DISCLAIMER

The Country Orientation Guides are provided as a service for faculty travelling to international destinations for teaching purposes. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in the Country Orientation Guides, neither the Office of Training nor the Fischler School of Education and Human Services at Nova Southeastern University can accept responsibility for any errors that may appear in information, editorial content, maps, text, representation, or illustrations as printed. The publisher does accept any responsibility for content of editorial. Additional copies of this publication may be obtained in the Office of International Affairs at the Fischler School of Education and Human Services in North Miami Beach.
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Welcome
Dear Colleagues,

Thank you very much for accepting to teach in Mexico!

The Office of International Affairs (OIA) at the Fischler School of Education and Human Services has prepared this country guide to provide you with basic and general information on the country you are about to visit.

This guide is intended to help you prepare for your trip. As you travel in the country, please let us know if you find that there are details that need to be added or changed so that we can keep our guides updated. Although we have tried to make it as comprehensive as possible, all of us know that our world moves very rapidly and changes happen everyday; however, we have tried our best to include all of the details you need to make sure you are comfortable in your new environment.

This information has been compiled with the help of the Office of Strategic Initiatives and Global Enterprises for Academic Development (SIGEAD), and the contribution from the OIA team members and our Field Associates and Regional Liaisons around the world. To all of them, and to you, thank you very much for helping these programs become as successful as they are today, and as a result, for making a difference in our students' lives, wherever they are located.

Have a wonderful experience and please be sure to meet with us upon your return so we can discuss your experience and solicit your input for future cohorts. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be any assistance to your prior to your departure, or while you are teaching.

Bon voyage!

Anthony DeNapoli, Dean of International Affairs
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSU Emergency Contact</th>
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### Travel Office Numbers

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Travel Office 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.</th>
<th>Office-954-262-8888</th>
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<td>Travel Office (ONLY after contacting airline or hotel directly)-</td>
<td>1-800-809-8858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a charge of $20 if you contact this number.</td>
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Passport Issues
A passport is an internationally recognized travel document that verifies the identity and nationality of the bearer. A valid U.S. passport is required to enter and leave most foreign countries. Only the U.S. Department of State has the authority to grant, issue, or verify United States passports.

The Passport Services Office provides information and services to American citizens about how to obtain, replace or change a passport.

To obtain a passport for the first time, you need to go in person to one of over 9,000 passport acceptance facilities located throughout the United States with two photographs of yourself, proof of U.S. citizenship, and a valid form of photo identification such as a driver’s license.

Acceptance facilities include many Federal, state and probate courts, post offices, some public libraries and a number of county and municipal offices. There are also 13 regional passport agencies, and 1 Gateway City Agency, which serve customers who are traveling within 2 weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. Appointments are required in such cases.

You will need to apply in person if you are applying for a U.S. passport for the first time:

- If your expired U.S. passport is not in your possession;
- If your previous U.S. passport has expired and was issued more than 15 years ago;
- If your previous U.S. passport was issued when you were under age 16;
- Or if your current valid U.S. passport has been lost or stolen.

*To obtain more information on obtaining a passport please visit

http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/first/first_832.html

*To renew an existing passport please visit

http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/renew/renew_833.html
Weather Information
For weather information on specific countries please visit:
http://worldweather.wmo.int/

Central Intelligence Agency-The World Factbook

The World Factbook provides valuable geographic and demographic information. For more information on individual countries, please visit:

TSA Travel Tips

Make Your Trip Better Using 3-1-1

3-1-1 for carry-ons =

- 3 ounce bottle or less (by volume);
- 1 quart-sized, clear, plastic, zip-top bag;
- 1 bag per passenger placed in screening bin.

One-quart bag per person limits the total liquid volume each traveler can bring. 3 oz. container size is a security measure.

Consolidate bottles into one bag and X-ray separately to speed screening.

Be prepared. Each time TSA searches a carry-on it slows down the line. Practicing 3-1-1 will ensure a faster and easier checkpoint experience.

3-1-1 is for short trips. If in doubt, put your liquids in checked luggage.

Declare larger liquids. Medications, baby formula and food, breast milk, and juice are allowed in reasonable quantities exceeding three ounces and are not required to be in the zip-top bag. Declare these items for inspection at the checkpoint.

Come early and be patient. Heavy travel volumes and the enhanced security process may mean longer lines at security checkpoints.

TSA working with our partners. TSA works with airlines and airports to anticipate peak traffic and be ready for the traveling public.
Useful Phone Numbers -- Sources of information include:

U.S. Dept. of State Travel Advisory: tel. 202-647-5225 (manned 24 hr.)

