

SAH 2010 Study Tour: Mexico City Modern

August 4-11, 2010

Kathryn O'Rourke, Tour leader



1. Bolsa

Introduction

Since its founding by the Aztecs in the fourteenth century, the city now known as Mexico City has been one of the most important in the Western Hemisphere. Today it is one of the largest and most culturally rich cities in the world. From about 1325 until 1521 the city was called Tenochtitlan and was capital of the Aztec empire. When the Spanish arrived they admired Tenochtitlan's straight streets, complex hydrology and canals, and stately buildings. Some compared the city to Venice and Istanbul.

Nevertheless, when the Spanish conquered the Aztecs they destroyed Tenochtitlan and built Mexico City directly on top of the ruins, often using the stones of the temples to construct new buildings. From the sixteenth through the early nineteenth centuries, Mexico City was the most important Spanish colonial city in the world, a vibrant and diverse center where principles of Renaissance architecture and urbanism met and mixed with the extraordinary artistic legacies of the Aztecs and their neighbors. In the eighteenth century exceptional baroque architecture and sculpture flourished. Following Independence in 1821, Mexico City was transformed again, this time by French influences. After the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917), the city became a center of modern architecture in the Americas. Mexico's tradition of complex and distinctive

architecture continued throughout the twentieth century and lives on in the work of many contemporary architects.

The focus of the SAH Mexico City tour will be modern and contemporary architecture, but because some knowledge of older buildings, contemporary problems in the other arts, and the growth of the city itself is critical to understanding Mexican modern architecture, the tour will include some buildings from before the twentieth century and works of art and urbanism that inform the development of Mexican architectural modernism in essential ways.

The tour will explore modern Mexican architecture's relationship to Mexican history, social reform, and urban context. We will visit sites that demonstrate differing approaches to housing and urban planning. We will consider whether it is possible to identify a polarity in twentieth-century Mexican modernism between buildings designed to facilitate societal transformation, and ones that appear to shun social engagement. Throughout our discussions we will analyze what makes twentieth-century Mexican architecture distinctive and how it relates to buildings and urban histories in better-known places, particularly in western Europe and the United States.

This study program is designed to include very famous, "must see" sites in Mexico City as well as buildings that participants may not know and which they would be unable (or find it very difficult) to visit. One of the advantages of this trip is not only access to certain buildings, but the orchestration of site visits and transportation within the city. Because of its size and bureaucracy Mexico City can be difficult to navigate on one's own.

Travel

Below is a description of some of the sites to be visited. Please note that this itinerary provides an overview and details, but is subject to change. We reserve the right to add/delete or modify the itinerary to allow for the highest quality experience for our members.

Day 1: Wednesday, August 4: Participants will arrive and get settled at the Camino Real Hotel in Polanco. We will gather in the lobby for a brief overview of the trip and learn about the hotel and its architect, Ricardo Legorreta (Legorreta + Legorreta Arquitectos). A student of Luis Barragán, Legorreta is among the best-known Mexican architects working today. The Camino Real (1968) was one of his earliest and most important buildings. After this introduction we will have a walking tour of the Polanco neighborhood, where attractive shops and restaurants line the streets and new glassy high-rise condominiums mix with late Art Deco and neocolonial houses. The neighborhood was developed in the 1940s by Jose de la Lama and Raul Basurto, two of the most important developers in Mexico City of the first half of the twentieth century.

Dinner included.

Day 2: Thursday, August 5: After breakfast at legendary Sanborn's in the 18th century Casa de los Azulejos, we will walk east on Calle Madero, noting major buildings, including the

magnificent colonial Palacio Iturbide. At the Zocalo, Mexico City's giant central plaza, participants will learn about the urban history of the city and have a brief lecture on the buildings that surround the Zocalo. We will look at the ruins of Templo Mayor, study the exteriors of the Churrigueresque Sagrario and Metropolitan Cathedral and enter the Cathedral to study its architecture and see the Altar of the Kings, one of the most significant 18th century altarpieces in Latin America.

We take a look at some of the major murals of the Centro. These are among the most important works of Mexican and twentieth-century art and help establish the foundation for understanding Mexico in the twentieth century. Some of the murals are in the stairway of the National Palace (Rivera), at the National Preparatory School (Rivera, Orozco, Siqueiros, Leal, Charlot), and the stained glass designed by Roberto Montenegro at the former church of San Pedro y San Pablo. All of these buildings were constructed during the colonial period.

Lunch included

In the afternoon we will see the great neo-classical works of Manuel Tolsa, Mexico's leading architect and sculptor in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. We will study the exterior of his National School of Mines, and his equestrian statue of Charles V.

