



OAXACA Pilgrimage To The Heart

Details & Information

TRIP FLOW

As our departure gets closer and you orient to the trip, please consult the [trip web page](#) for all of the details and to start to feel the energy! Oaxaca natives will guide our experiences, and our translator is a lovely, just-turned-40-year-old woman named Ainsley, an artist from Australia who has lived in Oaxaca for years. Ainsley will join us for our afternoon opening circle on Saturday 20 January at our hotel and will be with us every day of the trip.

LOCATION

“**Oaxaca**” refers to both the city where we will stay and the state, which is located in the southeast of Mexico and is bordered by the Pacific Ocean on the south. Most of our time in the city will be spent in the **Centro**, the historic portion of the larger city. We will venture into the mountains of Oaxaca state both for day trips and for two nights, staying in a village called **Lachatao**.

You will sometimes see Oaxaca called “Oaxaca de Juárez.” “De Juárez” honors **Benito Juárez**, a native son who had begun his legal and political career here and who served as president of Mexico from 1858 until his death in 1872. (We will be able to see his house in the Centro!)

WEATHER

The climate is **subtropical**. In January in Oaxaca town you can expect temperatures varying between 47 degrees (in mornings and evenings) and 81 in the middle of the day. The internet says 0 days of rain in January, and I didn’t experience any moisture at all last year at the same time.

When we stay in the mountain village of Lachatao, the temperature falls to 41-75 degrees.

LANGUAGE / CULTURE

Oaxaca is the most ethnically and linguistically diverse state in Mexico, with 16 ethnic groups living there. There are more speakers of indigenous languages in the state of Oaxaca than in any other state in Mexico.

The largest groups in Oaxaca state are the **Zapotecs** and **Mixtecs**. Since the whole area was colonized by the Spaniards, Spanish is widely spoken, and many people in the villages also speak their native tongues.

It’s great that some of you speak Spanish! I found that most people in markets, shops and restaurants do

not speak English fluently, which thrilled me but may cause others anxiety for those times that we are on our own in the Centro. If you don't speak Spanish and have cell service there, you can use [Google translate](#). I personally dislike having my phone attached to my hand when I travel, so I just ordered the [Lonely Planet Mexican Spanish phrasebook and dictionary](#). Dialects vary with every country, but any general Spanish will help you get by, and people really appreciate our efforts to communicate in their language. We can even learn some words in the Zapotec language(s) spoken in the villages we visit.

TIME ZONE

Central Standard Time (GMT-6), one hour behind New York and two hours ahead of California.

CURRENCY AND MONEY

Mexican peso, which ironically is written as **\$MXN**. As of the end of December 2023, one Mexican peso = 0.058 US dollars. For example, 100 pesos = \$5.85.

Tourist shops and many restaurants take credit cards. At smaller establishments in the city, and outside of the city, we may have to pay cash. Our guide Ainsley can advise us on this during our opening circle. As far as I know, credit card companies no longer require you to let them know when you will be traveling, though I sometimes do anyway – just to be sure I won't get stuck with a credit card being refused.

There are a few ATMs in the Centro. Please let your bank know you'll be in Mexico and ensure you'll be able to take out cash from an ATM there. Some banks have worldwide affiliations and thus don't charge a fee for affiliated ATMs, but many do charge a little fee. Ask your financial institution and/or google for more information.

I usually get some local currency from AAA before departure. The exchange rate from them isn't great, but then I know I will have some cash when I arrive. I always advise against assuming you will be able to change money at the airport upon arrival, not only because the exchange rate tends to be abysmal, but because we also don't know if the office will be open or whether an ATM there will be working.

TIPPING

The general rule is **15-20%**. Ainsley will tell us at the opening circle in which instances it is customary to tip and which not. I am playing with the idea of a **tip kitty**, where everyone gives me (or Ainsley) the minimum amount to give to our guides, and then any of us can always choose to add a few pesos if we feel the service has gone above and beyond.

CELL PHONES + WIFI

Call your carrier to see if your plan covers calling and/or texting from Mexico and/or receiving calls there. This part of traveling is NOT my specialty, so if anyone is willing to advise the group on this, please let us know!

Our hotel in Oaxaca does offer free calls to the US, and there is WiFi in every room.

ELECTRICITY

Mexico has the same outlets as the US. However, if one prong on a plug is bigger than the other, you may need an adapter. This is another area where my head spins, so please click the link for more info!

WATER

Apparently even locals don't drink the water in Oaxaca. The hotel will provide us with **garrafón**, large water jugs from which we can take water. **Please bring a reusable water bottle or two.** [These](#) are my favorite bottles - I have the original kind - which are plastic but BPA free and produced with a net zero carbon footprint. I love them because they are *light* for traveling – although stainless steel water bottles are also fantastic, just heavier.

TRANSPORT FROM AIRPORT

I am planning to pay for and send a taxi to the airport for you when you arrive, so please let me know when you'll be arriving so I can schedule that for you. It may get complicated if flights are delayed – but you can always text me and I can do my best to alter arrangements. If your flight is delayed and we are unable to get a driver to pick you up, please grab a taxi from the airport queue and I will reimburse you.

COVID AND OTHER ILLNESS

There are no more regulations regarding COVID or need to carry immunization cards. I encourage you to **bring some masks and a test or two** just in case you start to have symptoms. I'd love for us to care for each other by wearing a mask if we feel unwell - at least when we are in close quarters in a vehicle. I still wear a mask on the plane in the fall and winter to protect from any illnesses circulating at this time of year!

PACKING LIST*

Comfortable clothing in layers - to keep you happy in temperatures between 41 and 81 degrees F

Lightweight clothing that will offer protection from the sun

Slightly warmer clothing for mornings and evenings in town - and possibly a **light down jacket** for the mountains (if you get cold like I do)

We won't need fancy clothes, but feel free to bring fun clothing for dinners out in the Centro

Hat to keep sun off face

Comfortable **shoes** for walking

Last year I wore both sneakers and walking sandals, plus my very light [booties](#) when I felt like “dressing up” for dinner. The villages outside the city can be dusty, so sneakers would be best on those days.

Bathing suit for the magical pond at permaculture haven Tierra del Sol

Sunscreen for any exposed skin

Mosquito repellent? (though I didn't encounter any mosquitoes last January at the same time)

Medications in their original bottles

Toiletries (though you should be able to get some there if needed)

Reusable **water bottle(s)**

Electronic devices, with charging cords and adapter if necessary

JOURNAL if you like - *for reflection on the outer and inner journeys*

*I'm wondering about co-creating a document for people to share their favorite travel clothing and accessories, as I always love to see what others love. If you want to share some links, please send to me and I will put them here!