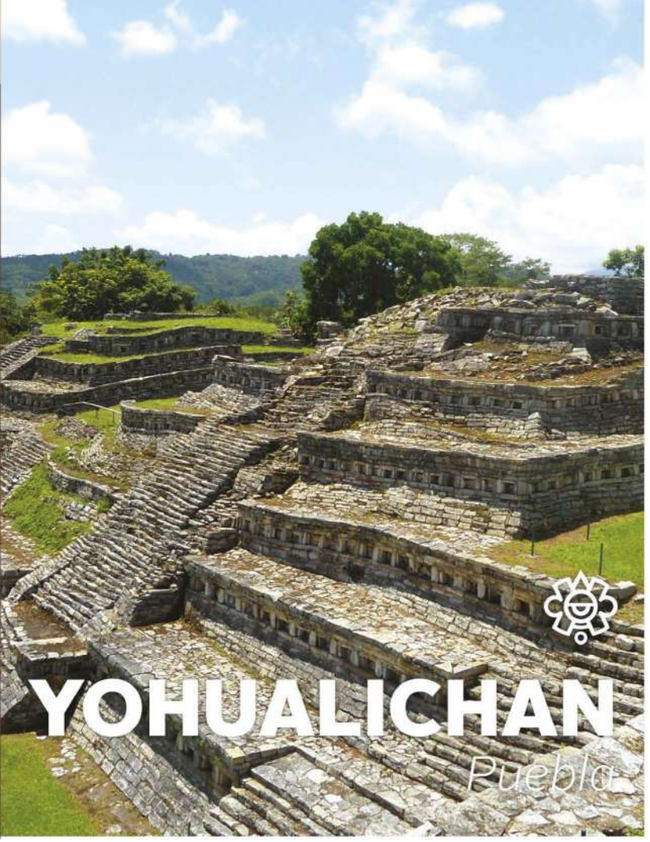



# HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

*The latest research has revealed that it was the earliest Totonac settlement, built around AD 800. Later, a substantial migration of Chichimecs in roughly 1180 brought nonlocal cultural elements into the region, such as the Nahuatl language. During this time, a number of towns were established in the area known as the Sierra Norte de Puebla, such as Xonotla, Tuzamapa, Ayotochco, and Telela.*

*The pre-Hispanic settlement had depressions resulting from local clayey soils and the possible presence of underground caves that had collapsed in the subsoil. In the northern and southern part of the site, evidence of major land works included a large number of agricultural terraces, and platforms and small temples. Larger temples and administrative buildings were built around the central plaza.*

*Rocky outcrops abound at the site and played a significant role in determining the height, layout, and function of some constructions. For example, the West Building arose from the presence of a vital element: water. This flows from this structure and from seventeen springs, located at the four cardinal directions of the settlement.*

*The region's last geological layer provided ample building material to lavish structures with niches to heighten the city's importance and magnificence. However, unlike other centers (e.g. El Tajín), at Yohualichan the builders employed only two types of niches: simple and composite (or double).*

*Although today visitors see the site's austere unpainted stone buildings in contrast to the lush green of the vegetation, at one time these structures were covered with painted stucco and reliefs, traces of which can be seen on the Building of the Stepped Frets and in the interior of niches.*

| | |
|---|---|
| PLACE NAME | Nahuatl word that means "Its house of night" |
| CULTURE | Totonac |
| PERIOD | Classic and Postclassic |
| DATE | AD 800 to 1200 |

### HOW TO GET THERE

It is 8 km (almost 5 miles) from Cuetzalan, Puebla; 165 km (102 miles) from Puebla. Its main access is on the Puebla-Teziutlán highway to the Zacapoaxtla turnoff. From the east coast, take the Xalapa-Puebla highway, taking the Teziutlán turnoff and later the Zacapoaxtla turnoff.

