

SURVIVAL GUIDE

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JANAL PIXAN *by*



Yucatán
Today®



Festival of the Souls



October 24 - November 2, 2026

The Festival de las Ánimas is an event that, since 2008, has represented the belief that in October, the **souls of the departed leave the cemetery to spend a few days back in the world of the living.** Today, the festival features several events that draw countless visitors to Mérida. In this guide, we'll cover the following:

- Monumental Altar
- Tours of the General Cemetery
- Souls' Bike Ride
- Parade of the Souls
- Catrinas Parade

GENERAL TIPS

Dress for comfort

Wear light, comfortable clothes and shoes, as you will be doing a lot of walking. Evenings in Mérida can still be warm, and the crowds add to the heat.

Be prepared

Bring water to stay hydrated. A fully charged cell phone is a good idea, but don't rely on it for communication or navigation in the densest crowds.



Arrive early

For many of the most popular events (the Monumental Altar inauguration, the Catrinas Parade, and the main Parade of Souls, for example), arriving at least one to two hours early is essential to get a good viewing spot, especially if you want a seat in the bleachers.

Be patient

Expect large crowds, especially at the most popular events. Take a deep breath and enjoy the experience.



Stay with your group

If you are with family or friends, establish a meeting point and a time to meet. With limited cell service and so much to see, it's easy to get separated.

Bring cash, preferably in small bills

It's safe to assume you'll have to pay cash for anything you'd like to purchase during the event; make sure to bring enough for snacks, souvenirs, and hydration, preferably in bills \$200-pesos or smaller.



Embrace the atmosphere

Take time to enjoy the music, dances, aromas, and art. The festival is meant to be a full sensory experience.



HOW TO GET THERE AND MOVE AROUND

Forget the car: The streets near the main parade route are closed, and parking is nearly impossible. Use public transportation or a rideshare service, but be prepared to walk a few blocks away from the event to get a signal to call a taxi on your way out.



Get your face painted: You can find stands offering face-painting services for a voluntary contribution at events like the Bike Ride and the Parade of Souls. This is a great way to feel more a part of the celebration.

Join in: While you cannot join the official parades, you can still dress up as a "catrina" or "ánima." There are also plenty of opportunities to take photos with others in costume and enjoy the festive atmosphere.



Feel free to move around: You can watch the parades from just one spot and be done, but you can also move around to see it more than once or experience different atmospheres.

Restrooms: This year, organizers plan to offer public restrooms at several points around most major events. Still, it might be a good idea to carry hand sanitizer and toilet paper, as it is possible these public restrooms might be underequipped. Restrooms inside hotels and restaurants are usually for patrons only.



IMPORTANT



Limited cell service: Due to the large crowds, cell phone networks often become overwhelmed. Don't count on being able to upload photos or videos instantly, and plan your meeting points in advance in case you can't get a signal.



Accessibility: The festival is family-friendly, but accessibility is not guaranteed; navigating with a wheelchair or a stroller can be a challenge at many events. Be very careful while walking in centro, as both pavements and sidewalks are often uneven. You can try to ask Ayuntamiento (City Hall) workers for assistance and/or designated areas, but demand is high. Due to this, staff may not be able to accommodate every request, and your understanding is appreciated.



Safety: The Festival of Souls and all of the events it comprises are usually very safe and peaceful. However, as with any major public event, visitors should always be aware of their surroundings. It's wise to carry a secure bag and, if you must bring valuables, keep them out of sight. Police and emergency services are typically present and visible throughout the festival, especially for crowded events.



The Monumental Altar



Oct 25 - Nov 2

One of the most anticipated events in the first days of the Festival de las Ánimas is, without a doubt, the Monumental Altar. It's usually set up in the Plaza Grande, right in front of the Cathedral, and can measure up to 4 meters high and 16 meters wide—that's 13 x 52 feet. Definitely monumental. What awaits you there is a feast for the eyes: candles, fruits, flowers, photographs, and regional dishes that together transform those more than 15 meters into a work that simply leaves you speechless and fills your heart, knowing that it's all in honor of our loved ones.

TIPS



Arrive early if you want to see it up close during the inauguration.



The altar usually remains open to the public for several days.



A good time to visit is in the early evening, as the altar really shines once all the candles on it are lit.



