YOUR ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE MINI GUIDE

Travel to the past and discover the secrets of Cacaxtla!

This is a place where ancient murals will tell you stories of power, trade, and rituals. Here, every stone preserves the echo of a great civilization that ruled the valley and established alliances with distant regions.

Marvel at the coloring of the "Bird Man", explore the imposing Great Platform, and discover the place where the people who ruled and traded wrote their history.



Temple of Venus: Star bearers

In this space, two pillars rise up holding a wonderful surprise. Each bears a figure with a body painted blue: a man and a woman. Both are wearing elegant loincloths (short skirts) of feline fur, although the man also has a mysterious scorpion tail.

However, the true secret lies in their hands! They bear a white five-pointed star on their palms and waists. This shape depicts the cross-section of a conch shell, symbol of the "star eye" connected to the planet Venus, an extraordinary example of their knowledge of astronomy.

Battle Mural: An epic painted tale



An impressive 22 meters long, this mural created between 650 and 700 A.D., is a masterwork that strongly resembles the Mayan art of its time.

The scene narrates a dramatic confrontation between two different groups. On one side are the vanquished, wearing feather headdresses and jade jewelry, who lie defenseless on the ground. On the other are the victors, wearing feline furs and bearing arms, who display a domineering attitude toward their rivals. This scene makes us question whether we are witnessing a historical event or a ritual sacrifice.



Portico A: North and South Murals

NORTH MURAL
A powerful figure wearing jaguar fur dominates the scene. Framed by a blue band with aquatic creatures, he stands upon a serpent with feline features while holding a bundle of spears that gush drops of water.

SOUTH MURAL
On the other side, a being dressed as a bird—with feathered arms, shoulders, headdress, and claws on its feet—poses upon a feathered serpent. Also framed by aquatic animals, it brandishes a bar of serpents. Together, these murals reveal a deep connection between sacred power and natural elements.



The Palace: The last home of the elite

This site complex corresponds to the final stage of occupation of Cacaxtla. Their spaces were constantly modified to adapt them to different uses, chiefly as privileged rooms for the elite.

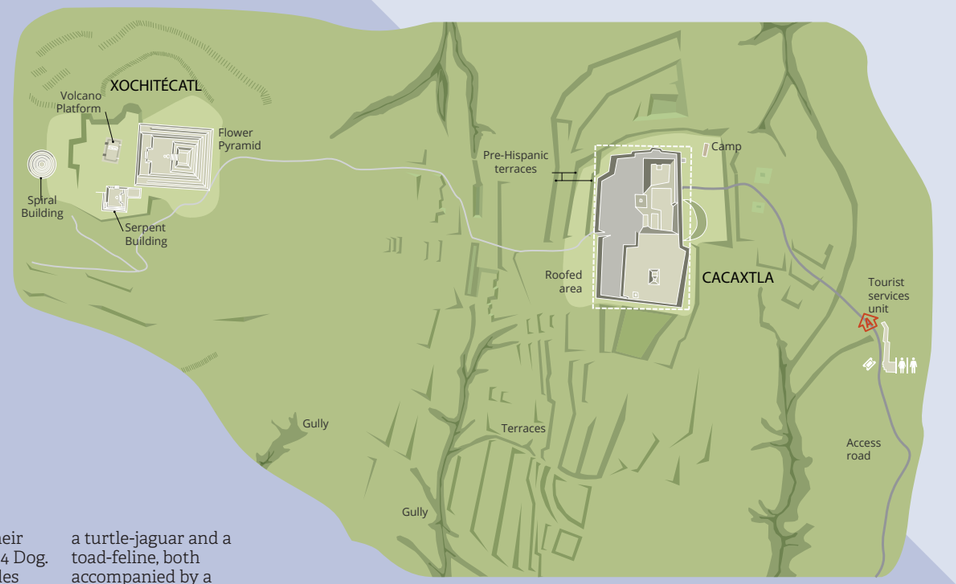
During the excavations, the remains of ritual child sacrifices were found, which were related to the start of new stages of construction. Its most outstanding elements include the Diamond Courtyard, decorated with geometric reliefs, and the Altar Courtyard, so-called due to the two altars found at its center.