### PHOTOGRAPHY

For the use of any device to make videos, visitors must pay the amount set by the Secretary of Finance. Non-professional photography, without the use of tripods, is free of cost.

### HOURS

From Monday to Sunday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

### ADMISSION

According to the Federal Fees Act, admission is free for children 13 or younger, students, and teachers with a valid ID, seniors, retirees, and pensioners, disabled people, and INAH workers. Sunday: free admission for Mexicans and foreigners living in Mexico.

www.inah.gob.mx
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CULTURA
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INAH

# GET READY TO EXPLORE

## Ballcourt

The bedrock outcrop was used as the base for two long constructions that formed the ballcourt, where the ritual ballgame was played. This area must have been of particular importance for the city's inhabitants, for it is much larger than similar structures elsewhere in Mesoamerica.
The playing field was bound by vertical walls, built with large blocks on the sides and small benches at the ends that formed the traditional double-T shaped court.

## The Tomb

Adjacent to the Ballcourt is a small underground precinct covered with an enormous flat stone. Although legends refer to this construction as a tomb, there is no evidence to support the claim. Instead, it might have been a *temazcal* (sweatbath), which were often associated with ballcourts.

## Building of the Stepped Frets

The earliest excavations of this monument uncovered reliefs in the shape of stepped frets on one of the substructures.

It is a religious structure, in which a rock layer was exploited in the construction to allow the front of the building to be higher than that the one the opposite site.

## Building 5 or Building X

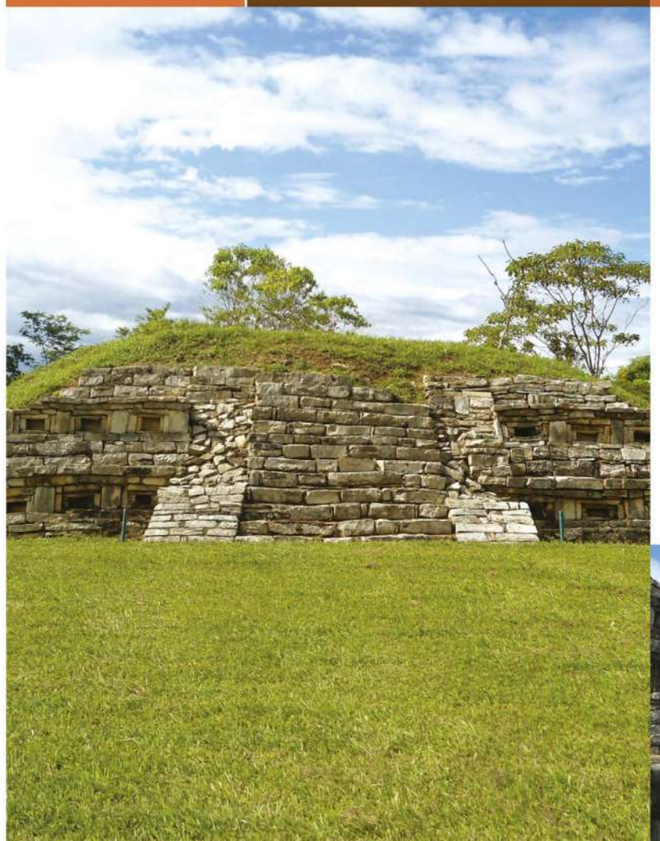
Adjacent to the Building of the Stepped Frets, excavations revealed how the builders skillfully took advantage of the topographic relief. Based on archaeological materials found, this building served a ceremonial purpose. Today it looks out of proportion as a result of the sinking land on which it was built, but originally it had horizontal lines of niches, which can be partially seen here and there.

## North Building

Its three tiers have long, somewhat short, shallow niches. It was the link between the religious and everyday spheres.

## East Building

Given its position within the main group, it must have been of particular importance to its builders. The front facade faces west. It is a relatively low-lying structure with only two levels that still display the remains of the temple that crowned it. Based on its characteristics, it is believed to have had an administrative function. The architects achieved a well-proportioned complex with an open precinct in the front, where the base of the walls suggests they once supported a wood and palm roof.