U.S. Passport Agency: tel. 202-647-0518

U.S. Centers for Disease Control International Traveler’s Hotline: tel. 404-332-4559

Lost & Found

Be sure to tell all of your credit card companies the minute you discover your wallet has been lost or stolen, and file a report at the nearest police precinct. Your credit card company or insurer may require a police report number or record of the loss. Most credit card companies have an emergency toll-free number to call if your card is lost or stolen; they may be able to wire you a cash advance immediately or deliver an emergency credit card in a day or two. To report a lost or stolen

**American Express** - To protect your information, you can only report a lost or stolen card by calling American Express Customer Service at 1-800-992-3404. Outside the United States call, collect 336-393-1111.

**Diners Club** - Call Diners Club Customer Service at 1-800-234-6377. Outside the United States call, collect 702-797-5532.


If you need emergency cash over the weekend when all banks and American Express offices are closed, you can have money wired to you via **Western Union**. Call tel. **1-800-325-6000**


Identity theft and fraud are potential complications of losing your wallet, especially if you have lost your driver's license along with your cash and credit cards. Notify the major credit-reporting bureaus immediately; placing a fraud alert on your records may protect you against liability for criminal activity. The three major U.S. credit-reporting agencies are **Equifax** (tel. **800-766-0008**; www.equifax.com), **Experian** (tel. **888-397-3742**; www.experian.com), and **TransUnion** (tel. **800-680-7289**; www.transunion.com). Finally, if you have lost all forms of photo ID, call your airline and explain the situation; they might allow you to board the plane if you have a copy of your passport or birth certificate and a copy of the police report you have filed.
Here are some quick tips to make your travel easier and safer:

- **Register so the State Department can better assist you in an emergency:** Register your travel plans with the State Department through a free online service at [https://travelregistration.state.gov](https://travelregistration.state.gov). This will help us contact you if there is a family emergency in the U.S., or if there is a crisis where you are traveling. In accordance with the Privacy Act, information on your welfare and whereabouts will not be released to others without your express authorization.

- **Sign passport, and fill in the emergency information:** Make sure you have a signed, valid passport, and a visa, if required, and fill in the emergency information page of your passport.

- **Leave copies of itinerary and passport data page:** Leave copies of your itinerary, passport data page and visas with family or friends, so you can be contacted in case of an emergency.

- **Check your overseas medical insurance coverage:** Ask your medical insurance company if your policy applies overseas, and if it covers emergency expenses such as medical evacuation. If it does not, consider supplemental insurance.

- **Familiarize yourself with local conditions and laws:** While in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws. The State Department web site at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html) has useful safety and other information about the countries you will visit.

- **Take precautions to avoid being a target of crime:** To avoid being a target of crime, do not wear conspicuous clothing or jewelry and do not carry excessive amounts of money. Also, do not leave unattended luggage in public areas and do not accept packages from strangers.

- **Contact us in an emergency:** Consular personnel at U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad and in the U.S. are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to provide emergency assistance to U.S. citizens. Contact information for U.S. Embassies and Consulates appears on the Bureau of Consular Affairs website at [http://travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov). Also, note that the Office of Overseas Citizen Services in the State Department’s Bureau of Consular Affairs may be reached for assistance with emergencies at 1-888-407-4747, if calling from the U.S. or Canada, or 202-501-4444, if calling from overseas.
U.S. Customs Restrictions – What You Cannot Bring Back With You

Some items may not be brought into the U.S., or may only be brought in under certain restrictions. For information on U.S. customs regulations and procedures, see the Customs and Border Protection booklet “Know Before You Go,” available at http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg.

Customs and Border Patrol Top 10 Travelers Tips

1. Have all required travel documents for the countries you are visiting, as well as identification for re-entry to the U.S.
2. Declare everything you are bringing in from abroad, even if you bought it in a duty-free shop. This merchandise is also subject to U.S. duty fees and other restrictions.
3. Be cautious when buying something from a street vendor. Keep in mind that the merchandise may be counterfeit and/or unsafe and you might have to surrender it to U.S. Customs and Border Protection when you get home.
4. Know that the things bought abroad for personal use or as gifts are eligible for duty exemptions. If you are bringing them back for resale, they are not.
5. Know the difference between prohibited merchandise (such as ivory, tortoise shell products, absinthe, and counterfeit items) and restricted merchandise.
6. Be aware that many foreign-made medications are not FDA-approved, and you cannot bring them into the U.S. Also, when traveling abroad, bring only the amount of medication you will need during the trip.
7. Do not bring any Cuban-made products into the U.S., not matter where you purchased them.
8. Do not bring any food into the U.S. without first checking to see if it is permitted. Also, any and all live birds and bird products, whether for personal or commercial use, may be restricted and/or quarantined.
9. Understand that CBP officers can inspect you and your belongings without a warrant. This may include your luggage, vehicle, and personal searches, and is meant to enforce our laws as well as protect legitimate travelers.
10. Read our helpful brochure, “Know Before You Go,” before traveling. Print copies may be requested online, or view the web version at www.cpg.gov under the Travel section.
**Country Overview**

Mexico is a Spanish-speaking country about three times the size of Texas, consisting of 31 states and one federal district. The capital is Mexico City. Mexico has a rapidly developing economy, ranked by the World Bank as the twelfth largest in the world. The climate ranges from tropical to desert, and the terrain consists of coastal lowlands, central high plateaus, and mountains of up to 18,000 feet.

