



So you're thinking of visiting Chiapas to know more about Zapatismo?

First of all we welcome your interest and desire to know more first-hand. Leaving home to visit Zapatista communities in Chiapas is a big commitment – in time, money, body and spirit. If you haven't already, we encourage you to seriously think about your motivations in going. One of the great successes of the Zapatista movement has been to provoke an understanding of the common struggle diverse communities around the world face, and there is plenty we can do to plant seeds of Zapatismo wherever we are in the world. And this you can do without the hardship of travel across land, oceans and culture.

Still intent on going?

Visiting autonomous Zapatista rebel territory is a serious matter. These communities live a situation of low intensity warfare every day, although some days the violence and hardships perpetuated by the Bad Government are more direct and visible. The compass have to be careful about who visits, and while this process of discernment to write a letter is ours, it is also out of respect and in service to the Zapatistas who have to protect themselves. We hope you understand the care and attention we give to this selection process. It is very important that you understand – visiting Zapatista territory is not merely a 'holiday in the sun'.

Another very important matter is to be aware – **no alcohol and no drugs** (tobacco is ok) are permitted in the communities, and this includes arriving sober. There are also local costumes and habits you'll need to explore and adapt to in order to be your most effective, but that will depend on the context and community. In brief, expect to dress modestly and be open to conversations about difference in ways you may never have had before.

You'll need a letter of introduction.

A letter of introduction from a solidarity organisation recognised by the Zapatistas is like an "entry visa" to the autonomous Zapatista municipalities, but it is not a guarantee of entry. Just like an entry visa in your passport facilitates your entry into whatever country requiring it, that country's immigration authorities can always deny your actual entry at their discretion.

Your letter of introduction is a preliminary step. You'll also want to ensure you have the other documentation for whatever your project is – attending the Spanish School in Oventic for example, or doing human rights observation with Enlace Civil and so on.

Letters of introduction from London Mexico Solidarity

Our mission is to build relationships and links to communities, groups and individuals working for social and environmental justice in Mexico with people in London/Great Britain.

We write letters of introduction for people we have come to know through solidarity work, and about whom we can affirm are individuals trustworthy and of solidarity.

What does trustworthy and solidarity mean?

“Obras, no palabras” (Actions, not words). London – Mexico Solidarity will write a letter of introduction for people who we have worked with and have come to know through attending our regular group meeting, taking part in organising events and the follow-up to events for a minimum of 6 months. We also expect you'll continue to be active with the group once you return. In addition, there is then an interview process before we write the letter where we ask you more about your visit/project and intention of visit. Our hope is this interview/discernment process guides and advises you interculturally, socially and politically. Visiting Zapatista territory is not like visiting Cancun or San Cristobal. It is another world. After all this we mutually discern to write a letter of support or not.

Not in London, and no solidarity group near you?

Get in touch and we'll explore ways forward. One example of how we've dealt with a situation like this in the past was to support from a distance the person interested in doing Zapatista solidarity work to organise events and do other solidarity/organising wherever you are.

Good luck discerning what to do next.

We hope this information is helpful, yet we imagine you may still have more questions. Don't hesitate to be in touch, speak soon.