

DAY OF THE DEAD, Oaxaca, Mexico: A Celebration of Life!

Oct 30th – Nov 7th, 2010

Trip Leaders: Sheri Rosenthal & HeatherAsh Amara

Of all the grand colonial cities in Mexico, Oaxaca is certainly the shining jewel. On this amazing week long journey, we'll celebrate one of the most beloved Mexican holidays – *The Day of the Dead* – in Mexico's most beautiful culinary and artisan center. Here we will practice the old shamanistic technique of Dreaming in the Toltec tradition, using the energies here to stir the flow of creative juices within us!



Artists of the Spirit

It's commonly thought that the greatest fear humans experience is that of death. The way that Mexico embraces both life and death reminds us of the truth: *the biggest fear humans possess is the fear of living life boldly and audaciously, free of judgment and pain.* During our week together we'll learn how to enjoy life as it is – to cultivate our joy and vitality and explore our manifestation as true "Artists of the Spirit."

Indeed, becoming a supreme artist of the spirit involves creating from the heart, not from a mind filled with fear-based beliefs about what we can and cannot do. Here we learn how to connect with the feeling of joy deep in our souls and to use that feeling to guide us in our lives. By the end of this spiritual journey with Sheri Rosenthal and HeatherAsh you'll have the tools to re-create your reality and to face your greatest fear – expressing your life with integrity, honesty, fearlessness and joy.

El Día de los Muertos

We are truly blessed to have lodging in Oaxaca for the very special holiday of The Day of the Dead (El Día de los Muertos or All Souls' Day). The city buzzes with energy as family and friends together to pray for and remember those beloved friends and family members who have passed away. On Day of the Dead, families build private altars honoring the deceased using sugar skulls, marigolds, the favorite foods and beverages of the departed, along with a festive visit to their graves!

Build your Altar

Fun and sacred ceremony are the order of the day on this journey! This week we'll have the opportunity to join a local family, celebrate in the Xoxocotlan graveyard and create your own altar to those you love (or even an old version of yourself, a relationship that has ended, or to someone you would like to forgive). For many people the process of building their altar is a profound, deeply moving experience. And – we'll also visit the sacred ruins of Monte Alban and much, much more! Many of the power places of the Zapotec and Mixtec peoples were built over by the Spanish who were attempting to eliminate old traditions, but you can still feel the energy of old in these beautiful churches and sacred sites!

Itinerary for the Day of the Dead – A Celebration of Life!

Day 1 – October 30th (-/-/-)



We leave home and meet in Oaxaca, Mexico. Oaxaca is one of the TOP TEN “world’s best cities,” and NUMBER ONE in Mexico/Central and the South American region, based on “sights, culture/arts, restaurants/food, people, shopping, value” – according to TRAVEL+LEISURE magazine issue August 2004. Most of us will be arriving around 6:30 pm and we'll meet our wonderful guide at the airport and proceed to

the **Hotel Casa del Sotano** – our beautiful B&B for the week. The smell of great food in the air – we'll go for a bite to eat at one of the delicious restaurants overlooking the main plaza/zocalo. Perhaps we will try the chapulines (crispy grasshoppers fried in garlic and lime)! After dinner we gather as a group and share our intent for our week together. Hotel Casa del Sotano is rated #3 out of 98 hotels in Oaxaca on [Trip Advisor.com](https://www.tripadvisor.com)

Day 2 – October 31st (-/L/-/S)

This is the day we go to the market to get everything we need to create our altars! We'll dedicate the entire morning to visiting the amazing “**Day of the Dead Tianguis**” at the Abastos Market. It's so photogenic seeing the piles of unique breads, sugar skulls, flowers, candles and all the Day of the Dead ornaments that local families purchase to make their home altars to their loved ones. Everyone will buy their breads, special skeletons, candles, flowers, and food for our Day of Dead Altar that our group will make at the hotel.

After the altar shopping is completed we will enjoy a group lunch at the fabulous restaurant Asador Vasco, overlooking the main plaza, and then we'll go back to the hotel to create our own altars then rest to get ready for the late evening/night wake to receive the departed!



The most popular graveyard is in the village of **Xoxocotlan**. This evening, we will meet at 7:00 p.m. to go to a nearby town to be hosted for hot chocolate and DOD tamales & bread with the Hernandez family. We will accompany them to their local cemetery to take part in the yearly celebration of the arrival of the "Angelitos." It will be wonderful to help them clean & decorate one of their families graves. We'll bring along a gift for allowing us to join them: flowers, incense, candles, etc and also leave a donation. Overnight Hotel Casa del Sotano

Day 3 – November 1st (-/L/-)

Today we explore **Monte Albán**, one of ancient México's most impressive ceremonial centers. This massive complex of pyramids, terraces and crumbling temples is considered one of the most important examples of pre-Columbian culture in all of México. Constructed by a culture that possessed a genius for building, this spectacular city is one of the most thoroughly explored archaeological sites in México. Throughout the centuries Monte Albán has continued to amaze those who study the site and has never failed to remain both magical and mysterious. Monte Alban sits 1200 feet above the valley floor. This location gave the residents a clear view of the Oaxaca valleys. The city was constructed by the Zapotecs who first moved to this site around 500 B.C. The



city experienced its peak or golden age for a period of 500 years, ending around A.D. 600. We'll have time to meditate at the site and have a ceremony at this powerful ruin.