Many cities throughout Mexico are popular tourist destinations for U.S. citizens. Travelers should note that location-specific information contained below is not confined solely to those cities, but can reflect conditions throughout Mexico. Although the majority of visitors to Mexico thoroughly enjoy their stay, a small number experience difficulties and serious inconveniences.

Across Mexico, in villages and cities, in mountains, tropical coasts, and jungle settings, enchanting surprises await travelers. These might take the form of a fantastic small-town festival, delightful dining in a memorable restaurant, or even a stretch of road through heavenly countryside. This section lists our favorites, to which you will have the pleasure of adding your own discoveries.

**Banking**

**Banking hours** - Bank hours are Monday through Friday from 9 or 9:30am to anywhere between 3 and 7pm. Increasingly, banks open on Saturday for at least a half-day.

**Currency** – Mexico’s currency is the Mexican Peso. There are one hundred Mexican cents (centavos) to every Peso. The symbol of the Mexican Peso is $. To distinguish this from the Dollar, you sometimes see it presented as MX$ or e.g. $100 MN. The MN stands for Moneda Nacional, or National Currency. Mexican Bank notes are printed in denominations of 20, 50, 100, 200, 500 and 1000 pesos. The most commonly used are the 50, 100, and 200 peso notes.
Communication

Language -- Spanish is the official language in Mexico. English is spoken and understood to some degree in most tourist areas. Mexicans are very accommodating with foreigners who try to speak Spanish, even in broken sentences. See Appendix B for a glossary of simple phrases for expressing basic needs.

Internet -- In large cities and resort areas, most hotels now offer business centers or some area with Internet access. You will also find cybercafes in destinations that are popular with expats and business travelers. Even in remote spots, Internet access is common.

Postal Service -- Postage for a postcard or letter is 8 pesos; it may arrive anywhere from 1 to 6 weeks later. The price for registered letters and packages depends on the weight, and unreliable delivery time can take 2 to 6 weeks. The recommended way to send a package or important mail is through FedEx, DHL, UPS, or another reputable international mail service.

Telephone -- The international access code for Mexico is +52. The outgoing code is 00 followed by the relevant country code (e.g. 001 for North America). City/area codes are in use, e.g. (0)55 for Mexico City, (0)744 for Acapulco and (0)998 for Cancun. Some US long-distance phone companies have access numbers, which can be dialed in order to use your phone card - calls are usually cheaper than direct-dialed calls from a hotel room. If calling internationally from a phone booth only use the official TelMex phone booths, as all others charge very high fees. GSM 1900 mobile networks cover most of the country.

Documents Needed
All Americans traveling by air outside the United States are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. This requirement will be extended to sea travel (except closed loop cruises), including ferry service, by the summer of 2009. Until then, U.S. citizens traveling by sea must have government-issued photo identification and a document showing their U.S. citizenship (for example, a birth certificate or certificate of nationalization), or other WHTI compliant document such as a passport card for entry or re-entry to the U.S. Sea travelers should also check with their cruise line and countries of destination for any foreign entry requirements.

Electricity
The electrical system in Mexico is 110 volts AC (60 cycles), as in the United States and Canada. In reality, however, it may cycle more slowly and overheat your appliances. To compensate, select a medium or low speed on hair dryers. Many older hotels still have electrical outlets for flat two-prong plugs; you will need an adapter for any plug with an enlarged end on one prong
or with three prongs. Many better hotels have three-hole outlets (trifásicos in Spanish). Those that do not may have loan adapters, but to be sure, it is always better to carry your own.

**Emergencies**

**Emergencies** -- In case of emergency, dial tel. 060 from any phone within Mexico. The 24-hour Tourist Help Line in Mexico City is tel. 01-800/987-8224 or 55/5089-7500, or you can now simply dial 078. The operators do not always speak English, but they are always willing to help. The tourist legal assistance office (Procuraduría del Turista) in Mexico City (tel. 55/5625-8153 or 8154) always has an English speaker available. Though the phones are frequently busy, they operate 24 hours.

