

The City of Córdoba A Heroic Past

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Exact copy of the Treaties of Córdoba in the Municipal Palace.

Córdoba is a privileged city. Strategically located in central Veracruz, it is within a stone's throw of the port of Veracruz on the Gulf of Mexico and an easy distance from Puebla and Mexico City in Central Mexico. Its semi-warm, humid climate has given birth to fertile lands and majestic scenery. Its past includes one of the most important mo-

ments in national history. And, as if all that were not enough, it is guarded on the horizon by a snow-capped mountain, Mexico's highest, Orizaba Peak or Citlaltépetl.

Its foundation in 1618 is linked to the constant robberies by escaped slaves, or *cimarrones*, holed up in the region's mountains, of carriages and stages carrying passengers, innumerable colonial products, and gold and silver from New Spain to the port of Veracruz, the only point of departure for Europe.¹ The settlement, origi-

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The Orizaba Peak guards the city's horizon.



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Portal de la Gloria which hosted the head of the Insurgent Army, Agustín de Iturbide.

The *Villa* of Córdoba was under viceregal rule for two centuries, but toward the end of the colonial period, it would play an outstanding role in achieving independence.



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The city's cathedral, opposite the Municipal Palace.

nally set up to protect the Orizaba-Veracruz road, also benefitted from nature's bounty.

The plans matured when Don Juan de Miranda, Don García de Arévalo and Don Andrés Núñez de Illescas, residents of the town of Huatusco, presented a request to the thirteenth viceroy of New Spain, Don Diego Fernández de Córdoba. The viceroy appreciated the great service that they intended to do for the Spanish crown, but also the fact that the place had an agreeable climate, healthy air, fertile land, abundant water, mountains with plentiful stands of cedar, walnut groves and innumerable robust, leafy trees, spacious valleys, lime deposits and other materials useful to a future population. The licence for founding the city, or *villa*, was granted in representation of Spain's King Felipe III, and included the stipulation that it should be named after the viceroy.

On April 27, 1618, the so called 30 Gentlemen, who, together with their families were going to found the *villa*, proceeded in caravan from the town of Amatlán to the place known as Lomería de Huilango, or



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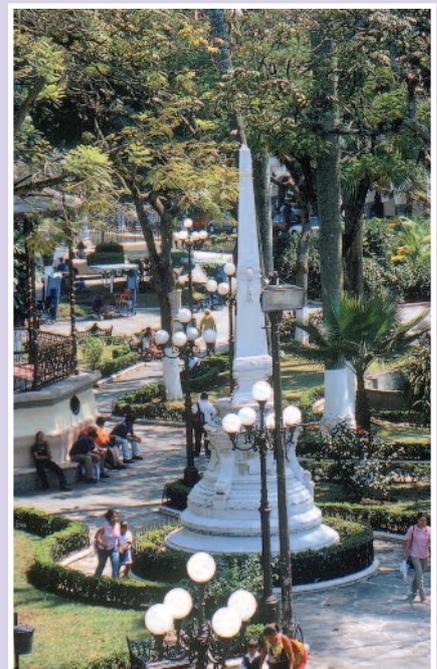
The neoclassical municipal palace's 21 columns commemorate the May 21, 1821 battle.

The classical colonial portals, with their semi-circular arches, are the doorways to buildings that housed viceroys, emperors, presidents and great figures from the past.

“the place where doves abound”, where what is now the city of Córdoba was to be established.

The *Villa* of Córdoba was under viceregal rule for two centuries, but toward the end of the colonial period, it would play an outstanding role in the history of the fight for independence. First, its inhabitants participated in the bloody battle against the well-armed forces of the royal army, which ended in a victory for the insurgents on May 21, 1821. Shortly thereafter, on August 24 of the same year, it would witness the consummation of independence, with the signing there of the Treaties of Córdoba by the Lieutenant General of the armies of Spain, Don Juan de O'Donojú, the envoy of the Spanish crown and last viceroy of New Spain, and Don Agustín de Iturbide, the commander of the Insurgent Army.

Since conditions after more than 10 years of fighting were still critical, Viceroy O'Donojú feared for his safety and decided not to travel to the capital. But the Veracruz climate was not to his liking either, so Córdoba was proposed for the meeting. When he arrived, the viceroy said,



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Carrara marble obelisk. View from the municipal palace.

“Given the good faith and harmony with which we proceed to this enterprise, it will be very easy for us to untie the knot without cutting it.” Under that premise, they negotiated the terms that would change the links that had united the two continents for four centuries: Mexico became an independent country.

Buildings, streets and monuments tell the city’s history. The classical colonial portals, with their semi-circular arches, are the doorways to buildings that housed viceroys, emperors, presidents and great figures from the past, like the Portal de Zevallos, which hosted Viceroy O’Donojú, or the Portal de la Gloria, at the other end of the plaza, that lodged the head of the insurgent army.

The Plaza de Armas is characterized by its culture and architectural beauty, its park boasting ramrod straight palm trees swaying to the rhythm of the wind from the port. Every Thursday in its

central esplanade, local inhabitants come together to dance the *danzón*. On one end is the neo-classical municipal palace whose 21 columns commemorate the date of the May battle, as does the Carrara marble obelisk right in front of it. The municipal archives hold an exact copy of the Treaties of Córdoba, as well as other treasures. Opposite the palace is the cathedral, with its imposing towers and bell towers, and inside, embossed gold sheeting and Our Lady of Soledad, who hides a legend that, like many others in the city, it will be a pleasure to discover. **MM**

NOTES

¹ New Spain was by no means free of the slave trade; African slaves were used in agriculture and mining. Many ran away and hid in the mountains, living from what they could steal from stages and travelers on the Royal Road from the port of Veracruz to Mexico City. These ex-slaves were known as “black *cimarrones*”.

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