The middle temple of Group E is aligned with the equinox sunrise. The temple on the left coincides with the summer solstice rising sun, and at winter solstice, the right-hand temple indicates the position of sunrise. (Griffith Observatory)

A sightline from the Palace of the Governor at Uxmal extends nearly 6 miles to the ruins of another Maya center in this district of Yucatán. The site is known as Nohpa and its main pyramid, which protrudes above the otherwise featureless eastern horizon, created a marker for the southernmost rising point of Venus, over its 8-ye...

From inside the center room of the Palace of the Governor it is possible to see a horizon feature that coincides with the southernmost rising position of Venus for the eighth century after Christ. This small bump on the otherwise characterless horizon is actually a sizable ruin, the large pyramid at Nohpat, almost 6 miles to the southeast. A fallen cylindrical stela and a platform that supports a statue of a double-headed jaguar both occupy spots on this sightline. In 1936 the American archaeologist H. E. D. Pollock traced a Mayan road, or sacbe, from Nohpat nearly to Uxmal, where it possibly ended at the Palace of the Governor. This roadway, then, would have coincided with the astronomical sightline.

(E. C. Krupp)