**Embassies & Consulates** -- U.S. citizens living or traveling in Mexico for more than one day are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy or nearest U.S. consulate through the State Department’s travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Mexico. U.S. citizens without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy or nearest U.S. Consulate. By registering, U.S. citizens make it easier for the Embassy or consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located in Mexico City at Paseo de la Reforma 305, Colonia Cuauhtemoc; telephone from the United States: 011-52-55-5080-2000; telephone within Mexico City: 5080-2000; telephone long distance within Mexico 01-55-5080-2000. You may also contact the Embassy by e-mail at: ccs@usembassy.net.mx. The Embassy's web page is http://mexico.usembassy.gov/eng/main.html.

In addition to the Embassy, there are several United States Consulates and Consular Agencies located throughout Mexico:

**CONSULATES:**

- **Ciudad Juarez:** Avenida Lopez Mateos 924-N; telephone (52)(656) 611-3000.
- **Guadalajara:** Progreso 175, Col. Americana; telephone (52)(333) 268-2100.
- **Hermosillo:** Calle Monterrey 141 Poniente, Col. Esqueda; telephone (52)(662) 289-3500.
- **Matamoros:** Avenida Primera 2002 y Azaleas; telephone (52)(868) 812-4402.
- **Merida:** Calle 60 No. 338 K x 29 y 31, Col. Alcala Martin; telephone (52)(999) 942-5700.
- **Monterrey:** Avenida Constitucion 411 Poniente; telephone (52)(818) 345-2120.
- **Nogales:** Calle San Jose, Fraccionamiento “Los Alamos”; telephone (52)(631) 311-8150.
- **Nuevo Laredo:** Calle Allende 3330, Col. Jardin; telephone (52)(867) 714-0512.
- **Tijuana:** Avenida Tapachula 96, Col. Hipodromo; telephone (52)(664) 622-7400.

**CONSULAR AGENCIES:**
Acapulco: Hotel Continental Emporio, Costera Miguel Aleman 121 - Local 14; telephone (52)(744) 484-0300 or (52)(744) 469-0556.

Cabo San Lucas: Blvd. Marina Local C-4, Plaza Nautica, Col. Centro; telephone (52)(624) 143-3566.

Cancun: Plaza Caracol Two, Second Level, No. 320-323, Boulevard Kukulkan, Km. 8.5, Zona Hotelera; telephone (52)(998) 883-0272.

Ciudad Acuna: Alfonso Gonzalez Ocampo # 305, Col. Centro; telephone (52)(877) 772-8179.

Cozumel: Plaza Villa Mar en El Centro, Plaza Principal, (Parque Juárez between Melgar and 5th Ave.) 2nd floor, Locales #8 and 9; telephone (52)(987) 872-4574.

Ixtapa/Zihuatanejo: Hotel Fontan, Blvd. Ixtapa; telephone (52)(755) 553-2100.

Mazatlan: Hotel Playa Mazatlán, Playa Gaviotas #202, Zona Dorada; telephone (52)(669) 916-5889.

Oaxaca: Macedonio Alcala No. 407, Interior 20; telephone (52)(951) 514-3054 (52) or (951) 516-2853.

Piedras Negras: Abasolo 211, Local #3, Col. Centro; telephone (52)(878) 782-5586 or (878) 782-8664.

Puerto Vallarta: Paradise Village Plaza, Paseo de los Cocoteros #1, Local #4, Interior #17, Nuevo Vallarta; telephone (52)(322) 222-0069.

Reynosa: Calle Monterrey #390, Esq. Sinaloa, Col. Rodríguez; telephone: (52)(899) 923-9331


San Miguel de Allende: Dr. Hernandez Macias #72; telephone (52)(415) 152-2357.

Hospitals - Adequate medical care can be found in major cities. Excellent health facilities are available in Mexico City, but training and availability of emergency responders may be below U.S. standards. Care in more remote areas is limited. Standards of medical training, patient care and business practices vary greatly among medical facilities in beach resorts throughout Mexico. In recent years, some U.S. citizens have complained that certain health-care facilities in beach resorts have taken advantage of them by overcharging or providing unnecessary medical care. Elective medical procedures may be less expensive than in the United States. However, visitors are cautioned that facilities may lack access to sufficient emergency support. The U.S. Embassy encourages visitors to obtain as much information about the facility and the medical personnel as possible when considering surgical or other procedures. In addition to other publicly available information, U.S. citizens may consult the U.S. Embassy’s web site for a list of doctors in Mexico City at http://mexico.usembassy.gov/eng/eacs_doctors.html and a list of hospitals in Mexico City at http://mexico.usembassy.gov/eng/eacs_hospitals.html or contact the U.S. Embassy, U.S. consulate, or consular agency prior to seeking non-emergency medical attention. The U.S. Embassy, U.S. consulates, and consular agencies maintain lists of reputable doctors and medical facilities that are available to assist U.S. citizens in need of medical care.
Legal Aid - International Legal Defense Counsel, 111 S. 15th St., 24th floor, Packard Building, Philadelphia, PA 19102 (tel. 215/977-9982), is a law firm specializing in legal difficulties of Americans abroad.

