



WORLDWIDE
ADVENTURES
MOUNTAIN BIKE HOLIDAYS

MOUNTAIN BIKE ADVENTURE

zapotec singletrack, mexico



Mountain bike holiday experts



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This week-long mountain bike adventure will open your eyes and change your perceptions of what Mexico is all about. The Oaxaca region is steeped in Zapotec culture, renowned for its outstanding cuisine and crafts. What's less well-known is that this mountainous region of diverse landscapes and warm-hearted people is also home to a web of fantastic mountain bike trails hidden deep in the Sierra Norte.

Ability level: beginner - intermediate



trip diary

by Euan Wilson, H&I Adventures owner

It's early October and the mountain biking season in Scotland is drawing to a close, but we are busily packing our bags again, this time heading to central America and more specifically the Oaxaca region of southern Mexico. This area of Mexico is more famous for its culinary delights than its mountain biking, but we know better!

We leave the Highlands of Scotland on a dark and wet October night, sitting in the van chatting about how we are looking forward to some dusty singletrack with the sun on our backs, salivating at the thought of sinking our teeth into the world-famous food and drink of the Oaxaca region. Our flights and transfers all go according to plan and before we know it we have arrived in Mexico City.

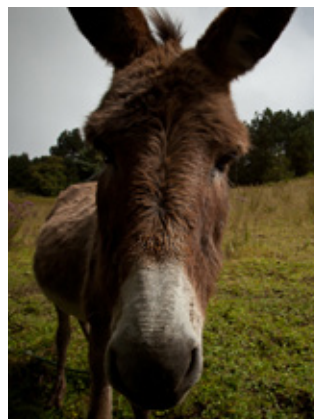
First thing in the morning the whole group assembles around the breakfast table, chatting excitedly about what's to come. Once we are fed and watered we climb into the van for our trip south to Oaxaca City, where we set about exploring this stunning UNESCO World Heritage Site.

That evening we set our taste buds alight with the first of many amazing culinary masterpieces that we enjoy during the trip, then look over some maps of the area we're about to explore on our mountain bikes.

The next morning we are up bright and early, building bikes and packing day bags for our début ride in

the Sierra Norte, but first we are going to visit the impressive Zapotec archaeological site of Monte Albán, which flourished around 750-800AD with over 40,000 inhabitants. After soaking up the history we head for the hills and saddle up for the first ride of the week - and what a ride! We set off from a village tucked away high in the Sierra Norte mountains and weave our way along ancient Zapotec hunting paths until we pop out at our woodland cabins and home for the rest of the week. Our kit is already there waiting for us and the fire is crackling away in the corner, so we unpack, settle in and open a beer.

Day two of riding is an early roll-call as we converge with our bikes, ready to ride at 5:30am. The reason for this





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Fantastic trip! If you want to see and experience the proper Mexico whilst riding some world class trails, look no further, thoroughly recommended.

L. Carruthers, Scotland

is that we have a dawn raid: we are trying to reach the top of a local hill before sunrise. We ride for an hour or so and gradually the light starts to return to the forest, so we pedal faster in order to catch the first glimpses of sunlight. We round the last corner to be greeted by a fire, coffee, hot chocolate, and muffins all laid out for us in front of a spectacular sunrise!

On riding day three we are promised some stunning waterfalls, and we're not disappointed. Within 20 minutes of riding we are off the bike and walking up a steep singletrack footpath, which opens out to a breath-taking cloud forest waterfall. The day goes on like this; riding great singletrack and doubletrack trails, punctuated by stunning waterfalls and panoramas - truly a fantastic day on the bike. On returning we are summoned to a BBQ birthday party for our local guide, where we eat some of the best meat I have ever tasted in my life, washed down with a few birthday beers, of course.

Today is one of the best days riding this year. Fact. We start from the village and weave our way along old farmers' tracks, singletrack paths and through wooded trails onto a stunning valley and up to a ridge that works its way deep into the forest. It is amazing how each valley, and even each hill face is so different in this region. Today is my favourite. Once we reach the highest point of the ridge, it is descent time! And what

a descent it is, it goes on for around 1.5 hours and has a bit of everything. It is not a technical descent, but a flowing, swooping, grin-inducing mountain bike extravaganza.

This is our final night in the Sierra Norte, so we get stuck in to the local cuisine, before hitting the hay in preparation for riding out of the Sierra Norte the next day. On leaving the mountains where the weather has been very temperate, you quickly feel the temperature rising, obvious really, but it makes us think how hard it would be to ride down in the valley for a week.

The closer we get to Oaxaca City and our final destination at the widest tree in the world, the group slowly starts to get quiet and the pace slows to a meander. I am sensing nobody wants this trip to end, but end it does, in a flurry of group hugs and pats on the back, followed by lunch, a couple of beers and a guided tour around the widest tree in the world.