Tours of the General Cemetery



Oct
24 - 27



6, 6:30, 7,
7:30 & 8 pm

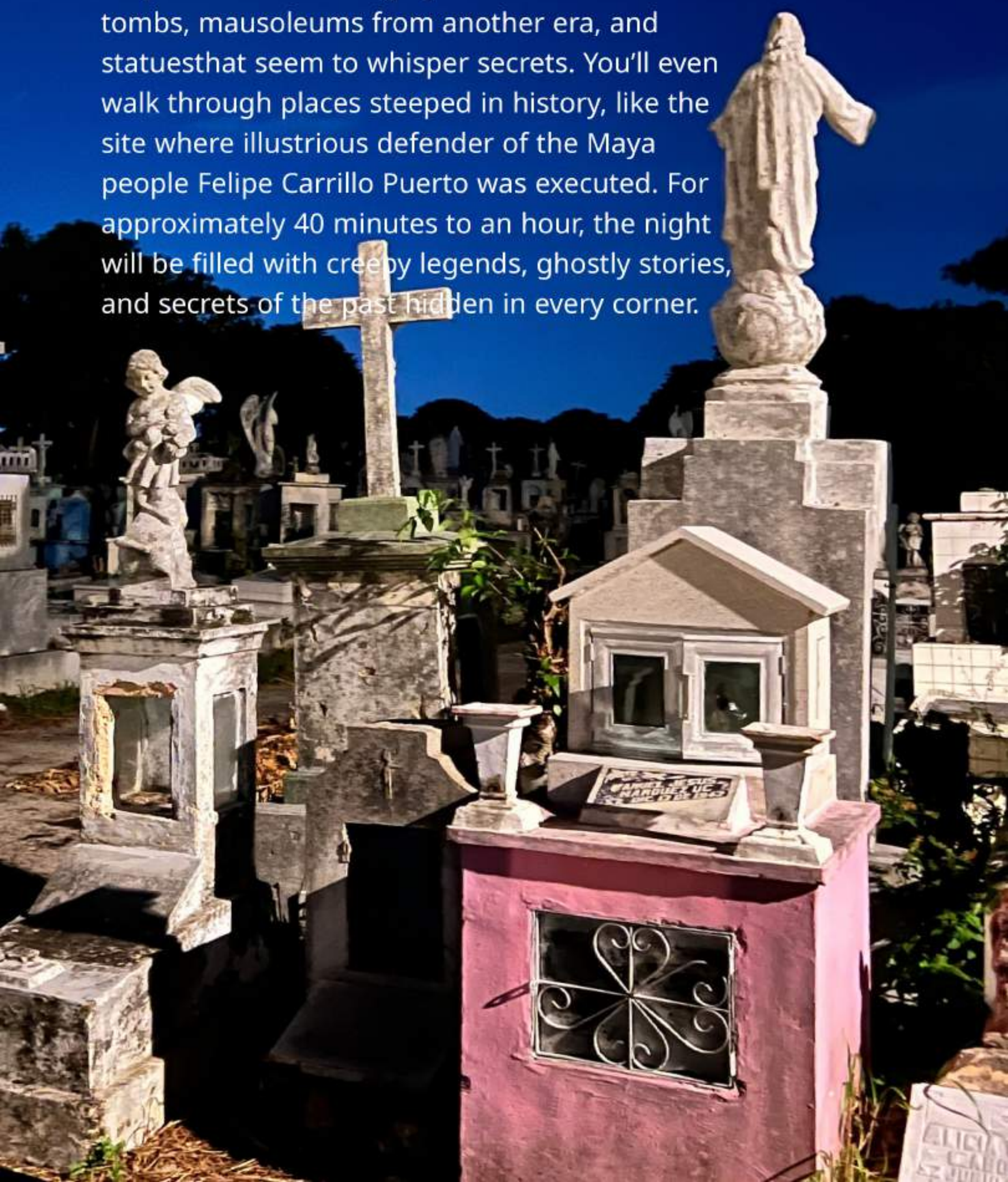


Spanish
& English

Would you dare walk among shadows and mystery in Yucatán's most historic cemetery?

One of the most anticipated and in-demand experiences of the festival is the nighttime tour of the General Cemetery of Mérida.

Prepare to walk through past centuries-old tombs, mausoleums from another era, and statues that seem to whisper secrets. You'll even walk through places steeped in history, like the site where illustrious defender of the Maya people Felipe Carrillo Puerto was executed. For approximately 40 minutes to an hour, the night will be filled with creepy legends, ghostly stories, and secrets of the past hidden in every corner.



