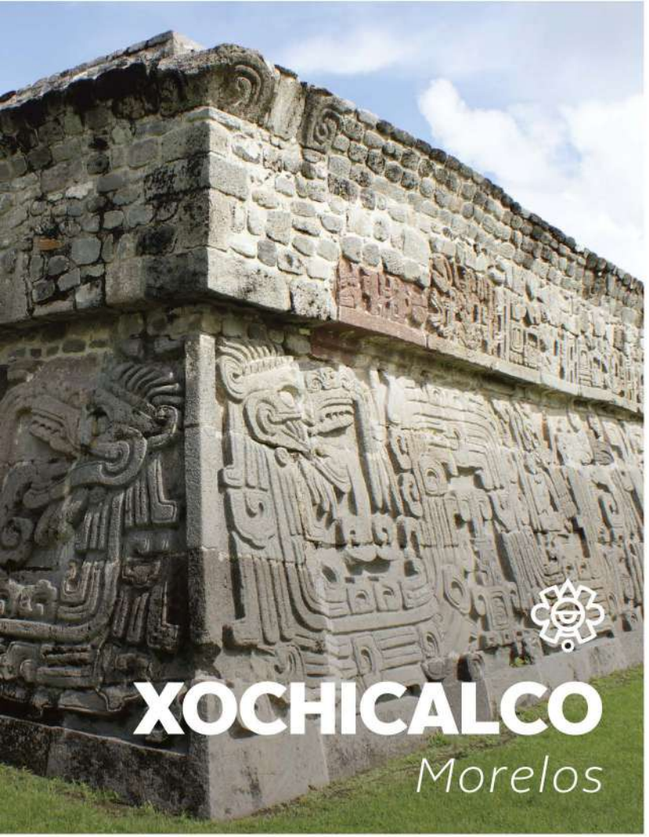


XOCHICALCO

Morelos

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Architectonic characteristics suggest that the builders of Xochicalco may have been Teotihuacan descendants, since many of the architectural features, such as battered and vertical walls, were replicated on this place. Furthermore, evidence points to an adjustment of the Mesoamerican calendars of the Mayan area, Oaxaca and the Gulf coast, which was applied here. This can be perceived in the reliefs of the Templo de las Serpientes Emplumadas [Temple of the Feathered Serpents], during a full solar eclipse in the year 743 AD. The Plaza de la Estela de los Dos Glifos [Plaza of the Stela of the Two Glyphs] and the observatory were built for astronomic measurements and they both reflect the huge control over ideology that regulated their rituals and agricultural activities. Such was the indigenous city, with defensive features, such as walls, moats and gates to control all points of access. This city displayed an extraordinary command of rainwater through its drainage system and tanks, and mastery of polychromy, and the diverse ornamentation on their temples.

Everything was built and ultimately abandoned in the very short period of 250 years. Xochicalco must have been related to other cities of the Late Classic period, such as Cacaxtla, Teotenango, Cholula, Monte Albán, El Tajín and La Quemada, and there is evidence of exchange with the Pacific coast and the Gulf coast. The existence of Xochicalco was noted in the sixteenth century, and has been studied by many curious people. Nevertheless, Leopoldo Batres was the first to conduct an archaeological and scientific research, in 1909. Ever since, various researchers have made great contributions to Xochicalco's history, being the 1992-1994 project the one that got to recover the greatest amount of pieces that now shape the Xochicalco Site Museum.

TOPONYM	*Xochitl* 'Flower', *Calli* 'House', *-co* 'place of'. Meaning: Xochicalco 'The place of the flower house'
CULTURE	Xochicalca, possibly immigrants from Teotihuacan.
PERIOD	Late Classic
TIMESPAN	650-900 AD.

LOCATION

Xochicalco is located 22 miles from Cuernavaca. If travelling by car, take the federal highway or toll road to Acapulco, then take the Alpuyeca exit if driving on the freeway, or exit at the toll payment booth of Balnearios-Jojutla, if you are taking the toll road. Keep straight and in both instances take the next exit to Miacatlán, 5 miles further take the exit to the archaeological site and keep going for 2.5 miles more.
If travelling on public transportation, from Mexico City's Southern Bus Station, take a bus to Coatlán del Río and ask to be dropped at the Crucero de Xochicalco stop, then take a taxi, or a bus to Cuentepec, or walk 2.5 miles to the archaeological site.

PHOTOGRAPHS

There is a fee for the use of any device for video recording as established by the Treasury Office. Non professional photos, without tripod, are allowed and have no cost.