Pharmacies/Drug Stores Drugstores -- Farmacias (pharmacies) will sell you just about anything, with or without a prescription. Most pharmacies are open Monday through Saturday from 8am to 8pm. The major resort areas generally have one or two 24-hour pharmacies. Pharmacies take turns staying open during off hours; if you are in a smaller town and need to buy medicine during off hours, ask for the farmacia de turno.

Police – To call the police, dial 060. In Mexico City, police are to be suspected as frequently as they are to be trusted; however, you will find many who are quite honest and helpful. In the rest of the country, especially in the tourist areas, most are very protective of international visitors. Several cities, including Puerto Vallarta, Mazatlán, Cancún, and Acapulco, have a special corps of English-speaking Tourist Police to assist with directions, guidance, and more.

Holidays
The official holidays of Mexico are as follows:

- January 1 – New Year’s Day
- February 4 – Constitution Day Holiday
- March 17 – Benito Juarez Day
- March and/or April - Maudy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter
- May 1 – Labor Day
- May 5 – Battle of Puebla Day
- May 10 – Mother’s Day
- September 16 – Independence Day
- November 2 – All Souls’ Day
- November 17 – Revolution Day Holiday
- December 12 – Lady of Guadalupe Day
- December 25 – Christmas Day

Safety
Sporadic outbursts of politically motivated violence occur from time to time in certain areas of the country, particularly in the southern states of Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca.

Demonstrations: The Mexican Constitution prohibits political activities by foreigners, and such actions may result in detention and/or deportation. Travelers should avoid political demonstrations and other activities that might be deemed political by the Mexican authorities. Even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and escalate into violence. U.S. citizens are urged to avoid the areas of demonstrations, and to exercise caution if in the vicinity of any protests.
Chiapas: The Department of State recommends U.S. citizens traveling to the southern state of Chiapas remain cautious at all times. Armed rebels and armed civilian groups are present in some areas of the state, and there is often no effective law enforcement or police protection. Violent criminal gang activity along the state’s southern border – mostly aimed at illegal migrants – continues to be a concern. U.S. citizens traveling to Chiapas are encouraged to contact the U.S. Embassy for further security information prior to traveling to the region.

Crime in Mexico continues at high levels, and it is often violent, especially in Mexico City, Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez, Nuevo Laredo, Monterrey, Acapulco, and the state of Sinaloa. Other metropolitan areas have lower, but still serious, levels of crime. Low apprehension and conviction rates of criminals contribute to the high crime rate. U.S. citizen victims of crime in Mexico are encouraged to report the incident to the nearest police headquarters and to the nearest U.S. consular office.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at [http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm](http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm).

**Personal Property:** Travelers should always leave valuables and irreplaceable items in a safe place, or not bring them at all. All visitors are encouraged to make use of hotel safes when available, avoid wearing obviously expensive jewelry or designer clothing, and carry only the cash or credit cards that will be needed on each outing. There are a significant number of pickpocket, purse snatching, and hotel-room theft incidents. Public transportation is a particularly popular place for pickpockets. When renting a vehicle, ensure that advertisements or labels for the rental agency are not prominently displayed on the vehicle. Avoid leaving valuables such as identification, passport and irreplaceable property in rental vehicles, even when locked.

A number of Americans have been arrested for passing on counterfeit currency they had earlier received in change. If you receive what you believe to be a counterfeit bank note, bring it to the attention of Mexican law enforcement.

**Personal Safety:** Visitors should be aware of their surroundings at all times, even when in areas generally considered safe. Women traveling alone are especially vulnerable and should exercise caution, particularly at night. Victims, who are almost always unaccompanied, have been raped, robbed of personal property, or abducted and then held while their credit cards were used at various businesses and Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs). U.S. citizens should be
very cautious in general when using ATMs in Mexico. If an ATM must be used, it should be accessed only during the business day at large protected facilities (preferably inside commercial establishments, rather than at glass-enclosed, highly visible ATMs on streets). U.S. and Mexican citizens are sometimes accosted on the street and forced to withdraw money from their accounts using their ATM cards.

