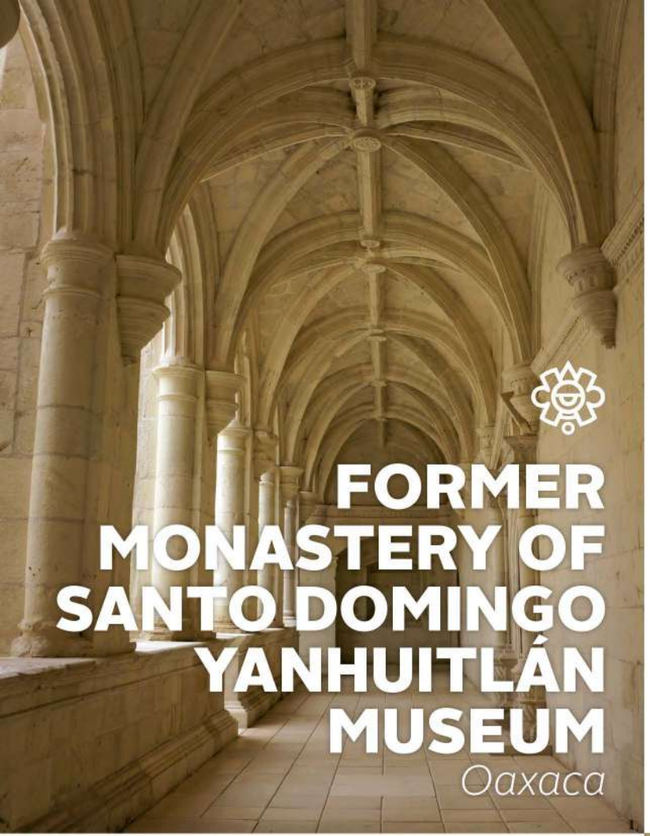


FORMER MONASTERY OF SANTO DOMINGO YANHUITLÁN MUSEUM

Oaxaca

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

In 1529, Fray Domingo Betanzos sent the earliest missionaries from the **Order of Preachers**, also known as the Dominicans, to Oaxaca. At that time, the *encomendero* of Yanhuitlán was Gonzálo de las Casas, who made arrangements for the construction of the church.

The church and former monastery of Santo Domingo Yanhuitlán was built on the base or platform of an ancient pre-Hispanic ceremonial center, destroyed by missionaries in the **sixteenth century**. The church construction is covered by rib vaults that were a common feature of Gothic architecture. The church has the sole pipe organ in Oaxaca displaying Dominican symbols on the decoration of the case: the black and white cross and the dog with its torch.

The former monastery is south of the church. In the middle of the patio on the ground floor of the cloister there is an ancient cypress tree, where the emblem of Saint Dominic, **"the fleur de lis,"** is represented in stone in allusion to the Dominicans.

Going up the wide staircase, we can see an original mural on the landing that depicts **Saint Christopher** with the Christ child sitting on his shoulders.



HOW TO GET THERE

Located 18 kilometers west of Nochixtlán, Oaxaca, and 37 kilometers south of Tamazulapan, Oaxaca. To reach this site from the city of Oaxaca, take highway 190.

HOURS

Tuesday to Sunday from 9 am to 5 pm.

SERVICES

Its educational services area offers guided tours to schools and programs focusing on children. It also houses the Alfonso Caso Documentary Center, which contains materials for consultation by researchers.

PHOTOGRAPHY

For the use of any device to make videos, visitors must pay the stipulated fee. Non-professional photography, without the use of tripods, is free of charge and must be done without flash.

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TEXTS
Former Monastery of Santo Domingo Yanhuitlán Museum

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MAIN ATTRACTION

Facsimile of the Codex of Yanhuitlán

It shows a panorama of the geographic and political relations of its times, showing a list of products paid in tribute that give us insight into the commercial activities at this site. The document shows forms of classic European rhetoric and Mixtec elements, such as calendrical glyphs and deities related to the *veintenas* (20-day periods). Among the figures portrayed are members of the clergy, indigenous nobles, and commoners.

Where to see it?

The facsimile of the Codex of Yanhuitlán is on display in the Profundis Hall.



COLLECTION

It includes pieces for religious veneration, including representations of Christ, angels, and saints, in addition to historical documents of importance for the community, such as the facsimile of the Codex of Yanhuitlán and royal land grants, and architectural elements recovered from different phases of intervention in the complex.

