

Feb. 17, 2015 to Guanajuato & Oaxaca

Greg Lund car service drove us to the airport. \$40. Not sure if we were supposed to give him a tip... We usually take the bus but it wasn't running that early. Greg picked us up at 6 am in his plush top-of-the-line Audi. We were at the airport by 6:30. Everything was on time and we arrived in Houston with plenty of time for our 4 pm flight to León.

One & a half hour delay on the tarmac in Houston due to a blown fuse. We had taxied way out and had to go back to the gate but not deplane. We're on a CRJ700 Canadair regional jet. 4 seats across, narrow & a bit hard. It's also quite loud. We know we won't get dinner until late, so we bought a pita chips & hummus snack. Only about 15 people on the plane.

We arrived in León at 7:30 pm. The airport was quiet & we got through customs & immigration quickly. They did search our bags & did not confiscate my unlabeled coffee powder & vitamins, although they gave them the hairy eyeball.

Hank & Mary were waiting for us. Half an hour later we were at the hacienda, our new home away from home. Hacienda la Escalera (named for the count who built the hacienda around 1730)

was a "Hacienda de Beneficio," dedicated to crushing & smelting silver ore mined around Guanajuato, & to producing items made of silver.

Hank & Anna purchased the property, which is across the street from their house. It was a ruin - only walls remained - and they've turned it into a gorgeous guest house with one bedroom & one & a half baths. It's beautifully decorated with folk art and has all the amenities. Grant & I have the King bedroom & Mary Preus is on the living room couch.

Wed. Feb. 18

Up at 8 for coffee & oatmeal.

Around 10:30 we were finally all ready to head out. It's a warm, sunny day (high 77°). We walked to the center of town to pick up tourist maps & go to the ATM. It's Ash Wednesday so we went to the Basilica and watched people get "ashes" stamped on their foreheads. We had chicken & fries at the rotisserie chicken place we had been to before (\$15 pesos each, or about \$5). Grant's foot was hurting (plantar fascitis) so he headed back to the house. Mary & I walked up to the University steps to see the view. Then we went to the Casa Diego Rivera where they were having an exhibition of additional paintings from Mexico City. I learned that Mary was an art major - I never knew! So she

really enjoyed it. We wandered into a wonderful folk art gallery. I saw a paper maché lizard I really liked (Oaxacan style) but it was \$130.

On the way back to the house we went to the market to buy vegetables & cheese. On the corner near the house we bought fruit & tortillas. It's mango season! Grant & Mary are going to make soup for dinner. I had a mango and tortillas and cheese for my afternoon snack.

We came back to the house around 4. Mary & Grant made a yummy soup with barley, lentils, garbanzos, chicken, & vegetables.

After dinner we played Farkle, did computer stuff, & read. Before we knew it it was 9:30.

Our room fronts onto busy Alhondiga street. Usually I wear earplugs in ~~busy~~ noisy places, but the noise here doesn't seem to bother me. In the morning the skylight wakes us up as it begins to get light (around 6:30). The throaty rumble of diesel trucks, low bass notes of horns, a rooster crowing, & the day begins. We never hear voices. Mexicans are generally mellow & quiet.

The ceilings in the house are very high - about 18 ft - with wood timbers covered with beautiful wood planks, dark & glossy. There is no heat so it can be a bit chilly.

Thursday Feb. 19

After a leisurely morning Hank drove us to the dentist. (Mary stayed at the house & will meet us later.) Grant's crown is infected. Rather than replace it, the dentist says he will drill a small hole, pack in medicine, wait a week, then patch the hole. He says the crown is fine. However, we do have to postpone our departure to Oaxaca by one day.

In the dentist's office we met a delightful black American woman who has lived here for eight years. Her name was something like Enid.

The dentist's office is near El Pipila, the giant statue of the Mexican revolution hero that towers over the town. After ogling the fabulous view from the statue viewpoint we walked down the hill to town, through the colorful & surprisingly clean callejones (alleys). We sat in the central Jardin Union until Mary arrived at noon.

We went looking for an enchilada restaurant I'd found on Yelp but when we saw the beautiful plaza de San Fernando we decided to eat there instead. We settled on a medieval cafe owned by a Mexican friend of Anna's named Sylvia. It's called ~~something~~ <sup>Juan</sup> Las Leyendas de Don ~~Quijote~~. Sylvia's husband is a professor of medieval history & the restaurant is decorated with part of

his collection of medieval odds & ends. The food was mediocre (I ordered an enchilada I couldn't eat because it was too spicy), but the ambiance & service were nice.

Our waiter was a young University student dressed in medieval garb. He participates in the annual medieval festival here. Angélique.

After lunch we wandered through the beautiful Jardín Reforma, with its fountain & stone archway, to the grocery store, where we bought yogurt & nuts & cough drops. The pharmacy was out of amoxicillin for Grant so we

continued on to the Alhondiga market to buy mixed veggies for dinner. We got back to the house about 3, and after a short break

I headed back to the pharmacy a bit farther away for amoxicillin, while Grant & Mary had siestas. On the way back I got ice creams from the vendor on the corner at Dos Ríos (the intersection near the house).

It was nice to go out alone & wander. It's getting quite toasty out.

Back to the house at 4 for ice cream & journaling. We made stir-fried veggies with tortillas, cheese, & avocado - delicious!

About 7 we headed for town, taking a slow route through gardens, plazas, & back streets. The main plaza was hopping with young people, families, & musicians. The town is beautiful at night, with soft lighting everywhere. After a long stroll all

over town we arrived home, quite pooped, at 9:00.

Friday Feb. 20

The Oxxo store across the street has individual size yogurts with a small package of granola on top, so I've been having yogurt, granola, & fresh mangoes for breakfast - yum! Had a lovely, hot shower.

At 9:45 Mary & I headed out to the dentist. We took the shortcut Grant rediscovered last night: up the alley to the right of the fruteria, onto Terromotto (with scalloped walls & a view), and left onto September 28 street by the Alhondiga. Then all the way down past the University to the main plaza. This route has less traffic & people & the sidewalks are less treacherous.

We took the funicular (18 pesos, behind the theater) up to El Pipila & arrived at the dentist at 10:30. At 11:10 they called Mary in & she came out at 12. Meanwhile I had an ~~a~~ interesting chat with a woman who wanted to know all about type 1 & 2 diabetes (she had seen Mary testing her blood). I learned how to say junk food: comida chatarra.

We had told Grant we'd meet him at 11:30, and at 12:30 we finally arrived,

having taken the funicular down (rather than walking) due to lack of time.

We all went to the taqueria on Plaza San Fernando for lunch. I had a ~~delicious~~ delicious cheese, chicken, & mushroom quesadilla for 15 pesos (one dollar).

Then we walked up to the Embajadora neighborhood to what Grant calls "Blue tarp market." It's a small neighborhood market where we bought some tomatoes. After a stroll on the short tree-lined median we had ice cream in the little central park. This guy's mantecado had dried fruit & nuts. It was good but we liked the Dos Ríos guy's better. It's breezy today & a bit cooler.

On the way back to the house we got some cheese & avocados at Hidalgo market, & some crema & salsa at the grocery store.

Grant carted everything home & Mary & I went to the Alhondiga museum. Seniors (60+) get in free. I paid \$52 pesos (about \$3.50).

