LA QUEMADA

Zacatecas





GET READY TO EXPLORE

Teachers' Group

On the second level of the archaeological site, the plaza is framed by three platforms with an altar in the middle. A number of small rooms stand on the east and south platforms, while a spacious hall is on the west platform, and a pyramidal platform was built north of the plaza.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

*Its ancient inhabitants settled in what is today the territory of the **Malpaso Valley**, between AD 350/400 and 1150, although the city was at its peak between AD 600 and 850, when it became a regional capital, controlling 220 local settlements of different functions and dimensions.*

It stood out for its monumental architecture, which spoke of the skill of its builders, the social hierarchy needed to harness a huge workforce, and the symbolic implications such a system entailed.

*Within the valley a complex system of **pre-Hispanic causeways** linked the center to the peripheral settlements for the control and distribution of goods. It also reflects the city's symbolic connotations, because the main arteries formed a rhomboid, the corners of which marked the cardinal directions.*

*It was one of the monumental sites in **northern Mexico**, which attracted attention during the Viceroyalty and was identified as the mythical city of Chicomoztoc, where the Aztecs are said to have settled briefly on their pilgrimage. In the nineteenth century this idea persisted, with the variant that it became known as Coatlcamatl, although locals in the region called it the **Hill of the Building**s, for its abundant constructions. In the twentieth century, studies were undertaken to better understand this settlement, which was formerly regarded as a site built by the Tarascan people. It was also associated with the Toltec people and control over the turquoise trade route. Later, it was proposed as a capital and sanctuary for the entire Chalchihuites culture and more recently, it has been regarded as the capital of a local culture within the Malpaso Valley.*

PLACE NAME	It has been said this name is derived from the place where the archaeological zone is located, on the lands of the Hacienda of La Quemada. However, it is now believed that the term actually refers to the *quemado* or burned remains found there by men who went to extract stone to build the hacienda, which prompted the idea that a fire brought an end to the ancient pre-Hispanic city.
CULTURE	Malpaso Valley
PERIOD	Classic, Epiclassic, and Early Postclassic
DATES	AD 350/400–1000

Plaza of the Sacrifices

This unique architectural space stands out on the third level, incomparable for its layout and structures. Two spacious halls frame the south and east sides of the plaza. A series of rooms occupies the west and a pyramidal platform rises on the north side, with an altar in the center. Between the pyramidal platform and the central altar, a carved stone sculpture depicts a woman carrying a child on her back, but the head is missing from both figures.



MAIN ATTRACTION

Hall of Columns

The earliest explorers dubbed this building The Cathedral, given its monumentality, and today it is known as the Hall of Columns for the presence of these architectural elements typical of the site.

In the interior of this hall, which is the largest roofed space at the site, eleven masonry columns tower some six meters tall. They are arranged parallel to the walls, leaving an open space in the center where there was a pit.

In the front there was a porticoed space, based on the traces of columns on the floor, which served to separate private and public spaces. In the interior, gatherings of members of the ruling class were conducted to make social, political, and religious decisions.



HOW TO GET THERE?

The archaeological site of La Quemada is 56 kilometers south of the city of Zacatecas on Federal Highway 54, México-Guadalajara.

HOURS

Monday to Sunday from 9 am to 6 pm.

ADMISSION

According to the Federal Fees Act, admission is free for children under 13, students and teachers with a valid ID, seniors, retirees, pensioners, and INAH personnel and researchers.

PHOTOGRAPHY

For the use of any device to make videos, visitors must pay the fee stipulated by the Ministry of Public Finance.
Non-professional photography, without the use of tripods, is free of charge.

