

**Foodorama**

**Letter # 18: From Oaxaca to Chiapas**

**By Foodorama, March 08, 2019**



Hi everyone, we hope you're fine! We left the freshness of the mountains of Oaxaca for the sultry heat of the coast. The temperature has changed dramatically in the space of a descent. We are going from 68-77 degrees to over 95 degrees! Difficult to pedal under the sun in the mountains. We sweat a lot and we only think about swimming at the end of the day in a small river (not yet dry) or in the sea. The moistness is permanent, even at night, so we have trouble sleeping in the tent for the temperature hardly descends below 86 degrees.



We go with Jean-Pascal - our new companion from Quebec - near Mazunte at Julia and Stephen, two friends of David who shelter us in Mexico City. They have just bought a land by the sea and have the wonderful project of building artist residences. What we didn't know yet is that for the moment nothing is yet built, that the ground is sloping and that there is a crazy job before being able to welcome artists. We arrive in the afternoon after pushing our bikes in a steep slope and a scorching heat. No time to go to the sea, we must quickly dig a small terrace in the slope to plant our tent. We'll have a few more liters of sweat!



We bike along the coast to Chiapas, the last state of Mexico before Guatemala.



But the heat on the coast is really too unbearable and Sylvain is sick (and yes, it's his turn now ...) we decide to take a bus to the mountains of Chiapas at 6600 feet altitude for the city of "San Cristobal de las Casas". We go back from 98° to 68° and that makes us the greatest good. We manage again to sleep in our tent, which we raised at Omar, a former cyclist-traveler who welcomes on his land the cyclists of passage like us!



We enjoy a break in this beautiful mountain town to visit Arcotete Park. It is a natural park with a stone arch very popular with lovers of climbing. Inside the arch are caves that we could visit with beautiful stalactites and stalagmites. Do you know the difference between stalactites and stalagmites?





Before going on the road again, we are lucky to attend the carnival closing party of the village of San Juan de Chamula which is about ten kilometers from San Cristobal. It is a village where there is a large population Tzotzile who has retained its traditions after the Spanish conquest. Here there is no Mexican police; it is the village that applies its own laws. In the center of the village is the church built by the first Spanish priests.



The interior is exceptional. while it is true that the building has a look of church, it is a long time since any priest has set foot there, rejected by the tzotziles. The Catholic saints inside brought by the missionaries who came to evangelize them, are still there but now represent their own divinities, the reincarnation of the very ones in whom they believed before the arrival of the missionaries. We enter. And we stay nailed on the spot. There are no more benches here; we sit on the ground on the long coniferous spines strewn on the ground. It smells good. Along the side walls there are the saints, everywhere, following each other, perhaps 30 or 40 statues. At their necks hang mirrors that reflect people praying in front of them. It is by their own mouth reflected in the mirror that the saint answers them. In front of them, the faithful light candles on the ground and sit next to pray until their extinction. In doing so, they drink alcohol to purify themselves or ... Pepsi to ... burp! Because to burp brings out the evil. It is strictly forbidden to take pictures here. The following photo is a stolen photo found on internet.





The carnival of Chamula lasts 5 days in total to celebrate the "5 days lost" of the Mayan calendar. The Mayan calendar pre-Columbian has indeed 18 months of 20 days which is a total of 360 days and not 365 days as our calendar. So they had the good idea to use these 5 days ... to party! Obviously they do not drink only water during these festivities and to purify the spirits of these excesses of alcohol, they organize the last day the "jump in the fire". In the public square, the carnival representatives, dressed in traditional clothes, parade running on straw on fire. At this time it is strictly forbidden to take pictures. We let you imagine the scene.



The second major event of this day is a game that involves running around the square a bull roped, which causes some crowd movements ... The brave (or drunk) even try to ride the bull a few moments! We find ourselves in the middle of the square with the procession running around us getting closer and closer. Scramble, panic ... A lot of emotions for this day! (see video what's app)



Tomorrow, on the road again, direction Guatemala that we should reach in 2 or 3 days.  
So see you very soon in a new country! Sylvain and Kalima