

CUESA Tour: Oaxaca & Puebla, Mexico February 28-March 8, 2009



Dear Friends,

Are you interested in interacting directly with farmers and food artisans, food enthusiasts, and chefs in other cultures? Then please join the Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Agriculture (CUESA) on Saturday, February 28-Sunday, March 8, 2009, as we conduct our next international tour to Oaxaca and Puebla in Central Mexico. These are both charming and historic cities that are UNESCO World Heritage sites and have been designated by the Mexican Government as "Magical Cities".

The tour is being organized by Food & Wine Trails of Santa Rosa in conjunction with Toni Sobel, an American-born tour leader who has lived in Oaxaca over 30 years since first arriving to complete doctoral studies through Stanford University. Says cookbook author and Chef Rick Bayless (of PBS's "Mexico One Plate at a Time" series), "Having cooked and traveled with Toni for years, I can truly say that she is a fount of knowledge, from the details of history to the intricacies of village life, Toni brings alive (Mexican) culture as brilliantly as anyone I know." We are pleased to have Toni as our personal guide throughout this entire tour.

Our journey is about visiting culinary regions and exploring food traditions, farming issues, and marketplaces. It's also about enjoying the significant cultural heritage of these two special regions. Proceeds will help support CUESA's education programs, including our local farm tours and culinary programs.

This will be CUESA's second extended tour. Said traveler Sheila Malkind of San Francisco after our tour to Spain last fall, "We visited small sustainable farmers on their land and in their homes, learned about preparing local foods, enjoyed market tours, and had fun the entire time. I came alone, and was accepted wholeheartedly by my fellow travelers, some of whom I still socialize with."

Since we can only accommodate 20 travelers, I urge you to call me at (415) 291-3276 X 107 or email me at dave@cuesa.org.

Dave Stockdale
Executive Director, CUESA

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

Saturday, February 28

Depart San Francisco, arrive Puebla (via Mexico City). Our hotel is the Holiday Inn Centro Historico (a restored 100-year old French mansion), located near the town center.

Sunday, March 1

We begin our week together with a tour of Puebla's beautiful and historic Central District, including impressive colonial architecture, museums, the renowned Mercado El Parián crafts market and several specialty food and farmer's markets. Afterwards, we savor a late lunch at the Hotel Royalty on the town square. The rest of the day is on our own to enjoy the sites, sounds and flavors of Puebla. B, L

Monday, March 2

We're off on a day trip to the nearby city of Cholula. First is a tour of the city center, including the Mercado de Cholula (food & craft market). Next we enjoy a guided tour of the Francisco Pelaez Ethnobotanical Garden, whose many displays include culinary and medicinal herbs and a fragrance garden. Later we visit the Pyramid of Cholula, (largest in the world). After a traditional Puebla-style lunch at La Casita Poblana, we return to the hotel and enjoy time on our own. B, L

Tuesday, March 3

We begin today with a private tour of the Talavera Iriarte factory where they make the famous and colorful Puebla tiles. Next we visit Atlixco Puebla (in the foothills leading to Popocatepetl volcano) where we enjoy the food and flower market that flows through the streets in the center of town. Then it's on to visit a rainbow trout farm, followed by a delicious fresh trout lunch. We return to the hotel late afternoon and can relax or take a swim, and enjoy the rest of the day on our own. B, L

Wednesday, March 4

We check out of our hotel and depart Puebla shortly after breakfast, enjoying a scenic drive to Oaxaca. Enroute we visit a Slow Food Presidia project and its new museum in the Tehuacán Valley. Farmers here are growing an endangered amaranth variety, plus corn and beans on a traditionally terraced farm. We meet and get to enjoy lunch with the farmers and then

continue our drive to Oaxaca, arriving late afternoon. Our hotel is the Hostal de la Noria, a restored colonial mansion located near the beautiful historic city center. After checking in, the rest of the day is on our own. B, L

Thursday, March 5

We begin today with a tour of the city center of Oaxaca, including the inspiring cathedral and the acclaimed museum. Next we savor lunch at Itanoni Restaurant, where owner Amado Ramirez Leyva refers to their food as “food of diversity and identity”. He will explain the origins of the many varieties of corn, chiles, beans and pumpkin seeds he uses and his relationship with the farmers that grow them. After lunch, we enjoy a guided tour of the Ethnobotanical Garden at the breathtaking Santa Domingo church. After a break, we’ll meet with members of the Slow Food Chinantla Vainilla (vanilla) Presidia at our hotel, then we can all enjoy drinks and snacks together. B, L

Friday, March 6

We begin today with a walking tour of the El Pochote Organic Market, followed by a tour of the Ocotlán Market, famous for its live animals and artisan breads. We then enjoy a demonstration of crafting the region’s acclaimed black pottery by Don Valente (son of famed artist Doña Rosa). Next is lunch at La Capilla in nearby Zaachila, which will be preceded by a demonstration on the preparation of their popular black mole and wonderful Oaxacan barbacoa. We return to the hotel late afternoon and enjoy the rest of the evening on our own. B, L

Saturday, March 7

Today it’s off to tour Monte Alban, a nearby pre-Columbian archeological site. We’ll see a remarkable 2,000 year old Tule tree, and later for a snack of traditional empanadas de amarillo and flor de cabeza con quesillo (squash blossom stuffed with cheese). Afterwards, we watch a demonstration of Teotlican rug weaving, before returning to our hotel mid-afternoon. After free time (or another siesta!), we enjoy a farewell dinner by renowned Chef Alejandro Ruiz and his acclaimed nouvelle Oaxacan cuisine at Casa Oaxaca. B, D

Sunday, March 8

Depart for the airport and our return flight home via a connection in Mexico City.



TOUR PRICE & REGISTRATION

Based on a minimum of 14 travelers and a maximum of 20, the price is estimated at \$2,499 per person, double occupancy, including airfare; the single supplement is \$400. Airfare is not included, but we hope to offer a special group rate of around \$600 later this summer (however, please note that airline prices are subject to change until ticket purchase).

Prices include all ground transportation, including transfers for those on booked on the group flight, hotels as specified below, 8 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 1 dinner, 1 cooking demonstration, English-speaking guide throughout, tips to guides, drivers and waiters for group activities, donations to all farmers and artisans visited, and a small donation to CUESA.

Hotel accommodations include four nights at the Holiday Inn Historico in Puebla, and four nights at the Hostal de la Noria in Oaxaca.

To make reservations, or for more information, including responsibility and liability information, contact CUESA’s Dave Stockdale at (415) 291-3276 X 107 or send an email to dave@cuesa.org.

We reserve the right to alter specific market and producer visits to suit their needs as well as our own schedule, and to substitute suppliers and types of producers as arrangements dictate.