



FORMER CONVENT OF CULHUACÁN



HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

According to archaeological work Culhuacán was settled around 300 BC.

Established at the foot of Cerro de la Estrella (Hill of the Star) and on the shores of Lake Chalco-Xochimilco, this site garnered high prestige, first for its relationship with Teotihuacan and then with the Toltec Empire. In about AD 900 it was dominated alternately by Azcapotzalco and Texcoco, who disputed power in the region. Later, although the Mexicas imposed control over the region, they sought marriage alliances with the Culhuas to augment their status and strengthen their lineage.

After the conquest, the Culhuas were converted to Christianity by the Augustinians, who directed the construction of a building and devoted their energies to teaching and learning indigenous languages. Later it became a monastery and served as such until 1756, when the Spanish Crown diminished part of the power from religious orders. It then became a parish house, and with time, its uses changed: headquarters of the *mayordomía*, barracks for Zapata's forces in the Mexican Revolution, and a tenement, among other functions, which led to severe deterioration. In 1944 the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) began its restoration and in 1983 it was established as a Community Center.



HOW TO GET THERE

Located in southeast Mexico City. Take Avenida Taxqueña southeast bound, turn left on Avenida Tláhuac and the Culhuacán Cultural Center is 100 meters on the sidewalk on the right. Closest subway stations on line 12 (very close), Atlalico and Culhuacán.

SERVICES

Guided tours (appointment required), temporary exhibitions, artistic initiation workshops, lectures.

ADMISSION

According to the Federal Fees Act, admission is free for students, teachers, and seniors with a valid ID; children under 13 and people with a disability. Sundays: Free admission for Mexican citizens and foreign residents.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Non-professional photography is free of charge when you show ID. For professional photography and video recordings, prior authorization from the National Coordination of Legal Matters of the INAH is required.

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HOURS

Library: Tuesday to Sunday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

TEXTS

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PRODUCTION

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PHOTOGRAPHY

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GOBIERNO DE MÉXICO

CULTURA SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA

INAH 1939-2019

MAIN ATTRACTION

Chicomecoatl (Corn Goddess) sculpture

Linked to Tlaloc (Storm God) and *Chalchiuhtlicue* (Water Goddess), this deity belongs to the group of fertility deities. Her name occupied the center of the thirteen months of the agricultural calendar: *Chicome*=seven and *coatl*=serpent. Seven is the place of the heart: *olotl* is corn, and *yolotl* the heart of man. The serpent, besides symbolizing infinity, represents the meeting of water and earth.

Where to see it

In Gallery 2.

