



The Olana Partnership 2009 Mexico Tour Itinerary *By James Male, Tour Operator*

Welcome fellow travelers to the 5th annual Olana Tour to Mexico!

I am so looking forward to this year's tour to Copper Canyon as it will certainly be our most exciting tour to date. Though Copper Canyon is truly a world-class natural wonder, it remains somewhat remote and off the beaten path to most tourists. As on all James Thomas Tours this will be a comfortable and relaxing tour with all the amenities you have come to expect, including wonderful, small, private hotels and on-staff expert guides. The pace of the tour will be gentle and aside from the high altitude at the canyon rim, the tour will not be particularly strenuous. We will have motorized transportation available to all the scheduled site visits and, for the more athletic among you, there will be ample opportunity for hiking and rigorous walking throughout the tour. Please read the itinerary carefully and note the wardrobe and luggage recommendations for traveling through multiple climate zones.

Kathy and Amy at Liberty Travel in Albany are familiar with this tour and can assist you with both the international flights on Continental Airlines, as well as the internal flights in Mexico (the charter flight out of the canyon is included in the tour package.) Medical and travel insurance are not provided and, should you feel the need, they are easily obtained — often through your credit card company or insurance carrier.

Pack Little and Pack Light!

We will be covering lots of terrain during the eight-day tour and traveling through multiple climate zones via jet, train, van, and small private plane. Dress clothing is not necessary except for those guests staying on in the Capital following the scheduled tour. If you wish to bring "city clothes" pack them in separate bags and I will hand them off to my assistant to keep in Mexico

City until our return the final night of the tour. For the Copper Canyon tour you will be allowed one bag or small suitcase per person. It is unlikely to rain but it can be quite cold up on the canyon rim where we will be spending two days and nights. A lightweight zippered fleece and a separate Gore Tex outer shell are perfect to keep you both warm and dry in any weather with minimal weight. Long johns are recommended as well as "sleeping socks" and gloves or mittens for the high altitude leg of the tour. One pair of sturdy, comfortable walking or trail shoes are all you will need for footwear. I favor Merrell brand trail shoes, available at Paragon in New York or at Kenco on Route 28, just west of Kingston. It will be sunny and warm for most of the tour requiring only light slacks, jeans, a few cotton shirts and not much else. Sun hats and most incidentals can be bought on arrival in El Fuerte near the Pacific Coast. Most of you will be coming from the frigid Northeast and can wear your cold weather clothes on the plane.

Tour Itinerary: Saturday, February 7th through Saturday, February 14th

Saturday, February 7th

I will meet you at the airport in Mexico City as you exit the final immigration desk and pass through the automatic sliding glass doors. My assistant, Omar Castañeda, will be with me to assist and lead you to the domestic departure gate for Los Mochis. Upon arrival in Los Mochis we will be taken to Hotel Torres in the colonial city of El Fuerte, one-and-a-half hours drive inland. Dinner will be at the Hotel.

Sunday, February 8th

Breakfast at the hotel will be followed by a three-hour river float trip through the El Fuerte bird sanctuary, home to over two hundred bird species. Guests are encouraged to bring along a pair of lightweight binoculars not only for bird watching but also for the long canyon views we will see throughout the tour. At the halfway point of the float trip we will dock and disembark to stretch our legs and view the first petro glyphs of the tour. A steep hike is optional for guests wishing to see more petro glyphs higher up the Cerro de la Mascara. The float trip ends in town where we will visit the historic city center and have a restaurant lunch. The afternoon is free for further exploration or rest until dinner.

Monday, February 9th

At breakfast, we will meet our expert ground guide, Ivan Fernandez, who will stay with us throughout the tour. Ivan has been guiding in Copper Canyon for many years and is by far the most highly respected guide in the region. We are very privileged to be able to have him in our group! At 8am we board the Chepe train for the six-hour ride up the Sierra Madre Mountains to the canyon rim and our hotel, Mansion Tarahumara. Lunch will be on-board the train and dinner will be at the hotel.

Tuesday, February 10th

After breakfast, we will do a guided rim walk with Ivan to view the overlook of the Taraecua, the Urique, and the Copper Canyons. This will be our best "top-view" of Copper Canyon until we fly up from the bottom on Friday. Checking out of the hotel by noon we will then take a van around the rim to the Sierra Lodge for lunch and a level one-hour hike to the beautiful Cusarare Falls. The van will be available to ferry guests close to the falls if necessary. The Sierra Lodge is a favorite of mine for its rustic simplicity and ambience reminiscent of the old southwest. Here is where you may need your "sleeping socks" as the cozy rooms are heated only by wood-burning stoves or fireplaces. Rest assured there is plenty of hot water in your private baths and warm, fluffy robes to wear fireside. Cocktails and dinner will be in the lodge dining room with communal tables lit by kerosene lamps.

Wednesday, February 11th

After breakfast at the lodge, we will depart by van for Batopilas making several stops along the way including a visit to a Tarahumara Museum and a hot lunch alfresco. As we descend thousands of feet to the canyon floor the temperature will rise and the landscape will change

from high sierra pinewoods to tropical desert complete with palm trees and parrots. Once a wealthy mining town, and the first in Mexico to have municipal electricity, Batopilas is now a sleepy backwater still waiting to be discovered. Our hotel, the Riverside Lodge, is a recently restored hacienda with rambling courtyards, fountains and roof terraces overlooking the quaint village center. It is not unusual to see a lone cow wander across the plaza or to pass a visiting Tarahumara family in full Indian dress scurrying down the street. We will be at The Riverside Lodge for two nights, dining out both evenings.

Thursday, February 12th

After breakfast we're off to The Lost Cathedral of Satevo, located about 5 miles from Batopilas. Guests can easily walk the entire distance following the gravel road along the river or a van will be available to take you all or part of the way. Guides will be available to accompany everyone and crossing the swinging bridge near the Cathedral is entirely optional. We'll have a leisurely picnic lunch under a palapa and wile away the hours in the warm desert sunshine. We'll return to the hotel in the afternoon, in time for a rest-up before dinner or a visit to the extensive ruins of Hacienda San Miguel across the river from town.

Friday, February 13th

Today we decamp and head to the airstrip just outside of Batopilas to meet our private planes for an hour flight up and out of Copper Canyon. Take-off time is weather dependent but will most likely be by mid-morning at the latest. Our pilots are experienced and licensed to fly certified rescue planes throughout the Copper Canyon region and can point out all the highlights you'll see from above. Lunch will be in the city of Chihuahua, followed by a short town tour before catching our 5pm flight to Mexico City for our final night and farewell dinner at The Sheraton Centro Historico.

Saturday, February 14th

A leisurely last breakfast together will be in our Hotel, overlooking lovely Alameda Park in downtown Mexico City. Guests should be ready to depart for the airport by 10am.

Tour Costs

The 8-day, 7-night tour package is priced at \$2350 per person, for double-occupancy; and \$2650 for a single-room plan. Airfare is not included. Make your payments in full to The Olana Partnership by January 1, 2009. Contact Keith Nyhof at The Olana Partnership Office for details at 518.828.1872, ext. 102.

Flight Information

- On February 7th: Continental #1736 departs Newark at 8:15 am for Mexico City; Aeromexico #2082 departs Mexico City at 6pm for Los Mochis.
- On February 13th: Aeromexico #217 departs Chihuahua City at 5 pm for Mexico City.
- On February 14th: Continental #1742 departs Mexico City at 1:50 for Newark.

For Reservations: Liberty Travel in Albany: Kathy or Amy at (518)456-8691.

Tour Contact

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