Kidnapping, including the kidnapping of non-Mexicans, continues at alarming rates. So-called express kidnappings, an attempt to get quick cash in exchange for the release of an individual, have occurred in almost all the large cities in Mexico and appear to target not only the wealthy, but also the middle class. U.S. businesses with offices in Mexico or concerned U.S. citizens may contact the U.S. Embassy or any U.S. consulate to discuss precautions they should take.

Criminal assaults occur on highways throughout Mexico; travelers should exercise extreme caution at all times, avoid traveling at night, and may wish to use toll (“cuota”) roads rather than the less secure “free” (“libre”) roads whenever possible. Always keep your car doors locked and your windows up while driving, whether on the highway or in town. When in heavy traffic or when stopped in traffic, leave enough room between vehicles to maneuver and escape, if necessary. In addition, U.S. citizens should not hitchhike with, accept rides from or offer rides to, strangers anywhere in Mexico. Tourists should not hike alone in backcountry areas, nor walk alone on lightly-frequented beaches, ruins or trails.

**Street Crime:** Armed street crime is a serious problem in all of the major cities. Some bars and nightclubs, especially in resort cities such as Cancun, Cabo San Lucas, Mazatlan, Acapulco, and Tijuana, can be havens for drug dealers and petty criminals. Some establishments may contaminate or drug drinks to gain control over the patron.

All bus travel should be during daylight hours and on first-class conveyances. Although there have been several reports of bus hijackings and robberies on toll roads, buses on toll roads have a markedly lower rate of incidents than buses (second- and third-class) that travel the less secure "free" highways. The Embassy advises caution when traveling by bus from Acapulco toward Ixtapa or Huatulco. Although the police have made some progress in bringing this problem under control, armed robberies of entire busloads of passengers still occur.

**Harassment/Extortion:** In some instances, Americans have become victims of harassment, mistreatment and extortion by Mexican law enforcement and other officials. Mexican authorities have cooperated in investigating such cases, but one must have the officer's name, badge number, and patrol car number to pursue a complaint effectively. Please note this information if you ever have a problem with police or other officials. In addition, tourists should be wary of persons representing themselves as police officers or other officials. When in doubt, ask for identification. Be
aware that offering a bribe to a public official to avoid a ticket or other penalty is a crime in Mexico.

It is increasingly common for extortionists to call prospective victims on the telephone, often posing as law enforcement or other officials, and demand payments in return for the release of an arrested family member, or to forestall a kidnapping. Prison inmates using smuggled cellular phones often place these calls. Persons receiving such calls should be extremely skeptical since most such demands or threats are baseless, and should contact the U.S. Embassy or closest U.S. consulate, or the Department of State for assistance.

**Time Zone**

Central Time prevails throughout most of Mexico. The states of Sonora, Sinaloa, and parts of Nayarit are on Mountain Time. The state of Baja California Norte is on Pacific Time, but Baja California Sur is on Mountain Time. All of Mexico observes daylight saving time from the first Sunday in April to the last Sunday in October.

**Transportation**

**Bus** - Mexico has a good road and bus network, and comfortable, frequent, reasonably priced bus services connect all cities. Most cities and towns have one main bus terminal where all long-distance buses arrive and depart. It may be called the Terminal de Autobuses, Central de Autobuses, Central Camionera or simply La Central (not to be confused with el centro, the city center!) If there is no single main terminal, different bus companies will have separate terminals scattered around town.

Baggage is safe if stowed in the bus's baggage hold, but get a receipt for it when you hand it over. Keep your most valuable documents (passport, money etc) in the cabin with you, and keep them closely protected. Highway robbery happens very occasionally. The risk is higher at night, on isolated stretches of highway far from cities, and in second-class buses.

**Car** - Driving in Mexico is not as easy as it is north of the border, and rentals are more expensive, but having your own vehicle gives you maximum flexibility and freedom.

Drivers should know some Spanish and have basic mechanical knowledge, reserves of patience and access to extra cash for emergencies. Good makes of car to take to Mexico are Volkswagen, Nissan, General Motors and Ford, which have plants in Mexico and dealers in most big towns. Very big cars are unwieldy on narrow roads and use a lot of gasoline.

**Taxi** - Taxis are common in towns and cities, and surprisingly economical. If a taxi has a meter, ask the driver if it's working: ¿Funciona el taxímetro? If it's not, or if the taxi doesn't have a meter, establish the price of the ride before getting in (this may involve a bit of haggling).
Water
In many areas in Mexico, tap water is unsafe and should be avoided. Bottled water and beverages are safe although visitors should be aware that many restaurants and hotels serve tap water unless bottled water is specifically requested. Ice may also come from tap water and should be used with caution. Visitors should exercise caution when buying food or beverages from street vendors.

