



ANDEAN PATHS OAXACA-MEXICO JOURNEY ITINERARY

With Daniel Koupermann
April 19th – 28th, 2025

April 19th: Arrive at the Oaxaca Airport, transfer to our hotel

April 20th: Oaxaca is home to a vibrant culture and beautiful weather. It was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987. There are over 1,200 historic buildings, most of which are hundreds of years old. The mixing of Indigenous, Spanish, and contemporary Mexican influences are unique with impressive architecture, museums, markets, restaurants, shopping, and nightlife. Lovers of culture come here to indulge in the Mexico of Zapotec and colonial legend. Flowing through picturesque, yet tranquil streets, life pulsates with an unadulterated regional flavor. It has a year-round spring-like climate due to its location nestled in a fertile valley of the Sierra Madre Sur Mountains.

We will do a walking tour, visiting the historical downtown, wandering to take in the vibrant colors and historic architecture, and along the way sharing time with the locals in the Zocalo courtyard, the Santo Domingo temple, and the impressive and colorful



markets. We will have lunch at one of the local markets where the Oaxaca gastronomy flourishes.

April 21st: Monte Alban

In the morning we will visit the Monte Alban archeological site. It is 35 minutes outside of Oaxaca. Besides being one of the earliest cities of Mesoamerica, Monte Albán was important for nearly one thousand years as the pre-eminent Zapotec socio-political and economic center. Founded toward the end of the Middle Formative period at around 500 BC, by the Terminal Formative (100 BC – AD 200) Monte Albán had become the capital of a large-scale expansionist polity that dominated much of the Oaxacan highlands and interacted with other Mesoamerican regional states, such as Teotihuacan to the north (Paddock 1983; Marcus 1983).

The city lost its political preeminence by the end of the Late Classic (AD 500–750), and soon thereafter was largely abandoned. Small-scale reoccupation, opportunistic reuse of earlier structures and tombs, and ritual visitations marked the archaeological history of the site into the Colonial period.

It contains great plazas, truncated pyramids, a court for playing the ball game tlachtli, underground passageways, and about 170 tombs, the most elaborate yet uncovered in the Americas. The site is located on high ground, probably chosen for its defensibility.

During the first two phases of Monte Albán culture, temples and other structures were built with dressed stone. Zapotec occupation of the site may be dated with certainty by about the 1st century BCE. The beginning of

the third and most flourishing phase of Monte Albán corresponds to the Classic Period (300–900 CE). The influence of the Teotihuacán architectural style is quite evident; the zenith of the period was reached circa 500. During the ensuing fourth period, about which little is known, Monte Albán lost its political preeminence, and its structures began to decay. In the final phase, which lasted up to the Spanish conquest in the 16th century, the Mixtec inhabited the site; they reused some of the old Zapotec tombs, and the two cultures became fused.

April 22nd: Prehistoric Mitla Caves

Caves here have yielded evidence of the earliest plant domestication in North America, about 10,000 years ago, and other valuable details about the transition from hunting and gathering to agriculture over a period of several thousand years.

We will visit a complex of several caves one of them is used today by the locals to make offerings honoring their ancestors and relatives that have passed away. Other caves have some rupestrian art. Here we will offer an Amazon Tobacco ceremony that is like a guided meditation with the song of a ceremonial drum.

We will go back to Oaxaca to have lunch in a local restaurant. Short rest until 5:00 pm when we will go to a private home in town to visit a local healer. We will receive a traditional cleansing and participate in a Chocolate Temascal (sweat lodge) where instead of pouring water on the hot stones they will use chocolate diluted with water. Seeds from the *Theobroma cacao* L. (name of specie of cocoa) are the base for the production of the most important and widespread functional food in human history. The origin of cocoa dates back to more than





3000 years, and it was used for nutritional and medicinal purposes by the Mayan and Aztec civilizations

One of the general health attributes of cocoa is reduced risk of chronic diseases. Various health benefits of the cocoa compounds have been attributed to its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory potency, phenolic and flavonoid contents. The total antioxidant capacities of cocoa are higher than that of other phytochemical-rich foods. For instance, flavanol-rich cocoa consumption improves dermal blood flow, increases photo protection and contributes to the maintenance of skin health. It also can produce a mental relaxation and a light sensation of peace of mind.

We will go back to our hotel to rest and to enjoy the benefits of this ceremony.

April 23rd: The King of Matatlán Mescal Distillery then transfer to Santa Catarina Lachatao community.

