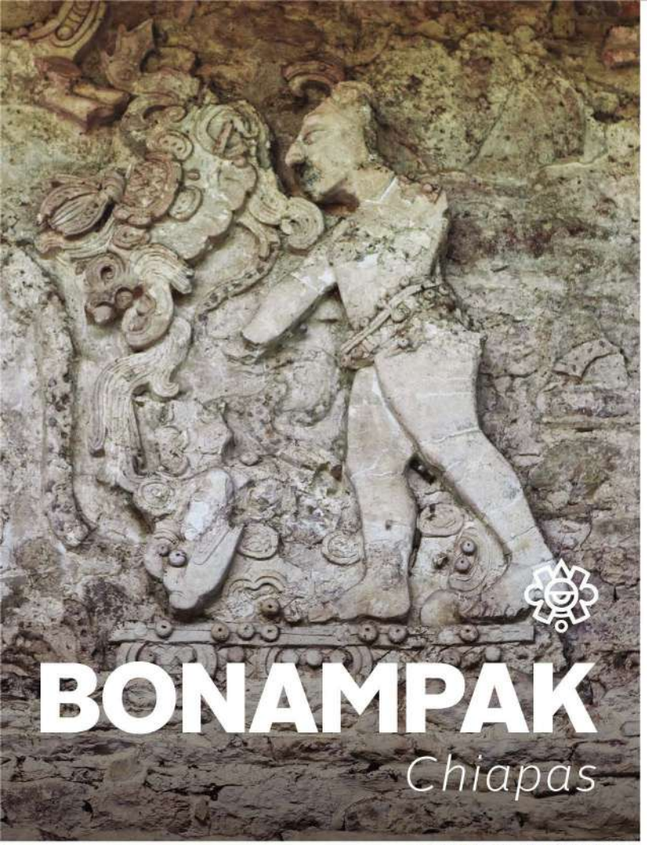


BONAMPAK

Chiapas

BRIEF HISTORICAL REVIEW

Bonampak is representative of the development of Mayan culture in the Usumacinta River basin, from the 1st to the 9th century. During its existence it was subordinate to the strong political influence of the two larger cities in the region - Piedras Negras and Yaxchilán. This allowed Bonampak to achieve an important socio-political presence in a large area of the Valley of the ***Lacanjá River****, which was occupied by at least half a dozen political entities of similar size.*

The pre-Columbian city occupied approximately ***3,000 hectares*** *(7,413 acres). The* ***Acropolis*** *was the political, administrative and religious center, and the* ***Gran Plaza*** *(Great Square) was the residence of the ruler and his family. Unlike Palenque, Piedras Negras or Yaxchilán where all the buildings are concentrated in a relatively limited space, in Bonampak, the multiple residential units are located from 100 to 400 meters apart (approximately 320 to 1,300 feet).*



This was related to an efficient form of land and production control exercised by elite families who lived in the housing complexes. The city endured constant problems of power succession, due to the existence of more than one lineage with the right to rule. The most well-known conflict occurred near the decline of the city ***(776 - 800 AD)****, when its last ruler,* ***Chan Muwaan II****, thanks to the military alliance with Yaxchilán, took Bonampak.*

TOPONYM	Painted or stained walls
CULTURE	Maya
PERIOD	Classic
TIMESPAN	0 - 850 AD

GETTING THERE

It is located 146 kilometers (90.7 miles) southeast of the city of Palenque and is reached by federal highway 307 that starts 10 kilometers south of Palenque (federal highway 199), at km 123 you reach the town of San Javier and continue towards Lacanjá-Chansayab; at km 3.5 starts the detour to Bonampak, which is reached after another 9.5 kilometers (5.9 miles) of dirt road, where visitors enter the archaeological site in vehicles from the Lacandon community. Throughout these last miles you can appreciate the dense vegetation of the high perennial forest of the Lacandon Jungle.

$ ADMISSIONS

The cost of admission is the one established by the Federal Law of Rights. Free admission for children under 13 years of age, students and teachers with valid credential, senior citizens, retirees, pensioners, disabled, as well as workers and researchers of the INAH.

PHOTOGRAPHY

A permit is required for professional cameras and tripod use. The use of video cameras costs is the one established by the Federal Law of Rights.

OPENING HOURS

Monday to Sunday,
8am to 4:45pm.

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CULTURA
SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA

INAH



DISCOVER IT YOURSELF

Acropolis

The Acropilis is a hill 46 meters (approximately 150 feet) high, whose north face was modified to build a huge stepped base, divided into three main terraces at different levels, where the main buildings of Bonampak are located. The most prominent buildings are the **Temple of the Murals**, on the second terrace, and **Building 6**, on the third terrace. The various structures are a product of the last 300 years of splendor, corresponding to eight ancient constructive stages of the Acropolis.

Building 6

On the third terrace there are six small buildings with Mayan vaults, they appear to be ritual rather than housing structures. The central one is number 6, the oldest of the entire group and it has a lintel carved with the image of ruler **Chan Muwaan I**, who governed Bonampak by the year 600 AD.