The museum was better than I remembered and definitely worthwhile, although mostly only in Spanish. The depressing revolution photos I remembered from last time weren't there.

It's a beautiful building with a courtyard & two levels. There are historic murals filling the stairways, plus folk art, & rooms with precolonial artifacts. It's a great introduction to Mexican history, with photos & other info.

Mary & I got back to the house about 4. We made quesajuevos for dinner, with tortillas, beans, cheese, egg, avocado, tomato, crema, & salsa. They were delicious.

At 7 Mary & I walked back downtown to attend a callejoneada. A group of musicians dressed in Cervantine costumes performs folk songs as you wander through the alleys. It cost \$100 pesos each (about \$7). It started on the steps of the church by the theater. Eight musicians sang songs & did funny dances & comedic bits while we all sat & laughed. They gave us a ceramic vessel shaped a bit like a musical instrument. We had to carry these to show we had paid. The musicians played tambourine, upright bass, guitars, & "mandolins," & sang. They were very talented & I recognized many of the songs. People sang along. There were probably about 40 people in our group. On Fridays & Saturdays they do an early group (ours was at 7:30), otherwise it doesn't start until 9:15. Ours didn't end until about 9:15. It was a ton of fun. We followed them through the alleys & they'd stop every so often to do a little number, always interactive. There was a group of women doing a bachelorette party & they serenaded her. Another time they poured sticky orange juice into our ceramic

jugs & cajoled people to try pouring it into their mouths from as high up as possible. Much laughter as it splashed all over. I didn't try this but still got sloshed before I was able to pour mine out. Glad I had a wet wipe with me! I'd recommend a flashlight as some of the alleys are a bit dark & treacherous. It was a lot of fun & a highlight of the trip. You don't need to understand Spanish, but it is more fun if you do.

We got back at 9:30 to find that Grant had burned a whole pot of applesauce & stunk up the whole place. He hadn't thought to open a window. I was pretty mad, as he's done this so many times before. He gets distracted & forgets he has something on the stove. This came on top of him losing 500 pesos out of his pocket, & forgetting things every day, so it gets a bit wearisome.

Traveling with Mary is going well. We're all getting along, & the house is big enough that we can have our own space.

Sat. Feb. 21 Dolores Hidalgo

Walked down to the bus stop below the house about 10 and bought tickets to Dolores Hidalgo from the ticket vendor who stands there all day. He was very friendly & taught me how to say "round trip." The bus comes about every 30 minutes, takes a little over an hour, and costs 71 pesos, or about \$5. From Guanajuato the bus climbs up steeply then down & onto the plain where Dolores lies. It's dry & brown now, but there are lots of green shrubs, including one covered in yellow flowers. Wikipedia says this is a steppe. The area gets 24-38 inches of rain a year, mostly in the summer. Dolores is a little bit lower than Guanajuato, at about 6500 feet. There's a lot of agave & prickly pear cactus.

We headed straight for lunch after we arrived, and found a wonderful place just inside the market. A very friendly woman ~~delectable~~ ~~dear~~ ~~dear~~ called out to us and "reeled us in" with her charm. A smorgasbord of colorful casseroles lined the counter for us to choose from: chile rellenos, mole, chicken soup, rice, beans, beef stew, potato fritters, and the list goes on. I had beef stew & rice, Mary had chicken soup & beans, Grant had a chile relleno, a pork taco, & a potato fritter. They brought baskets of fresh, hot tortillas, and they heated everything on the stove.

before they served it to us, so we weren't worried about germs. It was delicious & the woman & her two young helpers were really sweet.

After lunch we found the church where Father Hidalgo issued the cry that started the Mexican Revolution. Nearby (across from the church) is the beautiful green jardin central. There we met a chain-smoking American man & his Mexican friend Hector, a local math teacher who speaks fluent English. He got us oriented & showed us where to get a map at the tourist kiosk we had walked right by & not even noticed. He took us to a ceramic shop & showed us two others on Puebla. We were looking for ceramic peppers (strings of them are called ristras). We couldn't find any (turns out there were some at the very first shop, but we didn't see them...).

It was hot today, so we headed back to the jardin for ice cream. Dolores is famous for ice cream. Each vendor makes their own & there are supposedly over 100 flavors available. We got mantecado (vanilla for me & guayaba for Mary & Grant) from a guy ~~on~~ who Grant thought he remembered from last time. His ice cream was very good - loaded with big pieces of dried fruit - but expensive: 20 pesos for the smallest cup (which is 8 pesos near where we're staying). Lesson learned - ask the price before you order. We don't know if he

overcharged us, or if his prices were just higher than the other vendors.

After ice cream we kept looking for the place we remembered from last time, which sold pepper strings. No one remembered it & one guy finally told us it had gone out of business. We walked over to the highway (110) on the west side of town, about 4 blocks from the jardin. This street is lined on both sides by ceramic shops, each one owned by a different family & each offering slightly different items & patterns. The wares spill onto the ~~stre~~ sidewalks. At last we found a string of peppers.

Mary wanted to go back to one of the first shops we had been to earlier in the day, way on the other side of the jardin, so we slogged back there feeling very hot. She bought some small plates & then we headed for the bus station, arriving about 4:40, quite exhausted. \* Unfortunately, I appear to be getting a cold, something I haven't had in a very long time. I have a sore throat & runny nose.

The bus on the way back was even nicer than the morning bus. Our driver was a very friendly round man who spoke ~~very~~ good English (having once lived in the States) & was eager to use it.

The bus dropped us off in front of the hacienda at 1 pm. We found a note

on the door from Hank, inviting us over for a visit at 7. We were so tired but felt we shouldn't shun the offer. We rushed around making a quick dinner of leftovers. I was a bit crabby from hunger & not feeling well, so we all collided a bit in the kitchen.

Mary is a more leisurely person than me and likes to linger over a meal, but she was nevertheless ready to go at 7 and we headed across the alley (sans Grant, who was too tired, and wanted to work on scrubbing the burnt pot).

We sat on Hank & Anna's lovely patio in the silky warm night, with a slivered moon & Venus posing in the sky, & the moodily lit houses visible on the hillside nearby.

It's a magical view. We had a nice chat until about 8:30. They are pretty easy to talk to but are not kindred spirits completely.

I always feel I'm walking on eggshells around Anna for some reason, afraid to say the wrong thing & offend her.

Today was tiring partly because it's hard to travel with other people. We get along great with Mary, but I can definitely sense a little "overdose" setting in. My not feeling well probably has a lot to do with it.

\* We came upon a wedding. The bride & groom were walking into the church together, surrounded by all the attendees. A pickup truck loaded with elaborate floral displays was unloading in the courtyard. The bridal car was festooned with white flowers wilting in the heat.

Sun. Feb. 22

I slept for 12 hours, took Tylenol a couple times, & woke up feeling pretty good.

At 12:30 Hank & Anna took us to the Gene Byron Museum in nearby Marfil for a Mexican folk music concert. We had been here on our last trip. It's an old stone hacienda, crumbly & atmospheric. The concert room is the gallery, a long, narrow room that seats about 100.

