YOUR ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE MINI GUIDE

La Ferrería: Where landscape becomes memory

Immerse yourself in this site, which is a living testimony to how pre-Hispanic peoples interpreted and transformed their environment. Their material culture allows us to reconstruct a worldview where landscape, cosmos, and ancestral memory intertwine in a profoundly human experience. Are you ready to walk among sunken courtyards aligned with the stars, admire pottery that narrates myths, and discover how the past converses with nature?



Stone containers: Natural Altars

Rocks and crags were not just stones in La Ferrería, they were revered gods or ancestors. Artisans carved stone bowls (small fixed basins) to be used when making offerings of food, flowers, water, or ceremonial objects. Some even functioned as reflecting pools for observing the stars, thereby combining utility and ritual. Each container was a bridge between the earthly and the divine.

Complex 7: Pyramid and Priests' House

This complex is noteworthy for its sunken courtyard in its upper reaches, which is unique in Mexico. The pyramid was the site's earliest building and is the symbolic center of La Ferrería. The Guadiana Valley was visible from the summit, where equinoxes and solstices could also be observed. Its front courtyards hosted massive rituals and constituted the heart of the settlement.





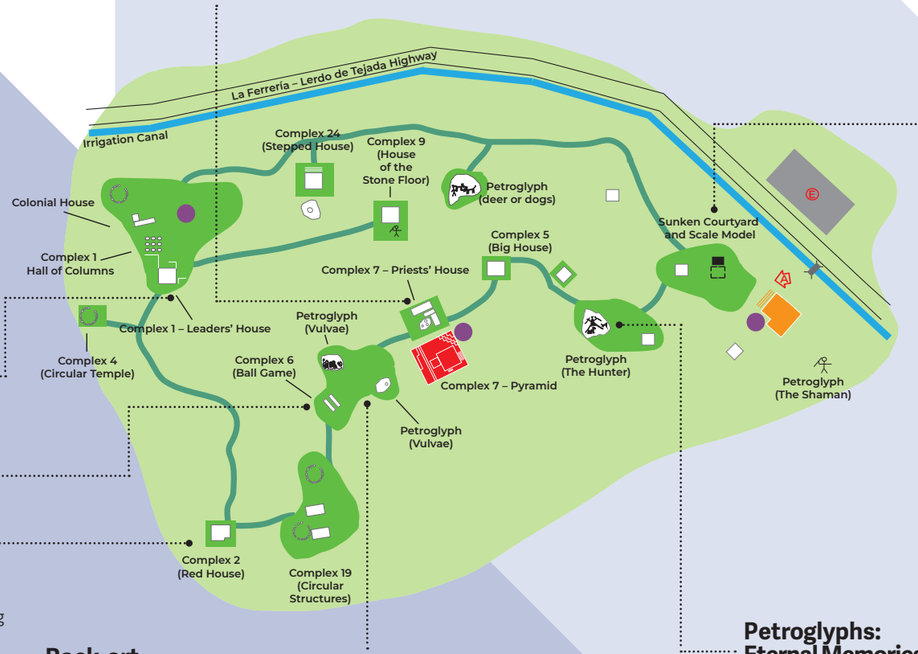
Site Museum: The Threshold of Time

Discover the tangible history of La Ferrería through a unique archaeological collection recovered directly from the excavations. This museum offers you an intimate first look at the people who inhabited this enigmatic settlement: their tools, their rituals, and their connection with the landscape. Each piece is a window into a world where the past resurfaces to make itself heard.



Complex 1: The Leaders' House

This complex reveals a vast, sophisticated exchange network. Materials were found from other places: pottery from Sinaloa/Nayarit and items buried in urns and seashells, all of which showed that geography was not a barrier. People traveled to the Sierra Madre for ritual feasts, at which they exchanged objects, materials, and ideas, thereby weaving a cultural network linking the coast to the mountains.