We will briefly visit the Alameda Central, Mexico City's magnificent central garden, which dates to the early colonial period. Standing in the plaza in front of the Palacio de Bellas Artes, participants will learn about this important turn-of-the-century building, and the early twentieth-century buildings at the corner of Madero and Eje Lazaro Cardenas. We will enter the Palacio Bellas Artes to see its Art Deco lobby and briefly look at the murals by Orozco, Siqueiros, and Rivera (the re-painted version of the fresco he intended for Rockefeller Center). We will also see the spectacular glass stage curtain designed by the artist Dr. Atl and fabricated by Tiffany's.

Our day will conclude with a trip up to the observation deck of the Torre Latinoamericana for (depending on weather and pollution) spectacular views of Mexico City. We will have a brief lecture on urbanism and engineering for earthquakes in Mexico City.

Dinner on your own.



Day 3: Friday, August 6: Today we will study the architecture, urbanism, and painting of Teotihuacan (c. 150 AD- c. 650 AD), one of the most important pre-Hispanic cities in the Americas, and a significant point of reference for twentieth-century architects and planners. This will be a long, tiring day with lots of walking. Participants will need to bring sun protection and plenty of water. Those who wish may climb the Temples of the Sun and Moon with Kathryn O'Rourke. We will lunch at the legendary El Gruto restaurant, built into a cave near the Temple of the Sun. We return to Polanco in the late afternoon.

Day 4: Saturday, August 7: Our day in southern Mexico City begins with a trip to Centro Nacional de las Artes, a 31-acre campus designed by Ricardo Legorreta that includes five professional art schools on the site once occupied by Churubusco Studios, a major center of the Mexican film industry. The different schools were designed by major Mexican architects of the late 20th century including TEN Arquitectos (Enrique Norten), Teodoro González de Leon, and Legorreta. Although these architects have distinctive personal vocabularies, each has distilled major themes of twentieth-century modernism to shape buildings of exceptional invention and historical sensitivity.

From there we will go to the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). The enormously-scaled campus of the UNAM lies at the southern edge of Mexico City and covers more than two square kilometers. Built on the rocky Pedregal, the campus was collaboratively designed by twentieth-century Mexico's most significant architects and replaced the various out-of-date buildings in downtown Mexico City that had housed the nation's university since the eighteenth century. Influenced by planning principles associated with the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne, the design organized the site into distinct zones for academic, athletic, and residential purposes, relegated cars to the perimeter, and created large open plazas framed by buildings. Most buildings are built in the language of mid-century International Style modernism, and several are decorated with large murals and mosaics by artists including David Alfaro Siqueiros, Francisco Eppens, Jesus Chavez Morado, and Juan O'Gorman. In 2007 UNESCO named UNAM a World Cultural Heritage site.

At UNAM we will study the Central Library (O'Gorman), the Olympic Stadium (Augusto Pérez Palacio et al), the Cosmic Ray pavilion (Candela), and brand new Contemporary Art Museum (González de Leon).

We will then drive through Luis Barragán's residential development, Los Jardines del Pedregal. Until Barragán began to develop the Pedregal in the late 1940s, the undulating, rocky volcanic landscape had been uninhabited since before the Spanish conquest. The design integrates houses built in the language and materials mid-century International Style modernism into the rugged site. Key houses include those by Barragán and Max Cetto. In many instances native plants that nearly obscure the buildings. Barragán's treatment of the Pedregal has important parallels with Frank Lloyd Wright's philosophy of organic architecture and raises questions about the relationships between Mexican and US modernism.

Lunch included in Tlalpan

In the afternoon we will visit the convent Barragán designed in Tlalpan for Capuchine Nuns. It includes important works by Matias Goeritz, with whom Barragán often collaborated. Tlalpan was a colonial town that is now a far southern suburb of Mexico City.

From there we head north to the upscale neighborhood of San Angel, also originally a separate town. We will tour Juan O'Gorman's famous pair of buildings for Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo and consider the influence Le Corbusier in late-1920s and early 1930s Mexican architecture.

We will conclude the day with dinner, as a group, at the celebrated colonial San Angel Inn, across the street from the Rivera-Kahlo houses.

Day 5: Sunday, August 8: The day begins with brief visits to two Chapultepec Park museums: the legendary Anthropology Museum (Ramirez Vazquez, c. 1964) and the Rufino Tamayo Museum (Gonzalez de Leon & Zabludovsky, 1975-81), both modern masterpieces.