HOURS

Lunes a domingo,
de 9 a 17 horas.

ADMISSIONS

As established by the Federal Law of Rights, entrance is free for minors under 13, students and teachers with valid ID, seniors, people retired and pensioners, as well as workers and researchers of the INAH. On Sundays entrance is free for Mexican visitors.

www.inah.gob.mx
www.difusion.inah.gob.mx
@inah_mx
Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia

TEXTS
Arqlgo. José Cuauhtli Alejandro Medina Romero, Arqlgo. Norberto González Crespo (t), Arqlga. Silvia Garza Tarazona.

TRANSLATION
Debra Emy Nagao Ogawa

PRODUCTION
Head of Promotion of the National Dissemination Office, INAH

PHOTOGRAPHY
Arqlgo. José Cuauhtli A. Medina Romero, Joanna Morayta Konieczna, Alejandro Boneta, Marco A. Pacheco.

CULTURA
SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA

INAH

DISCOVER BY YOURSELF

The whole city was organized on five height levels; the top one was the most important and most difficult to access. The Acropolis and the Temple of the Feathered Serpents are located there.

Main complex

Architectural arrangement located at the east access of the city. Today it welcomes visitors and it is assembled by a series of checkpoint systems to access the city, a squared plaza and the last segment of the prehispanic roadway that lead to the exterior.



Plaza of the Stela of the Two Glyphs

A space reserved to welcoming a large number of people, bearing, with all certainty, a public nature, since it is located on the southern access of the city, the most important and of greater extension. At the heart of the Plaza, a replica of the Stela of the Two Glyphs, bearing the date 'Año 10 Caña, Dia 09 Ojo de Reptil' , can be appreciated. This space has great astronomical importance in the observation of sunrises during the equinoxes and the solstices. Two gateways served as a first checkpoint to access the city, as well as the base D, located west, and the base C, located east, that together with the Gran Pirámide [the Great Pyramid], located north, limit the whole plaza.

Juego de Pelota [Ballgame]

South. The ballgame located on the fifth and lowest terrace, with its distinctive field shaped like a capital letter "I", was the largest and most public in nature, since its location rendered it the easiest to access. It still holds its two scoreboards. The so called Escultura en Forma de Guacamaya [Sculpture in the shape of a Guacamaya] was found here, and today it is guarded at the National Anthropology Museum. The ballgame is related to a housing complex known as El Palacio [The Palace], and also to the structure known as La Malinche. It connects with the main entrance, located south of the city, through a Prehispanic roadway.
North. This ballcourt is located on the third terrace and it has the same capital "I" shape that the south one has; it bears the highest lateral structures and its scoreboards have fallen to the center of the playing alley.
East. This ballcourt is located on the third terrace. It has the same "I" shape as the others but, unlike the rest of the scoreboards, this one features bas-reliefs, and is currently in display at the Site Museum.

The Great Pyramid

This structure is located north of the Plaza of the Stela of the Two Glyphs. It has a base comprised of three bodies from which a four-bodied structure arises, possibly dedicated to the god Tláloc.

East complex

It includes three temples, spatially arranged in relation to the east ballgame; an access called La Rampa de los Animales [The animals' ramp], where 270 flat stones with various carved animals such as insects, birds, mammals and reptiles, can be observed; the Templo de los Arquitectos [Temple of the Architects], also known as Patio Hundido [Sunken Patio], is outstanding because it has a floor level beneath the rest of the structures, where various tools for construction, such as plumbs, mixers and polishers, were found.

North complex

In this place we can find the cistern that was used for rainwater harvesting. There is also the Salon del Altar Policromado [the Hall of the Polychromed Altar], which exemplifies the way in which people from Xochicalco, or Xochicalca, built their roofs. There is also a Temazcal that, along with the north ballgame, had ceremonial purposes.

Main Square

Without a doubt, this was the best kept place and the hardest to access. The Temple of the Feathered Serpents, the Pirámide Gemela [Twin Pyramid], the Templo de las Estelas [Stelae Temple], administrative structures and, in the north, the Acropolis, the place of residence for rulers and center of wealthiness of the city, are to be found.

Prehispanic observatory

It is a cavern created out of the extraction of raw materials that shaped the pyramidal base of the city. It was drilled by the Xochicalca in such a way as to allow the entrance of a sunbeam, from April 30th to August 13th, an approximate period of 105 days a year, reaching its maximum illumination between the 14th and 15th of May.