Scale Model: Daily life in La Ferrería

Step inside a full-scale house from the past: wooden and mud palisade walls, earthen roof, dirt floor, and a hearth near the front door. In the back is a dirt bed with a mat to sleep on.

Life took place outside: corn growing, deer and rabbit hunting, and pottery and stone-tool fabrication. It was an organized commune that reflects the living heritage of today's indigenous peoples.



Complex 6: Ball Game

Located in the upper part of the site, this rectangular field was used to play a sacred game similar to Ulama in Sinaloa. Two teams played by hitting a rubber ball with their hips and forearms, combining sport, ritual, and cosmic connection: a legacy that united competition and spirituality.



Complex 2: Red House

This is one of the most representative complexes on the site. The Red House was a collective burial site, where humans, animals, and even objects were buried together. This practice reflected a unique worldview: everything possessed a vital soul and death became not an individual, but a communal transformation. Life and death were intertwined in a sacred cycle of regeneration.



Rock-art complexes: Architecture that converses with rock

This site features constructions decorated with petroglyphs (such as representations of vulvae, symbols of fertility) and stone containers. Irregular in shape but with rectangular floor plans, these structures are located on the hill's eastern slopes and plateau. Wattle-and-daub is the main construction technique, in addition to cultural symbols carved into the rock.



Petroglyphs: Eternal Memories

Rocks became canvases for sacred stories in La Ferrería. The engraving of a hunter with outstretched arms, a spear in his hand and deer at his feet is of particular note. It symbolizes the ritual importance of hunting or perhaps represents the constellation of Orion. Other complexes depict female genitalia (celebrating fertility) and deer or dogs (allies in life and death). Each engraving is a verse from an ancient poem that intertwines humans, animals, and the cosmos.

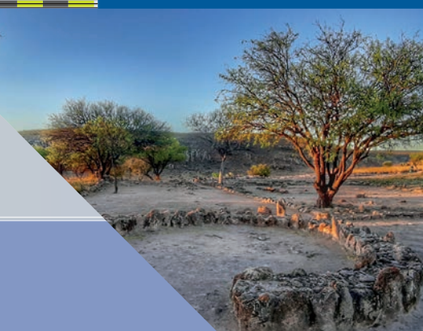


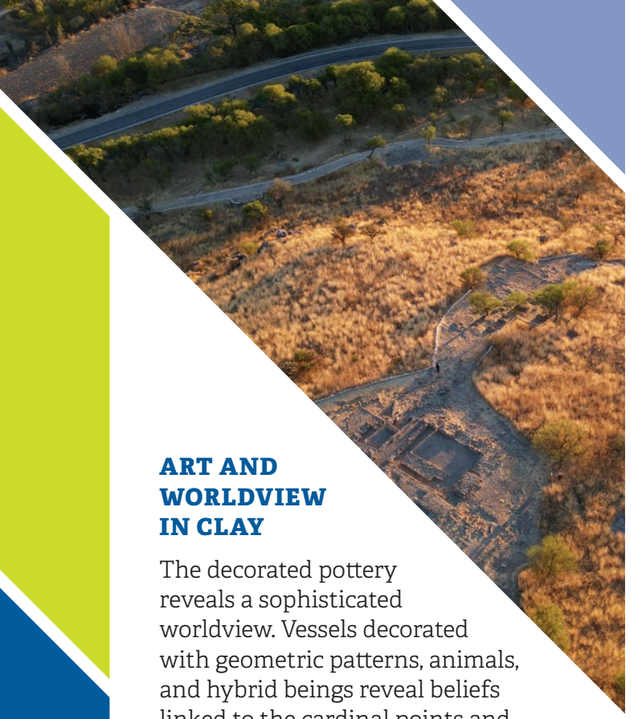
DID YOU KNOW...?

