



*Wisdom of the Mountains Tour:
Explore the Coffee Lands and
Ancient Civilization in México!
Trip Details*

Start Date: Saturday, February 20, 2010

End Date: Sunday, February 28, 2010

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Trip Description

JUDES has partnered with a Fair Trade, organic coffee farming community of Chayotepec, situated in the beautiful Oaxaca region of México to offer you this unique opportunity for a small-group, guided, responsible travel experience that respects local peoples and the environment. Explore ancient indigenous ruins, try your hand at harvesting Fair Trade coffee, hike to your heart's content, enjoy spectacular vistas, relax and enjoy the tranquility, and experience the delights of authentic cuisine.

About JUDES

JUDES (the Just Us! Development and Education Society) was established in 2006 as a not-for-profit organization that raises public awareness of Fair Trade and responsible purchasing. By providing educational resources and facilitating partnerships, JUDES builds solidarity between consumers and small producers across the hemispheres with respect to social, environmental, and economic justice.

JUDES uses a values-based approach to implement our projects and activities, which fall into two key areas: working to increase the understanding and connections between producers and consumers through educational exchanges, speaking tours, and videos; and creating resources and tools to support individuals and organizations in living justly and lightly on our planet. Our values encourage a holistic approach to being a conscious consumer and integrate social, environmental, and economic issues into tools for sustainability.

JUDES is managed by a volunteer Board of Directors and benefits greatly from the support of our many dedicated volunteers. We work in partnership with other non-profit associations and organizations across the Maritimes who share our vision and values. We also work in partnership with our founding partner, Just Us! Coffee Roasters Co-operative, which recognized the interest of schools and the general public in learning more about Fair Trade and has supported the development of JUDES in becoming an independent, non-profit organization.

About Chayotepec

The Zapotecs are an indigenous people of México. The population is concentrated in the southern state of Oaxaca. In pre-Columbian times, the Zapotec civilization (predating the Mayan and Aztec civilization) was one of the highly developed cultures of Mesoamerica, which among other things, included a system of writing. There are two basic groups of Zapotecs: the *istmeños*, who live in the southern Valley of Oaxaca, and the *serranos*, who live in the northern mountains of the Sierra Madre de Oaxaca. We will be visiting both groups, including three nights with Zapotec coffee producers in Chayotepec.

Chayotepec is one of 54 coffee farming communities that are associated with the UCIRI cooperative (www.uciri.org). This small community grows organic, shade-grown coffee within the protected cloud forest of their area, using traditional Zapotec respect for the earth.

The *Wisdom of the Mountains* tours emerged from a partnership between our founding partner, Just Us! Coffee Roasters Co-operative, and UCIRI to research community-based tourism opportunities. As an outcome to this research, UCIRI and the Chayotepec community have invited JUDES to participate as a Canadian educational partner, bringing interested, open-minded Canadians to visit their community and experience the Wisdom of the Mountains.

Detailed Trip Information

The following information has been compiled with care and is provided in good faith. JUDES reserves the right to make changes to ensure the smooth operation of tour and to ensure participant safety. Please read this carefully for details about your trip!



We are meeting in meeting in the City of Oaxaca, in the southwestern State of Oaxaca, México. Each star on the map to the right represents one of our destinations. We start in Oaxaca City and then travel to a nearby weaver’s cooperative in Teotitlan del Valle, visiting sites along the way. We then travel towards Chayotepec (1300m), where we will spend 3 nights there with this coffee farming community. Our final stop is a coastal city to allow us to swim in the Pacific Ocean, before returning to Oaxaca.

Itinerary Overview: Saturday, February 20th, 2010 until Sunday, February 28nd, 2010

<p>Saturday, Feb 20th</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet in Oaxaca – a UNESCO World Heritage City • Local guide is available for sight-seeing through Oaxaca City • Stroll the streets of Oaxaca and visit old buildings, museum, churches, and colourful, typically Latin-American markets (food and crafts) • Social on patio roof of Hotel • Dinner together in local restaurant 	<p>Sunday, Feb 21st</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AM: Visit Monte Albán, ancient city and historic site. • PM: Visit “El Tule” a 2,200 year old tree. • Experience a Mexican buffet and feast (late lunch / early dinner) 	<p>Monday, Feb 22nd</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit the majestic “Hierve El Agua”- Crystal Clear Mineral Waters (a cascade of stalactites), swim and eat tortillas at Alice’s Restaurant. • Visit Zapotec Weavers village and learn about ancient spinning, dying and weaving methods. 	<p>Tuesday, Feb 23rd</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel to Chayotepec coffee producing community, a 6-hour trip from Oaxaca. On the way visit UCIRI coffee facilities at Lachavisá. • Lunch picnic en route • One-hour Interpretation trail hike • Dinner in Chayotepec
<p>Wednesday, Feb 24th</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast • Coffee harvesting • Lunch • Afternoon with Zapotecs depulping coffee • Dinner • Storytelling & meeting with community healer 	<p>Thursday, Feb 25th</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast • Morning hike in conservation area (protected cloud forest) • Lunch • Tortilla making and coffee roasting • Dinner • Evening of music 	<p>Friday, Feb 26th</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast • Travel to El Porvenir • Hike to waterfalls through coffee gardens • Lunch at El Porvenir • Travel to the Pacific coast 	<p>Saturday, Feb 27th</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast • Beach visit • Lunch on the beach <hr/> <p>Sunday, Feb 28th</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return to Oaxaca • Stay on for your next adventure or return to Canada

