

Call of the Wild

Adventure Travel for Women since 1978



OAXACA: THE HEART OF MEXICO **October 25-November 3, 2008**

Rating: Easy

Group Size Limit: 14

Trip Leader: Carole Latimer

Accommodations: 9 nights lodging at B&B in Oaxaca

Cost: \$2,995; Reservation Deposit \$500. Balance due 3 months before start date of trip.

Please note: Price subject to change until your deposit is received

Located high in a fertile valley 300 miles southeast of Mexico City, Oaxaca, is a World Heritage Site and one of the most colorful cities in Mexico – with the added bonus of a lovely climate year round.

People from all over the world go to Oaxaca for the Day of the Dead, a rite of mourning that blends Catholic and indigenous traditions. It is a time when the living and the dead joyfully greet each other again for a short while. Altars for departed loved ones are set up with flowers and food, and families visit their graves. Our wonderful guide, native Oaxacan Nora Guterrez, personalizes this holiday and brings us into her family to celebrate and understand the spirit of *El Dia De Los Muertos*.

Oaxaca is also renowned for its quality arts and crafts, pyramids and ruins, and local markets. A highlight of our trip is our tour of the Monte Alban ruins, which provides an historical glimpse into Mesoamerica civilization dating all the way back to 500 BC. Beautiful creations from master rug weavers may be purchased in the Zapotec village of Teotitlan. We'll visit the workshops of the Aguilar sisters, well-known for their folk-art ceramics. We'll also make crafts visits to artisans making the fanciful and brilliantly painted wooden figures known as alebrije.

We'll tour the city's Colonial architecture, shop at the vibrant regional market, visit art and archeology, museums and monasteries, and dine out at excellent restaurants. There will be time for reading and relaxing in our lovely B&B, and people-watching on the zócalo.

Day 1, Thursday, October 25 ~ Arrival in Oaxaca

You will take a taxi/van from Oaxaca's small airport to our lodging at La Casa de Mis Recuerdos Bed and Breakfast, 508 Pino Suarez. (We'll reimburse you for your airport transfer to the B&B).

For those arriving on earlier flights we'll enjoy dinner out together; if you are arriving on a later flight, we'll have light snacks set out for you in your room.

Day 2, Friday, October 26 ~ Ocotlan Market, Crafts Tour and Visit to Pottery Artisans

On today's excursion to the colorful market town of Ocotlan in the Oaxaca Valley, we will visit the home of Rudolfo Morales, an internationally celebrated, locally-born artist who has dedicated his fortune to restoring churches and other public buildings in his home town. We'll also visit the ceramic shops of the famous Aguilar sisters with their wonderful folk art figures, and visit embroidery artists. We'll also check out the fabulous Ocotlan Market. After lunch at Tilcagete, it's on to the home of Jacoba, the famous woodcarver of San Martín Ticajete. You will be able to purchase wood carvings directly from the crafts people. Dinner out in Oaxaca. (*Breakfast*)

Day 3, Saturday, October 27 ~ Get to know Oaxaca, Visit the Regional Museum, People-watch on the Zocolo

After a fine breakfast at the B&B, we'll have an orientation meeting in the courtyard, then visit the regional museum and the beautiful Iglesia de Santo Domingo. At 1:30 PM we'll go to lunch at the popular La Olla restaurant for their *comida corrida* lunch, then you can continue exploring the area or do as the *Oxacaenos* do and take a siesta or just relax in the inner courtyard of our B&B. At 4 PM, after the heat of the day, Nora will take us on a tour of the city. We'll visit the ancient aqueduct and the old barrio, check out bookstores, unusual shops, galleries, the local open markets, and many *artesanía* shops and markets. Our tour will end at the Zocalo, where we can enjoy, music, people-watching and a fine dinner. (*Breakfast, Lunch*)