Our museum visits are followed by a driving tour of Santa Fe. This district at the western edge of Mexico City has grown up in the last twenty years. Its glassy skyscrapers house the offices of international corporations and high-end condominiums. Santa Fe is the most dramatic evidence of Mexico's participation in a global architectural culture driven by finance and international trade. From the bus we will see buildings by Hernandez, Serrano, Legorreta, TEN Arquitectos, and others.

We then head north to the Villa de Guadalupe, the area around Tepeyac north of downtown, where the Virgen de Guadalupe is believed to have appeared to the indigenous peasant Juan Diego in the sixteenth century. We will visit three main buildings: the Old Basilica (1695-1709), the Chapel of the Well (1777-91), and the enormous New Basilica (1971-75), where the shroud with the Virgin's image hangs. Here we will also consider the significance of the site in geography of the city, and the challenges of shaping modern sacred spaces while accommodating enormous crowds. The Villa de Guadalupe is the most-visited pilgrimage destination in the hemisphere.

We will then drive south and see Mario Pani's enormous Nonoalco-Tlatelolco Housing complex (c.1966), a sprawling campus of high- and middle-rise buildings that provided affordable housing for the city's growing population at mid-century. We will consider the legacies of CIAM in Mexico and discuss Pani's design in relation to other social housing schemes of the twentieth century. We will briefly get out of the bus and visit the Plaza of the Three Cultures at the center of the project. Here participants will see the ruins of pre-Hispanic city of Tlatelolco, the church of Santiago Tlatelolco, a rare early seventeenth century-church in Mexico City, and experience the scale of the modern buildings with greater immediacy.

Lunch included

The rest of the afternoon is a walking tour of areas south and east of the Zocalo. We will see the colonial churches, palaces, and the first hospital in the Americas. We will also see two important buildings by Antonio Muñoz Garcia: the Supreme Court, and the Abelardo Rodriguez Market, one of Mexico City's first modern markets, still in use today, and notable for its 1930s murals.

Dinner on your own.

Day 6: Monday, August 9: We begin with a walking tour of the Hipódromo neighborhood, an important case study in the development of 20th century urbanism in Mexico. Developed by de la Lama and Basurto in the late 1920s, Hipódromo was designed by José Luis Cuevas who incorporated in his design principles of Garden City planning, borrowed from Hegemann and Peets, and managed to link the neighborhood to an increasingly complex grid of streets around it. We will study the architecture of the Parque México at the heart of the neighborhood, considering the influences of Art Deco and social reform in shaping this modern suburb. On our walk we will see superb examples of Art Deco houses and apartment buildings, significant examples of the colonial revival style, an early Barragán apartment house, and several recent buildings by contemporary architects.

We will then tour the Ministry of Health building, an important modern classical building by Carlos Obregón Santacilia. Inside we will see Diego Rivera's only stained-glass windows and two little-known frescoes by the muralist.

Our analysis of urban planning and monuments of the centuries will continue with a driving tour of the Paseo de la Reforma, the grand 19th century boulevard laid out by Emperor Maximilian in the 1860s. Our tour will take us into and through the famous Chapultepec Park and culminate at Chapultepec Castle where we will look briefly at the building and take in the views of Mexico City.

Lunch included in Lomas de Chapultepec

In the afternoon we will tour Luis Barragán's own house (1947) in the Tacubaya neighborhood. We will then visit the Casa en el Aire (Augustin Hernandez, 1992) a daring work of technological and engineering bravado.

Dinner included in Polanco

Day 7: Tuesday, August 10: We begin with a visit to Juan O'Gorman's building for the Electricians' Union, an important work from his "functionalist" period; although equally significant for the powerful mural by Siqueiros (1939) that covers three walls and the ceiling of a small staircase.

From there we will go to the Escuela Normal de Maestros (1945), a major work by Mario Pani, significant in the evolution of Mexican modernism and an important example of the enduring link between social reform and modern architecture.

[If we cannot get into the Escuela Normal, an alternative is to drive around the Monument to the Revolution (1904; 1938) discussing, then go to the neighborhood of Santa Maria, where we can get out and see fine, diverse examples of nineteenth-century architecture and discuss the development of the city at the city in the late nineteenth century.]

We will then head north of the city, driving by the famous Torres de Ciudad Satélite (1957-8) by Barragán and Goertiz, on the Mexico-Querétaro highway.

We proceed to the leafy elite residential developments by Luis Barragán, driving through his Las Arboledas (1958-63) and Los Clubes (1961-72) subdivisions, and visiting the Casa Egerström (1966-68), one of the most celebrated Barragán houses, a modern homage to the horse and hacienda.

Boxed lunch included.

