

## The Legend of Popocatepetl & Iztaccíhuatl: A Love Story

The view that adorns the world's largest city – Mexico City – is enhanced by the majesty of two of the highest volcanoes in the hemisphere: **Popocatepetl** and **Iztaccíhuatl**.

The presence of these enormous millennial volcanoes has been of great significance for the different societies that have admired and revered them, being a source of inspiration for the many legends about their origin and creation. Among these, the best known are two below.

Thousands of years ago, when the **Aztec Empire** dominated the Valley of Mexico, it was common practice to subject neighboring towns and to require a mandatory tax. It was then that the chief of the **Tlaxcaltecas**, bitter enemies of the **Aztecs**, weary of this terrible oppression, decided to fight for his people's freedom.

The chief had a daughter named **Iztaccíhuatl**: the most beautiful of all the princesses, who had professed her love for young **Popocatepetl**, one of her father's people and the most handsome warrior. Both professed a deep love for each other, so before leaving for war, **Popocatepetl** asked the chief for the hand of **Princess Iztaccíhuatl**.

The father gladly agreed and promised to welcome him back with a big celebration to give him his daughter's hand if he returned victorious from the battle. The brave warrior accepted, prepared everything and departed keeping in his heart the promise that the princess would be waiting for him to consummate their love.

Soon afterward a love rival of **Popocatepetl**, jealous of the love they professed to each other, told Princess **Iztaccíhuatl** that her beloved had died in combat. Crushed and overwhelmed by sadness, the princess died without even knowing that it was a lie.

**Popocatepetl** returned victorious to his people, hoping to find his beloved princess. Upon arrival, he received the terrible news of the death of **Iztaccíhuatl**. Devastated by the news, he wandered about the streets for several days and nights, until he decided he had to do something to honor her love and to assure the princess would not ever be forgotten.

He ordered a great tomb to be built under the sun, piling ten hills together to form a huge mountain. He carried the body of his Princess in his arms, took her to the summit and laid her on the great mountain. The young warrior lovingly kissed her cold lips, took a smoking torch and knelt in front of his beloved to watch over her eternal sleep. From then on they remain together, facing each other. Over time, snow covered their bodies forming two enormous volcanoes that would remain together until the end of time.

The legend goes on to say that when the warrior **Popocatepetl** remembers his beloved, his heart – that preserves the fire of eternal passion – shakes and his torch smokes. That's why, even today; the **Popocatepetl** volcano continues spewing fumaroles.

This legend has been passed on from generation to generation since the time of the **Aztec Empire**, in the XIV century, and the importance given to them is clear, for the names that they have today were given to them since that time.

<https://www.inside-mexico.com/the-legend-of-popocatepetl-iztaccihuatl/>

## La Leyenda de Popocatépetl e Iztaccíhuatl

La vista que engalana a la ciudad más grande del mundo -- la Ciudad de México -- está realizada por la majestuosidad de dos de los volcanes más altos del hemisferio, se trata del **Popocatépetl** y del **Iztaccíhuatl**.

La presencia milenaria de estos enormes volcanes ha sido de gran importancia en las diferentes sociedades que los han admirado y venerado, siendo fuente de inspiración de múltiples leyendas sobre su origen y creación. Entre ellas las más conocidas son dos que a continuación relataremos.

Hace ya miles de años, cuando el **Imperio Azteca** estaba en su esplendor y dominaba el Valle de México, como práctica común sometían a los pueblos vecinos, requiriéndoles un tributo obligatorio. Fue entonces cuando el cacique de los **Tlaxcaltecas**, acérrimos enemigos de los **Aztecas**, cansado de esta terrible opresión, decidió luchar por la libertad de su pueblo.

El cacique tenía una hija, llamada **Iztaccíhuatl**, era la princesa más bella y depositó su amor en el joven **Popocatépetl**, uno de los más apuestos guerreros de su pueblo. Ambos se profesaban un inmenso amor, por lo que antes de partir a la guerra, **Popocatépetl** pidió al cacique la mano de la princesa **Iztaccíhuatl**.