For our final night's celebrations we go to a restaurant where they put a modern twist onto some very traditional Oaxacan dishes - and it works! We also enjoy the local drink Mezcal with a tasting session and a bottle for the table. As we retire our tired legs for the night there are further exchanges of handshakes, memories and jokes, before our heads hit the pillows, already asleep.



itinerary

Day 1 | Travelling day

We'll meet at Mexico City airport, then stay in an airport hotel for the night to recover from our travels.

Day 2 | Transfer to Oaxaca City

Our guides will meet you at your hotel and we'll drive (approx. five hours) to Oaxaca City, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The rest of the evening is yours to enjoy the sights and sounds of the city and have dinner in one of the many excellent restaurants.

Day 3 | Monte Albán

We will spend the morning visiting the most impressive Zapotec archaeological site, Monte Albán. After exploring the temples and plazas we'll continue to Cuajimoloyas, the gateway to the Sierra Norte and our first ride of the trip! We'll pedal a nice easy eight kms to the village of Llano Grande, where we'll stay in their eco-tourism cabanas run by the sustainable partnership formed by the eight communities in the area.

Day 4 | Llano Grande

We'll make a very early start to enjoy a head-lamp ride to El Mirador, where we will have a fantastic view of the mist-covered valleys below at sunrise (make sure you bring a warm jacket!). We'll pedal to Piedra Larga, on the northern side of the mountains, where, on a clear day, you can see the Pico de Orizaba, the highest snow-covered peak in Mexico at 10km. We head back to Llano Grande, where the locals have prepared a delicious breakfast for us.

Batteries re-charged, we'll depart for our second ride of the day – and it isn't even lunchtime! 20 km of cross-country singletrack and dirt roads. We'll pass some majestic rock formations known as Cueva Iglesia and enjoy a snack at an incredible viewpoint.

Day 5 | Llano Grande to Lachatao

Today we'll tackle our first big day in the saddle (approx. five hours). We'll ride some technical descents to beautiful waterfalls, then on to the village of Las Vigas. Then we'll test our stamina on the long uphill to Lachatao. Lunch will be prepared along the way by our guides, and we'll have dinner in Lachatao before being transported back to Llano Grande.

Day 6 | Llano Grande to Latuvi

Another early start and long ride today. We'll pedal from Llano Grande along ancient foot trails to one of the best descents in the country. We have a climb ahead of us to reach Latuvi, known for its beautiful views of the Sierra. We'll have a late lunch and our shuttle will be ready to take us back to Llano Grande.

Day 7 | Downhill out of the Sierra

We have the choice this morning of taking a shuttle or pedaling to the village of Neveria to start a very technical and exhilarating downhill trail back to Oaxaca. We'll finish our ride at the El Tule tree, the widest tree in the world, around which a shrine and a village have developed over the course of centuries. We'll also enjoy some of the best ice-cream south of the Rio Grande! After this refreshing break we'll transfer to our hotel in Oaxaca City, take a shower, relax and enjoy the city, before our fantastic farewell dinner in one of the city's finest restaurants, which also makes some of Mexico's best Mezcal!

Day 8 | Free morning and transfer

This morning is your own to explore Oaxaca, see the shops, buy some souvenirs to take home. We can even arrange a cooking experience, if you like. We'll then be transferred back to the airport to say our final farewells.



the details

Tour price

£1,325 per person (ex. flights)

This includes:

- All meals (except dinner on travel days and day two)
- All accommodation during the trip
- Mountain bike guides throughout the trip
- All ground costs
- Back up vehicles for the duration of the trip
- Ground transportation from Mexico City to Oaxaca

The price does not include:

- Air transportation
- Bike hire
- Activity insurance
- Alcoholic drinks
- Personal safety and cycling equipment
- Any other items not mentioned as included

Bike hire

We can arrange bike hire for you for the duration of the trip. Please let us know at the time of booking so we can arrange this and inform you of costs. Approximate cost for a full suspension for the duration of the trip would be £240.

Further information on Mexico

Spanish is the national language of Mexico and spoken by the majority of citizens. Although English is fast becoming the international language, it should not be assumed that everyone understands or speaks it. Should you have difficulty communicating with any of the locals, please ask your guide for assistance.

A lot of the comforts you are accustomed to may not be available to you, and time flows at a different pace.

Patience and respect are the crucial ingredients for a successful trip and an enriching experience.

The Sierra Norte can get cold at night (below freezing) so you **MUST** bring a warm jacket on the trip. Also, we will have a pre-sunrise trek while in the Sierra, so it will most likely be chilly. (You don't need sleeping bags, the cabins have warm blankets and wood burning fireplaces.)

The rainy season in Mexico extends from mid-June to late October, so come prepared with rain gear for the heavy afternoon showers! Average temperatures in Oaxaca range between 0°C/32°F (at night in the Sierra) and 30°C/86°F at mid-day.

Currency and foreign exchange

The currency is the Mexican Peso. US Dollars are also accepted in some larger establishments. ATM machines are readily available in Oaxaca City. Where we will be travelling there are few banks, so you will need to have enough cash to see you through 3 to 4 days of travelling.