FEATURE STRUCTURE

Temple of the Feathered Serpents

This monument has tremendous iconographic wealth. It comprises two bodies, one of them built with a talud base, a vertical wall (or tablero) and a bevelled cornice, and the other, in which only one talud base is preserved. On the facades, eight feathered serpents were sculpted on stone, arranged two on each one, and decorated with cut seashells and beads. The access to the monument, a staircase bound by two alfardas or slops, is located on the talud base, of the west facade. On this facade, the serpents were depicted with their heads touching their tails; likewise on the left side of the staircase an image that represents the calendrical adjustment with the correspondent date, can be observed; while on the right side the name and rank of the presumed ruler of Xochicalco can be noticed.

On the other three facades the feathered serpents, displaying the same characteristics, were sculpted in an undulating form. In each wave, seated characters in elegant postures and with Mayan features and new-fire glyphs, can be observed. Displayed along the vertical walls or tableros, of the four facades, are representations of characters with traits that reveal their specialty in the computing of time, along with the full solar eclipse symbol and an image that could stand for the name of the place where the adjustment of the calendar was made.

On the second body, animals, calendrical glyphs and place names are represented. In some spots of the north facade, above the bas-reliefs, remains of stucco and red paint can be appreciated. The architecture and art of this Xochicalco monument was one of the two reasons for its inclusion in UNESCO's World Heritage List.

ARCHITECTURE

Most of its architecture can trace its origin in the Teotihuacan style. Nevertheless, its main feature is the talud (a sloped wall) crowned by a tablero (vertical wall), in which the former is always higher than the latter. The characteristic Xochicalca ornamental element, in most of their buildings, is the arrangement of a series of niches over the tablero, and in some instances, the bevelled cornice imprints a special trait to the architecture.

WHERE TO SEE THE ARCHITECTONIC STYLE?

The best example of Xochicalca architecture is displayed at the Temple of the Feathered Serpents, where —with a little curiosity— you will easily identify, in three of its facades, the characters with Mayan features, among the wavy bodies of the serpents.



Xochicalco is an extraordinarily well preserved example of a fortified city dating from the Late Classic period (600-900), whose art and architecture reflect the mastery of its inhabitants, which can be appreciated at the Temple of the Feathered Serpents.

ESSENTIALS

- A *Main Complex*
- B *Plaza of the Stela of the Two Glyphs*
- C *Ballgame*
- D *Great Pyramid*
- E *Main Square*
- F *Temple of the Feathered Serpents*
- G *The Observatory*

1 Entrance
2 Exit

DID YOU KNOW?

- *Xochicalco's existence was first reported in 1577 by friar Bernardino de Sahagún on his work **General History of Things in the New Spain**.*
- *Xochicalco's Prehispanic observatory is one of four most studied observatories, along with the one in Monte Albán and two in Teotihuacan.*
- *It has been suggested that the sculpture of the Señor de Rojo [Red Lord] is a solar marker that was placed at the uppermost point of the city, to begin the city's trace from there.*
- *Archaeological evidence points to the fact that most buildings had stucco coating and painted motifs in different colors.*
- *Researchers have proposed that the name of Xochicalco was in fact Totolhuacalco or "The place where the birds are catch", due to representations found here and in Cacaxtla.*
- *An acoustic phenomenon heard on the semi closed Mesoamerican plazas, linked to the song of birds, can also be heard on the Plaza of the Stela of the Two Glyphs and in front of the Temple of the Stelae.*
- *The Prehispanic observatory was visited by Carlota, the empress of Mexico, wife of emperor Ferdinand Maximiliano of Habsburg.*

FACTS ABOUT XOCHICALCO

400 Over 400 carved stones with animals such as insects, birds, reptiles, and mammals have been found in here.

1909 The archaeologist Leopoldo Batres conducted the first scientific excavation of the Temple of the Feathered Serpents on 1909.

4 Four stelae were found complete: three on the Temple of the Stelae, and one known as the Stela of the Two Glyphs.

DO NOT MISS

- Xochicalco's Feria de la Salsa, a festivity devoted to hot chilli sauce, which takes place on March 21st.
- 15 minutes away, near Miacatlán, you can find the archaeological site of Coatetelco with its Site Museum and a lagoon where there is more than one way to enjoy a cooked mojarra.
- 5 minutes away, near Cuentepec, you can find the Cabañas Ecoturísticas de Tetlamatzin [Ecoturistic Cabains of Tetlamatzin],where you can spend the night and enjoy the region's cuisine.
- 10 minutes away, in the town of Cuentepec, you can practice extreme sports such as zipline, abseiling, hiking, kayaking, and speleology. Visit Parque Cuentepec Extremo.