The group was called Los Arribeños. 4 men & 2 women playing wooden guitar-like instruments with varying numbers of strings. The music they played is called "Son Jarocho." It's folk music from Veracruz that is a mix of African, Spanish, & other influences. Our favorite song was called Guanábana. Like all folk music, this is simple & repetitive. Stanzas are repeated in a call & response pattern. Singers take turns singing in a high almost nasal tone, like bluegrass or hollers. This kind of singing carries in a loud place with no microphone. Like all folk music it got a bit monotonous after a while, but was still very enjoyable. The musicians also took turns dancing in a foot stomping style a bit like flamenco, except in pairs. This is the music of ranches & life in the country. Full of life & energy.

After the concert there was wine & snacks in the courtyard. We met Jeff, a nice guy from Portland who now lives in GTO full time.

About 3 pm Hank & Anna dropped us off at the Exhacienda San Gabriel de Barrera, a former estate owned by a wealthy Spaniard. It is now a museum with the beautiful gardens, home, & furniture preserved. Like a mini Mexican Versailles. We all loved the gardens & I loved the furnished rooms. You could almost imagine what it was like to live here. <sup>In the courtyard they were cleaning up from an elaborate wedding the night before.</sup>

Another 80° day. We climbed the hill up to the road & found a patch of shade. We didn't have to wait very long for a bus back to town. 5 pesos & it dropped us off in the tunnel below the market, at the same place Ian & I disembarked 6 years ago.

Mary went off exploring on her own. Grant & I bought a roasted chicken, more oaxacan cheese, potatoes, tomatoes, an avocado, & some sweet bread (a kind of gordito).<sup>acorn</sup> Walking home past the Alhondiga we came upon a parade celebrating the first Sunday of Lent.

First came Aztec dancers with fabulous feathered headdresses. Then came marching bands, all playing drums in unison. Some of the drummers were tiny little boys. Next came four women carrying a bier covered in flowers. Next were the "carnaval" clowns - people dressed in all kinds of masks & costumes.

What a delightful treat it was to stumble upon this!

Back at the Hacienda Grant & I prepared a fabulous meal of chicken, boiled potatoes, street corn (grilled kernels mixed with mayo & cotija cheese - super yum), a plate of sliced tomato & cucumber, & a plate of sliced oranges with cinnamon. Mary arrived at 6 & we all enjoyed the meal very much.

A quiet evening at home catching up on journals & photos. I plan to sleep early & long because I don't want to get any sicker!

Monday Feb. 23

Another wonderful day. After a lazy morning we headed into town, stopping at several shops along the way to look at folk art, prints, & beautiful copper & pewter lamps along Positos Street. After Mary got some money from the ATM, I went to buy bus tickets to Oaxaca, & Grant & Mary went to the shop where she had seen ~~some~~ earrings she liked the other day. Alas, ~~by~~ the ~~earrings~~ earrings had been sold. Meanwhile, I bought bus tickets to Mexico City, but can't buy tickets all the way to Oaxaca.

In Plaza del Baratillo we ran into Hank & Anna, & Grant bought some tamales. We

walked back to the house for a nice lunch of tamales, chile rellenos, & quesadillas with avocado & tomato.

Then we walked down below to wait for the bus to Valenciana, to visit the church & the mine. The bus lets you off next to the church and up ahead you see a sign that says "Bocanina San Ramón" (mouth of the San Ramon mine). You pay 35 pesos and go into the courtyard of the old hacienda, or mining village. The price includes a tour in Spanish, or you can go on your own, which is what we chose. A nice young man showed us to the mine entrance & explained how to go down. There were optional hard hats, because parts of the ceiling are low. He told us that Valenciana had 12 mines, of which San Ramón was one. This one is easy to visit because the shaft is inclined & not vertical. Miners used to climb up the steps with heavy loads on their backs. Mary & I walked down to the bottom, about 40 metres. It used to go farther but they blocked it off for safety. Up top we saw various museum rooms containing old furniture & ledgers for recording the ore extracted. Some of the rooms are used for events. It was interesting & I'm glad we went.

Unfortunately the famous church was closed because it's Monday (many things close on Mondays). The church is opulent from the silver & gold riches of the mine.

Back in Guanajuato (the busses both ways were standing room only & cost 5 pesos), we looked for ice cream. We were disappointed that the Dos Rios guy wasn't there & walked all the way to the market before we found some. It was more icy, & less creamy. On the way back to the house we bought more of the round whole wheat bread (gorditas de trigo). Got back about 4:30.

After a while I went back out to buy vegetables & corn for dinner. There was no grilled corn so I bought boiled with cheese only, because the mayo sitting out in the sun made me nervous.

We made a stirfry with the ~~the~~ leftover chicken & ~~the~~ leftover vegetables, plus the leftover potatoes fried with onion, & the corn.

After dinner we walked back to town to enjoy the warm night air & the people watching. I tried a cookie from a street vendor & it was good. Home about 9:30.

Tues. Feb. 24

Slept in - trying to prevent this cold from taking hold. It's lurking but hasn't pounced. Planning a down day - laundry & lots of rest. Nice chat with Mary over breakfast, about the novel she is writing.

The day flew by. Did laundry, napped twice, showered, ~~then~~ read. At 4pm I walked down to the corner to buy flowers for Anna. 120 pesos (\$8) for a huge bouquet of fragrant white, pink, & yellow lillies. We then walked over to Hank & Anna's and visited on their porch for an hour and a half before walking down to a restaurant for dinner. We offered to take them out for dinner as a small thanks for letting us stay in their hacienda. They chose El Rincón de Fausto in the Jardín Reforma. Entrees were about \$8 per person. Grant loved his skirt steak. My spaghetti was OK.

Got home about 8:30, tried to buy bus tickets to Oaxaca online, but my credit card won't work. The ADO bus company only operates in southern Mexico and is the only company that goes to Oaxaca. Their website does not accept foreign credit cards. Hank actually emailed me his credit card info to see if it would work (it didn't, & thank goodness because I later noticed that you have to show the credit card when you go to pick up the tickets!).

Wed. Feb. 25

Said goodbye to Mary at 8:30 and walked to the dentist. Grant & I are on our own now. Traveling with Mary has been a wonderful treat, but we're happy to now be just us two.

We took the funicular up to El Pipila, admired the view for one last time, and walked 5 minutes up to the left to the Logani Clinical Integral of Dr. Daniel Alejandro Garcia Nieto. We got the payment squared away (\$2444 or 3800 pesos total for a root canal & crown repair), & then I said goodbye & walked back down to Plaza San Fernando to meet Anna, who had offered to show me where her travel agency is, in case they could help me buy bus tickets. It only took me ten minutes to get to the plaza so I wandered around for a bit before settling on a bench by a fountain to watch the people go by. The city is quiet in the morning, except for people heading to work or school. Many shops are closed. It was cool & breezy, but sunny.

Anna arrived & showed me the travel agency, but it was still closed. She went off to breakfast with a friend & I finally went to see the inside of the Teatro Juarez, a beautiful neo-classical building still used for concerts & plays.

Back to the travel agency, which couldn't help me. Oh well, we'll have to hope for the best tomorrow! Then I sat on a bench in the Jardín Unión to wait for Grant. A young man serenaded us with his guitar practice. A few vendors approached, but there is very little of it anywhere else in town, and they are very gracious if you say no. Same for stores - they never cling or wheedle.