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TEXTS
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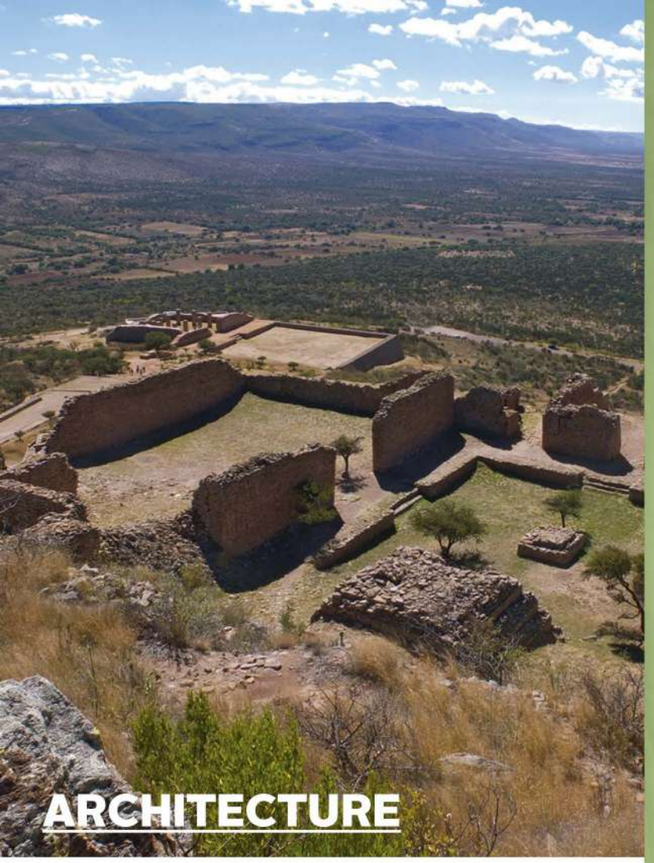
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La Quemada is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List as a reflection of the grandeur of Pre-Columbian cultures in Mexico and for its remarkable architecture.



ARCHITECTURE

The ancient city stands on an isolated hill in the valley, standing out for its five levels. On the first is the Hall of Columns and its sprawling plaza, the Ballcourt, and the Votive Pyramid. On the second level is the so-called Cuartel (Barracks), a small pyramid with a round structure, and the Teachers' Group. The third is composed of two large halls framing a plaza with a central altar and a stairway; the leveled ground extends to the west, where substantial walls and a pyramidal platform stand.

The fourth is composed of a pyramidal platform and various structures on the hilltop. Finally, the Citadel is located on the fifth level. A massive wall protects the north and west; in the interior is a small ballcourt and a stairway leading to the main structure. This structure consists of a plaza with a pyramidal altar in the center, a pyramid on the east, and a spacious hall on the north.

WHERE TO SEE THE ARCHITECTURAL STYLE?
The massive terraces to produce leveled ground to build the diverse architectural spaces are noteworthy, giving the impression they were aerial builders, as turn-of-the-century archaeologist Leopoldo Batres observed.



ESSENTIALS:

- A *Hall of Columns*
- B *Ballcourt*
- C *Votive Pyramid*
- D *Teachers' Group*
- E *Plaza of the Sacrifices*

1. Main Plaza
2. Main Stairway
3. The Cuartel (Barracks)
4. Upper Pyramidal Platform
5. Terraced Zone
6. Causeway to the Citadel
7. Citadel
8. Ballcourt of the Citadel
9. Wall

DID YOU KNOW THAT . . .

- *Through time the site has been known as Tuitlán, Chicomoztoc, Coatlcamatl, Cerro de los Edificios (Hill of the Buildings), and La Quemada.*
- *Around this settlement there are 220 archaeological sites connected through a variety of pre-Hispanic causeways.*
- *It was the largest pre-Hispanic settlement in Northern Mexico.*
- *It has the region's largest ballcourt.*

HIGHLIGHTS

- 450 - 1150 — La Quemada was occupied between AD 450 and 1150.
- 5 — La Quemada is composed of 5 levels.
- 3 — Three ballcourts have been found at the site.
- 12 — Archaeologists have found twelve pyramidal platforms at the site.
- 17 — The Votive Pyramid measures 17 meters tall.
- 18 — It has eighteen groups of petroglyphs.
- 220 — 220 peripheral sites have been detected to date in the Malpaso Valley.
- 170 — If the diverse causeways lining the Malpaso Valley were joined together, they would measure 170 linear kilometers.
- 18 x 15 — The site's largest ballcourt measures 18 meters long by 15 meters wide.
- 11 — Eleven columns once supported the roof of the Hall of Columns.



