

How to Celebrate the Day of the Dead in Huaquechula, Puebla (2025)

The Day of the Dead (Día de Muertos) is one of the biggest celebrations in Mexico. You've probably heard about how it's celebrated in Mexico City or other popular places, but have you heard of Huaquechula? This small town is known for its multi-level altars, and also for welcoming tourists into their homes to celebrate and eat together in honor of their deceased loved ones.

However, if you're planning to visit Huaquechula during this festive season, there are a few things you should keep in mind. To be well-prepared and show respect, read my tips for celebrating the Day of the Dead in Huaquechula. Let's get started!

What to Expect During the Day of the Dead in Huaquechula

Huaquechula (pronounced "wa-keh-CHOO-la") is a small town near Puebla City where you can visit *ofrendas*—public altars honoring loved ones who've passed away—during the Day of the Dead season.

What makes Huaquechula special is that you can visit not only *ofrendas* in public spaces like the *Presidencia* and the ex-convent but also private ones inside family homes. These home *ofrendas* commemorate family members who've died in the past year, and families open their doors to visitors to share their traditions—and a meal.

Closer to the season, [a map is released](#) showing which families welcome visitors. As November 1 and 2 approach, more and more *ofrendas* open to the public.

When visiting a home, [be mindful](#). It's customary to bring a candle (preferably a large, thin one) as an offering (see [where you can get one](#)). After viewing the altar, guests are often invited to share a small meal in the backyard or front yard. In one home, we saw a live band with dancers in traditional costumes. In another, a guitarist played solemn music in front of the altar. You might even get to chat with the family and learn more about the deceased person. If you don't speak Spanish, no worries—just be respectful and take it all in.



We were invited to eat at the family's home (on the left: *mole poblano*, on the right: *mixiote*)

When to Come to Huaquechula

For the most current information, check the [town hall's Facebook page](#). In 2024, you could visit the ofrendas on October 28 and 31, and November 1. We went on October 28, and it wasn't very crowded, with just six altars open. November 1 gets busier, but there are also more ofrendas to see.

Aim [to arrive around 2 PM](#). As you'll pass through [Atlixco](#) on the way, I highly recommend you visit the Valley of Catrinas there in the morning before heading to Huaquechula.



Dance performance at a home

How to Prepare for Your Visit

Bringing a **candle** for the altar is a common custom. If you're driving, you'll pass shops selling candles before the turnoff to Huaquechula. You can also buy candles in town. We bought ours at the local mini-supermarket on Avenida de la Juventud.

Bring some **small change** too. Local kids often ask for coins for their little pumpkin mugs. You can also give candy or fruit if you want to be more traditional, but it seems most kids prefer cash these days 😊 No worries, you don't have to give to everyone (which is impossible anyway), so if you run out of supplies, just say, *Ya no tengo* (I don't have any left), or *No tengo cambio* (I don't have any coins).

Some altars have collection plates for collecting money, but not all do. If you run out of candles, you can leave money instead—20 or 50 peso bills are common (1-2.50 USD).



Street decorations from left to right: Bull statue with monarch butterflies; a passage decorated with orange marigold flowers; a basin with floating boats and skull decorations

Where to Get a Map of All Ofrendas (Public Altars)

As the event approaches, the town hall [shares a map on its Facebook page](#).

You can also pick one up at the info booth in Huaquechula's main square (*Zócalo de Huaquechula*). They'll give you a flyer explaining the altar elements and a basic code of conduct. It's all in Spanish, so have your [translation app handy](#).



Zócalo in Huaquechula

How to Behave When Visiting Home Altars

The [info leaflet you get at the local info booth](#) outlines the etiquette, especially for visiting private homes. Here's a summary of what to keep in mind:

- Don't enter homes with public altars before 2 PM—that's when the *Ánima Bendita* (Blessed Soul) is believed to arrive.
- During the ritual of welcoming the Blessed Soul, please remain quiet out of respect.
- Ask permission to enter and bring a candle. Families usually invite you in directly, but if unsure, ask: *¿Puedo pasar?* (May I come in?).
- Stay silent and respectful while near the altar.
- If you'd like to take photos of the altar, ask the family first. Usually, there are one or more family members at the entrance or exit. A simple gesture usually works, so no worries if you don't know Spanish.
- If invited to eat, feel free to accept or politely decline with a *Gracias, ya comí* (Thanks, I've already eaten), or ask for a beverage only with *Solo un refresco, gracias* (Just a beverage, thanks).
- After eating, throw away your trash in a trash bin. Sometimes, someone will walk around with a plastic bag for this.
- When leaving, thank the family for inviting you into their home and sharing their celebrations with you with *Muchas gracias*.
- In general, keep the streets clean by putting your trash into the bins. From my experience, Mexicans hold back from providing bins, but there are some near the *zócalo* (main square).