Grant & I both think the sidewalks are in better shape than four years ago, although Hank & Anna say they haven't noticed.

We had lunch at the taco lady on Plaza San Fernando. 51 pesos (about \$3.50) for three big tacos with cheese, meat, potatoes, beans, mushrooms (not all in the same taco). Juicy & flavorful.

We headed back to the house & were happy to see our ice cream man was back on the corner at Dos Ríos. His mantecado is rich & creamy. Today he charged us 24 pesos for two small (chica). The other day he charged 23 for a small & a medium. Prices here can sometimes be a mystery.

We ~~spent~~ spent the afternoon packing & napping. We had a scare when Grant thought Mary had inadvertently taken his diabetic test strips. It's a new meter & the chances of being able to find strips here are probably slim at best. I got pretty upset, imaging traipsing all over town looking for strips in vain & then a ruined

Vacation because Grant would be having to guess at his blood sugar all the time.

I do get tired of the medical emergencies we've had on various trips... Then, hallelujah, Grant found the strips & apologized for giving me such a scare.

The internet has been out all afternoon.

About 5:30 we walked to town to get street food for Grant. (I had bean & cheese quesadillas with tomato & avocado.) He had elote (grilled corn kernels with mayo, cotija cheese, & chile) & tacos with chopped steak, grilled onion, & salsa. He said yum.

On the way back we stopped at Hank & Anna's to say goodbye. They were sitting out on their patio with a fire in the chiminea. It was hard to tear myself away to come back & finish packing.

My cold, that lurking thing, has pounced. Runny nose, cough, sore throat. Thank goodness I brought cough suppressant & decongestant, or I wouldn't be able to sleep.

Thursday Feb. 26

Up at 5 for some hot tea for my throat. The alarm will go off at 5:30 and it will be time to pack and take a taxi to ~~to~~ the bus station. The internet came back on. Apparently it was a country wide outage.

We left the hacienda a little after 6 and hailed a cab right away. For 50 pesos (\$3.50) we were at the bus station in about 10 minutes. It was a chilly morning. I was glad for my cloth wrap in the bus waiting room. There's a special waiting area for Primera Plus customers. They had Fox Spots blaring from both corners. Fox is such a conservative channel (anti-immigration reform, etc.) that I'm surprised Mexico does business with them.

Our bus was right on time. There were only 4 passengers! They give you a ticket when you load your bag under the bus & check the number when you retrieve it, so you don't have to worry about anyone running off with it. They gave us our choice of beverage (juice or water) & a bag with packages of muffins & cookies. The bus was cold for a long time. We had front row seats which gave us a great view, but we could hear the driver's loud talk radio station. This bus had a door between the driver & passenger compartments.

We stopped in Irapuato, a good sized city, to pick up more passengers. A woman mopped the aisles. We watched another employee polishing station windows. The bus has sloping foot rests, bendable "wing" type headrests, & lots of leg room. They showed two movies, both dubbed. It's strawberry season & we passed many roadside stands selling strawberries & cream (fresas con crema). We arrived in Mexico City on time at a few minutes after noon at the north terminal. We headed straight for the ADO counter, hoping for the best, and to our enormous delight there were still seats on the 1:00 bus! We then ate our lunch of bread & cheese & veggies.

744 pesos  
each

At this station passengers go through x-ray & metal detector security before you can go out to the bus waiting area, and they search your hand bags & ward you before you get on the bus. They gave us water but no snacks. This bus was nice but not as deluxe as Primera Plus. There are about 40 seats on each bus & two restrooms in the back. They showed two movies (both about food) and two concert videos (one was ACDC). If you don't want to be distracted by the screens, bring a baseball cap. Mexico City is huge. It took us two hours to get from one side to the other.

The scenery south of Mexico City got more & more beautiful. We went through a lot of mountains, and saw some that appeared to have patches of snow. There were pine forests. Then we crossed into Sonoran? desert country, with juniper, joshua trees, organ pipe cactus, saguaro, & yucca. It was dense, lush, & green, like Southern Arizona squared. Many fields being burned. Saw sheep, goats, cattle, a man plowing with horses, & a cowboy. There were birds & palm trees, soaring rock formations, small towns with church steeples & dome-topped missions.

We arrived at 8:20, about an hour late due to a traffic delay. A nice taxi driver took us to the hotel for 45 pesos.

Our room is 75 pesos a night (about \$5 U.S.). We had asked for a queen but their available one didn't have air conditioning, and it's been about 90 degrees here. So we opted for the room with two double beds. It is also more spacious. It has a closet, two bedside tables, a credenza with drawers, two pillows each, a ceiling fan, large bath towels, & a roomy, hot shower. It does have lights shining in the window all night (glad I travel with an eye mask) and two of the reading lights don't work. It's pretty quiet. There is good wifi and some nice common areas.

Friday Feb. 27

Other than some coughing fits that kept me upright part of the night, I slept well. Awoke to the sound of birds. Had a nice hot shower (the steam felt good in my chest). We slept until 8:30! We had breakfast in the lobby restaurant.

23 pesos for a nice plate of ripe fruit, yogurt, & granola, and 18 for a cup of hot water & milk for my decaf instant coffee. We liked the atmosphere, and a lot of Mexicans eat here.

We walked to the zócalo, or main square, not far away. It reminds me a little bit of Antigua, Guatemala, with its cobbled streets, colorful walls, & old stone buildings. It's a flat town. It's very touristy. Lots of hawkers & beggars. The zócalo is a maze of taped stalls selling mostly schlock. Grant did find a beautiful handcarved wooden spoon made from huamuche wood. Some pushy vendors.

We then walked down to the Juarez Market where we saw grasshoppers (champulinas) for sale in huge baskets and multiple flavors. We also saw maney fruit, which is a beautiful salmon color inside. Burger King, Dominos, high end hotels & restaurants all mixed together. Lots of tour companies being hawked by Mexicans speaking perfect English.

People here are small, like in Guatemala, as they are mostly indigenous.

Everyone has smart phones. There is a lot of English spoken because there are so many tourists here. Lots of older travelers, mostly women.

We had a cheap but not very good lunch of quesadillas at a little restaurant whose location I can't recall (I'm not oriented yet). An older couple from Fairbanks came in & we chatted for a while. They reminded me a little bit of Carole & Brad.

Next we went into the gorgeous, gilded Templo de Santo Domingo. Then we walked to ~~the~~ Juárez Park where they were having the big Friday market. This is a local market, so no crafts, but it was fun to people watch, especially the teens in their school uniforms strolling around the fountains eyeing each other. Grant tried an empanada verde: a large corn tortilla heated on a comal (griddle) and filled with some kind of green chili sauce, chicken, & cheese, then folded over and grilled. The vendor used a plastic bag whenever she touched money, and the food was hot, so it seemed safe, but a little while later Grant had a bout of diarrhea.

We spent the afternoon at the museum of Oaxacan Culture, which had a lot of wonderful things to see. I especially liked the funeral urns & the treasures from one of the Monte Albán tombs. The building itself is gorgeous, housed in a restored Moorish-feeling cloister. 64 pesos each. Nice & cool on a warm day (81 degrees).

