

Academic Programs Abroad

Mexican Gulf Coast Cultures



Winter Break 2006

February 25–March 4

Program:

Earn credit in Anthropology while exploring the modern and ancient cultures of the tropical Gulf Coast of Mexico. This is a traveling program that includes cultural tours in the states of Tabasco and Veracruz, with a short stay in Mexico City at the end of the trip. In Tabasco, students will visit ancient Olmec and Chontal Maya ruins, take a boat tour from a coastal fishing village, and learn how cacao (cocoa) is grown. In Veracruz, students will visit ancient ruins, visit a peasant ejido (a collective farm) established under the Mexican land reform system, learn how coffee is grown, and visit the historical cities of Veracruz and Xalapa. The trip ends in Mexico City, with excursions to the National Museum of Anthropology and the ancient city of Teotihuacán. The course themes include prehispanic Mexican civilizations, tropical ecology and food production, and globalization and change. Students can expect to eat dishes common to the region, interact with Mexicans, and learn about peoples and places off the tourist path. Earn three credit hours in Anthropology 379.

For more information:

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Visit the program site at:

www.emich.edu/abroad/mexgulfcoast/index.html



2006 Program Fee:
\$875

Program fee includes:

- Lodging
- All travel within Mexico
- Daily meals
- Museum admissions
- Lectures
- Miscellaneous tour expenses
- All gratuities
- International Student ID Card (EMU students)
- Health insurance (EMU students)

Program fee does not include:

- Round-trip international airfare
- EMU tuition and fees
- Personal expenses

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Winter 2006 Itinerary*

*Subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances. If a location must be dropped from the itinerary, it will most likely be the trip to Papantla and El Tajín.

Saturday, February 25 Students will arrive by air in Villahermosa, the capital of the state of Tabasco. After checking into a downtown hotel and exploring the adjacent market area, we will have dinner and a half-hour introductory meeting.

Sunday, February 26 Students may choose to have a quick breakfast (fruit is readily available in the market area and there are several good adjacent restaurants including one in the hotel). At 8:00 AM the group will check out of the hotel and visit the Parque Museo La Venta (La Venta Park and Museum), a beautiful outdoor park with indigenous animals and archaeological monuments from the ancient Olmec site of La Venta, in Villahermosa. The group will then travel, stopping for lunch on the way, to the ancient city of Comalcalco for a site tour. After touring the ruins, we will proceed to El Bellote: a fishing village at the mouth of a lagoon along the Gulf Coast. There, we will settle in at a house in the village, have dinner (local fresh fish and seafood), and hold our nightly post-dinner discussion on the day's activities. At the house, students will have a choice in sleeping in beds or the traditional hammocks from the region. Some students may have to share beds (king and queen-sized).

Monday, February 27 The group can have breakfast at the house. At 9:00 AM we depart for a boat tour of the lagoon, which emphasizes tropical coastal ecology and economy. After the boat tour, and lunch, the group then departs for a nearby private ranch in the area that includes a tour on cacao (cocoa) production. We then return to Villahermosa. Arriving there in the evening, we will check into a hotel, have dinner, and have the nightly post-dinner discussion.

Tuesday, February 28 Students may choose to have a quick breakfast. At 9:00 AM we will check out and travel 2-3 hours to the ancient Olmec ruins of La Venta - the largest and most impressive Olmec site - with a tour led by the site's archaeology director. After lunch, the group will proceed on a 4 hour trip west to the historic port city of Veracruz - Mexico's largest port, and major tourist destination for Mexicans. Along the way, we will stretch our legs at a peasant Ejido - a collective farm established under the Mexican Land Reform system. In Veracruz, we will check into a hotel, have dinner, and hold the nightly post-dinner discussion.

Wednesday, March 1 Students may choose to have a quick breakfast. At 9:00 AM we will have a tour of the colonial Spanish and historical Mexican monuments. After the tour in Veracruz, we head to nearby Cempoala - a prehispanic and 16th century site where Cortez disembarked before marching toward the Aztec capital in what is now Mexico City. We then travel north to the town of Papantla in the Totonac cultural region. We will check into a hotel, have dinner, and hold the nightly post-dinner discussion.

Thursday, March 2 Students may choose to have a quick breakfast. At 9:00 AM we will tour the ancient prehispanic city of El Tajín - one of Mexico's most unique archaeological monuments. From El Tajín, we will travel back south and then inland, up off the coastal plain, and into the cool tropical mountains to the city of Xalapa (the capital of the state of Veracruz). Shortly before arriving, the group will tour of a private coffee ranch. At this rustic mountainside city, we will check into a hotel, see the downtown area of Xalapa, and have dinner and the nightly post-dinner discussion (followed by an optional night out at a lively club featuring Huapango [regional folkloric], Salsa, and Cuban music - not covered by program fees).

Friday, March 3 Students may wish to have an early quick breakfast before this long day of traveling and walking. At 7:00 AM we begin our climb toward Mexico City (ca. 4 hrs.) during which time students will witness the tremendous geographical variation of central Mexico: tropical highlands, pine forests, deserts, the high Sierra Madre Central, the basin of Mexico, and, of course, Mexico City itself! Before arriving in Mexico City, we visit Teotihuacan - one of the world's largest ancient cities and the center of the Mesoamerican world from AD 200-600. After navigating our way through the city, we visit the Museo Nacional de Antropología (National Museum of Anthropology), which is widely considered to be one of the world's best anthropology museums. Then, we check into a hotel, have dinner and hold the nightly post-dinner discussion (and possibly meet up with the EMU students in the Art in Mexico City program).

Saturday, March 4 Students may wish to have a quick breakfast. After checking out of the hotel at 9:00 AM, the group will explore the Zocalo - the central historic plaza - and see the adjacent ruins of Tenochtitlán (the capital of the Aztec empire). The group will then head to the Mexico City airport for the return to Michigan.