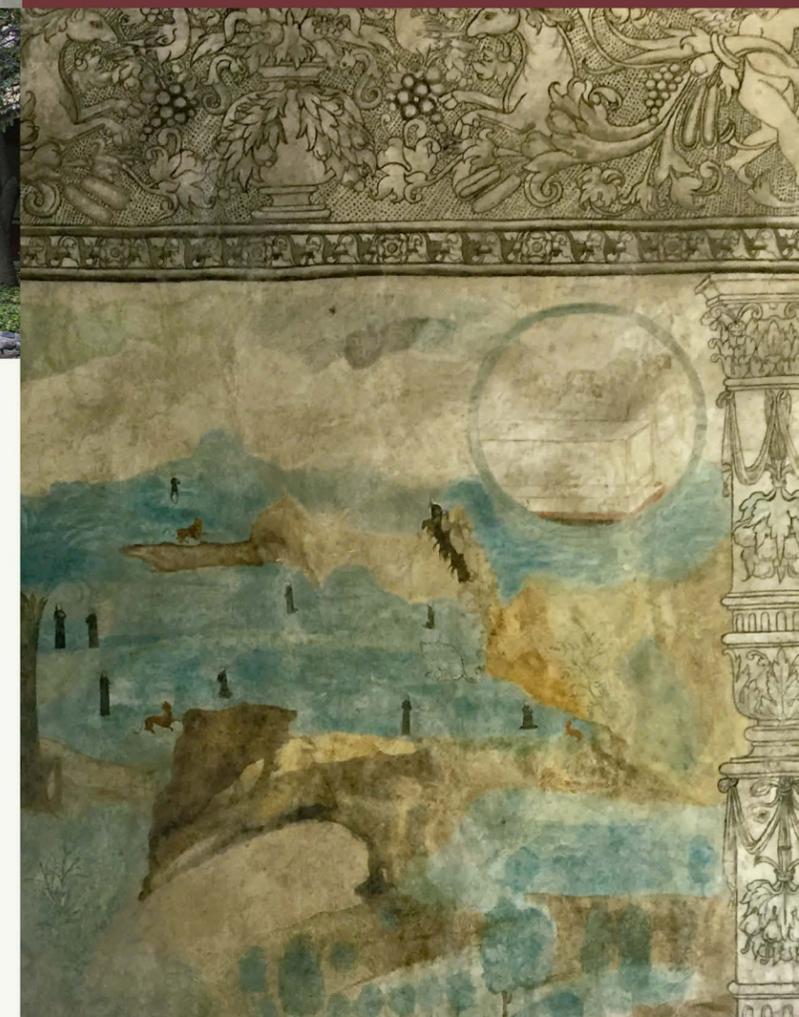


COLLECTION

The former monastery was established in a highly significant place for the native inhabitants. Dedicated to Saint John the Evangelist, its interior preserves sixteenth- and eighteenth-century murals of remarkable quality that depict the founders and martyrs of the Augustinian order, as well as passages from the life of Christ. Geometric designs recall the shape of the hill and reveal the skill of the indigenous hand.

The Sala de Profundis (anterefectory), presbytery, and baptistery, kitchen, and storeroom occupy the lower cloister. The upper floor of the cloister has the monk's cells and the Domestic Chapel.

The original church still retains traces of the choir and the confessionals. On one side there is an open chapel, which surely functioned as a portal for pilgrims.





/GALLERIES

● Site Museum

Three cells in the upper cloister exhibit pieces that illustrate the importance of the site during the pre-Hispanic period. The Domestic Chapel evokes aspects of the Colonial period.

In another cell, photographs document the process of the architectural restoration of this valuable building, with Renaissance-style architectural traits with basalt or volcanic stone walls.

● Historical Park

Prepared with community participation, it has two significant elements from the pre-Hispanic period: a sacred spring where, as legend would have it, Chicomecoatl appeared as an apparition and the former pier on the lakeshore where the original stairway has been preserved.

