

Uxmal reveals new secrets

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SANTA ELENA Yucatan (EFE) – Uxmal, one of the most important archeological zones of Yucatan in southeastern Mexico, continues to amaze tourists and archeologists who in each investigation discover details of the architectural richness of the place and hieroglyphics that tell the story of the Maya rulers.



Photo: **The Yucatan Times**

“The majestic Mayan palaces of Uxmal are unique in their type, because they were built on various levels and their facades are notable for the stone filigree that seduces visitors,” says archaeologist José Huchim Herrera, director of the Uxmal Management Plan at the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) to EFE.

His gaze covers the site, which looks beautiful under the powerful rays of the summer sun and stops at the esplanade of the “Governor’s Palace” set on a 12 meters high platform, whose façade boasts beautiful examples of Mayan architectural sculpture that himself has been recovering with the pre-Hispanic formula based on lime.

The archaeologist and his team work with this material *“because cement has many sulphates and salts that start to generate a crust with humidity and prevent buildings from ‘breathing’”*, Huchim Herrera explains.

His current goal is to finish the steps of the Governor’s Palace, whose façade features the throne of a sovereign seated majestically, surrounded by intertwined snakes, masks of Chaac (god of rain) and reliefs dating from the period 900 AD.

Huchim, for 27 years has been researching and restoring back to its splendor the buildings of Uxmal and other emblematic Mayan sites, reveals that the stone filigree that adorns the palace's façade tells a story and makes clear the huge power of the ruler of the place, whose identity so far, is unknown until now. Huchim feels proud... He says tourists will learn more about *"the legend of the Dwarf king of Uxmal, the hydraulic systems that supplied the big city, the chultunes (aljibes) and the aguadas, or go to the route of the walls that would enter the low jungle and take them to the great sac bé that ends in Kabah,"* he says.



Photo: **The Yucatan Times**

The researcher explains that one of the objectives of his project is to integrate all the spaces so that the visitor *"understands how the Mayas and kings circulated within the city"*. He has evidence that individuals belonging to the Chenes (Mayas of Campeche), itzaes (of Chichén Itzá, Yucatán) or Putunes (of Tabasco) constructed buildings in Uxmal. *"They were the last Mayans to arrive when the city was almost abandoned,"* says the expert.

However the mystery remains to researchers... in one of the levels of the Temple of the Fortuneteller where there is a structure decorated in the style of the Chenes (Mayas of Campeche). *"We don't know if it is the result of a commercial or family alliance; that is to say, maybe they exchanged a Mayan princess and as a gift they built that architecture for her"* he adds.

Uxmal, the second most visited area in Yucatan, *“has enough elements to become an archaeological park that would include the natural aspect, in the same sense that the pre-Hispanic Mayans had”*.



Sacbé road

Upcoming

project

In the next coming months, a project will be presented. It is the opening of the the **“sac bé”** (paved road built by the ancient Maya) that goes from Uxmal to the site of Kabah.

“It will be an 18-kilometer journey with two or three specialized guides who would accompany visitors on foot or by bicycle. It will be an alternative to make known the respect that the pre-Hispanic Mayans felt for nature,” says the archaeologist.

Regarding the sac bé project from Uxmal to Kabah, the archaeologist reveals that the inhabitants of the municipality of Santa Elena and the INAH would sign an agreement for the same settlers to take charge of the project. The objective *“is to give space to the women of the region, who have always collaborated with INAH,”* he said.

To carry out the last renovation work on the Governor’s Palace, INAH has a problem to solve: a population of more than 6,000 bats that live there. *“We have to design a way to change their homes to restore the interior of the building, the facade and the roof,”* Huchim said.

José Huchim Herrera, director of INAH’s Uxmal Management Plan proudly declares: *“Uxmal is the second most visited area in Yucatan and it has enough elements to become an archaeological ecological park”*.