

How to Get to **Monte Albán** from **Oaxaca City**



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Monte Albán, the ancient Zapotec capital and UNESCO World Heritage site, is perched on a hilltop just 9 kilometers west of Oaxaca City. Despite its close distance, reaching it requires a bit of planning since the site is elevated and public transit does not drop you at the main entrance. Whether you're a backpacker on a budget, a family looking for convenience, or an art and history lover seeking context through a guided tour, here are all the ways to get to Monte Albán — with prices, times, pros, and cons clearly laid out.

Walking: For the Adventurous

It is possible to walk from Oaxaca City to Monte Albán, but this option is not for the faint of heart. The distance is about 9 kilometers, mostly uphill, with very little shade along the way. The climb can take 2 to 3 hours depending on your pace, and the heat in Oaxaca Valley often makes the journey uncomfortable. In addition, there have been reports of robberies along the hiking path, which makes it a risky choice for solo travelers. Walking is only advisable if you are fit, traveling in a group, and hiking in daylight. While it is free and offers the satisfaction of arriving on foot as the ancient Zapotecs once did, most visitors will find it too strenuous and potentially unsafe.

Public Buses: The Ultra-Budget Option

Two city bus routes travel toward the Monte Albán area for just MXN 10 per ride (as of Sept. 2025). However, they do not actually reach the archaeological site. The buses stop several kilometers below the ruins, leaving you with a steep uphill walk of about 3 kilometers to the entrance. This means you save money but trade it for a sweaty climb at the end of your journey. For locals, this option makes sense, but for visitors with limited time and energy, the challenge outweighs the savings. If you do try the bus, ask the driver to let you off at the closest stop for Monte Albán, and be ready for the uphill trek.

Tourist Shuttle Buses: The Most Popular Choice

By far the most common option is the official tourist shuttle, known locally as “autobuses turísticos.” These minibuses leave from offices near the Zócalo or popular hotels, such as Hotel Rivera del Ángel. Shuttles run hourly in the morning, starting around 8:30 or 9:00 AM, with return trips every hour in the early afternoon. The cost is approximately MXN 90–100 for a round trip ticket, which you can purchase in advance or just before boarding. The ride takes about 30 minutes and drops you directly at the main entrance, bypassing any uphill walk.

The convenience of these shuttles cannot be overstated. They are safe, punctual, and affordable. The only limitation is that you must return on their schedule. If you plan to spend the whole day at the ruins, take one of the earliest buses to avoid the midday heat and catch a return in the early afternoon. For most tourists, this is the best balance of price and ease.

Taxis: Flexible and Direct

Taxis are plentiful in Oaxaca City and can take you to Monte Albán in about 20–30 minutes. Prices range from MXN 100–150 one-way, depending on your negotiation skills and starting point. This option is especially attractive for groups, since splitting the fare between three or four people makes it comparable to the shuttle cost. The downside is that taxis are not always waiting at the site for the return trip. If you take a taxi, arrange with the driver to either wait for you or pick you up at a set time. Otherwise, you may find yourself stranded at closing time.

No Rideshares

Unlike Mexico City or Guadalajara, Oaxaca does not allow Uber, Didi, or other rideshare services. These have been banned due to local taxi union regulations. Travelers should plan to rely on traditional taxis, shuttles, or private tours instead.

Private Tours and Drivers: Hassle-Free

If budget is less of a concern and you want added value, private tours are an excellent option. Tour operators offer half-day excursions that include hotel pickup, transportation, and a certified guide who can explain the history and architecture of Monte Albán. Prices usually start around \$30–40 USD per person, and many tours combine Monte Albán with nearby artisan villages or cultural stops. Hiring a private driver is another option, giving you complete flexibility for the day. For families or groups who want a smooth, educational experience, this is the top-tier choice.

Comparison at a Glance

Walking: Free and adventurous, but hot, long, and unsafe for most travelers.

Public Bus: Ultra-cheap, but drops you far from the entrance with a steep uphill walk.

Tourist Shuttle: MXN 90–100, hourly service, direct to the gate. Best overall option.

Taxi: MXN 100–150 each way, flexible for groups, but return must be arranged.

Private Tour: \$30–40 USD, includes guides and comfort, ideal for those seeking context.

Final Tips

No matter how you get there, plan to arrive early. Monte Albán has little shade, and exploring in the morning makes the visit more comfortable. Bring water, sunscreen, and a hat, as well as cash for entrance tickets and transport fares.

Allow at least 2–3 hours to explore the ruins, more if you want to see the on-site museum or spend time taking photos. With the right transport option, your visit to Monte Albán will be smooth, enjoyable, and unforgettable.

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