From there we go to the Mexican headquarters of the Bacardi Company, visiting Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's administration building (his only building in Mexico) and the bottling plant designed by Felix Candela, a marvel of thin-shell concrete construction.

We will conclude the day with a visit to the spectacular colonial church of San Francisco in the town of Tepotzotlan. The altarpieces and façade of San Francisco are some of the finest examples of the Churrigueresque style in Mexico.

The tour concludes with a farewell dinner in Polanco at the Hacienda de los Morales. (Coat & tie suggested.)

Day 8: Wednesday, August 11: Travel to airport by bus, return to US on a morning flight.

Kathryn O'Rourke is Assistant Professor of Art History at Trinity University in San Antonio. She received her B.A. in Architecture from Wellesley College and her M.A. and Ph.D. in the History of Art from the University of Pennsylvania. Her doctoral research focused on architecture in Mexico City in the 1920s and 1930s and its relationship to post-revolutionary efforts to reform public health. She has received grants from the Mellon Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the Society of Architectural Historians. At Trinity Kathryn teaches courses on the art and architecture of Latin America, with a focus on twentieth-century Mexico. She is a member of the Urban Studies faculty and is affiliated with Trinity's interdisciplinary Mexico-Americas-Spain Center. Before coming to Trinity she taught at architectural history at Swarthmore College.

SAH Fellowship

SAH will offer one fellowship to a graduate student to enable them to participate in this program to help further their relevant research, study and to help in career advancement. Details and the online application may be found at www.sah.org

Timing, weather, and traffic

Participants will arrive in Mexico City on Wednesday, August 4 and depart on Wednesday, August 11. The average high temperature in Mexico City in August is 74 degrees; the average low is 53 degrees. Mexico City's weather is generally mild year-round, but particularly attractive at this time of year to those who might otherwise endure the heat of late summer in the United States.

August does fall during the rainy season (approximately June-November). participants can expect brief, but very heavy afternoon downpours, usually at some time between 3pm and 6pm. Although such rains may interfere slightly, outdoor visits will be scheduled for the morning and early afternoons, which are typically sunny. Many travelers find that the cooler air and relief from the sun that the rainy season brings make it a preferable time to travel to Mexico than during the unrelentingly sun-drenched months of the dry season (January-May). The rainy season's cloudy periods, early mornings, and nights can be chilly. Be sure to bring clothing options for your personal comfort.

Within Mexico we will use a chartered bus, but the tour will include walking through the denser and particularly architecturally-rich sections of the city. Traffic in Mexico City can be a challenge. Time has been scheduled for unavoidable delays.

Things to Consider

Mexico City's notable crime is real, but at the same time can be avoided. While we have plans in place to do everything possible to provide a safe and pleasant experience, it is important to understand that there are risks. Participants should remain alert at all times, and take responsibility for their safety.

Some participants may experience mild intestinal distress during the first days of travel in Mexico. This is not serious, but participants will want to be prepared with their preferred over-the-counter treatments.

Mexico City sits in the bowl-like Valley of Mexico at 7,349 ft. and is surrounded by mountains and volcanoes. Many travelers accustomed to life at lower altitudes experience minor fatigue and headaches during the first day or two of their visit. People with respiratory problems should take note. A high spf grade of sunscreen, a hat and long sleeves may be something to consider when packing for the program.

TOUR PRICES AND INCLUSIONS

Land only package	\$2,950 per person double occupancy
	\$3495 per person single occupancy

\$600 per person deposit or full payment is required at registration to hold a space for this program.

Balance due no later than June 1, 2010.

The per person tour cost includes:

Meet and Greet service at the airport

Transfer to the hotel

7 nights accommodations, based on double occupancy at the Camino Real Mexico City hotel

Entrance fees to all public sites listed in the itinerary

Transportation for the tour by deluxe private motorcoach

Meals as outlined in the itinerary

 Breakfast daily beginning August 5

 Lunch daily beginning August 5

 4 dinners outlined in the itinerary

Unlimited water is included on the chartered bus

Handling of two pieces of luggage per person at the hotel

Applicable gratuities and service fees

Services of a Spanish-speaking Tour Manager provided by ISDI

Tour notes
Mailings
SAH Board Representative
Tour Leader
SAH administrative costs
Voluntary donation to SAH
40 AIA/CES Learning Units



The Society of Architectural historians is registered with the American institute of Architects' Continuing Education system to provide credit for participation in study tours.

SAH is partnering with International Seminar Design, Inc, to bring this program to the members of SAH.

If you have questions please contact Kathy Sturm at ksturm@sah.org or 312 543 7243