The quality of water along some beaches in or near Acapulco or other large coastal communities may be unsafe for swimming because of contamination. Swimming in contaminated water may cause diarrhea and/or other illnesses. Mexican government agencies monitor water quality in public beach areas but their standards and sampling techniques may differ from those in the United States.

Academic System
Structure of School System
Primary
Type of school providing this education: Escuela Primaria
Length of program in years: 6
Age level from: 6 to 12
Certificate/diploma awarded: Certificado de Primaria

General Secondary
Type of school providing this education: Secundaria General
Length of program in years: 3
Age level from: 12 to 16
Certificate/diploma awarded: Certificado de Secundaria General

Technical Secondary
Type of school providing this education: Telesecundaria, Secundaria técnica
Length of program in years: 3
Age level from: 12 to 15
Certificate/diploma awarded: Certificado de Secundaria

Higher Secondary
Type of school providing this education: Educación media superior
Length of program in years: 3
Age level from: 16 to 19
Certificate/diploma awarded: Certificado de Bachillerato general, Bachillerato tecnológico,
Educación profesional técnica

**Specialized Secondary**
Type of school providing this education: Secundaria Para Trabajadores
Length of program in years: 3
Certificate/diploma awarded: Certificado de Secundaria

**Specialized Secondary**
Type of school providing this education: Para adultos
Length of program in years: 3
Certificate/diploma awarded: Certificado or Diploma

**Polytechnical**
Type of school providing this education: Capacitación para el Trabajo
Certificate/diploma awarded: Certificado or Diploma

**National Institute for Adult Education**
The institute is responsible for teaching reading and writing to adults and also offers special courses for adults wishing to obtain a certificate of primary or secondary.

**K-12**
Education is compulsory from 6 to 15 years of age. The third year of pre-school education (age 5) is planned to become compulsory. Primary education lasts for six years leading to the Certificado de Primaria. Secondary education is divided into: general secondary, secondary education for workers, tele-secondary education, technical secondary and open education. Secondary education lasts for three years from ages 13 to 15 and is offered to pupils who have completed primary education. Secondary education for workers is offered to pupils of 15 and more who have completed primary education. Secondary education lasts for three years and leads to the Bachillerato general or the Bachillerato tecnológico.

**Higher Education**
The higher education system is made up of 1,892 institutions which, being autonomous or having received official recognition by federal or state authorities, are part of the so called National Education System. Of those, 713 are public and 1,179 are private institutions with different profiles. As described below, the higher education institutions can be classified in the following subsets.

PUBLIC FEDERAL INSTITUTIONS: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (UAM), Universidad Pedagógica Nacional (UPN) and
Instituto Politécnico Nacional (IPN) make up this subset. UPN and IPN are part of the Ministry of Public Education of the Federal Government. All four institutions carry out teaching, research and extension services.

PUBLIC STATE UNIVERSITIES: This subset integrates 46 institutions (only the main campuses are counted), distributed over the 31 states that make up the Federal Republic. Of them, 78% are autonomous institutions, and 50% also provide education at the upper secondary level. The state public universities are, as opposed to the federal institutions, part of the local state governments and, like them, carry out teaching, research and extension services.

PUBLIC TECHNOLOGICAL INSTITUTES: This subsystem comprises 211 institutes and 6 specialized centers. Of them, 110 are federal institutions scattered over the 31 states, and 107 are state technological institutes located in 22 states. Classified by vocation and orientation, 184 are related to industry, 20 to agriculture and livestock, 6 to marine science and one to forestry. The National Centre for Research and Technological Development, the Interdisciplinary Centre for Research and Teaching in Technical Education and 4 regional Centers for the Enhancement and Development of Equipment comprise the 6 specialized centers. This institutions are coordinated by the Ministry of Public Education through the Undersecretary of Higher Education.

PUBLIC TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITIES: This subsystem comprises 60 institutions in 26 states offering two-year intensive higher education leading to an associate degree. The Technological Universities are created on the Federal government's initiative but as part of the local state governments and they carry out teaching, applied research as well as extension and technological services. Growth of the public system has been mainly concentrated on this type of universities.

PUBLIC POLYTECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES: Only recently established by a federal government's initiative (2002), this subsystem has 18 local state-created universities distributed in 21 states, whose characteristic is the relevance of their provision to the aim of increasing the accessibility to public higher education institutions.

PUBLIC INTERCULTURAL BILINGUAL UNIVERSITIES: Also created at the Federal Government's initiative, this subset comprises 4 local state created universities in Chiapas, Mexico, Guerrero and Tabasco (all states with a high density of indigenous populations). It must be noted that 20% of their students are not indigenous. When in full operation, each intercultural university will have two to three thousands students.

TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGES: Distributed all over the Republic, they include 433 institutions,
249 of which are public. Some of them are part of the Ministry of Public Education and others have been created by the local state authorities. In both, the syllabus is defined by the Federal government and corresponds to licenciatura programs.

PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS: They include 995 institutions in all states from universities to colleges. They are mainly non-denominational, although a few very prestigious ones are. Most of them are non-profit organizations.

PUBLIC RESEARCH CENTERS: 27 Research Centers distributed all over the country carry out mainly R&D activities but are also responsible for the provision of graduate research oriented programs, although some also offer Licenciaturas. This subset is coordinated by the National Council for Science and Technology (CONACYT) which establishes the guidelines and allocates the funds for their operation.

OTHER: There are other public higher education institutions, autonomous or not, which are not included in the afore mentioned subsets either because they are coordinated by other Ministries than the Ministry of Public Education or because they have been created by the local state governments and operate without the participation of or the allocation of funds by the Ministry of Public Education. Some are very prestigious (e.g. Colegio de México, Centro de Investigación y Estudios Avanzados or Universidad Chapingo).

Professor/Student Relationship
For a long time, education in Mexico was considered passive; the teacher would simply impose the information to the student. The teacher was only a facilitator driving the learning environment. Currently, the new approach is more active. The student is more receptive, completing research or conducting “field” works and tests that help enrich the content of the academic process.

The personal teacher/student relationship is very respectful. In rare occasions, more advanced students are aggressive with those teachers who have not mastered the subject or fail to maintain the group’s interest in the subject. The conducting of a lecture has to be serious, yet there has to be a level of comfort.

The teacher should provide clear objectives, goals, and expectations. In order to create an atmosphere of mutual learning, the teacher should be at the same level as the student, while maintaining leadership.

Teacher Education
Training of pre-primary and primary/basic schoolteachers - Courses leading to a first
degree last for four to six years at one of the teacher training colleges (Escuela Normal). Students must hold the Bachillerato. They obtain the title of Licenciado en Educación Preescolar, en Educación Primaria and in Educación Secundaria.

**Training of secondary school teachers** - Secondary school teachers hold a Licenciatura delivered by a teacher training college or a university. Some teachers qualify through in-service training.

**Training of higher education teachers** - Since 1970, there have been programs that train or upgrade teachers. Scholarships are offered to study for a Maestría or a Doctorado. Particularly as from 1996, the Faculty Enhancement Program (PROMEP) has worked toward the adoption of international standards for the recruitment of academic staff by the HE institutions. After 10 years of operation, the proportion of full time academics in public state universities holding a Licenciatura has decreased from 63% to 28.5% and the number with doctorates has almost tripled from 8% to 22%.

**Etiquette**
The official name of Mexico, Estados Unidos Mexicanos, translates to “The United States of Mexico.” Referring to the United States of America as simply “The United States” can cause confusion. The polite Mexican term for a citizen of the United States of America is norteamericano.

**Cultural Orientation**
In Mexico, information is readily accepted for purposes of discussion, but little movement in attitude is seen. Mexicans tend to become personally involved in each situation and look at particulars rather than initially using a rule or law to solve problems. Mexicans highly value the individual dignity of a person, regardless of social standing or material wealth. It is important not to pull rank, publicly criticize anyone, or do anything that will cause an individual to be humiliated.

**Business Practices**
The family is the single most important institution in Mexico. Because of this nepotism is an accepted practice. Mexican executives generally put a higher importance on the best interest of their families than on their place of employment. Mexicans find continued, intense eye contact to be aggressive and threatening. Mexican business executives expect intermittent eye contact.

For business, men should wear a conservative dark suit and tie; women should wear a suit, pantsuit or dress.

Mexican secretaries expect gifts from foreign businesspeople. A government secretary who performs any service for you is generally given a toke gift. For
secretaries in the private sector, a more valuable gift should be given on a return visit.

**Protocol**

Men will shake hands in greeting. Women will often pat each other on the right forearm or shoulder instead of shaking hands. If they are close, they may hug or kiss each other on the cheek. Men may wait for women to initiate a handshake. Be prepared for a hug on the second or third meeting.

Conversations take place at a much closer physical distance than what may be considered comfortable in the United States. Pulling away from your counterpart may be regarded as unfriendly – and your Mexican associate may simply step forward and close up the distance again. Men should avoid putting their hands in their pockets. Hands on the hips indicate a challenge is being made.

**Tipping**

Most service employees in Mexico count on tips for the majority of their income, and this is especially true for bellhops and waiters. Bellhops should receive the equivalent of 50¢ to $1 per bag; waiters generally receive 10% to 15%, depending on the level of service. It is not customary to tip taxi drivers, unless they are hired by the hour or provide touring or other special services.
References