Day 4, Sunday, October 28 ~ Food Market, Cooking Chocolate Mole with Nora

Today our guide Nora will take us on a food tour at the Merced market. Oaxaca is famous for its seven moles, and we will be preparing Black Mole, which is traditional for Day of the Dead. Together we'll go to the Merced Market and learn about and buy the ingredients for black mole; of special interest is the fresh ground chocolate made from Nora's beloved grandmother's recipe. At 4 PM (or earlier), we'll join Nora on the patio of our B&B. It is a lovely setting for our class. Here we can relax and unwind and enjoy cooking this special holiday meal together. After our dinner is prepared we'll sit down and enjoy our feast together. (*Breakfast, Dinner*)

Day 5, Monday, October 29 ~ Tours of Monte Albán ruins and town of Atzompa

After breakfast we will depart for the ruins of Monte Albán, believed by many experts to have been the Americas' earliest metropolis. It ranks among Mesoamerica's most regal and spectacular ancient cities. Visitors to the ruins will enjoy a panoramic view of the Valley of Oaxaca. The ruins of Monte Alban provide an historical glimpse into Mesoamerican life dating all the way back to 500 BC. Monte Alban was the ancient capital of the Zapotecs. It was here that economic, political and ideological culture took shape for this mountainous region. Serving as a ceremonial center, Monte Alban structures include the Great Plaza, Ball Court, the Palace and a tomb, where treasures were uncovered in 1932. Mesoamerica is one of six birthplaces for early civilization in the world. Besides the Zapotec, other Mesoamerica people include Mayans and Aztecs. After Mt. Alban, we will go for a crafts visit in the village of Atzompa to the studio of a famous woman artist who makes gorgeous angels. Then we'll go to the village crafts store where you'll see much of Atzompa's famous green pottery. You can also purchase clay bells,

candle holders of all sizes, plates, flower pots, vases, and much, much more, all for bargain prices. Dinner out. (*Breakfast*)

Day 6, Tuesday, October 30 ~ Free Day for Exploring Oaxaca's Markets, Museums, & Galleries -- or Take an Optional Tour of the Ruins of Yagul and Mitla in the Oaxaca Valley

Today is a free day with time for taking it easy or visiting the city's many art galleries, churches and museums. There are many wonderful shopping opportunities in Oaxaca, from artisan carpets to clothes, jewelry and art. You could even take in an event at Oaxaca's famous historic theatre this evening. Alternatively, for those who want to tour more ruins, we can arrange a tour of the ancient Zapotec and Mixtec ruins of Yagul and Mitla. The two sites share architectural details such as the greca fretwork and the size and complexity of buildings. Yagul's ball court is the second largest in Mesoamerica. There's an optional hike to the hilltop for a magnificent view of the entire valley. From the pastoral surroundings of Yagul, you can then go to the nearby ruins of Mitla. Virtually anywhere archeologists dig within the present town they hit remains of the myriad ancient dwellings, plazas and tombs that connected the still-visible landmarks. Dinner at a regional restaurant. (*Breakfast*)

Day 7, Wednesday, October 31 ~ Morning Altar, Cemetery Visit at Night

This is the day when families prepare altars in their home with special bread, sugar skeletons, skulls made from honey and sesame seeds, and flowers and offerings with favorite possessions of the deceased. The main arch of the altar is made out of sugar cane, then candles are placed, and last, but not least, photographs of those who have passed away are displayed. Colorful flowers are placed on the altar, especially marigolds, which are believed to guide the spirits of loved ones home. We are invited to participate with Nora's family in remembering their family and our loved ones as well. You may bring a photo of someone you love who has passed on and your photos will be placed alongside those of Nora's family members. In the evening we will visit one of Oaxaca's cemeteries, where we will see families gathered around the graves of loved ones with tall beeswax candles lighting up the cemetery. This is more of a joyous occasion than a solemn ceremony. Children are playing, the families have brought favorite foods of their departed loved ones and happy memories and feelings of being with departed loved ones again are prominent. Return to our B&B about 10 PM. (*Breakfast, Light Evening Meal*)

Day 8, Thursday, November 1 ~ Visit Master Rug Weavers in Teotitlan, Day of the Dead Procession and Party in Oaxaca

Today we will visit the famous Zapotec rug weaving town of Teotitlan. We will visit the working studio of the Vasquez family. This family was among the first to bring back the ancestral methods of extracting dyes from plants and insects, and their lovely rugs are works of art. You will have the opportunity to purchase these gorgeous creations. We will tour the town and church of Teotitlan. At 3 PM today the town church bells begin to ring to welcome the departed souls returning, and all the doors in the town are thrown open to admit them. We will visit the home and altar of the Vasquez family and pay our respects to their family. We'll then join them in their authentic traditional Zapotec meal on this day: tasty little tamales, mezcal, and other delicious foods.