The lattice: A unique window onto the past

This is a fascinating architectural element that is unique in the whole of Mesoamerica. It was built with an ingenious structure of branches covered with mud to shape them, to which a delicate coating of lime and sand was applied.

This amazing lattice shows us the enormous creativity and technical skills of the inhabitants of Cacaxtla, who designed architectural solutions as functional as they were beautiful.



Red Temple: A journey through murals

This is a corridor staircase between two extraordinary murals. The first shows an ancient person dressed as a jaguar next to a *cacaxtli* (a bundle used for trade) with their calendar symbol 4 Dog. This scene includes magical plants: corncobs with human faces and fruit resembling cocoa.

Facing it, the second mural displays amazing creatures: a turtle-jaguar and a toad-feline, both accompanied by a corn plant with anthropomorphic cobs (with human features). This gives us a unique perspective on the Mesoamerican worldview!





Portico "A": North and South jambs

Both jambs reflect the deep connection between nature, the divine, and human beings.

NORTH JAMB
An enigmatic figure wearing feline fur has a plant growing out of its stomach. In its arms, it holds a jug with the face of the rain god Tlaloc, which spills drops of water. Highlighted in the lower part is a calendar date: the glyph "7 eye reptile."

SOUTH JAMB
A second figure wearing a feline loincloth, whose face and body are painted black, bears a conch from which emerges the torso of a figure with long red hair, creating a scene filled with symbolism and mystery.

NOT TO BE MISSED

- **Xochitécatl**
  Lying 850 m from Cacaxtla, it is included in your admission. Enjoy its pyramids and views of the volcanoes!
- **San Miguel Sanctuary**
  A place of pilgrimage full of faith and tradition.
- **Amaranth candies**
  Try the delicious alegrías in San Miguel del Milagro.
- **Local gastronomy**
  Quesadillas at the entrance, grilled carp in Atoyatenco, or restaurants in Tlaxcala: a feast!

STEPPING THROUGH TIME: THE JOURNEY OF CACAXTLA



650-950 A.D.
Foundation and rise of Cacaxtla (Epiclassic period)

650-700 A.D.
Creation of the Battle Mural (related to the Mayan style)

700-900 A.D.
Hegemony in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley after the decline of Teotihuacan and Cholula

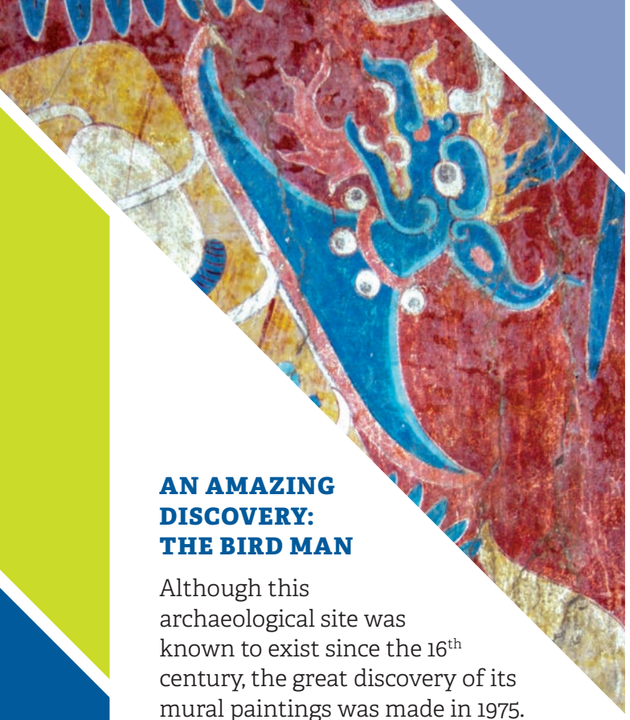
1975
Discovery of the murals by field workers from San Miguel del Milagro