From here we can have some lunch at the traditional restaurant Los Caporales and the village of **Soledad Etla** to take part in the **Comparsa Parade**. The Comparsas – are a series of Carnival style parades that go from village to village in an area of the valley. The people will be all dressed up with fantastic outfits and brass bands accompany them

and it's very festive.

If we have time we might visit the artisan town of **Atzompa**. Atzompa is where the green-glazed pottery is produced. It is incredibly beautiful and is in use daily all over México, and other parts of the world. We may stop by the “La Casa del Artesano” and see how these beautiful terracotta and green



glazed items are made following ancient, ancestral techniques. We can also drive back to the San Miguel Cemetery as this evening 10,000 candles are lit as judges walk through to select the winners of the Oaxacan annual contest of Day of the Dead Altars and Sand Carpets. Overnight Hotel Casa del Sotano

Day 4 – November 2nd (-/-/-)

Today we have a chance to explore the city of Oaxaca, enjoy the shopping, crafts, stores and people. No visit is complete without exploring the Santo Domingo church — one of the great monastery-church compounds of Mexico, seat of the Dominican order in Oaxaca since the 16th century and now the only residence out of the more than 40 that existed originally. The dignified exterior leads one to expect something quiet and dignified inside but you can only gasp at the incredible sight of the whole interior of the church covered in gleaming decoration. Aldous Huxley described it as “one of the most extravagantly gorgeous churches in the world”. Today is also a great day for catching up on shopping in this amazing artisans town. Overnight Hotel Casa del Sotano

Day 5 – November 3rd (-/L/-)

Today we visit the XVI century **convent of Cuilapan de Guerrero** & wood carving village



of **San Martin Tilcajete**. This Dominican ex-convent of Santiago Apóstol was left unfinished sometime in the middle of the 16th century, but the cloister, walls, cupola and foundations of what was supposed to be an enormous church remains.

Afterwards, we'll stop at the traditional village of San Martin Tilcajete to see the traditional

wood carvers of the famous **Alebrijes**. Alebrijes, are imaginary, fantasy animals, and many other objects that are carved out of a local wood named copal. These imaginative carvings come in all shapes, sizes and are usually brightly colored with intricate designs, all painted by hand. Here we'll be hosted for a traditional lunch by a family of wood carvers.

On our way back we'll stop to see the making of the famed black pottery of the village of **San Bartolo Coyotepec**, where we will first visit the famed potter Carlo Magno Pedro who specializes in Day of the Dead Art. Then we'll visit the home of Sofia & Simón Reyes, a family with many generations of making traditional ollas and they will give a demo of their traditional work. Overnight Hotel Casa del Sotano

Day 6 – November 4th (-/-/D)

Today we'll be traveling east of the city to visit the Tule tree and to move on to our new home at Casa Sagrada in the Zapotec weaver's town of Teotitlan del Valle. Even if you're not especially interested in trees, this one will blow you away. **The Tule tree, "El Arbol del Tule"** is said to be the world's largest tree, and once you see this magnificent natural wonder you will not doubt this claim. The Tule tree is 170 ft round, 41 meters tall, weighs over 500 tons and is over 2000 years old. We will do our best to make time to lunch at El Patio today, with its breathtaking view of the mountains where we will enjoy valley Zapotec cooking, perhaps starting with Consome Xochitl, typical botanas and cazuelas including mole negro Oaxaqueño, followed by Café de Olla and Oaxacan dessert. Of course, no Oaxacan lunch would be complete without some excellent regional Mezcal served in a jarrito verde de Atzompa.

Teotitlán is a traditional Zapotec village, **famous for the intricate woven rugs** produced here. The rugs and other items are all hand-loomed out of wool. Designs vary from traditional to contemporary. Natural dyes made from indigo, insects, different types of mosses, sea snails, and other earthly sources are still commonly used. There are shops on the small main street devoted to selling the local products. If you really like these rugs (you will), do a little searching and find the homes of the weavers where you can privately browse through the inventory. If you get on friendly terms with the weaver you will probably be able to strike a better deal than in the local stores. Overnight [Casa Sagrada](#)

Day 7 – November 5th (B/L/D)

From the terraces of Casa Sagrada, you can see **Guia Betz, the sacred mountain** that



overlooks Teotitlan. This morning you will challenge yourself by participating in this guided hike to the top of the sacred peak. The panoramic views of the valley and the high Sierras are worth every step! We will create a beautiful ceremony on the mountain top and enjoy the quiet, peace and serenity of this sacred place. Then in the afternoon we'll have time to rest, journal and commune with the land and each other. This evening we just might be ready to have a Salsa dancing class and celebrate our joy together! Overnight [Casa Sagrada](#)

Day 8 – November 6th (B/L/D)

After breakfast we are off to our cooking class from around 9:00am to 2:00pm. Hummm, will we be making one of Oaxaca's seven moles (MO-lays), organic salads, or perhaps chiles filled with traditional ingredients? Whatever we make – we will be eating it and thoroughly enjoying ourselves!