Tipping

It is not compulsory to tip your guides or drivers in Mexico, but if you feel that you have had a good service or experience, you can tip at your discretion. It is not compulsory to tip in restaurants, however should you wish to tip your servers, 10% - 15% of your meal cost would be acceptable.

Visas

US, Canadian and European Citizens do not require visas to visit Mexico. You must have your passport as proof of citizenship. The tourist card will be given to you aboard the airplane during your flight to Oaxaca. Please send us a copy of your passport for our file in case of emergency.





Our guides

Our mountain bike guides are of the highest level. They are qualified in first-aid and for this type of trip they also hold an expedition leader award, which means that they have the knowledge and experience to lead a group safely in these very remote, wild and unpredictable parts of Mexico.

In addition to formal qualifications, our guides have years of experience in the saddle on the Mexican trails and will be able to enhance your holiday with facts and fables on local history, flora and fauna. They're also genuinely nice people and will do their best to make sure that everyone in the group has a great time.

Meeting point and how to get there

The meeting point for our Mexican mountain bike tour is Mexico City airport. We will spend this first night in an airport hotel to allow everyone to relax and recover from their journey.

Mexico by air

Mexico City airport is well served by many major airlines from all over the world. For up-to-date timetables and booking information go to: www.ba.com, www.aa.com, www.continental.com, www.klm.com.

Health and safety

No vaccinations are required for visiting Mexico; however some online resources like **MD Travel Health** have a list of suggested precautions. We do not recommend drinking tap water. Bottled or filtered water will be readily available throughout the trip.

Also, please let us know if you have any special food requirements, allergies or pre-existing conditions your guides should know about.

Accommodation and food

One of the things that sets our holidays apart from others is the excellent accommodation we use.

We understand that when you've had a big day in the saddle on the trails you want a warm welcome, hot shower and a comfortable place to relax and unwind – because that's exactly what we're looking for too.

On our Mexican trip you'll be staying in a traditional hotel in Oaxaca City and the eco-tourism cabanas in Llano Grande, where a roaring fire and delicious home-cooked food await.

Most of the food you will enjoy in Oaxaca is relatively simple food, but prepared with the greatest of care and skill. Typical ingredients include: chorizo and other local sausages; bean paste; corn and flour tortillas; cheese; eggs; tomatoes; peppers; fabulous Mexican beef; salsas and guacamole; and artisan breads.

Kit list

- **Helmet (essential)**
- **Gloves (appropriate to the time of year)**
- **Glasses**
- **Gear hanger for your bike**
- **Cycle shorts/trousers**
- **Waterproofs**
- **Warm jacket (for cold nights in the Sierra)**
- **Hat and spare gloves**
- **Bike in good working order**
- **Inner tubes**
- **Brake pads to suit your bike (x2 sets)**
- **Water system (water bottle or Camel back)**
- **Sun cream and insect repellent**
- **Any medication you require (you must inform your guide about this prior to the tour)**
- **Advil or Ibuprofen**
- **Suitable day sack to hold all of the above, larger than your normal day pack**



Holiday insurance

You are required as a condition of booking to be insured against medical and personal accident risks. In this policy you must include cover for mountain biking and we recommend that you take out a policy which covers cancellation and baggage.

We work closely with WorldNomads.com whose policies are specially designed for mountain bike holidays. You can arrange your insurance cover directly with them by following this [link](#) and then we ask that you send us your policy details.

Please note: if you have arranged your own holiday insurance, you must bring a copy of your policy with you on your mountain bike holiday with us.

Responsible travel

Highlands and Islands Adventures is a company committed to its sustainable tourism policy, and takes seriously its responsibility to operate in a sustainable way. We are working hard to improve our procedures, policies and our impact on the environment that we work in, so for a copy on our 'responsible tourism policy' please contact us on info@mountainbikeworldwide.com.

How this trip makes a difference

Although the Oaxaca region of Mexico is one of the most stunning parts of the country, it is also one of the least affluent regions. This is because of the remoteness of the rural communities and the low levels of employment. The people of Llano Grande and its neighbouring villages worked for fifteen years to achieve their ambition of creating a sustainable eco-tourism partnership that would benefit each and every community equally. They have succeeded in their goal and, with the backing of the Mexican government, can now say that they operate the most successful community-led adventure travel organisation in Mexico. And we're delighted to be able to support that, whilst enjoying some of the warmest hospitality in the world.

We have a 'leave no trace' policy on our mountain biking holidays to ensure that our impact in these beautiful regions will not have a negative effect on this fragile environment. During our trips our guides will pass on their knowledge and explain the reasons behind our environmental policy and the 'leave no trace' ethos.

We are also on hand to advise you on how you can make a difference as we travel through the remote wilderness of Mexico.

I've read enough, sign me up!

BOOK NOW



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