The King of Matatlán Distillery began producing mescal in 1950. The Elders, originally from Santiago Matatlán transmitted for generations the traditions, culture, as well as the secrets, knowledge

and ideas of how to produce mescal. The King of Matatlán Distillery makes mescals from its own plantations, however, there are some agaves which are obtained from the mountains and cobbled areas that are difficult to access.

The Santiago Mateo family continues with the age-old tradition of producing mescal by hand, being the third generation and very proud of its mescal roots.

After this visit we will travel for 2 hours through the mountains of the Sierra Norte to the small local community of Santa Catarina Lachatao. This community is inhabited by Zapoteca descendants. We will spend 3 nights here in very simple and nice cabins.

Later in the evening a ceremony with the "holy children's" (psilocybin mushrooms) will be available for those would like to participate (optional). This evening will be a "night ceremony" experience. We will offer a "daytime" experience a day after tomorrow.

April 24th: Fire Ceremony

The people of the Lachatao community will offer us a fire ceremony under the Zapotec tradition. We will do an easy hike to Cerro Dragon Hill within the land of the community. At the top of the hill there is an altar for their fire ceremonies. The healers of the community will lead the ceremony. After the ceremony we will have a picnic offered by the community. We have a free afternoon to rest and meditate. Dinner in the community.

April 25th: After breakfast, in mid-morning, the community will offer us a temascal (sweat lodge) experience. Then in the afternoon we will have an opportunity for a second ceremony with the "holy children's" (optional). Dinner in the community.

April 26th: Lachatao to Puerto Escondido
From Lachatao to Oaxaca we will do a 2

hours ride, then we will take a new road for 3 hours to Puerto Escondido, which is located on Mexico's Pacific Coast in the state of Oaxaca. The climate is tropical and humid, with an average annual temperature of 28°C (82°F) and a rainy season in the summer. As the legend goes, pirates once kidnapped a young woman here. While they were docked in the bay, the woman managed to escape. They referred to her as "La Escondida" (The Hidden One), and looked for her every time they returned, to no avail. The name stuck, and it eventually became known as Bahía de la Escondida (Bay of the Hidden One). The port here was established around 1900 to ship coffee. There was no settlement here at that time due to a lack of potable water, which didn't appear until the 1930s, and with the water came the foundation of a new town.

There are plenty of beaches in Puerto Escondido that are great for chilling out. Playa Carrizalillo is a wonderful beach to visit. You'll have to walk down 167 steps to access the beach (and then back up again), but this stunning cove is worth it. Also you'll find two bays sitting right next to each other – Puerto Angelito and Playa Manzanillo. Both of these Puerto Escondido attractions are nice for relaxing and swimming.

Most cuisine is based on seafood and local plants, which include eleven species of banana, chocolate and coffee. We will have the afternoon to walk around the village. Dinner will be in a local restaurant.

April 27th: We will have a free day at Puerto Escondido to integrate all of our experiences, to rest and enjoy the beaches, and the charm of this picturesque fisherman village. We will offer different optional activities like boat rides for dolphin watching, horseback

riding, bird watching and more.

Our last night we will have a "light" ceremony, a Phosphorescence Ceremony with bioluminescence, a unique alchemy of ocean currents and water temperature which draws dinoflagellate plankton into the Manialtepec Lagoon. "Ancients believed bathing in phosphorescence gave them special energy and made them more youthful."

Back to town for our farewell dinner.

April 28th: Transfer to the airport to get our flight to Mexico City for international connections.

General Information:

Zapotec Middle American Indian population living in eastern and southern Oaxaca in southern Mexico.

The Zapotec culture varies according to habitat—mountain, valley, or coastal—and according to economy—subsistence, cash crop, or urban; and the language varies from pueblo to pueblo, existing in several mutually unintelligible dialects, better called distinct languages. In general, however, Zapotec society is oriented around central villages or towns and has an agricultural base. Staple crops are corn, beans, and squash; market crops such as coffee, wheat, and sugar cane are grown where the climate allows. Some hunting, fishing, and gathering of wild foods is also practiced. Agriculture is based on slash-and-burn clearing of land, and plow and oxen are used in cultivation. Crafts are still practiced in some areas; these are chiefly pottery, weaving, and palm-fiber weaving. Clothing ranges from traditional (particularly for women) to modern. Traditional dress for women consists of a long skirt, long overtunic (huipil), and a shawl or wrap around headpiece. Male dress, when not modern,

consists of wide, loose trousers, loose shirt, sometimes with pleats, sandals, and straw or wool hat. The religion of the Zapotec is Roman Catholic, but belief in pagan spirits, rituals, and myths persists, to some extent intermingled with Christianity. The *compadrazgo*, a system of ritual kinship established with Godparents, is important.