Back to the hotel for a nice siesta (I'm still feeling under the weather). We had dinner at the

hotel restaurant. It normally closes at 6 but happily served us. Nothing special, but my cheese omelette hit the spot. \$78 pesos. Grant had quesadillas.

We walked to the MORA, a women's art cooperative. They had a lot of great stuff at good prices, so we'll probably go back there. We strolled around for a bit, checking out the Friday night scene, which was hopping with live music, street food, bars, & music. It was windy & just a tad cool. On the way back we passed a somber parade led by a man dressed in a black women's gown, followed by girls in dresses & a band playing a repetitive, dirgelike melody.

Bought a big jug of water at the corner store & came back to the hotel about 8:30. My throat is very raw. Hope I feel better soon!



Saturday Feb. 28

A small boy  
stuck this on  
me in the  
cathedral &  
asked for 1 peso.

Coughing fit in the night. Sat up sipping water for a long time. Losing my voice this morning. I had breakfast in the hotel restaurant, along with 14 American women here on a tour.

We walked to the ethno-botanical gardens, but you can only go with a tour. Tours cost \$7 and last 2 hours (11am - 1pm) which is just too long for us, and during lunchtime.

Next we walked to Las Golondrinas Hotel to see if we liked it better. It has a lush, jungly garden & nice common areas, but the room was smaller, with no AC, although the bathroom was pretty deluxe. The breakfast restaurant is pricey. So we've decided to stay put.

We walked to the Hotel Angel Rivera and bought tickets to Monte Albán tomorrow. 50 pesos each (\$3.50), transport only.

Next we visited the Artisanal market, which we really liked. I bought a tin heart, but we still can't decide which alebrije (carved & painted wooden animal) we like. They range in price from \$10 to hundreds, and the more expensive ones are more beautiful.

We passed a hotel that cost 280 pesos for a double room with private bath. That's about \$20 a night. We were curious to see it but decided to maybe look another time.

We decided to eat bread & cheese for lunch.

We went into the 20 de Noviembre market and bought two white rolls & a ball of slightly salty Oaxacan cheese (quesillo), then walked to the zocalo. On the way we passed a woman selling homemade cookies for \$1 a bag. She gave us a sample. Thin, crispy, sprinkled with sesame, with a toasted flavor - yum.

Another demonstration in the zocalo, to do with university improvements. We sat in the shade listening to the speeches. The zocalo is so crowded you can't really see it. A sea of tents, tents, merchandise, & people.

Then we went back to the Juarez Market, which has a lot of great crafts & food.

From there we walked back to the Cathedral on the north side of the zocalo.

There we saw a young girl celebrating her 15<sup>th</sup> birthday (quinceañera), dressed in a green princess dress with sparkling headress & 5 male attendants. Her father proudly told me it was her quinceañera and she let me take her picture.

The cathedral is beautiful inside.

On the way back to the hotel we passed another parade. Headed by a marching band, it consisted ~~of~~ of three groups of women in gorgeous embroidered traditional dresses. Back to the hotel at 2 for siesta.

At 4 we headed out again. Up to Juarez Park in search of ice cream. Street vendors here only sell ices & slurpies (raspas). Guys were setting up a stage(?) in the park and when we asked they told us it was for "family day," i.e., Sunday (tomorrow).

We headed south & spotted a "neveria" which turned out to have ice cream. Pricey at 18 pesos (#1.20) a cup, but yummy. We had walnut. Sat near the zocalo to eat it.

Went looking for "China town" but didn't find it. Ate dinner at "La Flor de Oaxaca," recommended in ~~Lonely~~ Moon guidebook. It's a traditional Oaxacan restaurant, low key & not touristy. Grant had the mole negro, which he said was a bit too sweet. I had milanesa de pollo (breaded chicken fillet) which was OK, if a bit boring. It came with fried potatoes & salad with no dressing. The total was 210 pesos, about #14. We left a 10% tip.

On the way back we walked on the pedestrian blvd and saw two parades. One was for a wedding: a band, some big puppets, the bride & groom, and all the guests in their sparkly long dresses.

Back at the hotel at 8.

Forgot to mention that we also went to the Oaxacan Textile Museum. It's free, and was a disappointment. not much to see and nothing is labeled. However their exhibits do change.

We also popped in to the St. Augustin church which has an impressive collection of historic paintings. But they are dark with age & hard to see. I did like how the church was used as an informal

community gathering place.

The city is a sea of tarps strung across roads, & tents set up. People are staging protests & camping out. We don't know if this is an occasional or constant situation.

We stopped at one of the chic "Brujula" coffee shops to ask the price of their granola. At \$3 (45 pesos) for a small bag, we passed. There are many coffee & chocolate shops here. There are also many hotels. Grant likes the area around the Juarez market best if we ever come back.

Sunday March 1

A cool morning. After breakfast we walked to the tour bus. Along the way many taxi drivers tooted and then smiled broadly & waved when I shook my head no.

At the bus pickup spot we decided to change to one of their all-day tars. Monte Alban was full so we opted for El Tule - Mitla - Teotitlan - Fabrica de Mezcal - Hierve el Agua. At only 200 pesos each (\$14) it turned out to be more than worth every penny. It was a 12-passenger van with 10 people (5 couples - one Italian and the others Mexican). There was a driver & two guides. We left town about 10:30, after waiting a while for one of the guides to show up (stuck in traffic).

All the tour companies in town seem to offer pretty much the same tours for the same prices, and use the same vans & drivers. We felt it was well organized & good (great) value.

The streets are clean here. Street cleaners push carts with big garbage cans & brooms. There are more pharmacies here than Starbucks in Seattle. Walmart & Office Depot outskirts.

The beautiful purple Jacaranda trees are in bloom everywhere, adding bursts of color.

We took the Pan American highway (Mexico 190) to Santa Maria del Tule, a delightful little town with an absolutely enormous cypress tree, probably the largest in Latin America, and over 2000 years old. 10 pesos to enter the fenced enclosure and adjacent small <sup>old</sup> church. Even on a Sunday it wasn't crowded. An adjacent green garden, pedestrian promenade, and ice cream stalls make this a very pleasant place. Alas, we only had about 15 minutes here. The clean 3 pesos bathrooms were most welcome. (Variously called baños, sanitarios, or WCs, they cost 3-5 pesos, if they charge, and are usually pretty clean.) Lots of palm trees & hills.

Our very friendly bilingual guide told us that the local people grow mostly corn & beans but have begun growing more agave for mezcal. He does not think this has cut into their food supply.

In Teotitlan del Valle we were taken to the Vasquez family rug makers where a very friendly man gave us a very interesting explanation of

how the wool is cleaned & dried (including how cochineal bugs are cultivated on cactus, dried, and ground to make red dye), then spun & woven on big old wooden looms. He explained the different Zapotec patterns and their meanings, diamonds, tree of life, butterflies (good luck), lightning. The prices depend on the complexity of the design. To our surprise we ended up buying a medium-sized red & blue rug with a "diamond" pattern (strength?) for 3000 pesos (\$210). It's gorgeous.

