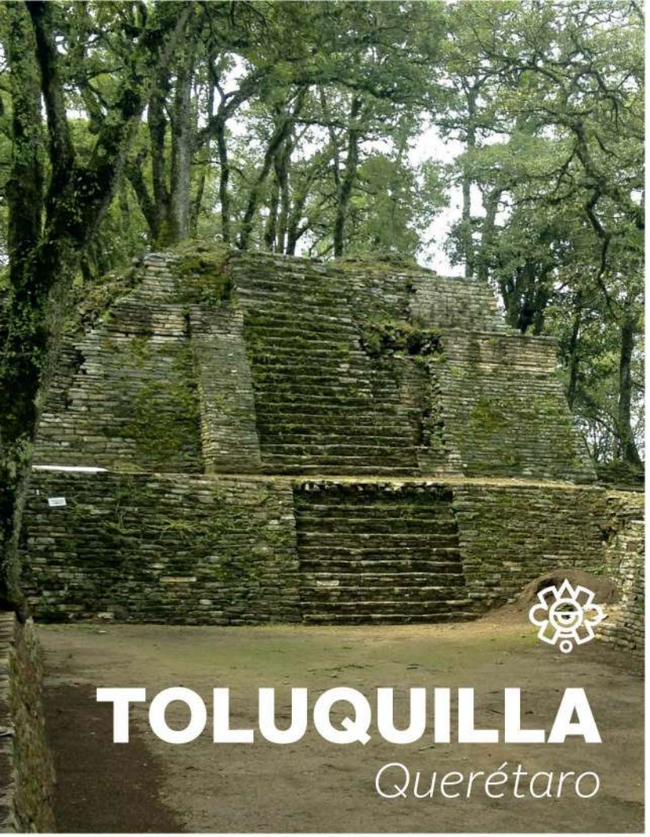


TOLUQUILLA

Querétaro

GET READY TO EXPLORE

Toluquilla is in an excellent state of preservation. On your visit, you can see roughly 40 percent of the ancient city and various complexes:

Vestibule

When climbing the hill and after registering, go to the first group. There you can see a small plaza surrounded by six rooms that is the vestibule to the ritual ballcourt. Building 3 of this space shows a substructure with a double projecting cornice at the door and corners.

Ballcourt 1

It is formed by a sunken playing field surrounded by markedly vertical walls on the sides and a raised patio on the side. Building 13 has traces of stucco coating on its walls.



HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The archaeological site of Toluquilla is known thanks to the historian and statesman, Carlos María Bustamante, who published news of the discovery of Ranas and Toluquilla in the newspaper, ***El Sol*** *(1823–1832). In 1848 English traveler John Phillips visited the Sierra Gorda, described it in his bilingual book Mexico* ***Illustrated/ México Ilustrado****, and included a lithograph of Toluquilla Hill. In 1872 and 1880 three mining engineers, Bartolomé Ballesteros, Mariano Bárcenas, and José Ma. Reyes, went to and described Toluquilla. This prompted the visit of the first archaeologist, Eduardo Noguera who in 1931 refuted the engineers' interpretations. Thirty-six years elapsed before the start of three-month conservation work began at the site under archaeologist Margarita Velasco in 1987. Since 1993, INAH has developed a project encompassing restoration, infrastructure, and research to habilitate and open the site to the public in 1997. The project continues to the present under the direction of archaeologist Elizabeth Mejía.*

Work at Toloquilla revealed that throughout the site's occupation, the inhabitants, known as the Serranos, knew about and extracted a red powder known as cinnabar (mercury sulfide) from the earth. Cinnabar was of great ritual value among the cultures of ancient Mexico, because they used it to cover the corpses of rulers and important people. In the southern sierra cinnabar mines enabled its inhabitants to know about and exchange products with other cultures over the centuries. Nevetheless, archaeological materials confirm that although the Serranos were familiar with other cultures, and communicated and traded with them, they were never conquered by outsiders and their culture endured even after the cities of their trade partners had fallen. For instance, various kinds of seashells and animal bones from the Gulf of Mexico were the result of interaction with El Tajín. Likewise, obsidian from the Sierra de las Navajas, Hidalgo, came from trade with Teotihuacan (200 BC to AD 550). After the fall of that city, trade in obsidian and other products shifted to the Toltecs of Tula, Hidalgo (AD 600–1200). Another link was with the region of Michoacán, the source of seashells and obsidian. Although Toluquilla continued until the arrival of the Spaniards, it was never in direct contact with the Mexicas or Aztecs.

PLACE NAME	Hunchback Hill
CULTURE	Local development or Serrano (Mountain)
PERIOD	Classic-Epiclassic-Late Classic
DATES	300 BC to AD 1550

Residence

Continuing to the south, twelve rooms surrounding three patios can be seen. Preliminary archaeological work suggested it was an area purely for housing. However, today we known it also had a funerary function, because 200 skeletons have been recovered here. In the first patio, Room 18 has been restored and the doorway has been reconstructed. In the second patio, in Building 31, at a corner 2.30 m high you can see a narrow projecting slab, which is an architectural feature known as *ixtapaltete* (wide flat slab) and *tablero* (rectangular panel).

Agave field

If you continue ahead, you will come across an area of dismantled structures where many years earlier the buildings were destroyed to plant agaves. Therefore, only traces of rows of ancient rooms are visible. Leaving this space, you will come to a corridor that leads to the next ballcourt.