Please note: JUDES reserves the right to make alterations to our itinerary, based on availability and circumstances beyond our control.

Trip Philosophy

JUDES and the Chayotepec community-based eco-tourism project are seeking adventurous, open-minded individuals with an interest in Fair Trade and coffee, with respect for different cultures, eagerness to try new things, and a sense of humour.

This is a small-group trip (maximum of 9 people) that will support the community economic development of the Chayotepec coffee farmers and their families. This trip is a guided trip, using both a Canadian trip facilitator and local guides. You do not need to speak Spanish to join us. The trip includes some optional activities and some free time, but most of the travelling and touring is done as a group.

Respect & Cultural Difference

JUDES is inviting each participant to ensure that we all embrace and celebrate our cultural differences and remain respectful of the history, traditions, and attitudes we experience in México. We also want to create a culture amongst our group that respects diversity in all its forms – ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, ability, age, and experience, among others.

JUDES requires participants to respect the boundaries and requests of the Chayotepec community and to please remember to ask permission before taking photographs, etc. When in doubt, ask one of the guides.

Experience

One of the key purposes of this trip is to experience a different way of life. You will have a rare opportunity to experience a different pace of life and the unbelievably gorgeous landscape of Oaxaca. You will also encounter the realities for these coffee farmers – realities that include living in dignified poverty. Road conditions and toilets (among other things) will often not always meet our Canadian standards, so it's important to keep a sense of humour and adventure.

Reciprocate

The Zapotec communities we will visit are keen to share their culture, but this experience is about mutual cultural learning and sharing. We expect participants to reciprocate by sharing stories, music, and our culture with our hosts.

JUDES has also established a **Reciprocity Fund**, as part of the *Wisdom of the Mountain* tours that will enable us to bring representatives from producer communities to Nova Scotia to tour our region, creating opportunities for mutual visits.

Participate

In addition to being active participants while we are in México, we are asking each participant to commit to sharing their experience with friends, family, and co-workers upon return to Canada. JUDES can help to facilitate these opportunities.

Ideas include speaking to a local high school class or university class about your experience; sharing your trip experience at your local library or church; or hosting an evening coffee event and telling others about the impacts of Fair Trade on these communities, the Zapotec culture, and the beauty of Oaxaca.

Sustainability

As part of our commitment to responsible travel and in consultation with the community members in Chayotepec, we have identified two key environmental impacts while travelling: climate change and waste. The **Sustainability Fee** (\$130 Cdn) that is part of the tour cost is directed towards projects and activities that reduce our impact.

Climate Change

Climate change is a dramatic force in our world today, resulting from the burning of fossil fuels, and impacting our weather systems (e.g. increased droughts or rain, extreme weather, and changes in average temperatures). Greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) are associated with everything we do, but the most impactful tourism element is air travel.

Using online GHG calculators, we have determined that the return trip from Canada to México (by airplane) and our ground travel releases out 2.5 tonnes of CO_{2e} (corrected for emissions at higher altitudes). There is no carbon-free option for travelling to México, but JUDES has identified several steps to reduce our impact. Carbon offset programs exist, but some are not as good as others.

JUDES has chosen to purchase carbon offsets from a Gold Standard certified carbon offset program. Gold Standard programs ensure real carbon emissions reductions, local stakeholder involvement, transparent contribution to sustainable development, non-fossil energy production for climate protection, and no tree planting programs (www.cdmgoldstandard.org). Gold Standard programs are verified by a third party and must meet Gold Standard criteria. PlanetAir (www.planetair.ca) has an extensive Gold Standard programs, and JUDES will be purchasing carbon offsets through this non-profit organization (included in your tour fee).

The community of Chayotepec has also requested support from the **Sustainability Fee** go towards native tree planting activities to help maintain the ecological health of the protected forest area, in which they live.

Waste

The residents of Chayotepec has identified that waste is an environmental impact of visitors to the community. Waste management and collection in rural México is very different from our experience in Canada. Waste is stored centrally in the town and collected only a few times a year. Recycling and disposal facilities for hazardous waste (e.g. batteries) are not common. We are directing some of the money collected through the **Sustainability Fee** that is part of the tour cost to the community to support a waste separation and storage project.