The next stop was El Rey de Matatlan, a family-owned Mezcal maker. Grant & I are the only English speakers, so we had a private guide, a young man of the family who has worked here his whole life. Agave is also called Maguey. There are 12 kinds, each with a different flavor, but only one is cultivated, and is thus the most common. It's called sword agave. It takes eight years to get big enough. They cut off the leaves and cook the whole body, or heart, of the plant, which they call a "piña" because it looks like a pineapple. They put the hearts in a pit, cover them with earth. Under the hearts is burning wood with rocks on top. When the rocks get red hot they place the agave on top and cover everything with dirt and leave it for 5 days. When it's done the agave is soft & brown & sweet. They grind it with a big stone turned

by horses and ferment it in big barrels. Then it is distilled. The pulp is used for fertilizer, (compost), or adobe bricks. The mezcal is sold clear or aged in oak barrels for up to 8 years. They eat sliced oranges dipped in chili salt as a chaser. The chili salt has ground up agave worms in it, which enhances the mezcal flavor.

The next stop was Mitla, a beautifully preserved archeological site. This was a city for funeral ceremonies & burials of the wealthy & important. Incredibly ornate stonework & carvings. Again we had a private guide. Again we were struck by the similarities to the Navajo people in the way people look and their geometric designs (although the Navajo never developed city states like in meso America). At Mitla enormous slabs & columns of stone were moved long distances without wheels or horses, and carved without stone tools.

By this time it was 2:30 so Grant & I ate our lunch of brown bread & rubbery Oaxaca cheese (the "original" string cheese!).

At 3:00 the van stopped at a buffet restaurant. For 130 pesos (about \$9) you can absolutely pig out on about 100 different items of traditional Oaxacan food. It was just like a Royal Fork or Old Country Buffet, with kids gorging on piles of desserts. Next door were

some baby horses, some weavers, and another mezcal vendor. This one was the cheapest we've seen so far. We bought two tiny bottles for Colin & my dad.

The restaurant had a sea of overhead fans & clean bathrooms (a guy was even mopping the floors). They were playing nice Mexican music. 90% of the patrons were Mexican. We stayed here for an hour.

The next door weaver was making thin brown cloth. He had a pulley contraption that threw the shuttle back & forth as he worked the wooden pedals.

Our last stop of the day was Hierve el Agua, a calcium carbonate "waterfalls" made from dissolved minerals from a spring. It was 23 km from the restaurant up into the hills. The last 4 km were on a dirt road through a village. The entry fee is 40 pesos. Along the way we passed a driverless donkey trotting down the road with a load of wood on its back. We were on the side of a hill looking down into a valley dotted with terraced fields. Saguaro & ocotillo dot the slopes. Saw a man building a house from adobe blocks. We arrived at Hierve at 4:30 and there was a nice cool breeze blowing. We had a nieve (ice milk). Delicious.

Then we walked about 5 minutes down the hill to see the "falls" and were delightfully surprised to see people swimming in the pools at the top of the falls. What a delightful place to spend a hot day!

on the way out of town we saw two processions of people carrying calla lilies.

It wasn't crowded, even on a Sunday. Lots of families & teens, mostly Mexicans. No screaming children. It's clear. It's a stunningly beautiful place! It reminded me of Havasu Falls in the grand canyon. The falls are magical - they look frozen as they plunge down into the valley. We had one hour here. I'd love to come back here & swim some day. The pools are turquoise & green from the dissolved minerals. There are also stunted palm trees here.

We left at 5:45 and got back to Oaxaca at 5, just as it was getting dark. It was windy. We ate at La Tlayuda, across from Santa Domingo church. We liked it. For \$3-4 (45-60 pesos) you can get a tlayuda, a giant crispy (not fried) tortilla loaded with your choice of beans, cheese, meat, & veggies. Back to the hotel at 8:30 where we absolutely crashed!

Lots of hamburger & hot dog vendors at night. Mexican roads have lots of speed bumps (topes). The sidewalks here are pretty smooth & wide, but congested, so it's hard to walk two abreast. Mexico is a mix of Europe & third world. Gorgeous buildings & cathedrals, & dirt poor villages. People here have a variety of features that show their origins: Asian, Eskimo, Navajo, European. It's a beautiful and fascinating blend.

Monday March 2

~~breakfast~~ The hotel restaurant <sup>doesn't</sup> open until 8.  
~~breakfast~~ I went out looking for a substitute but almost nothing was open so early. I think it was about 7:30. Tamale vendors.

At 9 we headed out. We bought more brown bread for our picnic, and yogurt for my breakfast. I used the last of my decongestant last night, but couldn't find any in a pharmacy. I also struck out on hard candies. The ~~only~~ candy store I found had a one kilo minimum purchase.

The tour started late again - the van picked us up about 10:30. I think it goes around town collecting people. Today it's a 12-passenger van with 15 people (two are small children). We are the only English speakers.

We climbed up out of the city on a narrow, windy road with no guard rails. We had a great view of the town below. We arrived about 11:30. The guide was funny. He gave us short blurbs as we walked from place to place, so it never got boring. Monte Albán means white (albino) mountain. The city was inhabited by "the people of the clouds" from 800 BC to 800 AD. It was a matriarchal society. The population was 50 thousand, life expectancy was 52 years.

Monte Alban entry fee 64 pesos (about \$4.50)  
Crowds of school kids on field trips.

In contrast it was 29 years in Europe at that time, mainly due to poor sanitation. Only about 20% of the site has been excavated. Then there were no trees or plants allowed because the roots would destroy the floors & aqueducts. They had a whole system of underground cisterns & sanitation. The houses had no windows so all living was done outdoors in the sun. Melanoma & eye damage were common. The people were 3-4 feet tall. Now there are many acacia, cotton, and other trees providing welcome shade.

We are really impressed with the quality & value of these tours. The guides are excellent, the drivers are professional, and everything is friendly and well run.

We had delicious strawberries & cream ice milk before hopping on the bus. We spent about an hour at Monte Alban.

We saw brilliant red & black vermillion flycatchers today.

Next stop was Arrozola to a workshop where they carve alebrijes (fanciful creatures) out of sacred cobal wood & paint them with tiny geometric designs. To get there we went "overland" through private land on bumpy dirt roads past rustic houses with cows & banana trees. It was great!

At 2 pm we went to another buffet restaurant, this one smaller & simpler than yesterday. We did not hear the cost. We ate

our lunch of brown bread & cheese. The restaurant is called La Cabana del Indio.

It was quite warm, but there were clouds & a nice breeze.

One of the couples had two adorable little girls. The youngest was a tiny three year old. They bought (the parents did) matching "madeline" hats for them - so cute!

At 3 pm we drove "cross country" to Cuilapan to see a beautiful 16<sup>th</sup> century chapel with a mix of Roman, Moorish, & Mexican architecture. Grant was flagging from the heat & high blood sugar & stayed in the van.

Our last stop of the day, after a 20-minute bumpy ride through villages was San Bartolo Coyotepec, famous for making black pottery. We went to the workshop of the grandson of Doña Rosa, the woman who pioneered the technique. He gave a demonstration of making pots on a pre-Colombian "wheel" (a dried ~~gourd~~ gourd balancing on an overturned gourd). The brown clay contains manganese which turns black when fired. The pieces are very inexpensive but we decided it was too fragile to bring home & didn't buy anything.

We got back to town at 5:20 and went back to the hotel to rest for an hour.