Ballcourt 2

This group was not as well-preserved as the first ballcourt. It appears to be on a single level and is much larger than the other court. To one side of this ballcourt, a corridor was restored where you can see eight rooms that have not yet been excavated. To the north and south of the corridor, a *temazcal* (steambath) stands at each end. In the north part the chimney is embedded into the wall.
Today the south sector and 60 percent of the site have not yet been habilitated to receive the public.

MAIN ATTRACTION

Building 15

The tallest and most important temple at the site also stands at the end of Ballcourt 1. With a single access, it is particularly significant for three reasons. In addition to standing more than 8 meters high, during explorations archaeologists found six remodeled stages, one within the other, displaying the site's three architectural styles. In the first period, they constructed a round building 10 m in diameter, which was later destroyed and covered with a rectangular building with a double stairway on its facade and a small niche in the center. Part of these elements can be seen in a window, where the balustrade was destroyed on the right of the main stairway. Finally, the stage visible today has two tiers, below a large *talud* (sloping wall) topped by a projecting cornice reminiscent of the Tajín style, on which stands the wall of the room with decorations at each corner, similar to those seen on a smaller scale in Building 3.

HOW TO GET THERE

Located 110 km northeast of San Juan del Río, Querétaro, you can get there by taking Federal Highway no. 120 to Vizarrón, then continue for 7 km until you reach the turnoff for San Joaquín. At km 30 take the road to the Zimapán hydroelectric dam, at km 11 take a 500-m dirt road that leads to the site.

ADMISSION

According to the Federal Fees Act, admission is free for students, teachers with a valid ID, seniors, retirees, and pensioners; children under 13 and people with a disability, as well as for INAH workers and researchers.

HOURS

Monday to Sunday from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm.

PHOTOGRAPHY

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

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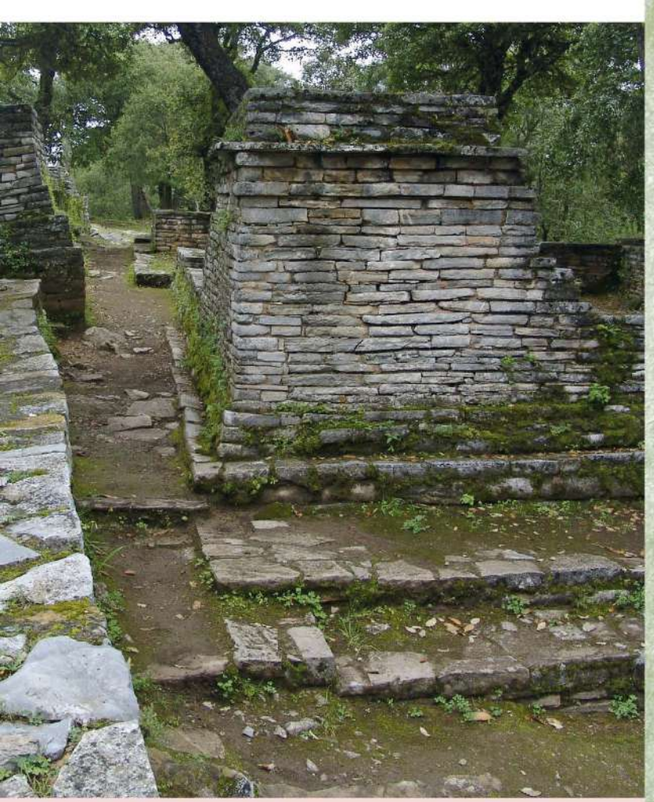
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Toluquilla, a well-preserved mining town for 2000 years and where cloud banks can be seen when the "Nortes" (strong, cold, north winds) come from the Gulf of Mexico in October to February.



ARCHITECTURE

Toluquilla was built using limestone slabs extracted from the hill itself. At the site there were at least three construction phases: the round buildings, covered by rectangular structures, and in the final construction stage, today visible throughout the site, there is evidence of diverse decorative elements, such as: projecting Tajín-type cornices (on buildings 3, 15, and 57). Both the ixtapaltete (wide flat slab) and tablero (rectangular panel) in the upper part of some walls were continuously used and a fashion imitated from Teotihuacan (Building 31).



AND DON'T MISS . . .

- If you visit the southern Sierra Gorda, you can go to the Ranas archaeological zone and the Herrero Grottoes, the town of San Joaquín, which celebrates the Huapango dance festival in April, and its traditional fiesta in August.
- If you still have time, we recommend you visit the northern Sierra Gorda, where you can see five Franciscan missions (Jalpán, Landa, Tilaco, Tancoyol, and Conca), declared UNESCO World Heritage sites.



ESSENTIALS:

- A *Ballcourt 1*
- B *Residence*
- C *Agave field*
- D *Ballcourt 2*

1 Building 15
2 Building 18
3 Temazcal
4 Building 57

DID YOU KNOW THAT . . .

- *Toluquilla is the largest site in the state of Querétaro.*
- *The site's excellent state of preservation allows visitors to see the center's first ballcourt, still standing as in ancient times. It never had ballcourt rings on the walls.*
- *The residential area of Toluquilla is southwest of the hill, far from the cold north winds.*
- *Given the number of rooms and the area of cultivation, we estimate that Toluquilla could have supported some four thousand inhabitants.*
- *The southern region of the sierra had a large number of mines. Therefore, they were full-time miners.*



HIGHLIGHTS

- 4 ballcourts and the largest number of these structures known in the state of Querétaro.
- 20 percent of the site has been explored.
- 210 is the number of monuments at Toluquilla, spread over 17 hectares.
- Toluquilla has been officially recognized as a Zone of Monuments under the jurisdiction of the federal government under an expropriation decree of 1999. It receives 4000 visitors per year.