

CAÑADA DE LA VIRGEN

Guanajuato

DISCOVER IT YOURSELF

The archaeological site is comprised of four Architectural Complexes: A, B, C and D.

Complex A

Complex A or Casa de los Trece Cielos (House of the Thirteen Skies) is the sunken courtyard enclosed by lateral platforms and by the pyramidal basement to the west.

BRIEF HISTORICAL REVIEW

*Cañada de la Virgen is part of the **Río Laja** archaeological tradition, which originates northeast of Guanajuato. The site was possibly inhabited by villages of **Otomi-Hñahnu** origin.*

*Among the characteristics that identified this group was the presence of architectural structures such as **sunken courtyards** with pyramidal bases, platforms with stepped patios, raised white pottery, **red type pots** and **stained earthenware**. Ritual paraphernalia includes braziers, censers, sahumadores and caps with application, as well as painted anthropomorphic urns, obsidian knives, hooks and objects made out of shells.*

The structures are located on a conditioned plateau and surrounded by canyons. It follows the Mesoamerican model of relation between architecture and landscape, where the hills function as axes of urban planning.

Complex B

It consists of four buildings and a pyramid to the southwest, at its top there is a room with storm drainage that has been given the name of temazcal (sweat lodge), for this space seemingly fulfilled this ritual function. A female skeleton associated with drainage was found on the south platform, it belonged to a seven year old girl placed in the center of a circle of stones and accompanied by an offering of bowls and plates. Numerous isolated human bones, mostly limbs, also ceramic offerings associated with building events, and three ceremonial stoves with remnants of ash and ceramics were also found in this complex. A glyph, fragments of battlements and a depiction of the earth monster on a lithic board made in quarry were also found.

Complex D

Complex D or the Casa del Viento (House of the Wind) is a circular structure in which a square room lies, there is a narrow staircase to the north and its eastern facade extends towards a circular plaza. Burial 14 was found in this complex, it is associated to the second constructive stage and to a possible event of ritual sacrifice distinguishable by the abundant pottery symbolically "killed". The first constructive stage had walls decorated with red paint.

*This site was a place for the observation and recording of **astronomical phenomena**, its symmetry traverses in half the main structures of Complex A, this axis considers the portico the center of the patio and the pyramidal base is oriented to the sunrises of April 17 and August 25, as well as the sunsets of March 4 and October 9.*

*To date, 19 burials have been located, most of them primary **burials** accompanied by their corresponding offerings. These have been studied and highlight certain cultural practices, such as: cranial deformation, burials, ancestral veneration and rituals that have been interpreted as about the foundation of the site.*

CULTURE	Río Laja Tradition/ Tolteca-Chichimeca
PERIOD	Classic - Postclassic
TIMESPAN	550 - 1050 AD. Apogee during Epiclassic

GETTING THERE

From Guanajuato, by highway 110 (towards Dolores Hidalgo on Xoconoxtle), around the community known as Don Sebastián, take highway 51 (to San Miguel de Allende), access to the Archaeological site is located on the Km 10 + 800 of highway 51, in its Don Sebastián-San Miguel de Allende section. Since it was opened to the public there is a Visitor Service Center (CAV), private vehicles can be parked there and entry is done on 20 seat trucks from the Instituto Estatal de la Cultura (State Institute of Culture). A section almost one kilometer (0.6 miles) long of the road to the archaeological site is done by foot.

ADMISSIONS

No discounts apply. Admission includes truck transportation to the site.

OPENING HOURS

Tuesday to Sunday, from 10am to 4pm.

PHOTOGRAPHY

For the use of any recording device there is a fee authorized by the Ministry of Finance. The taking of non-professional photographs, without a tripod, has no cost.

www.inah.gob.mx
www.difusion.inah.gob.mx
@inah_mx
Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia

TEXTS
Arqlgo. Omar Cruces Cervantes

TRANSLATION
Victoria Padilla Bernal

PRODUCTION
Head of Comunications of the National Office of Broadcasting, INAH

DESIGN
Latex / Manuel Cózar

CULTURA
SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA

INAH

Amanalli

The amanalli or body of water is a pond that is located within the monument's site, which was vital to settlement in this area.



OUTSTANDING STRUCTURE

Casa de los Trece Cielos

Complex A or House of the Thirteen Skies is the main building of the archaeological site. The complex is comprised of three platforms and a pyramidal basement 16 meters (52.4 feet) tall. At the top of this base there is an area called Red Temple which has mural paintings with red, black and ocher horizontal stripes, possibly alluding to the different celestial strata of Mesoamerican culture. In this complex, 13 burials have been found, this has helped to understand different cultural practices such as cranial deformation, burials, ancestral veneration and rituals about the foundation of the site.

To reach this complex there was access trough a ceremonial road to the east, which starts in a glen and culminates in Complex A. This road is on average 18 meters (approximately 59 feet) wide and 900 meters (approximately 0.55 miles) long. It should be mentioned that in the South platform of this Complex, 12 burials were found, most of them in room 3.

ARCHITECTURE

The sunken patio is one of the typical buildings of the Río Laja tradition, and in Cañada de la Virgen you can appreciate all its constructive details, such as the sunken space that was built enclosed by structures with bleachers made of quarries cut of many different colors, that give this building a rather singular appearance. The walls were covered with slabs of tuff stone on a slope. It emphasizes the pyramidal basement with its staircases. At the top of the structure there are remains of the Red Temple, which still has remnants of mural paintings. Complex D is a circular structure with a semicircular courtyard, this makes it an atypical building for the region.

Cañada de la Virgen is the place where the ancestors were venerated.





MUST-SEE

- A *Complex A or House of theThirteen Skies*
- B *Complex B*
- C *Complex C*
- D *Complex D*
- E *Shrub Garden*
- F *Amanalli*

DID YOU KNOW...?

- *The main burial found in the Red Temple and B.C. named The Hierarch, is dated to 700 B.C., which means that it is prior to the building of the site. Data provided by Carbon-14 analysis relealed this person was buried sometime between the years 640 and 720 AD.*
- *The archeological zone of Cañada de la Virgen was not a population center, but a place of pilgrimage and ceremonial practices.*
- *Archaeoastronomy played a major role in the planning and orientation of the buildings of Cañada de la Virgen.*
- *It is believed that the lunar cycle played an important role in the design of the constructive bodies of the pyramidal basement of Complex A.*



YOU CAN'T MISS...

- We recommended visiting all the Architectural Complexes, three are open to the public. The landscape surrounding the site is yet another great attraction, as it remains isolated and retains its remote and mysterious essence.
- The shrub garden contains native species in danger of extinction and a space to see the main healing plants of the region.
- We advise you to visit San Miguel de Allende, a historic city famous for its gastronomy and tourist attractions –especially during popular holidays such as Easter, Día de Muertos, and the day of the patron saint of San Miguel, on September 29th.

SOME KEY NUMBERS

4 It has 4 architectural complexes distributed on top of a plateau.

16 The pyramidal basement height is 16 meters (approximately 52.49 feet).

150 Over 150 species of native plants have been recorded and studied.

3 There were 3 stages of occupation at the site.

The dating for the Hierarch dates from 770 to 400 BC.