We had dinner again at La Tlayuda. I had the open-faced Sierra, with beans, cheese, & vegetables, along with

a bowl of their delicious bean soup (with quesillo & crunchy tortilla "chips"). Grant had the "Classico" with a piece of thin steak on top. The total was 145 pesos (about \$10) plus a tip. We saw two of the couples from today's tour.

Back to the hotel to relax. There are no bugs here so we can leave the door open to cool off the room (so much nicer than A.C.).

We haven't seen any people in indigenous clothing, even in the small villages.

Local cotton clothing is made from cotton from cotton trees. I never knew cotton also grew on trees. Harder to harvest, as it's up high.

Streets in Oaxaca are one way, which makes them much easier to cross - you only have to look one way.

Tuesday March 3

The weather continues perfect (I think it usually is here) — cool nights & mornings, warm days, blue sky.

After breakfast in the hotel restaurant we walked a few blocks north to the "Arquitos" (little arches) neighborhood. The arches are the remains of the original aqueduct built for the city water supply. We liked the area a lot — it's more quiet & residential.

We then angled SW on narrow, quiet streets to the Basilica de Nuestra Señora de Soledad, a gorgeous gilt Baroque church whose claim to fame is a statue of Mary wearing a crown made of 5 pounds of gold & 600 diamonds. The adjacent museum (donation) contains a hodgepodge of interesting artifacts.

Next to the church is a lovely plaza with a fountain & ice cream stalls. I tried one of the custard-filled cone-shaped pastries I've been seeing. Delicious, & not too sweet.

I stopped by the Monte Alban hotel to ask about the evening folk dance performance. They cancel if less than 15 people reserve, so I have to stop by around 6 to see.

We walked to the Artisanal Market and found two alebrijes (carved & painted animals) we liked, after a lot of looking (I have wanted one for a long time). We got

a panther for 300 pesos (\$21) and a wolf for 350 (about \$25). Grant's blood sugar went low. He's a bit crabby today, but he isn't sure why.

We walked through the November 20 & Juarez markets, enjoying the food & flower displays, then headed north to a restaurant recommended in our guidebook. Along the way we saw yet another protest march & heard the loud booms of nearby fireworks (actually just big firecrackers, like M-80s, with no visible displays). This did not improve Grant's mood, as he does not like that noise.

The restaurant turned out to no longer exist, so we headed back to our old standby, La Tlayuda, for club sandwiches. They came with delicious fresh-squeezed orange juice & either salad or fries. We could have easily split one.

Back to the hotel at 1 for an early siesta. There's a music stall in the zocalo that's always playing great music. Today we heard some Cuban music we really liked and ended up buying the CD for 20 pesos (\$1.40).

We finally tried grasshoppers, with lime & salt. Not as crunchy as we expected. You mostly taste the lime & salt. The legs tend to linger in the mouth. I think they'd be best ground up and added to things.

Around 3:30 I headed out alone. First I went to the ~~the~~ Huizache Arte y Vivo de Oaxaca

artists cooperative store on Alcala at Matamoros. This is the best shopping place we've seen yet, with a large collection of every type of craft. Good quality & good prices. Rugs cheaper than what we paid - oh well!

The main zocalo is very crowded - we call it the zoocalo. But the adjacent Alameda de Leon is nice, with the front of the cathedral on one side. I looked for the wedding dress shop my friend Cathy mentioned but couldn't find it.

On the way back I peeked into the library on Alcala, which looks very nice, with an open air courtyard, and sponsors a big calendar of events, including films.

I also visited the beautifully-restored ex-Convento de Santa Catalina, now the Hotel Mina Real.

There are long lines for ATM machines here.

Back to the hotel at 5. Around 6 we headed out to look for a snack, as we were still a little full from lunch. First we popped in to Huizache & the Hotel Mina Real so Grant could see them. Then we went to the zocalo so I could show Grant the food tables I thought he would like. But another protest march was passing by with exploding firecrackers & Grant got mad. So while he sucked on the corner I went to find out if the folk dances would be happening tonight.

Unfortunately they are not. Grant and I went back to Soledad to look for food. The adjacent plaza sells only ice cream and pastries. We found the restaurant we'd seen today that looked good & went in. Unfortunately it was right next to a video arcade. But Grant said he wanted to stay so we ordered chicken fajitas to share. It was a small portion with a puddle of beans & a small mound of white rice & a basket of corn tortillas. Grant pushed the plate away in disgust. I ate what I could & he finally ate some so we wouldn't waste the chicken & vegetables.

I was pretty mad when we left and headed straight for the hotel, but didn't really just want to sit in the hotel all night. So we stopped for a while and watched the live musicians by the cathedral. The trio is pretty good. They mostly play blues rock. It kind of fell apart when an older white guy joined them on harmonica.

We walked up to Santo Domingo and Grant got a cup of esquites; boiled corn with mayo, cheese, chili, & lime. The only roasted corn we could find was whole. We sat by the cathedral and watched some dancers advertising for a political candidate. Back to the hotel around 8.

Although I do like traveling alone, that can get lonely. I ~~do~~ do like traveling with Grant, but our travel styles are pretty different. He doesn't have as much stamina or tolerance for heat or physical discomfort. He also gets frustrated by the food. You don't really know what you're getting, and sometimes it's disappointing. It takes a while to learn what's what.

Wednesday March 4

Our last day in Mexico. We're ready to leave Oaxaca. We've run out of things we want to do and we're ready to be done with the crowds & noise & heat. We wish we had a kitchen so we could shop & cook like we did in Guanajuato. Next time we do a trip like this we're going to try to stay in a place with a kitchen.

After breakfast we walked across town to the second class bus station to look for a bus to the Etla Wednesday market. After getting sent in a different direction by each person we asked, we finally concluded that the "collectivo" taxes, 15 pesos (\$1) each were the way to go. We ran into another gringo couple who were similarly confused & suggested we all take a taxi together. The taxis hold 5 people: two in front with the driver & three in back. It's a tight squeeze.

The couple turned out to be from Portland & were pretty much kindred spirits. She's retired from a tech job in San Jose & he ran a social service agency down there. They're thinking about spending half of each year down here. We gave them our card & hope they'll contact us.

We were disappointed in the Etla market. Just more stalls selling the same things every market sells. Grant sampled the barbecued goat, which he liked. We sat at a shady table and ate walnut ice milk, which we love, and then decided to head back to Oaxaca City for lunch, having only spent an hour and a half in Etla. We didn't see a single woman in traditional clothing.

The ice cream vendors spin the ice cream by hand. The metal canisters sit in wooden buckets filled with ice & salt.

People wrap infants in fleece suits & blankets, even in the heat. The heat must drug the babies into a stupor.

On the way back to Oaxaca in the taxi, an adorable baby girl, about 6 months old & all dressed in pink, was playing with my hair & touching my arms. When I turned around to talk to her she laughed & babbled at me.

We ate lunch at one of the vendors on the south side of the zocalito, near the

Monte Alban hotel. Delicious pork tacos, hot off the comal. 40 pesos for 5. Wish we'd tried this place sooner. We'll probably go back for dinner.

Back to the hotel about 1:30 for a break.

Lesson learned: buy souvenirs in town & not at the tour stops, which are more expensive. (They may not be - check prices in town first.)

About 3:00 we headed out again. First stop was ice cream next to the Teatro Principal. The theater has a green copper dome & is quite beautiful. The inside is also supposed to be beautiful, but the doors were closed. I peeked in the window to see a bit of the lobby.