TIPS



Follow the guide at all times: The darkness and size of the cemetery can play tricks on you if you separate from the group.



Stand at the front: The megaphones aren't very powerful, and, trust us, you won't want to miss a single moment.



Most importantly, enjoy every spooky fact and story, because this experience isn't available all year.





Bike Ride of Souls



Oct 28



8 pm



La Ermita de Santa Isabel

If you want to experience the Festival de las Ánimas on two wheels, don't miss the Souls' Bike Ride. Every year, this nighttime event brings together cyclists of all ages to have fun while paying tribute to those who have lost their lives in traffic accidents. The starting point is the Ermita de Santa Isabel. From there, the route proceeds to the General Cemetery of Mérida. Then, the souls continue towards Calle 66 and returns to La Ermita park. The ride starts around 8 pm and usually ends near 11 pm—just enough time to pedal under the moon, have fun... and still get back before the souls start eyeing you.



You'll see people in costumes with their faces painted like skulls. Then, hop on your bike decorated with spooky-ooky motifs. Along the route, some riders bring speakers to add a beat to the ride, and as you pass the cemetery, you'll find costumed characters posing among the mausoleums for memorable photos.

TIPS



Wear comfortable clothes for pedaling.



If you don't have a bike, no problem—rental services are available, and they're hard to miss.



Take advantage of the free face-painting service, which operates on a voluntary contribution basis.



