging in 3-star accommodation in Huatulco (B, L)

Saturday, June 25th

We'll drive to Juchitan today and explore its local markets and local delicacies, including fish and perhaps iguana for the most adventurous. We'll discuss the myths vs. realities of this Zapotec city. This evening we'll have a celebration dinner and reflect on our experiences together. If possible, we'll share in a local celebration, Juchitan style. This depends in part on luck, but on many weekends there are celebrations for baptisms, weddings, etc. (B, L, D)

Sunday, June 26th

After breakfast, those that are ending the trip tomorrow will drive back to Oaxaca in our private van and get settled into a comfortable hotel. The rest of the day will be free to relax, with dinner on your own. (B)

Note: total driving time today is 5 hours.

Monday, June 27th

Pedro, our English speaking transport captain, will accompany you to the airport with Pascual, our driver, for your flights back to Mexico City and the US. (B)



Optional week of language and culture classes:

For those teachers who want to take Spanish language and culture classes after our ten day trip, we offer a great program. Teachers will participate in 4 hours of daily (Monday through Friday) language courses, plus 2 hours in the afternoon of optional culture classes such as dance, weaving, pottery and cooking. Participants will stay with local host families and receive three meals per day.

Optional extension to Chiapas (highly recommended):

Sunday, June 26th

We'll start the day driving from Juchitan, stopping along the route for a boat ride inside the dramatic gorges of Sumidero Canyon. After experiencing these beautiful canyons from the water, we'll continue through the fertile mountains of Chiapas to San Cristobal, arriving in the early evening. (B, L, D)

Note: total driving time today is 6 1/2 hours.

Monday, June 27th

Enjoy the colonial charms of San Cristobal with a guided morning walking tour. We'll take you to explore its markets and charming streets, plus we'll visit a hand-made paper cooperative where we'll see natural and recycled paper being made.

Enjoy the colonial charms of San Cristobal with a free afternoon to walk the city center, shop or just relax at a scenic café with a delicious cup of organic Chiapas coffee! (B)

Tuesday, June 28th

The nearby towns of San Juan Chamula and Zinacantan are fascinating for their strong indigenous culture and adherence to centuries old traditions. We'll spend the morning in these two communities, returning to San Cristobal for a last afternoon to shop, wander the narrow cobblestone streets or just relax.

Tonight we'll share a celebration dinner, reflecting on our experiences with great food and friends! (B, D)

Wednesday, June 29th

After breakfast and still digesting all the new memories swirling in our heads, we'll drive to Tuxtla Gutierrez in time for your flight to Mexico City and then home. (B)



Ground Costs for 10 days = \$1,350 per person (double occupancy)

Optional private/single room upgrade in the hotel portion of the 10 day trip = \$250

Optional week of language + culture classes, including home stay +3 meals/day = \$440

Optional post-trip extension to Chiapas = \$390 per person (double occupancy)

Optional post-post trip extension to Palenque = \$390 per person (double occupancy)

Included:

- Jim Kane, Culture Xplorers co-founder, will accompany the group during the 10-day trip
- An experienced, local guide/leader will be with the group for all organized activities
- Specialist day lecturers and/or local experts to give insights into the festivals and cultural celebrations we participate in
- All lodging - double occupancy in charming hotels (3 star equivalent) & host families
- Most meals as listed on the itinerary
- All in-country transportation (including private van, boat and taxi transport)
- All entry fees (museums, national parks, monuments, etc.)
- Travelers' insurance covering medical treatment and emergency evacuation up to \$500,000
- Airport pick-up and drop-off

Items not included and estimates:

- International airfare to/from Oaxaca, (or returning from Tuxtla Gutierrez or Villa Hermosa for those that take the optional extensions). Budget \$700
- A few meals that are not listed. This gives you the opportunity to explore on your own and indulge your individual tastes. Budget \$10/day
- International departure taxes at airport. Budget \$30
- If you are traveling alone and choose a single room, then add \$250 for the 10-day trip
- Trip cancellation and interruption insurance. This is optional but recommended. Speak with us about the details when booking.

Details:

- Max. travelers 12 (minimum 8)
- Length of trip - 10 days (plus optional extension to Chiapas and/or Palenque or a week of language and culture classes in Oaxaca)
- Activity Level - moderate 3 - 4 hours (total) of walking per day