

Optional 2-4 day delegation to Oaxaca

January 21-24, 2008

Tentative Itinerary

Day One:

8:00 to 9:00 a.m. Morning indigenous blessing

We will make our way up from the city center of Oaxaca to the outskirts of the ancient city of Monte Alban. This was the center of the Zapotec empire in the 9th and 10th centuries and was taken over by the famous Mixtec king Ocho Venado in the early 11th century. It is the site of the discovery of the treasure filled “Tomb 7” by Alfonso Caso in the 1940’s. Carmelina Santiago Alonso, a Zapotec leader and director of the human rights organization, Flor y Canto, will lead us in a morning blessing among the small temples on the outskirts of the main archeological site.

10:00 a.m.— The Fundacion Comunitaria Oaxaca will lead an excursion of two indigenous based projects from the Mixe Sierra.

11:30 am Perspective Juvenil

The first stop will be Santa Maria Yacochi, Tlahuitoltepec in the Mixe Sierra to visit the organization “Perspectiva Juvenil” which began in 2003 in Santa Maria Yacochi, Tlahuitoltepec of the Mixe zone. This group is dedicated to organic horticulture in a community greenhouse. The products, principally tomatoes, are generated for self consumption and local sale.

2:30-4:00 pm – Project “Despertar Mixe”:

The organization “Despertar Mixe” consists of indigenous women and men from the community of Santa Maria Yacochi, Tlahuitoltepec of the Mixe zone. The men are in charge of maintaining the trout farm and the women keep the restaurant going.

4-6:30pm: Travel back to Oaxaca City.

Return to Oaxaca City dinner: Talk by Marcos Leyva, Director and co-founder of EDUCA

Services for an Alternative Education. Formed in the mid 1990’s EDUCA has worked primarily in indigenous communities working with indigenous leaders to promote governing under the traditional indigenous system of “usos y costumbres”. Oaxaca is the only state in Mexico that authorizes by constitution the return of indigenous communities to their original town meeting type democracies. EDUCA has been in the forefront in trying to hone this legislation into working models in indigenous communities. It also played a significant role in the democratization movement of the Peoples Popular Assembly of Oaxaca (APPO) during the 2006 protests.

Day Two:

8:00 A.M. –Site Visits to Sierra Norte by Union of Organizations of the Sierra Juarez of Oaxaca (UNOSJO)

We take an hour and a half drive up into the beautiful pine-forested high country of the Sierra Norte to Ixtlan de Juarez and the center of the Union of Organizations of the Sierra Juarez of Oaxaca (UNOSJO) established in 1990 by 26 indigenous and campesino organizations of the Sierra Juarez. They work in defending forests from illegal logging, defending indigenous land rights and led the studies that revealed contamination of native corns with genetically modified corn. The area is the birthplace of former president and national hero, Benito Juarez.

2:00 p.m.--Back to Oaxaca City for lunch

3:30 P.M. –Visit Centeotl

Drive 45 minutes through the Central Valleys to the town of Zimatlan, home of Centeotl. The organization is an example of what an indigenous community can do to revitalize an economy and conscientize itself for the future. The organization works with children and adults to promote ecological restoration of the community, sustainable agriculture and a return to cultivation of such miracle grains as amaranth. They have started successful small industries such as one that processes amaranth and sells amaranth products as well as a highly successful micro lending program involving thousands of campesino women.

7:00 p.m.--Return to Oaxaca City dinner.

Day Three:

9:00 A.M. Sightseeing.

A visit to the striking colonial church of Santo Domingo and the beautiful, and sophisticated museum of Oaxacan indigenous and colonial history that is attached to the church. If time and interest are on our side, we can do a visit to the botanical gardens behind the church which houses a great number of the cacti and native plants of Oaxaca, one of the areas with the greatest biodiversity left in the world.
11:30 Leave to drive up the mountain to the archeological site of Monte Alban, perched on an impressive mesa above the central valleys. Lunch at 2:00 at the archeological site restaurant.

3:30 P.M. Return to city center for a presentation by Carmelina Santiago Alonso of Flor y Canto

Carmelina will present on the human rights situation of present day Oaxaca especially as it relates to women. Flor y Canto has been one of the major organizations involved in defending those illegally detained and tortured during these months of protest in Oaxaca.

Evening free to explore downtown colonial Oaxaca.

Day Four:

8:00 a.m.— Ñuu Savi, the people of the land of the clouds

The cultural, historical, and economic distance from Oaxaca City to the fields of the Mixteca Alta is much like that from New York City to Oaxaca. To know the everyday reality of indigenous campesinos we will leave at 8:00 A.M. and journey up the mountains to the land of the Ñuu Savi, the people of the land of the clouds. Once the center of the largest indigenous kingdom south of Mexico City and an unequalled center of art and culture, the Mixteca Alta is home to the only people in the Americas with 1000 years of written history extant in its exquisite codices.

It is also one of the most eroded and poorest areas of Mexico. Yet, stimulated by a small group of Mixtec indigenous campesinos who in the early eighties formed CEDICAM, The Center for Integral Campesino Development of the Mixteca, the area has become a model of ecological restoration and sustainable agriculture that has restored thousands of acres of seemingly unrestorable land to native forests, planting 4 to 5 million trees in the last 15 years. We will visit the ancient capital of the Mixtec empire at Santiago Tilantongo, visit the water catchment and aquifer recharging projects of CEDICAM and witness how they are confronting the devastating effects of free trade with sustainable resource use, agroecological projects to promote soil fertility, and cooperative marketing projects to retake local markets lost to low prices, subsidized competition, and junk foods. From an environmental and economic perspective these campesinos may be developing the agriculture of the future.

7:30 p.m.--Dinner

Note: The itinerary above is tentative and is subject to change.

Costs per person (in US dollars), based on a maximum of 12 participants and minimum of 8, due to transportation limit of 12 people per van. Costs include, transportation to site visits, contribution to organizations visited, translation services, hotel and meals.

(Cost does not include airfare to Oaxaca, tips, dinners, other personal expenses.)

Total per person:

For 2 day trip (3 nights) : \$450.00 (USD)

For 4 day trip (5 nights) : \$650.00 (USD)

*****Please refer to the following dates to arrange your travel plans:***

Departure from Queretaro to Oaxaca: 12 noon on Jan 20th.

Departure from Oaxaca:

For 2 day trip, plan to depart by January 23rd

For 4 day trip plan to depart by January 25th