After lunch we'll visit the beautiful sacred ruins of Yagul and Mitla IF we have time. The **Yagul** archaeological site was settled at approximately the same time as Monte Albán, but actually outlasted Monte Albán. The site, which is located on a beautiful hillside location, contains three distinct parts and houses the largest ball court in the Oaxaca valley. Yagul contains some incredible facades, engravings and hieroglyphics. This site is easily accessible and makes for some great photography, especially from the hill above the ruins. To top the day off, we'll visit the famous "Cuevita/Cave" where all locals claim their origin and bring offerings for the past 3,000 years. We'll have time to meditate at the site and have a ceremony at this ruin.

(In ancient times **Mitla** was an important Zapotec ceremonial center and home of the Zapotec priestly class. It was inhabited from around 100 AD to its peak around 750 AD. The ancient city was probably planned and is known for the artistic quality of construction and the beauty of the intricate patterns and designs of some facades and tombs. To date, five large architectural complexes have been found. The main church of the small town was actually built by the Spaniards on some of the ruins.) Overnight [Casa](#)

[Sagrada](#)



Day 9 – November 7th (B/-/-)

Today we leave our beautiful bed & breakfast hotel and make our way back to the airport and get ready for our flights home. We say our last goodbyes, hugs and kisses as we prepare to take our new dream of heaven back to our lives!

Important Information for the Day of the Dead Spiritual Journey

There are so many sacred places to experience in Oaxaca and we're so excited to share them all with you! We'll do our best to enjoy the food and art in this #1 rated culinary city! Your heart will surely melt in this fabulous place, totally fed by the magic and energy of this land. We'll be staying in both the city of Oaxaca (5 nights), and in the Zapotec village of Teotitlan (3 nights) which is world famous for its hand loomed rug weaving (be prepared to take a few home)!



The state of Oaxaca is located in the south of Mexico and straddles the Sierra Madre mountain ranges. Deep valleys and majestic peaks characterize this geographically challenging state. Ranging from tropical beaches to alpine mountains, Oaxaca's micro-climates are unique among the world's ecosystems. **Oaxaca is culturally fascinating with many diverse native ethnic groups and rich craft traditions** and as a result, the city of Oaxaca has been declared a Cultural Patrimony of the World by UNESCO.

What's Included:

- Five lunches, three dinners, three breakfasts, one late night graveyard snack
- All spiritual teachings, ceremonies, and classes
- All admission fees to the ruins of Monte Alban, the Tule Tree, Mitla &/or Yagul & the convent of Cuilapan de Guerrero
- Guided hike up the sacred mountain
- Your wonderful guides
- All tips for the drivers, guides, and bell-boys
- All ground transportation (unless you fly in or out of Oaxaca and miss the group transport)
- Trips to the artisan towns of San Martin Tilcajete, San Bartolo Coyotepec & Teotitlan del Valle
- Our Day of the Day experience at the cemetery and market!
- A Salsa Dancing class
- A cooking class – learn to cook a traditional Oaxacan dish!
- Creating an altar

****Remember** – you are in one of the culinary capitals of Mexico! We did not include all the meals so that you would have an opportunity to sample the foods you would like to try and enjoy! **Trust us** – this is the way to go. ******

What's Not-Included:

- Daily breakfast is not-included but FYI: the Continental Breakfast at the hotel is 70.00 pesos per person (around \$5.50 USD) which includes: coffee or tea, juice or fruit, bread, jam and butter or you can have the American Breakfast which is 90.00 pesos per person (around \$6.80 USD) which includes: coffee or tea, juice or fruit, bread, jam, butter, eggs or hot cakes (you can also eat at another nearby restaurant).
- Figure that you'll be purchasing supplies for your altar (around \$10.00-\$15.00 USD).
- Tips for the maids are not-included (we suggest you plan on leaving \$1.00 USD per person per day).
- Your roundtrip air flight to Oaxaca is not-included in the cost of the journey, nor are spa services, or souvenir shopping.

Day of the Dead Trip Costs

The 2010 trip cost is: \$2465.00 USD per person double occupancy. If you desire a single room, the cost is an additional \$275.00 USD per person (these rooms are limited). A deposit of \$700.00 USD with your trip registration forms is preferred by: August 15th, 2010. Final payment is due: September 15th, 2010.

Want to Join Us?



Give us a ring at 727-421-0849 (or register on the website) – we can't wait to hear from you! This is a profound and heartfelt trip – meant to connect you with your inner divine consciousness. Our intention is for you to become the highest expression of Spirit and light that you can be!