We walked down to the 20 November market so I could try the hot chocolate.

I got it with milk. It comes in a bowl with bread but I declined the bread.

The chocolate was delicious, with cinnamon, vanilla, & other subtle flavors. Good thing I didn't try it days ago or I'd have had some every day! 20 pesos (\$1.25) without bread. Grant had a cookie because his blood sugar was low even after the ice cream.

We found the "grilling hall," a hot, smoky corridor where you buy the meat you want, they grill it over charcoal, and serve it to you at

communal wooden tables.

The Palacio del Gobierno museum was closed due to the protest that has been going on in the zocalo the whole time we've been here. The area is so choked with tents & protesters that Grant christened it the "choke-aló". They're clamoring for the release of certain political prisoners.

Looks like there won't be any folk dancing tonight either, alas. I also emailed another place but never heard back from them.

I bought a leather bracelet for Colin at Huizachev. Then we walked up to Juarez (21 pesos) Park & sat by the big fountain watching cute children play on the inflatable slide. Back to the hotel about 5:30 for another break before dinner. 86 degrees today. It's supposed to rain tonight.

Tacos for dinner at the zocalito. Back to the hotel to shower & pack. Gave our untouched loaf of bread to an old beggar woman, along with a lollipop I'd bought from a young boy today for 3 pesos. This was in keeping with my decision to buy little things from poor vendors as a way to help them without directly giving them money.

The tour group of 14 American women has left. They were very loud. Lots of loud conversations in the echoey hall outside our room at night. One night they had a sing-along!

Thursday March 5

Up at 5:30. Flagged down a taxi within a few minutes on Juarez street, right next to the hotel. 150 pesos (\$10). No cars on the street this early and we were at the airport in 15 minutes. Oaxaca airport is great. Small, clean, low key, quiet. Most passengers in the waiting area are older than us. Airport staff are friendly.

Flight arrived before 11 am. Customs uses kiosks. You scan your own passport & it takes your picture. It prints a page that you show to the customs officer. Then you have to go through security again. All of this took about 45 minutes. We were very hungry, not having had breakfast (Grant) or much (me). We pigged out on burgers & fries at Rubys.

Our flight doesn't leave until almost 4. We had been on a ~~3:15~~ 3:15 flight that no longer exists, but the strange thing is that we were never notified. Free wifi at the airport. The news is showing more snow problems on the east coast. I'm grateful to live in Seattle.

Our flight left about 4:45. There was a mechanical problem with the jetway. I was disappointed that this United flight did not offer a free movie, only pay Direct TV. We purchased

pretty edible meals (chicken wrap and Asian noodle salad) for \$19. The flight was about 4.5 hours. By the last hour we were squirming miserably in our cramped seats, unable to find a comfortable position. Flying should be classified cruel & unusual punishment.

We arrived at SeaTac just before 8pm and missed the 8:05 bus to Bellevue by a minute or two. Rather than take the light rail to Seattle, the Z55 to Kirkland, and drag our suitcases up the hill, we splurged on a taxi. \$65 with tip, and we were home by 8:30. Our driver was a nice Ethiopian man who told us the current best Ethiopian restaurant in Seattle is Enat at Northgate.

# Tule - Teotitlán del valle - Mitla Hierve el Agua y Mezcal

Tule-Teotitlán del Valle-Mitla-Hierve el Agua and Mezcal factory  
**10:00 a/to 19:00 hrs.**

Tour todo el día/Full-Day tour  
Incluye guía y transporte/Guide and transportation included.

Tule: Árbol milenario

Teotitlán: Pueblo del sarape

Mitla: Ciudad de los Muertos

Tule: Millennial tree

Teotitlán: Town of woolen tapestries

Mitla: City of the dead

## Hierve el agua:

cascadas petrificadas que forman los manantiales de agua mineral que están en la montaña. Se puede realizar un de descenso para admirar la cascada desde el pie de la montaña.



## Hierve el Agua:

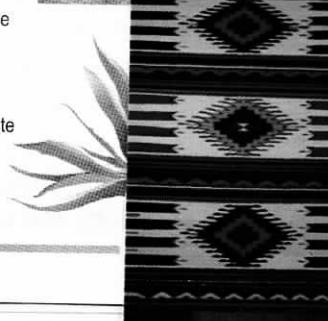
Petrified stone waterfalls where mineral water springs have formed and run down the mountain. One can descend and admire the creation from the foot of the mountain.

## El Mezcal:

Se visita una destiladora del licor oaxaqueño conocida como mezcal que procede del agave con el que se elabora el tequila y se degusta la variedad de mezcales.

## Mezcal Factory:

We will stop to visit a Mescal distillery and taste the wide variety of flavors. Mezcal is the Oaxacan liquor that comes from the agave plant, the same plant that is used to make tequila.



Nombre común: Ahuehuete o Sabino

Nombre técnico: Taxodium mucronatum (ten)

Familia: Taxodiaceae

Género: Taxodium

Edad: Más de 2,000 años

Grosor: 58 mts.

Altura: 42 mts.

Diámetro: 14.05 mts.

Volumen: 816,829 m³

Peso: 636,107 tons.

FUENTE: SEDAF

No 121688

\$10.00



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Sucursal Centro Trujano 201 Lobby Hotel Hostal de Santa Rosa  
Tel. 4-78-00 4-78-06 Oaxaca, Oax.

### CUPON DE SERVICIOS:

NOMBRE Karen Story  
POR CONCEPTO DE Mitla, Tule, Teotitlan del Valle,  
Ariño el agua y Morelos  
FECHA 01 - Marzo - 15 HORA 10:00 Nº PAX. 2  
PRECIO \$ 400 FORMA DE PAGO Efectivo  
OBSERVACIONES No incluye admisiones  
AGENTE \_\_\_\_\_ OAXACA A \_\_\_\_\_ DE \_\_\_\_\_ DE 199 \_\_\_\_\_

### Monte Albán - Arrázola-Cuilapan -San Bartolo Coyotepec 10:00 hrs.

Todo el día/All day tour  
Incluye guía y transportación/Guide and transportation included.

#### Monte Albán:

Zona Arqueológica donde se estableció la cultura zapoteca.

#### Monte Albán:

Archaeological zone where the Zapotecan culture began.



#### Arrázola:

Pueblo donde se elaboran figuras exóticas de madera pintadas a mano.

#### Arrázola:

Town where the alebrijes elaborate, exotic, handmade wooden painted figures--- are made.



#### Cuilapan:

Convento del siglo XVI donde la arquitectura virreinal construyó una capilla abierta y en este lugar estuvo preso Don Vicente Guerrero héroe de la independencia de México.



#### Cuilapan:

Sixteenth century convent where vice royal architecture was used to build an open chapel. Don Vicente Guerrero, hero of the Mexican independence battle, was held captive in Cuilapan and ultimately killed there.



#### Coyotepec:

Pueblo donde visitamos la casa de Doña Rosa, famosa por su cerámica negra y por haber encontrado la forma de darle brillo a esta loza.

#### Coyotepec:

We will visit doña Rosa's home to see the process in which they make the black ceramics. Doña Rosa and her family are famous in the region for having discovered how to make the pottery shine.