In the Footsteps of the Maya:
Temples, Traditions, and Crafts of Chiapas
January 3-10, 2016
Dear Smith Alumnae and Friends,

Smith Travel invites you to join popular Smith College faculty leaders Donald Joralemon, Professor of Anthropology, and Phoebe Porter, Professor of Spanish, on In the Footsteps of the Maya, January 3-10, 2016. Mexican guide Florencio Moreno, who received rave reviews from travelers on Smith’s 2015 tour to Mexico, will also be participating.

Nestled in the virgin jungles of the far southeastern fringe of Mexico, Chiapas is a magical corner of our hemisphere—a world apart, largely free from the travails of modern Mexico. Rich in indigenous Maya culture and history, Chiapas is a fascinating region for lovers of culture, archaeology, and anthropology.

This custom-designed itinerary focuses on the different Maya peoples, cities, and subgroups that competed for dominance over a thousand years of history. It is designed to be as easy-going and deluxe as possible for a Maya adventure; however, it is not entirely undemanding.

Our primary base for the first half of the tour is the Chan-Kah resort near Palenque, an eco-lodge with spacious, comfortable, air-conditioned cabanas situated in lush tropical gardens. We will visit four extraordinary archaeological sites—Comalcalco, Palenque, Bonampak, and Toniná—featuring soaring pyramids, enormous ball courts, colorful murals, unique stone carvings, and ancient “skyscrapers.” A few of these sites require walks of over a mile to be properly experienced.

The second half of the itinerary is more leisurely with three nights in the deluxe Casa del Alma Hotel Boutique & Spa, which is situated in the gorgeous colonial hill city of San Cristóbal de las Casas. From San Cristóbal, experience the region’s superb crafts, remote indigenous villages, and spectacular natural scenery. Enjoy authentic interactions and meetings with interesting local people—weavers, artists, farmers—and enjoy visits to museums, churches, and homes. Participate in a full day excursion into a quiet valley where the population is almost entirely Maya for an unobtrusive look at Maya life and traditions in the 21st century.

Throughout the week, sample the succulent molés and tamales for which Mexico is world-famous.

We hope that you will join Smith alumnae and friends on this Mexican sojourn. Space is limited, so reserve your place today!

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Bigwood
Director for Travel, Office of Alumnae Relations

For additional information please contact Liz Bigwood at Smith Travel
call (800) 225-2029 | email: alumtrav@smith.edu | fax (413) 585-2015
or call International Seminar Design, Inc. at (202) 244-1448
Sun, Jan 3  USA / Villahermosa
Fly to Villahermosa and take an evening transfer to the Quinta Real, the city's best five-star hotel. Retire for the evening.
Quinta Real Villahermosa

Mon, Jan 4  Comalcalco
Explore Comalcalco archaeological site, the only Maya city built with bricks of baked clay instead of stone. At a charming hacienda renowned for its chocolate, learn about cocoa production and enjoy a chocolate tasting and lunch. At the famous La Venta Park, see an amazing collection of sculptures from the ancient Olmec civilization, including four colossal Olmec heads. Continue to Palenque's best hotel, the Chan-Kah Resort and Village, a four-star ecological resort. Enjoy a welcome dinner together.
Chan-Kah Resort (B, L, D)

Tues, Jan 5  Palenque
Spend the day exploring Palenque, a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the most remarkable ancient Maya kingdoms, gorgeously situated in a lush jungle setting. After a comprehensive tour of the site's grand temples and tombs, visit its impressive on-site museum. (B, L)

Wed, Jan 6  Bonampak & Lacandon People
Visit the romantic ruins of Bonampak to see Mesoamerica's best-preserved ancient murals. Continue to the remote village of Lacanja and learn about Lacandon people, one of the original surviving Maya groups who uphold their ancient traditions. Following lunch with a Lacandon family, hike into the rain forest to learn about the flora and fauna and see a beautiful waterfall. Return to Palenque in the early evening. (B, L)

Thu, Jan 7  Toniná
Drive through breathtaking mountain scenery to San Cristóbal de las Casas, a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of Mexico's most spectacular colonial cities. Stop at the archaeological site of Toniná that features groups of temple-pyramids set on terraces rising more than 200 feet above a central plaza. Toniná is distinguished by its well-preserved stucco sculptures and two restored ball courts. Check into the Casa del Alma, arguably San Cristóbal's best boutique hotel. During an orientation city tour, visit San Cristóbal's lively zócalo and 16th-century cathedral.
Casa del Alma Hotel Boutique & Spa (B, L)

Fri, Jan 8  San Cristóbal de las Casas
Stroll through San Cristóbal's vivacious and colorful food market. Continue to the Ex-Convent of Santo Domingo and examine its baroque façade and exuberantly gilded interior. The attached monastery and convent house a remarkable exhibition of textiles, an informative regional history museum, and an outstanding craft cooperative that sells the region's finest hand-woven

Custom Smith Itinerary
Donald Joralemon is Professor of Anthropology at Smith College. His B.A. is from Oberlin College (1974) and his doctorate from the University of California, Los Angeles (1983) with a concentration in Latin America. He has published widely on shamanism and, most recently, on medical ethics. He is the co-author (with Douglas Sharon) of Sorcery and Shamanism (1993) and author of Exploring Medical Anthropology (2010, Third edition). He has taught at Smith for over thirty years and has chaired his department for extended periods.