The Parade of the Souls



Oct 30



6 - 11 pm

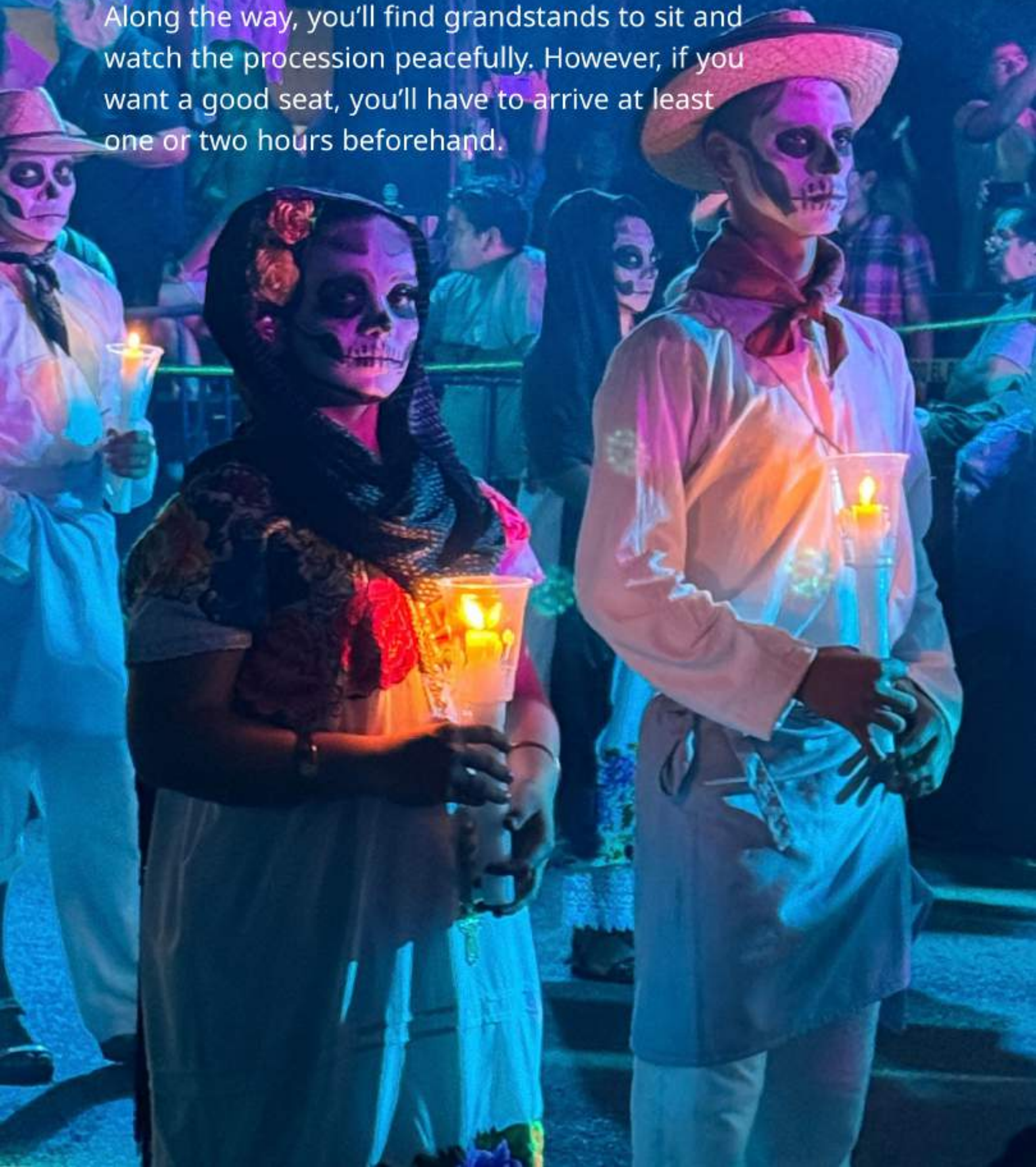


Parque de San Juan

La Ermita

Parque de San Sebastián

This is the most anticipated event of the entire celebration. It's a representation of the moment when the souls return to the world of the living and leave the cemetery on their way home. The tour begins with the "souls" leaving the General Cemetery, following the Panteón Florido to the parks of San Sebastián, La Ermita, and San Juan. Along the way, you'll find grandstands to sit and watch the procession peacefully. However, if you want a good seat, you'll have to arrive at least one or two hours beforehand.



Paseo de las Ánimas is much more than a simple parade. Along the entire route, you'll come across altar displays, bazaars, stages with regional music, and much more. In short: a lively party with a mystical air that only Janal Pixan can provide.

TIPS



Forget the car: The streets near the route are closed off, and parking is nearly impossible. It's much better to arrive by public transport or a rideshare app.



If you manage to get a spot near the start, before the parade kicks off, **you can enjoy the Pok Ta Pok of Souls**, a unique and worthwhile spectacle. It's a reenactment of the ancient Maya ball game, with actors characterized as souls from the underworld.





Catrina Parade



Oct 31



8 pm



Plaza Grande to
La Plancha Park

“La Catrina” is the name given to a famous illustration of a skull elegantly dressed in the style of early 20th-century México. The Catrina figure is not from Yucatán but is associated with the central part of the country.

During the Catrina Parade, hundreds of “catrinas” and “catrines” of all shapes, sizes, and ages gather to walk, dance, and celebrate with all the style and detail of Mexican tradition. The parade route is set to begin at Plaza Grande, and go north towards Paseo de Montejo, ending just before Monumento a la Patria.

For about an hour of pure celebration, you can enjoy festive floats, dance troupes, and iconic figures from Mexican folklore, from little devils and skeletons to colorful alebrijes.

Can I join the parade?

Unfortunately, no, even if you're all dressed up and perfectly in character: neither the Catrina nor the Parade of the Souls are open for outsiders to join in. But that doesn't mean you and yours won't have fun: you'll have plenty of opportunities to take pictures with participants and attendants. It's an unforgettable experience!

TIPS



Arrive early: This is a massive event, and getting a spot at the front requires strategy, patience, and arriving well in advance.



If you want to experience every part of the festival, you might want to move between different points along the parade route.

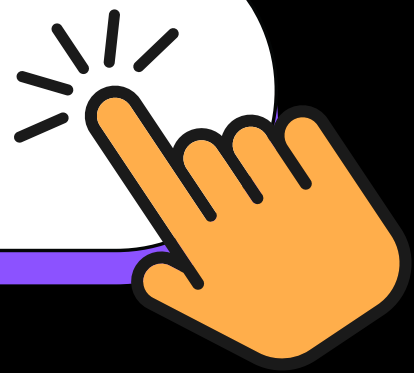


Be patient: The crowds are large, but take a deep breath, look around, and enjoy every detail that unfolds in front of you.



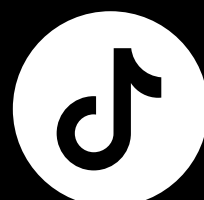
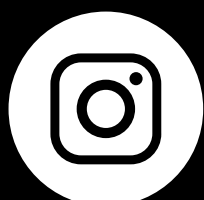
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