As visitors, it is also our responsibility to minimize the waste we leave behind. We are asking all participants to:

- Never litter
- Minimize or eliminate the use of plastic bags
- Bring a refillable water bottle and not purchase bottled water whenever possible (you can refill them with clean, safe water)
- Choose rechargeable batteries, and bring any non-rechargeable batteries with you back to Canada and dispose of them through your local Household Hazardous Waste program
- Help us think of other ways to reduce the waste we produce along the way.

In addition to these initiatives, JUDES is also limiting the number of people per trip and the number of trips per year. We are trying to choose sustainable and green accommodations and modes of travel in-country. We are also asking each participant to help us improve by identifying ways we can reduce waste, energy, water use.

Payment Details and Costs

The cost of this tour is \$1,500 Cdn. No taxes are applicable. Full payment is required to confirm your participation on the trip.

Included in the tour price is:

- Local travel (by private van, from Oaxaca City), 8 nights' accommodation, all activities, and most meals. We ask that you pay for your own beverages when we eat at restaurants (we will make clean water available during when we're outside).
- **Sustainability Fee** (\$130 Cdn per person): Gold Standard carbon offset for air and ground travel and support of local environmental projects
- **Reciprocity Fund** (\$50 Cdn per person): A fund to enable representatives from Fair Trade

producer communities to visit Canada

- **Administration & Education Fund for JUDES** (\$300 Cdn per person): Contribution to the administration costs for JUDES and educational activities on Fair Trade

Flights are not included. Flight costs vary depending on airline, length of stay and the time you book. Cost estimates are listed below:

- Halifax departure: \$1300 including tax
- Montreal departure: \$1000 including tax
- Toronto departure: \$1000 including tax

For flight information, please contact our Travel Partner, Odyssey Travel at:

(800) 263-0050 or (613)549-3342 or info@odyssey-travel.com

Participants will be required to pay for their own transfers from the Oaxaca airport to our hotel. The price is less than \$10 by *shared taxi van* and we can provide you with information on how to reach the hotel.

Insurance

Insurance is not included. Remember, your tour costs are fully non-refundable and your flight costs will have cancellation penalties. We recommend that you have both CANCELLATION insurance and MEDICAL insurance. Insurance costs can vary depending on your age, your current medical condition and the length of stay. Some tax inclusive cost estimates are listed below:

	Age 0-50	Age 51-60	Age 61-65	Over 65
Comprehensive (cancellation and medical)	\$43.20	\$149.04	\$169.56	Please ask
	Age 0-50	Age 51-59	Age 60-64	Over 64
Cancellation only	\$47.52	\$133.92	\$149.04	Please ask
	Age 0-50	Age 51-54	Age 55-60	Over 60
Medical only (10 days coverage)	\$16.00	\$21.00	\$25.00	Please ask

For insurance information and to receive a quotation, please also contact our Travel Partner, Odyssey Travel.

Note that payment for both flights and insurance can be made to Odyssey Travel by cheque or credit card.

Additional Activities

Along the way, we will have the opportunity to experience some optional activities. These are included in the price, but you can choose to participate in any (or all) of these or just relax instead.

- Milking cows
- Cheese-making
- Tortilla making
- Cooking lessons

You may also wish to bring money for purchasing gifts, snacks, or other items along the way.

Cancellation Policy

JUDES reserves the right to cancel any tours, due to changes in the destination country that might impact our safety or ability to travel, or if the minimum number of participants is not met. If a tour is cancelled, all payments are refunded in full.

If you are unable to come on the tour because of illness of either yourself or your travel partner, you can receive a refund (minus a \$300 non-refundable administration fee), if cancelled more than 30 days prior to the departure date. If you are cancelling within 30 days of your departure, you are not eligible for a refund. Comprehensive trip cancellation coverage could help you recover your costs.

If the tour is cancelled, Hotel Azucenas (our local hotel in Oaxaca City) would be happy to assist in identifying other activities and plans for an enjoyable visit in Mexico.

Please note: Please make sure that your flights are refundable, transferable, or that you have insurance to cover flight costs if the tour is cancelled or if you are not able to go due to personal medical reasons.

Getting There

As mentioned above, it is your responsibility to arrange your own flights to and from Oaxaca.

- We will be meeting at our hotel in Oaxaca in the morning of Saturday, February 20, 2010. This is the start of our trip. The Airport code for Oaxaca City is "OAX."
- We will return to our Oaxaca hotel in the afternoon of the last day of our tour (Sunday, February 28, 2010).
- You are welcome to extend your stay in México and visit other regions either before or after our tour.