El padre accedió gustoso y prometió recibirlo con una gran celebración para darle la mano de su hija si regresaba victorioso de la batalla. El valiente guerrero aceptó, se preparó para partir y guardó en su corazón la promesa de que la princesa lo esperaría para consumir su amor.

Al poco tiempo, un rival de amores de **Popocatépetl**, celoso del amor de ambos se profesaban, le dijo a la princesa **Iztaccíhuatl** que su amado había muerto durante el combate. Abatida por la tristeza y sin saber que todo era mentira, la princesa murió.

Tiempo después, **Popocatépetl** regresó victorioso a su pueblo, con la esperanza de ver a su amada. A su llegada, recibió la terrible noticia sobre el fallecimiento de la princesa **Iztaccíhuatl**. Entristecido con la noticia, vagó por las calles durante varios días y noches, hasta que decidió hacer algo para honrar su amor y que el recuerdo de la princesa permaneciera en la memoria de los pueblos.

Mandó construir una gran tumba ante el Sol, amontonando diez cerros para formar una enorme montaña. Tomó entre sus brazos el cuerpo de su princesa, lo llevó a la cima y lo recostó inerte sobre la gran montaña. El joven guerrero le dio un beso póstumo, tomó una antorcha humeante y se arrodilló frente a su amada, para velar así, su sueño eterno.

Desde aquel entonces permanecen juntos, uno frente a otro. Con el tiempo la nieve cubrió sus cuerpos, convirtiéndose en dos enormes volcanes que seguirán así hasta el final del mundo.

La leyenda añade, que cuando el guerrero **Popocatépetl** se acuerda de su amada, su corazón que guarda el fuego de la pasión eterna, tiembla y su antorcha echa humo. Por ello hasta hoy en día, el volcán **Popocatépetl** continúa arrojando fumarolas.

<https://www.inside-mexico.com/la-leyenda-de-popocatepetl-e-iztaccihuatl/>

## Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl Volcanoes, Mexico



As part of the circum-Pacific “Ring of Fire,” Mexico hosts several of the world’s most continually active volcanoes, including the massive Popocatepetl (Aztec for “smoking mountain.”) This detailed, oblique astronaut photograph also depicts a neighboring volcano, Iztaccíhuatl (the “Woman in White.”) With North to the right in the scene, the view is a westward-looking perspective.

The faint plume emanating from Popocatepetl’s 250- to 450-meter-deep summit crater attests to the significant, ever-present hazard the volcano represents to the 25 million people living in the region, including the nearby city of Amecameca, as well as the metropolitan centers of Mexico City to the northwest and Puebla to the east.

Popocatepetl has produced small, intermittent eruptions since 1994. In addition to the constant danger of eruptions producing ash deposits, pyroclastic flows, and lava (see an earlier astronaut photograph of [Popocatepetl erupting](#)), the summit of Popocatepetl also hosts glaciers. These can melt during eruptions to form dangerous mudflows that blanket areas to the south.

In contrast to Popocatepetl’s well-defined symmetrical cone, Iztaccíhuatl is formed from several overlapping smaller cones that trend north-northwest to south-southeast. Glaciers and year-round snow are also present on Iztaccíhuatl (white regions along the peaks). Deep valleys have been eroded into the massive apron of ash and pumice deposits, glacial outwash, and alluvium to the east of the volcano. Despite its close proximity, similar age, and similar geologic character to Popocatepetl, Iztaccíhuatl has not erupted in historic times. This has encouraged the establishment of numerous agricultural fields (visible as faint rectilinear patterns in the lower half of the image) on the eastern flank of the mountain.

Astronaut photograph [ISS006-E-28546](#) was acquired February 16, 2003, with a Kodak 760C digital camera with an 800-mm lens, and is provided by the ISS Crew Earth Observations experiment and the Image Science & Analysis Group, Johnson Space Center. The [International Space Station Program](#) supports the laboratory to help astronauts take pictures of Earth that will be of the greatest value to scientists and the public, and to make those images freely available on the Internet. Additional images taken by astronauts and cosmonauts can be viewed at the NASA/JSC [Gateway to Astronaut Photography of Earth](#).

<http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/IOTD/view.php?id=5369>