MEXICO TRAVEL GUIDE

Climbing mysterious Teotihuacan

TEOTIHUACAN, MEXICO CITY. Its origin some 2,200 years ago is shrouded in the depths of history, as are the reasons why the great city of Teotihuacan was abandoned.

But still, the city’s two mighty pyramids and the mysterious Avenue of the Dead that links them together stand as one of the greatest monuments of ancient America.

About 50 kilometers north of Mexico City are the ruins of Teotihuacan, once, historians believe, the continent’s most powerful city, home to as many as 125,000—150,000 residents.

The city is full of mysteries — it is a matter of debate among historians and scholars who built it as well as why it was burned to the ground. Left today is the Avenue of the Dead, Teotihuacan’s main thoroughfare, lined with the foundations of once fine temples that were used by the city’s elite. Also left are the two mighty pyramids, of which the Pyramid of the Sun is the most famous.

Today, the archeological site of Teotihuacan is a must-see if you visit Mexico City. It is easy to get there by bus, and the ride north from the city centre is interesting too, as is takes you through some of the poor northern suburbs of this mega-city.

Sellers of everything from t-shirts to
plastic Maya statues swarm the place, as is the case with any major tourist attraction. But that shouldn’t stop you from visiting Teotihuacan, as this ancient city holds some of history’s largest secrets. Why was it ever built? What was its purpose? Why was it burned and abandoned?

**Historians seem unable** to decide on one single theory, instead they vary widely — there might have been famine, or civil
unrest, that caused an uprising in Teotihuacan, the poorest residents of the city’s outskirts burning the palaces of the wealthy in the city centre. Or, alternatively, Teotihuacan was invaded and its residents slaughtered. But by whom?

The best view of the ruins you’ll get from climbing the Pyramid of the Moon, at the far end of the Avenue of the Dead, although the Pyramid of the Sun is actually the largest. Its base is said to be of roughly the same size as the largest pyramids of Egypt, although with lower height.

**Teotihuacan is a classic** must-see attraction if you visit Mexico City. Buses depart regularly from the northern bus station. Ask your hotel or hostel staff, or consult your guide book.

*Story by Erik Bergin*

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