For flight information, please contact our Travel Partner, Odyssey Travel at:

(800) 263-0050 or (613)549-3342 or info@odyssey-travel.com

Visas

We highly recommend a valid passport (with a minimum 6 months validity) for any travel outside of Canada. As a Canadian, you will not require a visa to enter México. Landed immigrants will need to travel with your permanent resident card and valid passport. Everyone will be asked to complete a “multiple migratory form” known as a tourist card. You can obtain this card during your flight to México or at your point of entry (e.g. México City).

If you are travelling under a different nationality, please check with the Mexican embassy to ensure you have the proper documents (www.sre.gob.mx/english/services/visasforeigners.htm or www.inm.gob.mx/EN/index.php?page/I_want_to_travel_to_México_as_Tourist).

How can I learn more about México before I go?

For practical information on weather, Mexican history, or other information, feel check out a guidebook like *The Rough Guide* or *Lonely Planet* before you go. Moon Handbooks has a special Oaxaca 2008 guidebook, focused just on the region, or visit:

- www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/México/
- www.visitMéxico.com/wb/VisitMéxico/Visi_Home
- www.intercultures.ca/cil-cai/country_overview-en.asp?ISO=MX&lvl=8

We also encourage you to spend some time familiarizing yourself with the history of the Zapotec people – many resources exist online.

Transportation Methods and Physical Activity

Once in Oaxaca, we will be travelling as a group using a private van. There are no internal flights. Road conditions are often unpredictable, so bring your sense of adventure!

Sturdy walking shoes that can handle light trails are highly recommended, as is raingear or wind & water proof jackets. The trails are intermediate, with each hike being about 1-3 hours long. A basic level of fitness is required, but you don't have to be a mountain goat. Some trip participants found a walking stick helpful in navigating stairs or trails. Monte Albán has a number of stairs, but we will go at a relaxed pace, as we do on the hiking trails.

Accommodation Information

All accommodations and prices are based on sharing rooms. Some rooms have bathrooms in the rooms, others are shared bathroom facilities.



The accommodations range from beautiful, small hotels to picturesque cabins with mountain vistas.

Oaxaca: In Oaxaca, we will be staying at the beautiful, colonial, and centrally located Hotel Azucenas (www.hotelazucenas.com). Accommodations are double occupancy.

Chayotepec Cabins: There are recently built, ecologically-friendly cabins in Chayotepec, each one sleeping up to 5 people, with a mix of single and double beds and a washroom in each cabin. Nestled amongst the trees with mountain vistas, these cabins are a real treat (www.ecoturistmo.com). Tents and camping equipment is also available for those who wish to sleep under the stars. Please note that the cabins are comfortable, but basic. There is no hot water for showers, but the temperatures are warm and the cool water is refreshing after our hikes.

Juchitán: We will stay at the Hotel Central (double occupancy) – a small, friendly and family-run hotel in this Zapotec city of 25,000.

Meals

Eating is a big part of traveling and you will have the chance to explore different specialties of the region. Oaxaca is known for its *mole* sauces – a specialty of the region. Please let us know if you have any special dietary requirements, including allergies. We will try to accommodate dietary restrictions (e.g. vegetarians, those allergic to shellfish, etc.), but please recognize that we may not be able to control the content in all foods. Vegans will experience difficulty finding vegan-friendly alternatives.

We will be including most meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) with your tour, starting in the evening on Saturday, February 20th and ending with lunch on Sunday, February 28th. Two breakfasts, one lunch, and two dinners are not included, to allow you the freedom to choose your next culinary adventure. We will provide access to safe and clean water on the journey, but ask that you purchase any beverages (e.g. juice or alcoholic beverages) with meals yourselves. You may also choose to purchase snacks during the day for travelling.

Money and Payments

Money Exchange

Exchange rates are best if you bring Canadian (\$ Cdn) with you in cash and exchange for pesos either at bank exchanges in México City or Oaxaca airports. There is no need to convert to US dollars before your trip. In Oaxaca, you should be able to access bank machines and draw money directly from ATMs (often with additional charges), but it is best to take cash and credit,

as well. Traveller's cheques are generally not recommended. We also encourage you to notify your bank of a

Currently, the exchange rate is approximately \$10 Mexican pesos = \$1 Canadian

Emergencies: Please also make sure you have access to at least an additional \$300 Cdn (or equivalent) as an "emergency" fund, to be used when circumstances outside our control that requires a change to our planned route. This is a rare occurrence, but something to consider when travelling abroad!

Tipping: It is customary to offer tips to local guides and hotel staff. Please consider approximately \$2-\$3 Cdn / person / night in the hotels. Our local guides are experts and excellent, too! We encourage you to provide a tip appropriate to your experience. It is not necessary to tip our Chayotepec hosts or your Canadian guide.