



**D**ay of the Dead, also known as All Saints Day, is one of the most important religious celebrations of the year in Mexico. The festivities focus on the continuity of life and the honoring of ancestors. This uniquely Mexican holiday takes place in Oaxaca with more ceremony, ritual and flair than in any other town in Mexico. It provides an opportunity for a warm family and community reunion which includes the well remembered deceased, along with the living. The dead are considered as still being an integral part of the family and they are remembered especially on this day.

The whole family takes part in preparing for the celebration. The women of the household prepare the favorite food, the children collect those items that had special meaning for the deceased and the men build the family altar to honor the dead whose spirits will be returning to visit their homes on this day. They come to celebrate with the living and to enjoy the spirit of what their earthly descendants have prepared for them. The altars provide the means for communication with and remembrance of family spirits which

the trip to the cemeteries is to honor the dead in their resting place.

On the days leading up to the celebration, the markets are lively and animated with vendors selling sugar skulls, special bread called pan de yema, bright yellow marigold flowers, delicate handmade ornaments and hand-dipped candles for the altar. This is a time for celebration not mourning. There is a saying in Oaxaca, "We are not here for a long time, we are here for a good time."

The final preparations take place on the night of October 31st, bringing the whole community and generations of families out to the cemetery. The grave sites are cleaned, decorated and bedecked with flowers and candles, as well as food and drink that the deceased loved while living.

This is a very meaningful time for the community and one that they

have been sharing with Vistas' guests for several years.

So come join us for a very special and unique Mexican celebration of life and death.

Vistas Intercultural Institute has been operating Spanish programs and tours in Mexico since 1994. We use bi-lingual certified guides and the vehicles used for transfers and tours are comfortable and well-maintained.

**Your stay will include:**

- Arrival and departure transfer to/from hotel.
- Welcome supper at Hotel.
- Farewell dinner at Camino Real with Regional Dance show.
- Guided visits to: Monte Alban, City tour, Tule tree, Tlacoahuaya

church, Teotitlan del Valle, Mitla, Tlacolula, Mezcal factory, night visit cemetery in Atzompa, San Bartolo Coyotepec, night visit panteon San Miguel, San Martin Tilcajete, Ocotlan de Morelos, San Jose Mogote and Fábrica de papel (See table II for details).

**Costs:** \$1920 includes: airport transfers, welcome dinner, accommodations, 2 meals daily, entrance fees to museums and archaeological sites, transportation and guided visits to the main tourist attractions during the day, and night tours to cemeteries and Day of the Dead processions. Airfare is NOT included.

# Day of Dead Tour 2010

Tour dates: Thursday, October 28th to Friday, November 5th, 2010



For more information please contact Dr Debbie Mounts at [debbie@milagrosparati.com](mailto:debbie@milagrosparati.com) or see our web page at [www.VistasVeracruz.com](http://www.VistasVeracruz.com)

## Guided visits to:

**Monte Alban:** the greatest Zapotec city, one of the first urban centers of Mesoamerica boasting monumental architecture, built on a mountain top (450 meters above the Oaxaca valley) with beautiful views of the valley below.

**City tour:** a two and a half hour walking tour of Oaxaca's historical center, visiting Santo Domingo church and museum as well as other important churches, colonial buildings and historical monuments, as well as a market and chocolate factory.

**Tule tree:** A huge Moctezuma cypress, over 2000 years old, locals claim it's the thickest and oldest tree in the world.

**Tlacoahuaya church:** 16th Century Dominican church with original paintings and altarpieces. This is the church in Oaxaca which retains most of its original interior decoration.

**Teotitlan del Valle:** Weaving village, world renowned for the use of natural dyes, especially the cochineal (a parasite of the prickly pear cactus).

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We will visit weavers and see how they work, and also the workshop of a candle maker.

**Mitla:** This is the 2nd most visited archaeological site in Oaxaca and well known for the mosaic fretwork designs composed of thousands of individual pieces which make up geometrical patterns without the use of mortar.

Tour of market in **Tlacolula**.

**Mezcal factory:** We will see the process for making mezcal from the maguey plant and try this local drink.

Night visit: **Cemetery in Atzompa** is a highlight of the trip. We will meet a family and have the traditional hot chocolate and pan with them and then visit the cemetery where we have the opportunity to decorate an unvisited tomb.

**San Bartolo Coyotepec:** This village is famous for black pottery. No glaze

or chemicals are used to achieve the black, shiny finish of these pieces. A demonstration is given showing the prehispanic pottery techniques. Visit to museum.

Night visit: **Panteon San Miguel** Cemetery and Comparsas (carnival-like processions).

**San Martin Tilcajete:** Woodcarving village where you can see a demonstration of the world famous "alebrijes" wooden animals beautifully carved and painted using acrylic and natural paints.

**Ocotlan de Morelos:** The hometown of Oaxacan painter Rodolfo Morales. Visit his home, the church and ex-convent restored by the Rodolfo Morales Cultural Foundation, which houses a museum of religious and folk art. Visit the workshop of the Aguilar sisters, folk art masters, potters specializing in miniature figures that reflect rural life in

Oaxaca, nativity scenes, the tree of life, market women, as well as Frida Kahlo replicas.

**San Jose Mogote:** the first urban center in prehispanic Oaxaca. This site collapsed around 600 B.C. and the site museum contains some remarkable jade pieces.

**Fabrica de papel:** demonstration of the art of making paper utilizing different kinds of local fibers and flowers of the Oaxaca area at the paper factory sponsored by famous Oaxacan painter Francisco Toledo.

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