Stelae 2 and 3

These stelae are located on the first terrace, where **Chan Muwaan II** is depicted. On stela 2 he appears along his mother and his original wife from Yaxchilán, in a blood shedding ritual. On stela 3, he is shown taking a prisoner. These events took place between the years 776 and 785 AD, which correspond to the date of his enthronement.





The murals of Bonampak are exceptional because of the wealth of information they present about the society of the Late Classic period (600-800 AD). The murals are the subject of current scientific inquiry, as well as restoration and preservation works.

Gran Plaza

It extends at the foot of the Acropolis, with its dimension of 90 by 110 meters (approximately 295 by 361 feet) emphasizing its importance. It is enclosed by six structures; four of them are very elongated, reaching up to 60 meters (196.85 feet) in length. The north end is bound by two smaller but taller structures. The function of these buildings varies, there is housing, and exclusively ritual, as there are some where both functions are combined. At the center rises Stela 1, one of the tallest in the Mayan world, where you can see Chan Muwaan II with a cane, standing over the god of earth.

Building 15

It is one of those that enclose the Plaza on the north side; with a constructive life of at least 300 years. The upper level is divided into a courtyard where Stela 9 stands –one of the oldest stelae on the site. Across from it, stands a large room that had a roof made of perishable materials and holds an underground corridor, which leads to an ancient niche, occupied by a cylindrical stone, depicting the **sacred ceiba**, the access point to the underworld.

OUTSTANDING STRUCTURE

Temple of the murals

It is a structure of 16.50 by 3.90 meters (54 feet by 12.7 feet) by 6 meters (19 feet) high, consisting of a single interior corridor divided into three rooms covered by mural paintings. The subject observed in Room 1 is the presentation of the heir son of Chan Muwaan II and a ritual procession lead by the same character. In Room 2, a great battle is depicted, with the taking of prisoner and their sacrifice, and in Room 3 a kind of performance with dancers is displayed, along a depiction of the body of a sacrifice, all under the sight of the ruler. This cycle closes with a scene of one of the most important characters of Bonampak. One interpretation of the murals indicates that the rituals depicted are meant to guarantee the future rise of the heir of Chan Muwaan II, another hypothesis indicates that it is actually depicting the recovery of the throne of Bonampak by Chan Muwaan II with the support of Yaxchilán, where the defeated are the conquered ruler along with his group.

ARCHITECTURE

*It is part of the **Usumacinta style**, which emphasizes the use of large stairs built with large blocks of limestone, which gives the buildings a monolithic aspect. This style also includes broad flush rafters from the first stair step.*

The buildings usually have a single interior corridor and in some cases the entrances have stepped enclosures. Stucco masks of various deities that decorate the exterior walls of the vault are commonly found. Nonetheless, the local architecture was not very elaborate due to the lack of quality limestone quarries. This halted the construction of a greater number of buildings with Mayan vaults.

WHERE CAN I SEE ELEMENTS OF THE USUMACINTA STYLE?

The ladders with rafters are located in three buildings of the Gran Plaza: number 15, 16 and 18, also in the first section of stairs of the Acropolis.





MUST-SEE

- A Acropolis
- B Building 6
- C Stela 2
- D Stela 3
- E Great Square
- F Building 15
- G Temple of the Murals

1 Building 16
2 Building 17
3 Stela 1



DID YOU KNOW...?

- *The site was discovered to the world by Charles Frey in 1946. He arrived in the site in February of that year guided by his Lacandon friends and accompanied by John Bourne.*
- *Giles Healey is credited as the first westerner to see the paintings of the Temple of Murals, June of the same year.*
- *It is the only archaeological site of the Mayan world that has highly preserved murals. Remains of the same pictorial style are preserved in a building of Yaxchilán and two others in the small dependent cities of La Pasadita and El Tecolote, both in Guatemala. This indicates that this tradition was exported to Bonampak from Yaxchilán.*
- *On the murals, although some of the same characters can be seen several times, all the individuals depicted show diverse garments and decorations, a witness to the wealth of the clothing worn by Mayan nobility.*

SOME KEY NUMBERS

4,000 It occupied about 4,000 hectares (approximately 9,884 acres).

700 More than 700 structures make up the 165 housing complexes found so far.

6,000 Its population towards the end of the 8th century, at its peak, was about 6,000 inhabitants.

270 The paintings of the Temple of Murals show 270 different people.

YOU CAN'T MISS...

- Being in Bonampak, you must visit the archaeological site of Palenque, which is about 290 kilometers (180 miles approximately) away. From there, you can go on to the city of Villahermosa to rest and then visit the famous La Venta Park-Museum or the Planetario Tabasco 2000, one of the best in the country.
- The gastronomy in the state of Chiapas varies according to the region. However, there are dishes that are ubiquitous, such as the famous *tamalitos de elote* and the *tamales de chipilín*, or plantains, sliced and fried, served with cream and cheese. There is no forgetting the delicious and fragrant coffee, or the most delicious and foamy chocolate, both excellent anywhere you try them in the state.