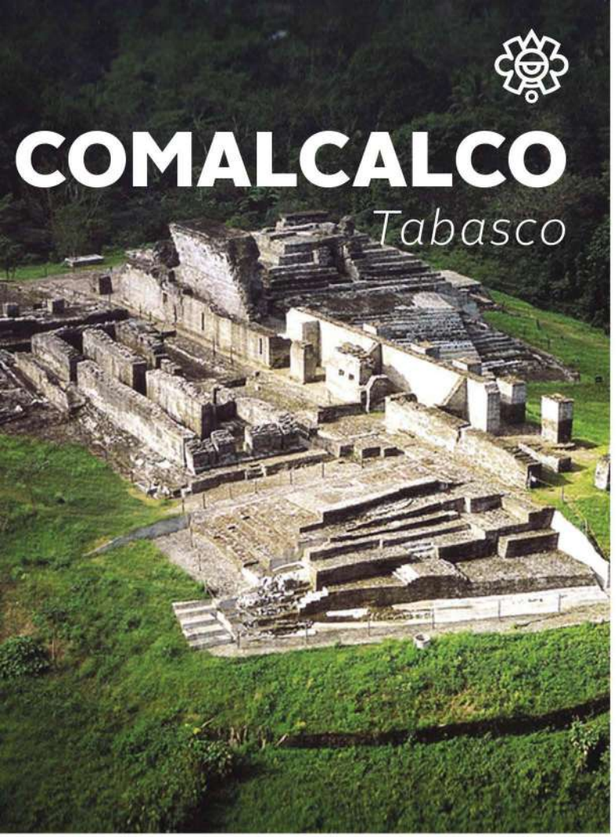


COMALCALCO

Tabasco

BRIEF HISTORICAL REVIEW

*It was the most important city northwest of the territory occupied by the Mayan culture, during the **Late Classic**. At its height (AD 550-900) it covered an extension of 7 km, on a vast alluvial plain between the forest and the mangroves. The common population built their houses on mounds of soil along the fluvial channels, thus avoiding the annual floods coming from the adjacent river, the Mezcalapa-Mazapa. In contrast, the major **monumental architecture** groups identified as North Plaza, Great Acropolis, East Acropolis and West Group were erected on an **earth dome** that made it possible to direct them towards the cardinal points on an east to west axis basis.*

It was part of a border region with other cultures, historically recognized as a cacao producing area, as well as crafters of vessels and figurines that Comalcalco exported to sites far from the entire Gulf of Mexico coast line to the north of the Yucatan Peninsula.

Its original name in ch'olana language was Joy'Chan, which has been translated as "rolled sky". The most recent research project has identified the names of some rulers and deities, the positions of certain officials, as well as data on offerings and prayers by dignitaries and their consorts.

*The historical record of the site includes three centuries. It confirms the existence of their own **glyph symbol** stating the importance of the settlement. In addition, it records a combat resulting in the capture and beheading of the dignitary Ox Balam on December 23th, A.D. 649, a time when the city was subjected to the kingdom of B'aakal -Palenque-, having to adopt its glyph symbol from that moment on.*

TOPONYM	In the house of the skillet
CULTURE	Mayan
PERIOD	Late pre-Classic to Terminal Classic
TIMESPAN	200 B.C. to A.D. 900

GETTING THERE

It is located 63.1 km to the northwest of Villahermosa city. On the Mexico federal highway 180 heading to Cárdenas, 26 km are covered before taking the deviation to the right at the junction La Isla-Cunduacán - Comalcalco; from here you cross 36.3 km to the junction with the access road to the archaeological site that is only 832 m. to the right.

ADMISSIONS

In accordance with the provisions of the Federal Law of Rights: Free entrance for children under 13, students and teachers with current ID cards, senior citizens, retirees and pensioners, as well as workers and researchers of INAH.

SERVICES

Site museum, multipurpose room, snack bar, toilets, luggage storage area.

PHOTOGRAPHS

The fee for the use of any photographic or video shooting device is subject to the provisions of the Federal Law of Rights.

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CULTURA
SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA

INAH

DISCOVER IT YOURSELF

North Plaza

From the top of Temple I to the end of the staircase, the Ix Pakal Tunn goddess skull looks towards the square and witnesses the daily sunrise.

The four cardinal points limiting the square feature different constructions that have been related to religious activities, funerary and possibly administrative spaces. The extension of this esplanade suggests that it could house a safe area to carry out the market exchange, close to the river channel through which people and goods were moved, but distant enough to avoid the growing river in the rain season.

Great Acropolis

At the top of this complex are several buildings inside of which small vaulted bays were built where important dignitaries were buried. The inside walls of the one below Temple IX were decorated with bas-reliefs, showing nine subjects performing a ceremony on the 8th century A.D. after the death of a dignitary. As a sign of mourning, some show a raised hand close to the face.