# MAIN ATTRACTION

## West Building

It is one of the most complex buildings at the site, both for its architecture and its ritual function. Its entrances were on the east facing the Main Plaza, and also on the west facing the modern community park. It is a construction that resembles the others; it had an interior channel to remove spring water that accumulated from filtration in the bedrock in order to prevent water damage to the structure. The building has a tall stairway framed by fine balustrades that lead to the remains of a temple, where religious ceremonies were probably conducted. This mound and that of the Stepped Frets are joined by a stairway at an angle, from the top of which can be seen the stairs leading to the Plaza of the Bell Tower and the Ballcourt, a structure that is unique in all of Mesoamerica.



# ARCHITECTURE

*The principal characteristic of a Totonac culture typical site are the niches present in all of their settlements, which were later developed in the Totonacapan region. Here visitors can see the process leading to the perfection of the technique, for the earliest buildings have simple niches, and the most recent have double or composite niches. The niche represents a ceremonial ornament with multiple interpretations related to the transition from life to death, echoed in the interplay of light and shadow with the sun's passage during the day. Other interpretations have identified these niches with the countless caverns and hollows found naturally in the ground throughout the region.*

**WHERE TO SEE THE NICHES?**

***They can be seen on each of the buildings. Just as those at El Tajín, they were built with stepped tiers, composed of a talud (sloped panel), topped by niches, and crowned by a cornice.***




**ESSENTIALS**

- **A** *Ethno-botanical passage at the entrance to the site*
- **B** *Ballcourt*
- **C** *The Tomb*
- **D** *Lookout*
- **E** *Main Plaza*
- **F** *West Building*

1. Entrance
2. Ticket office
3. Building of the Stepped Frets
4. North Building
5. East Building

# DID YOU KNOW?

- *In the historical annals of the community of Yohualichan, The Tomb was used as an arsenal during the insurgent struggle for independence in the nineteenth century and as a jail in the early twentieth century, among other purposes.*
- *Although ballgame objects carved in stone such as votive yokes, hachas and palmas (ax-shaped and palmate belt gear) come from this region, ballcourt markers or rings have not been found at the Ballcourt. Nevertheless, these pieces were probably made with perishable materials.*
- *The remarkable acoustics of the Main Plaza allow you to hear sounds from the Lookout and the Plaza of the Bell Tower perfectly. It is especially useful if we bear in mind that in the past, it was the community meeting place.*
- *The buildings around the Main Plaza are perfectly aligned with the four cardinal directions.*
- *In norte season characterized by strong winds, you can hear the wind whistle as it passes between the niches.*



**The archaeological zone of Yohualichan is considered the cradle of Totonac culture.**



# AND DO NOT MISS . .

- During the local saint's feast day on July 16, indigenous dances dedicated to the celebration of Our Lady of Mount Carmel are performed.
- Very close to Yohualichan is the Pueblo Mágico (Magical Town) of Cuetzalan, with its various attractions, waterfalls, and grottos typical of the region.
- Near the archaeological site there is an association of indigenous women who produce folk art, as well as typical pre-Hispanic dishes.
- Half an hour to the east is the river marking the border between Puebla and Veracruz.

# SOME FIGURES

| | |
|---|---|
| 90 | The Ballcourt measures 90 m (295 ft.) long and is one of the longest in Mesoamerica |
| 48 mil | In 2015 Yohualichan received 48,220 visitors |
| 100 | In the site's Ethno-botanical Corridor there are more than 100 different plants typical of the region |
| 5 | Five buildings delimit the Main Plaza (North, East, and West Building, The Building of the Stepped Frets and Building X) |
| 60 | The distance between Yohualichan and El Tajín is only 60 km (37¼ miles) as the crow flies |