Only enter homes listed on the [official map for the date you're visiting](#). You might see orange petals (marigolds) leading to a home, but that's not an open invitation—it's a path to guide the returning

souls to their family's home. We made this mistake ourselves, so don't just follow the petals—stick to the map.

Tip

Don't light your candles unless they come with a fireproof base. Just place them unlit on the ground in front of the altar. If they don't stand on their own, place them next to the altar—there's often a small table for this.



Public multi-level altar (*ofrenda*) in Huaquechula with candles in front of the altar

What Else to Do in Huaquechula During the Day of the Dead

Aside from visiting family and public altars (see [the official map](#)), there's more to explore. Please note that these activities might vary from year to year.

- **Photo opportunities:** Take selfies near the *zócalo* (main square) with skeleton carriages, flower-covered arches, or a giant butterfly bull.
- **Free events:** Join the events held in the evenings. When we were there, you could get a free Day-of-the-Dead makeup and watch dance performances.
- **Walking tour:** Stroll through the decorated streets, especially the ones around the ex-convent San Martín Caballero opposite the *zócalo*. We enjoyed the view onto a long basin decorated with colorful *Catrin*as and skulls, a mock graveyard with sarcastic epitaphs, and lots and lots of *cempasúchil* (marigold) decorations.
- **Take pictures of murals:** Along Avenida de la Juventud, when entering the town, you'll find colorful murals, many themed around the Day of the Dead.



From left to right: Skeleton on a carriage; *Llorones* figures next to orange marigold flowers leading to the ofrenda; mural of a *Catrina* in front of the volcano Popocatepetl

The Meaning Behind the Multi-Level Altars

Huaquechula is known for its impressive multi-level altars, each with symbolic meaning:

- **First level** – The earthly realm. You'll find the things that the soul enjoyed while it was alive. From food and drinks to personal items or the *llorones* (mourning figurines), there's also a mirror reflecting the photo of the deceased person, symbolizing the soul's immaterial nature.
- **Second level** – The bridge between heaven and earth. Here you'll find a religious image of a saint that the deceased person revered.
- **Third level** – The final destination: heaven. A cross or a Jesus figure is often placed here.



A local is playing songs on a guitar in front of a family's *ofrenda*

How to Get to Huaquechula

Huaquechula is about an hour's drive southwest of Puebla City and 45 minutes from Atlixco. As you pass by [Atlixco](#) on the way to Huaquechula, it's worth visiting the Catrinas there in the morning

From Puebla, you have two routes to choose from: The toll-free 190 highway or the toll road 438D, which eventually merges with the 190 once you pass Atlixco. The last 20 minutes are off-highway, leading into town via Avenida de la Juventud.

At the town's entrance, there's a parking lot on your right. Tour buses stop there, and you can park for 50 pesos (2.50 USD). As you walk up the main street toward the zócalo, you'll pass a small supermarket where you can buy candles as an offering if you didn't bring any.



From left to right: A mock grave with sarcastic humor on its cross ("That's why I asked you for your password"); a decorated arched hall; a cat amidst marigold flowers on a staircase

Understanding the Day of the Dead in General

For more background, check out my post on [celebrating the Day of the Dead in Puebla](#).

So...Is It Worth Visiting Huaquechula for the Day of the Dead?

If you ask me, it's a solid yes. Beyond being a lovely little town, the multi-level altars are impressive—and being invited to sit and share a meal with local families is both moving and unforgettable. Don't miss the opportunity of a very personal insight into Mexican family traditions.

The Day of the Dead in Mexico shows us a different way of mourning and perceiving death. I think this is a great way to learn and to be inspired to think about how to approach the death of your loved ones. You might even feel inspired to create your own small *ofrenda* at home and start your own traditions to remember your loved ones.