In the far north is the *popol nah* or "council house", identified by the decoration of its facade which includes an element symbolizing the royal mat. In addition, half of the body of three seated characters is observed, one of them with the representation of a codex on one side.

Other constructions of this group were houses and temples of the elite. Associated with patios and features to store, distribute and drain water with mud pipes of different caliber.





OUTSTANDING STRUCTURE

The palace

It's a vaulted enclosure formed by two long bays or parallel rooms, with a length of 262 ft. and a height of 26 ft. in the section still standing. It might have been part of the ruling family residence area, associated with small sanctuaries and a possible pib'ilnaah or steam bath.

ARCHITECTURE

The architecture is different from any other Mesoamerican site. To build the first construction stage and because of the lack of stone in the environment, the population had to compact soil to form staggered basements protected by thick layers of stucco. Red paint was applied on the walls to decorate these buildings, as well as bas-reliefs with mythological scenes.

As in other Mesoamerican sites, the first buildings comprised the core of new constructions as time went by. In the second construction stage of Comalcalco, the Maya used quadrangular bricks of different sizes for masonry. This material allowed the architects and bricklayers to create spaces with new shapes, permanent ceilings, and the construction of funeral crypts under some buildings.

Placing the bricks in a shallow manner, vaults were built with a dribble or protrusion in its starting, to avoid rainwater from draining the walls decorations. There were small crests towards the middle part of the roof. The decoration of this architecture stands out for the presence of sculptures in bulk with portraits of possible rulers or ancestors, as well as local fauna. Only in Temple V "of the water birds" heads and complete bodies of a duck, a pelican and a crocodile were found between the rubble.

The buildings in the central area are made of several overlapping bodies topped by two bays or parallel rooms, joined by a central aisle. They have a wide portico that allowed the internal spaces to ventilate. The architecture style, although similar to that of Palenque, shows differences in spaces and building material.

Out of the six archaeological zones open to the public in Tabasco, Comalcalco is the only one built with bricks. In the last ten years, it has received a total of 784,220 visitors, comprising almost seventy percent of the registered public of all the museums and archaeological zones dependent of the INAH in the State. The main visitors are elementary and high school students.



MUST-SEE

- A *Temple 1*
- B *North Plaza*
- C *Acropolis Plaza*
- D *The Palace*

1 Museum
2 Parking lots



YOU CAN'T MISS...

- Visit one of the cacao farms in the area to learn about the plantings of this fruit, its harvest and the processing it requires to become chocolate. Of course, try some drinks or sweets made with it.
- Visit some of the towns where the yokot'an community lives and appreciate their ancestral knowledge to get and process vegetable fibers and clays used in the making of "petate" or pots.
- Tour the colorful churches of Chontalpa in the towns of Comalcalco, Jalpa de Méndez and Nacajuca, which apart from their peculiar architecture and colors, they have a few colonial paintings. It is recommended to visit the town of Tucta between July 22nd and 27th to witness the offerings to Apostle James, and to learn about the "Baila Viejo" ancient dancing, where people with masks dance shaking a fan and rattle in their hands along with music of whistles and drums.
- In addition to enjoying the site museum with 1400 year-old pieces excavated in the place, visit the Community Museum of the Virgin of Cupilco, which has a varied ethnographic and religious collection.

DID YOU KNOW...?

- *In Comalcalco, the burial of the priest Aj Pakal Than, who lived on the site in the late 8th century, was discovered. His offering included bone earrings and stingray spines with 280 incised glyphs, which refer to ceremonies to rain gods, unique data in Mayan history known so far.*
- *An important local production was the figurines of animals and people molded in mud. Among these is a female representation that carries a fan in the right hand and uses a decorated huipil. She was named the Lady of Comalcalco; she was the local woman archetype.*
- *5,400 bricks have been found, decorated by the Mayans with geometric elements, portraits of individuals and gods, buildings and different species of birds, mammals, reptiles and insects. These special pieces were hidden between brick masonry without decoration on floors, walls and roofs.*
- *The earliest historical record of the site goes back to August 10th, 561 A.D., while the latest date is March 7, 814 A.D. when the decline of the site and its disappearance began in the jungle that would hide it for more than a thousand years.*
- *The skeletons indicate that the women of Comalcalco had a height between 4.8-5 ft., and the men of 5.2-5.5 ft. They had anemia and other diseases from drinking polluted water.*

SOME FIGURES

1880 — It was discovered and explored between November 12th and 25th, 1880 by the French explorer, Désiré Charnay, who took the site's first photographic plates.

23 — 450 buildings are registered, 23 of which are open for visit.

82 — 82 funeral urns have been discovered in the center and periphery of the site.