Mixtec Middle American Indian population living in the northern and western sections of the state of Oaxaca and in neighboring parts of the states of Guerrero and Puebla in southern Mexico. Historically the Mixtec possessed a high degree of civilization in Aztec and pre-Aztec times.

The modern Mixtec are primarily farmers who practice slash-and-burn cultivation and use the hoe and digging stick or oxen and the plow. Corn (maize), beans, and squash are the staple crops. Other subsistence activities are hunting, fishing, herding, gathering wild foods, and producing and selling items of woven palm fiber. Settlement patterns vary; there are central villages (which may be vacant except during fiestas or market days, with the families living on their farms most of the time), and there are dispersed villages with family groups living scattered over the countryside.

Weaving (of cloth and palm fiber), ceramics and Alebrijes (woodcarving figures) are common crafts. Dress is largely traditional or semi traditional. Men wear a white cotton shirt and trousers, straw hat, and sandals. Women wear a wraparound skirt, a long tunic (huipil), and a shawl (rebozo). Women generally are barefoot and may go without the huipil, nude above the waist, in the coastal areas.

Although nominally Christian, most Mixtec believe in an assortment of pre-Christian spirits and deities, and in some areas they worship stone idols representing the rain

god. Hills, caves, streams, springs, and swamps may also be sacred. Agricultural rituals and the harvest feast are important, and *curanderos* (shaman-healers) are common. Christian fiestas and masses for patron saints are also cele

Price per person:

\$3,870 per person (double occupancy)

Single Occupancy an extra of \$1,590

A deposit of \$1000 will reserve your space.

Second payment of \$1,380 is due January 15th 2025.

The balance of \$1,000 is due March 15th 2025.

Reservations: All reservations are subject to availability. For information about how to reserve your space and make your deposit for the journey, please contact Linda Leyerle at lleyerle@aol.com. In Mexico it is not possible to reserve rooms, flights, etc. without a copy of the traveler's passport. Linda will give you details about how to send a copy to us. Time is of the essence so please respond as soon as possible if you are interested in this journey.

Cost includes: Air ticket from Puerto Escondido to Mexico city, private tour bus or van for travel during the journey, entrance fees, all meals, hotels, tips for restaurants and hotels, water during meals, temascal (sweat lodge) ceremonies, one of the two holy children's ceremony, Daniel Koupermann assistance during the journey.

Cost does NOT include: Roundtrip airfare to Oaxaca, and back from Mexico city, soft drinks and alcoholic beverages, one of the two holy children's ceremony \$120, tips for the local guides, and tip for private bus driver, personal items, souvenirs.

Please be aware that internet and other communications will not be available in Lachatao community.

This journey is for individuals ready to have an educational/experiential experience. People with physical or psychiatric challenges may find this journey too difficult or uncomfortable.

We recommend a visit with your doctor at least 6 weeks in advance of departure. No immunizations are required unless you will be entering Mexico from a country with Yellow Fever – in which case you will need a Yellow Fever immunization certificate and be prepared to show proof.

No visas are required for most people entering Mexico (US, Canadian, UK, EU, Australia and New Zealand citizens). If you have questions about this, please let Linda know. **Your passport must be valid at least 6 months after the date of your departure from Mexico (28th October, 2025).**

Once you have reserved your space, we will send you more information – packing lists, info about the country, etc. You will be fully prepared for the journey. Also, Linda is always available by email for any questions or concerns – whatever they may be.

Cancellations & Refunds: Due to availability of space on our journey and the time required to process trip reservations **payments will not be refundable after January 15th, 2025.**

We highly recommend purchasing travel insurance in order to protect yourself in case extenuating circumstances force you to cancel your trip. There are many different options available on-line.

Responsibilities: ANDEAN PATHS reserves the right to accept or reject any person as a participant at any time, and to make changes in the itinerary whenever deemed necessary for the comfort, convenience, and safety of our participants, and to cancel a journey at any time. In the event a journey is cancelled, ANDEAN PATHS shall have no responsibility beyond the refund of monies paid to it by program participants as listed. By registering, the participant agrees that neither ANDEAN PATHS nor their affiliates shall be liable for any damages, loss or expense occasioned by any act or omission by any supplier providing services to any program participant. Reasons that Andean Paths might cancel a program include, but are not limited to, issues around safety due to impassable roads, protests in Ecuador, or similar unforeseen events.

We are available to address any questions, concerns or comments.

By Andean Paths ©