The aim is for these objects to be valued by the community as well as by visitors from Mexico and abroad. The subject matter focuses on the cultural and economic transition taking place in the seventeenth century. It reflects syncretism between European and Mixtec cultures.



HIGHLIGHTS

2000 2012 — Architectural intervention and restoration work was necessary after a strong earthquake damaged the bell tower in 1999. From 2000 to 2012, diverse stages of intervention were carried out on the entire complex, under the direction of architect Juan Urquiaga Blanco.

1529 — On July 24, 1529, the *alcalde mayor* (deputy governor) of Oaxaca, Juan Peláez de Berrio, granted the Dominicans twelve lots for the construction of their church and residence.

25 — The church has a single nave. Construction lasted twenty-five years. It is 25 meters tall, 15 meters wide, and 75 meters long.

1570 — The main altar is a veritable gem of viceregal art. It was created by the painter from Seville, Andrés de Concha, in 1570.

6000 — The construction of the church was begun in 1550 by Fray Domingo de la Cruz. Some 6,000 indigenous workers were assigned to work on the construction in *cuatequil* (forced labor), divided into ten groups of 600 men, each team responsible for transporting stone, lime, and water.

/GALLERIES

PERMANENT EXHIBITION GALLERIES

- Profundis Hall

When the Dominican order occupied the monastery, this room served as a space where prayers were said prior to meals. Psalms were read before the monks entered the dining space of the refectory, especially the Psalm of David *De profundis* (Psalm 130), for the profound rest of Dominicans who had passed.

Today this room houses part of the Museum's permanent collection, which includes a facsimile of the Codex of Yanhuitlán, reproductions of royal land grants, pieces of worked *cantera* stone from the monastic complex, and a sculpture of death from the seventeenth century.

- Chapter Hall

The name is derived from the monks' early morning custom of reading one of the seventy-three chapters of the Rule of Saint Benedict. This custom explains the name "chapter," referring to the meeting of the entire religious community that dwelled in the complex. Therefore, the space served as a meeting place for the monks and it was where they performed liturgical, disciplinary, educational, administrative, elective, apostolic, and ministerial activities, all information confidential in nature. This site was used as a burial place for monks, where the friars sang to them and held a procession.

Today this room houses objects of a religious and historical nature belonging to the community of Santo Domingo Yanhuitlán and under the care of the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH).

- Refectory

This was the dining area for the Dominican friars and it has a box where food was passed to the friars. It also has a pulpit where sacred stories were read as the brothers of the common order ate.

Today this space displays objects of a religious and historical character belonging to the community of Santo Domingo Yanhuitlán and under the jurisdiction of the INAH, including a sculpture of Saint George.

/ On May 10, 1933, both the church and the former monastery of Santo Domingo Yanhuitlán were declared a Historic Monument.





GROUND FLOOR

- A *Profundis Hall*
- B *Chapter Hall*
- C *Refectory*
- D *South Entrance Hall*
- E *Kitchen*

1 Entrance
2 Ticket booth
3 Cloister patio
4 Chapel
5 Church

UPPER LEVEL

- F *Cells*
- G *Library*
- H *Boardroom*

6 Restrooms
7 Office

TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS GALLERIES

- South Entrance Hall

This space served as the alternative entrance to the back part of the monastery that provided access to different sections, such as the orchards, kitchen, and the Profundis Hall. It evokes the intersection of the food supply and onsite food production.

Today this area is used for temporary exhibitions, whose creators and subjects are related to the Mixteca Alta region of Oaxaca.

- Kitchen

This room was employed in the preparation of food for the friars who lived in the complex. It still preserves a chimney where food was cooked. It is flanked by niches that served as storage pantries.

This area is currently used for temporary exhibitions, whose creators and subjects are tied to the Mixteca Alta of Oaxaca.

- Upper floor cells

These rooms have a beam ceiling similar to the original construction and were used by a single occupant. Each of the cells has a reading bench beside a window that provided light. They are decorated with their respective medallions, including a hand holding a heart, the chalice, the host, the cilice, the model of the church on a book, and the fleur-de-lis cross.

Today some of the cells on the upper floor are used for temporary exhibitions, whose creators and subject matter concern the Mixteca Alta of Oaxaca. Others were used to integrate the form of what is today the meeting hall and to house the bibliographic collection with books available for general consultation.

- Mural

A wall of the staircase to the upper floor has a mural depicting Saint Christopher, the giant who carried the baby Jesus on his shoulder to cross the river. The mural is polychromed with tonalities such as red oxide, ochre yellow, and blue.