Phoebe Porter received her BA in Spanish from Bryn Mawr College in 1975, her MA (1980) and her PhD (1985) in Hispanic Studies from Brown University. She has taught Spanish at a number of institutions including Smith College, Colgate University and the University of New Hampshire. Her area of specialization is the Modern Spanish Novel with an emphasis on women writers from Spain. She has co-authored an anthology of Latin American short stories, (MacMillan), and has translated a Spanish novel into English, Fiesta al noroeste by Ana Maria Matute (Celebration in the Northwest, Nebraska Press).

textiles. Following lunch in a local restaurant, meet a philanthropist who owns one of the finest Maya textiles collections, and enjoy his lecture on the lifestyles of indigenous Indian cultures. 

(B, L)

Sat, Jan 9  
Tzotzil Villages 
Take in majestic mountain scenery during a morning excursion to Tzotzil Maya villages, each with their own distinct customs and traditions. In Zinacantán, visit the main church of the community and learn about the flower trade that supports many of the local villagers. Meet one of the village's most respected families of weavers, who will demonstrate the hand dying of wool and weaving on treadle looms. Continue to San Juan Chamula, famous for its unique religious practices that blend Catholic and Maya beliefs. Experience its unforgettable church, carpeted in pine needles and decorated with mirrors, incense, and candles. Families kneel on the floor, chanting and praying to statues of saints that decorate the interior. Return to San Cristóbal and enjoy lunch together at Na Bolom, the former home of Frans and Trudi Blom. The house was a thriving cultural, social, and academic center and eventually converted by Trudi into a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection of the Lacandon Maya and the preservation of the Chiapas rain forest. This evening, bid adiós to Chiapas during a farewell dinner in a memorable location. 

(B, L, D)

Sun, Jan 10  
Tuxtla Gutierrez / USA 
Following breakfast, take a group airport transfer that will meet United Airlines’ non-stop flight from Tuxtla Gutierrez to Houston. 

(B)
Tour Price:
Land Only: $3,995
Single Supplement: $795

Tour Price is per person based on double occupancy, with a minimum of 18 paying participants. Land prices are based on May 2015 quotes and are subject to change.

Activity Level
Moderately Active – Daily programs tours involve walking between one to two miles. All participants should be in good health, physically fit, and capable of walking over uneven terrain without assistance. San Cristóbal de las Casas is located 7,200 feet above sea level.

Flights
Participants are responsible for all aspects of their air arrangements to Villahermosa (VSA) and from Tuxtla Gutierrez (TGZ), Mexico. Participants who are unable to take the group airport transfers are responsible for their own airport transfers.

Deposit & Final Payment:
A deposit of $1,000 per paying participant is required to guarantee participation in the program. This may be paid by check, or by Visa or MasterCard. Final payment is due by September 24, 2015. Registrations will be accepted beyond this date on a space available basis with payment in full by check only.

Terms & Conditions:
International Seminar Design, Inc. (ISDI) acts only as an agent for the participant with respect to transportation, accommodations, and all other services relating to this tour. ISDI, Smith College, and/or their agents assume no responsibility or liability for any act, error or omission, or for any injury, loss, accident, delay or irregularity, which may be caused by any defect in any aircraft, ship, train, bus, or other carrier, or through negligence or default of any subcontractor or other third party, which may be used wholly or in part in the performance of their duty to the participants of the tour. ISDI and Smith College reserve the right to cancel any portion of, or in relation to, this tour.

Cancellations & Refunds:
All cancellations must be received in writing by ISDI, and are subject to a non-refundable administrative fee of $500 per person. Written cancellation received by ISDI on or before September 24, 2015: full refund minus $500 per person administrative fee. Written cancellation received by ISDI on or between September 25 and November 18, 2015: full refund of any recoverable land costs, less $2,000 per person cancellation charge (includes administrative fee). Cancellations received on or after November 19, 2015: no refund. After the tour has commenced, it is not possible to issue any refunds. No refunds can be issued for occasional missed meals or itinerary alterations before departure date.

Tour Price Inclusions:
7 nights accommodations as outlined in the itinerary: breakfast daily, 6 lunches, 2 dinners; participation of 2 Smith faculty members; services of an ISDI Tour Manager land transportation by private bus and vans; gratuities to local guides and drivers; entrance fees to sites per itinerary; wine or beer with dinners; taxes, services, and portage fees.

Tour Price Exclusions:
Airfare, airline taxes, and fuel surcharges; individual transfers to and from the airport; excursions, activities, meals marked optional on the itinerary; personal items; personal services; airport tax, fuel surcharges, and travel extensions; personal insurance for health, baggage, and tour cancellation; any other items not specifically included in the itinerary.

In the Footsteps of the Maya
January 3-10, 2016
Tour Registration

Complete and return by mail or fax to:
Smith Travel - Office of Alumnae Relations
33 Elm Street | Northampton, MA 01063
fax (413) 585-2015
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Tour Highlights

Delve into ancient Maya culture during an excursion to the ancient city of Palenque, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and the off-the-beaten-path sites of Bonampak and Toniná, still shrouded in jungle growth and removed from the large tourist crowds.

Journey into a remote village in the Lacandon Indian Territory and learn from a Lacondon Elder about the traditions of these descendants of the ancient Maya.

Learn about the harvesting of cacao and the production of traditional chocolate, complete with a tasting.

Enjoy the camaraderie of Smith professors Donald Joraleman and Phoebe Porter and popular Mexican guide Florencio Moreno, who received rave reviews from previous Smith travelers to Mexico.

Experience the grandeur of Spanish colonial architecture during visits to plazas, convents, and colonial buildings in San Cristóbal de las Casas.