Cerro Ayala (La Ferrería) was formally studied from 1952 onwards by archaeologist J. Charles Kelley, who named it "Sitio Schroeder" in honor of Federico Schroeder, the enthusiastic Durango native who showed the site to anthropologist J. Alden Mason in 1936. Schroeder, a local collector, had gathered numerous pieces from the hill and promoted its investigation. Thus, the name "Schroeder" remained in archaeological literature for decades until the current name of La Ferrería was adopted. A tribute to citizens' contributions to science!

LA FERRERÍA'S MILESTONES

- **600 A.D.** Start of construction (pyramidal foundation)
- **1100-1350 A.D.** Last pre-Hispanic occupation
- **1936** First academic visit (Mason and Schroeder)
- **1952-1958** Research (Southern Illinois University)
- **1992** Explorations by INAH Durango
- **1997** Opened to the public
- **2000** Site Museum
- **2002** Declared a Monument Zone
- **2011** Resumption of excavations





ART AND WORLDVIEW IN CLAY

The decorated pottery reveals a sophisticated worldview. Vessels decorated with geometric patterns, animals, and hybrid beings reveal beliefs linked to the cardinal points and the heavens. This ceremonial pottery contrasts with that used for everyday purposes, which reveals spiritual and artistic depth.

COSMIC ARCHITECTURE AT LA FERRERÍA

The pyramid's sunken courtyard, with entrances at the four cardinal points, is aligned with the heavens. During equinoxes, a path of sunlight traces agricultural cycles and rituals across the courtyard. A burial site at the west entrance aligns with this path, thereby integrating ancestors into the symbolic landscape. A nearby fire pit is suggestive of celebrations to the sun and cornfields.



Construction techniques—masonry (stones joined together), wattle-and-daub (interwoven sticks covered with mud), and adobe (sun-dried mud bricks)—were adapted to the environment and served a dual purpose: practical and symbolic. Foundational burials beneath structures reveal that each building was a sacred, ritually consecrated space.



Address
Carretera a Sebastián
Lerdo de Tejada, Km. 1.5,
La Ferrería (Ejido Cuatro de Octubre),
Durango, Durango

Services
Site museum, parking lot, restrooms.
There is no infrastructure for people with disabilities.

Admission
The individual cost of admission and free admission are as stated in the Federal Act on Government Fees.

Opening hours
Tuesday to Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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RITUAL ARCHITECTURE IN SACRED LANDSCAPES

The monumental architecture integrated with graphic-rock art is noteworthy: pyramidal bases, sunken courtyards, stone containers, ceremonial plazas, petroglyphs, and a ball court are strategically laid out across the hill. This site visually dominates the Guadiana Valley and the Sierra del Registro, a landscape that not only furnished resources but also framed ritual and social life in symbolic grandeur.





LA FERRERÍA

MiNiGUIDES

Durango



- STAR HUNTERS
- UNIQUE PETROGLYPHS
- DURANGO LEGACY

ANCESTRAL WISDOM AND ABUNDANCE

Food came primarily from growing crops in the fields (corn, beans, squash, chili peppers) and gathering prickly pear fruit and pads and acorns. This was supplemented by hunting deer, hares, and birds, and possibly catching fish and collecting mollusks from the Tunal River. Utensils like stone mortars reveal everyday cooking rituals deeply connected to nature. Every dish was a legacy of adaptation to and respect for the environment.

ECHOES OF A UNIQUE CIVILIZATION IN NORTHERN MEXICO

Cerro Ayala, its two peaks steeped in living history, rises above the banks of the Tunal River valley in Durango. Between 600 and 1350 A.D., this privileged environment, rich in water, flora, and fauna, was home to a cultural group that integrated the landscape into their daily lives and rituals. Bioarchaeological studies paint a fascinating picture of the inhabitants: men standing 1.70 m tall, slim but muscular, dedicated to farming, hunting, and gathering; women 1.60 m tall with strong arms and legs, perhaps shaped by hours of grinding at the mortar; and a life expectancy that ranged from 25 to 40 years, with some living to 65. La Ferrería is a testament in which every bone, every tool, tells the story of a community that knew how to flourish in harmony with its surroundings.