This evening in Oaxaca the partying aspect of the Day of the Dead gets under way with people dressing in costumes as skeletons, devils and more. The masks are fantastic and hilarious! Neighborhoods host a traveling play performance and people follow the actors in a procession as

they go from home to home, with the party atmosphere building to dancing in the streets to live bands. This is a fun and friendly party with lots of laughing at the play and hilarity in the streets as young and old join together in the fun and dancing goes on into the night. (*Breakfast, Late Lunch*)

Day 9, Friday, November 2 ~ Free Day

This is our last day in Oaxaca and today you can explore Oaxaca City on your own, make any last minute purchases, or relax in the courtyard of Mis Recuerdos. You might choose to shop at one of the many open markets in Oaxaca, especially the Mercado Juárez, which covers the entire square block just south of the zócalo. You could also shop at the Mujeres Artesanías de las Regiones de Oaxaca (MARO). Here a remarkable all-Oaxaca grass-roots movement of women artisans sell their goods and demonstrate their manufacturing techniques. We'll gather back at Mis Recuerdos before going out for our farewell dinner. (*Breakfast*)

Day 10, Saturday, November 3 ~ Travel Day, Return Home

After breakfast, we'll transfer to the airport and fly home. (*Breakfast*)

Note: Itinerary subject to change at leader's discretion due to weather and other contingencies.

WHAT YOUR TRIP INCLUDES:

- Experienced leadership, local bilingual guides
- Nine nights lodging (double-occupancy rooms or triple apartments) at B&B, with all breakfasts included
- Ground transportation and airport transfers
- Excellent food (provided meals are noted on itinerary)
- Cooking class with Nora Guterrez
- Tour of Mt. Alban and crafts visits
- Entrance fees for scheduled museum visits
- Fees for scheduled Day of the Dead activities

NOT INCLUDED:

- Air transportation to and from Oaxaca City
- Restaurant meals not noted as included on itinerary
- Personal gear (see equipment mailed in your registration packet)
- Optional tips for your guides

About tipping: People on our trips often ask us about gratuities, so here are some guidelines: If Carole Latimer is leading your trip she, as the owner of the business, does not accept tips—but Nora and the other guides do. In Mexico, each person usually tips \$2-\$5 per day for each guide depending on the level of service and the number of guides assigned to the trip. Your guides take care of many extra details to give you a safe and fun trip. Tips at the end of the trip are a way of showing your special appreciation if you feel that your guides have given very good service to you.

DAILY ACTIVITY AND MILEAGE OPTIONS

Day 1 ~ Travel Day

Day 2 ~ Get to know Oaxaca, visit regional museum

Day 3 ~ Ocotlan market, crafts tour, visit pottery artisans

Day 4 ~ Food market, cooking with our hostess
Day 5 ~ Tour Monte Alban ruins, town of Atzompa
Day 6 ~ Free day or optional tour of Yagul, Mitla ruins
Day 7 ~ Altar ceremony, night cemetery visit
Day 8 ~ Artisan tour of rug weavers in Teotitlan, Day of the Dead procession
Day 9 ~ Free day to people watch or visit market
Day 10 ~ Travel Day

HOW TO REGISTER

First, call us or fill out our quick reservation form on our website <http://www.callwild.com/quickreserv.htm> We will hold your space for 7 days while you are completing the application process, making travel arrangements, and mailing your deposit check. *Next*, send in completed and signed Trip Application. The Trip Application is available by fax, mail, or from our Web site at www.callwild.com/trip_application.htm After receiving your deposit and application, we will send you confirmation of your reservation and an information packet on your trip.

TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE

We strongly suggest that you take out trip cancellation insurance. Call of the Wild does not issue cash refunds, whatever circumstances may cause a cancellation. Depending on the time of your cancellation, you may or may not be eligible for a credit for another trip; please read our refund and cancellation policy at www.callwild.com/jointrip.htm We also include a copy in our trip packets; or you may phone our office. You may be committed to going on your trip, but people have been forced to cancel due to circumstances beyond their control or because of a completely unexpected misfortune. To sign up for Travel Guard insurance call us for a brochure or visit www.callwild.com/travelguard.htm For certain coverage, you must purchase insurance within 14 days of making your initial deposit with Call of the Wild.

Please Note: Call of the Wild provides Travel Guard insurance brochures and a link to their website for your convenience, but there are many other travel insurance companies. It is your responsibility to know the restrictions and provisions of your policy.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE PLANNING

Please plan your arrival in Oaxaca for Thursday, October 25, and your departure for Saturday, November 3. Many flights arrive in Oaxaca late in the evening. If you wish to arrive early or stay later, we can help make arrangement with the B& B, but please be advised that Day of the Dead is the busiest holiday of the year in Oaxaca and all reservations must be made far in advance.

AIR TRAVEL AGENT

For air travel, please contact Wendy Fazio at Skyline Travel 510-530-1100 or e-mail wendyatskyline@aol.com . Let her know that you are traveling with Call of the Wild.

ACCOMMODATIONS

La Casa de Mis Recuerdos epitomizes the gracious charm that brings travelers to Oaxaca. From the moment you enter the tranquil courtyard, you will find yourself immersed in a world of fountains, flower-covered walls, tiled balconies, bougainvillea, hibiscus and lilies. Adding to the blizzard of color in the courtyard are many birds, including canaries and parrots. The bedrooms

are classic Oaxacan: pastel colors, tiled floors, full of character and refined. The tasteful décor is enhanced by local handicrafts.

QUALIFICATIONS

Call of the Wild trips are designed for flexible, energetic people who like to be active and have a spirit of adventure. We expect trip participants to be in good physical condition, and willing to undergo the potential hardships of international travel. You must have your own health insurance. Our best trips are those where everyone is equipped with a positive attitude, the sensitivity to recognize the needs of the group, and a sense of humor!

GUIDES AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Call of the Wild guides have extensive wilderness and travel experience and bring proven leadership to your trip. We pride ourselves on giving women safe opportunities to venture out and do something that perhaps they've never done before. Call of the Wild guides are certified Wilderness First Responders and they'll go the extra mile to make you feel at home in what may be an unfamiliar environment to you. Our guides in Mexico are bi-lingual and have been leading tours for many years. **If you have any concerns about your health or safety at any time during the trip, please inform the trip leader.**

WEATHER

Oaxaca has a lovely climate year round. Temperatures should be in the 60s and 70s. Rainfall is strongly seasonal with most rain occurring in summer and early fall. Rain tapers off in October.

WATER

Our B&B in Oaxaca provides our rooms with some purified bottled water, but you will probably want to purchase more at the nearby grocery store on the corner. For more information on water, see **General Information for Travelers in Oaxaca**, which is sent out after you sign up for the trip.

ABOUT THE FOOD PROVIDED ON THIS TRIP

Breakfasts at the B&B will be tropical fruits, pastries, eggs and assorted traditional dishes, complimented by hot chocolate made straight from the best ground cocoa beans or delicious coffee made to order from home roasted beans. We will sample some of Oaxaca's wonderful restaurants for dinners. And of course one night we will get to dine on the fabulous traditional black mole prepared by ourselves with the instruction of Nora Guterrez.

Please note that while we can certainly accommodate vegetarians we can't accommodate every individual food preference, and can't make separate meals or bring different provisions for individual diets. Special diet foods such as protein supplements, lacto, or non-wheat alternatives may not be available. Therefore, if you have food allergies, if you are vegan, or if you don't eat certain foods we suggest that you plan to bring your own food to supplement the above menus. For more information on eating out in Mexico see **General Information for Travelers in Oaxaca**.