1975-1980
First excavations and consolidation under the INAH (Diana López and Daniel Molina)

SEPTEMBER 12, 1985
Installation of the roof to protect the murals

1986-1987
Official inauguration as an archaeological zone and site museum





AN AMAZING DISCOVERY: THE BIRD MAN

Although this archaeological site was known to exist since the 16th century, the great discovery of its mural paintings was made in 1975. Field workers from San Miguel del Milagro found a surprising mural, the face of the "Bird Man": a true treasure that came to light!

PROTECTING HISTORY: INAH'S CONTRIBUTIONS

After the incredible discovery in 1975, INAH researchers began to reveal the secrets of Cacaxtla. Diana López and Daniel Molina made the first efforts, defining the seven building stages of the Great Platform and its dimensions.

Next, Rosalba Delgadillo and Andrés Santana discovered spectacular murals such as those from the Red Temple and the Temple of Venus. To protect this treasure, Lino Espinoza and Pedro Ortega coordinated the installation of the large roof that now protects it (1986-1987).

Excavations by Mari Carmen Serra Puche and her team in the Plaza of the Three Hills confirmed the link between Cacaxtla and Xochitécatl, showing that they were part of the same large society. Their meticulous work enables us to understand this legacy.



Address
Circuito Perimetral s/n,
San Miguel del Milagro,
Nativitas, Tlaxcala

Directions
From Mexico City, take Highway 150 to the tollbooth at San Martín Texmelucan, Puebla. Next, exit the bypass at Xalmimilulco, passing San Miguel Xochitecatitla as you head toward Nativitas, until you arrive at the junction for San Miguel del Milagro and Cacaxtla.

Services
The Site Museum has an inclusive gallery, with relief paintings and clay reproductions for blind and visually impaired people.

Opening Hours
Open Monday to Sunday
from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
(last admission at 4:00 p.m.)
Tel. 246 4160 000

Z. A. Cacaxtla - Xochitécatl Página oficial
@cacaxtlaxochitecatl_oficial
cacaxtlaxochitecatl@inah.gob.mx

D.R. © 2025 Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia

Cultura Secretaría de Cultura | INAH

THE GREAT PLATFORM: THE HEART OF THE CITY

This great platform, the center of the ancient city, was built in different stages. It is huge, measuring 200 m long, 100 m wide, and 25 m high!

Inside, it had houses and open spaces, including sunken courtyards. To build it, they used blocks of tepetate (very hard sedimentary rock), adobe, and stones covered with stucco.

The most amazing part is its decoration: it has walls with clay reliefs in geometric patterns and some of the most colorful and best-preserved murals from ancient Mexico.

CACAXTLA

MiNiGUIDES

Tlaxcala



- CRUCIAL BATTLE
- STELLAR JAGUARS
- BIRD MAN



THE SEAT OF POWER AND THE RULING ELITE

The Great Platform was the exclusive space of the rulers. This was where the most important political, ritual, and commercial activities took place.

A large roof measuring 10 000 m², which covers the main section, was installed in the 1980s to protect this invaluable legacy and its magnificent paintings. It's a huge shield that protects our history!

CACAXTLA: GUARDIAN OF THE MOUNTAINS

This archaeological zone lies in a chain of hills in the municipality of Nativitas, Tlaxcala. Its name comes from the Nahuatl word *cacaxtli*, which was the name for a package or bundle used by traders for transporting their wares.

Although the identity of the group that inhabited it is unknown, it is believed to have been founded between 650 and 950 A.D. This settlement was the second time these hills had been occupied, after Xochitécatl. Together, these formed an archaeological complex that reached its greatest height in around 750 A.D.

After the fall of Teotihuacan and Cholula, Cacaxtla achieved a great deal of political, military, and economic power in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley, establishing important connections.