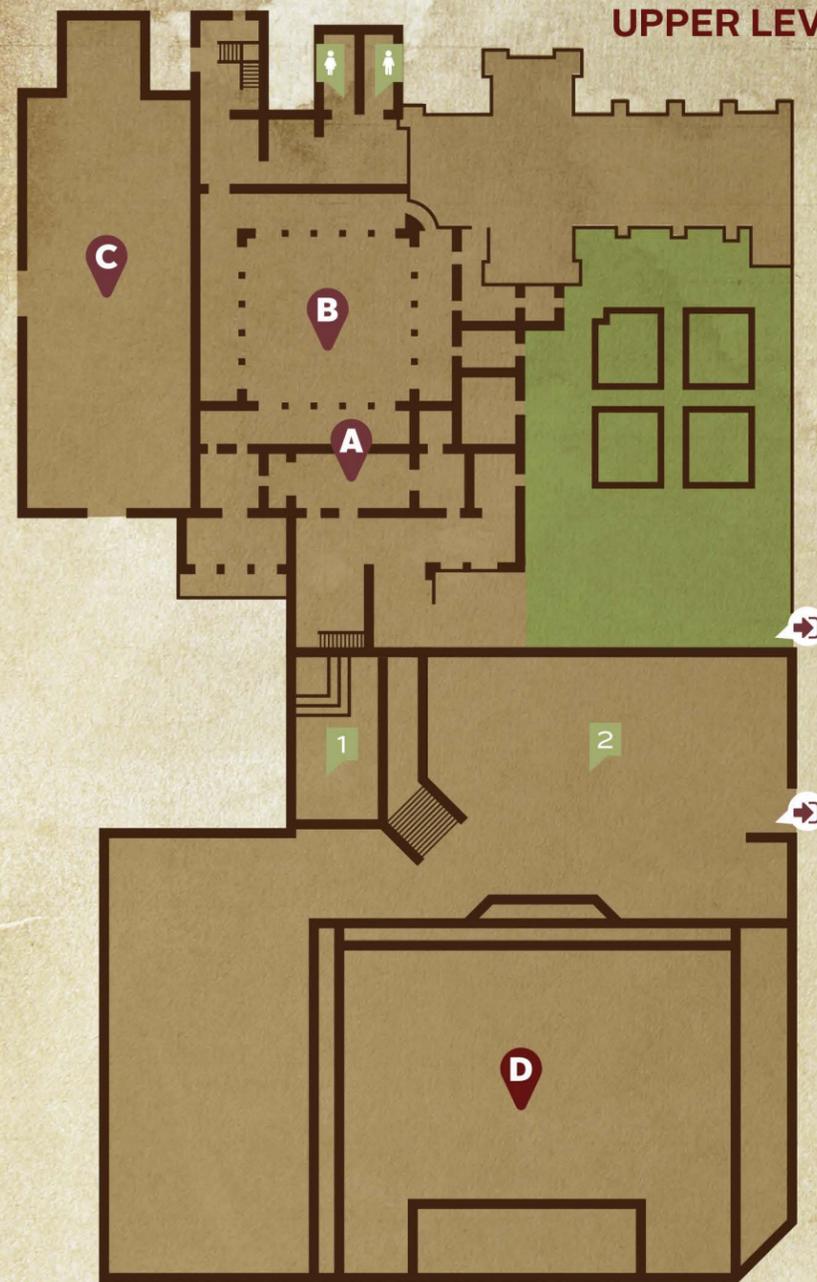
● Paper Mill

In a small plaza that can be reached by Avenida Tláhuac, the remains of a mill have been preserved. Its historical importance resides in the fact that it was a factory. It was probably the first of its kind throughout the Americas.

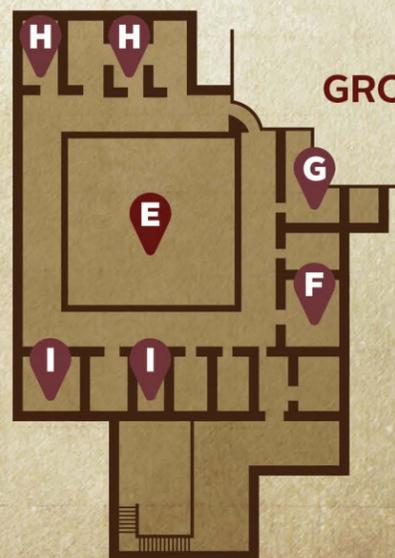
● Maps

Sixteenth-century map of Culhuacán and its environs, linked to Mexico City and the towns in the region, via roads, causeways, and an extensive network of canals.

UPPER LEVEL



GROUND FLOOR



➔ ACCESS

UPPER LEVEL

- A** Sala de Profundis (anterefectory)
- B** Lower cloister
- C** Ancient church
- D** Historical Park

- 1 Open forum
- 2 Parking

GROUND FLOOR

- E** Upper cloister
- F** Library
- G** Photography display
- H** Site Museum
- I** Offices



/ HIGHLIGHTS

1507

The Mexicas celebrated at least three New Fire ceremonies on Cerro de la Estrella, given its character as a sacred hill. The last was carried out in 1507.



The majority of the museum pieces come from archaeological excavations conducted by the Historical Park project.



The Augustinians usually painted murals in their monasteries to remember the origin of the Order of Thebes, in northern Africa, and they called it Thebaid. They represented the friars praying or studying in the desert, isolated from the world. The Thebaid of Culhuacán is polychrome and has been given an aquatic landscape, mirroring local environmental conditions.



The baptismal font of the former convent is original to the construction and was carved from a single piece of stone.

1992

The project for the Park, designed by architect Mario Schejtnan, won the Gold Medal at the Mexican Architecture Biennial in 1992.



/ INAH opened the Community Center to the public with the intention of promoting joint responsibility with the community of Culhuacán in the conservation of this building, by publicizing its enormous historical value and the joint planning of cultural activities stirring public interest and addressing the need for knowledge and recreation.