Important Names & Addresses

In the United States
Learning Abroad Center
University of Minnesota
230 Heller Hall
271 19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55455-0430
Phone: 612.626.9000
Fax: 612.626.8009
Toll Free: 888.700.UOFM
Email: UMabroad@umn.edu
Website: UMabroad.umn.edu

Molly Micheels, Associate Program Director
mollym@umn.edu

Scott Daby, Program Director
daby0005@umn.edu

In case of emergency, you or your friends and family should contact the Learning Abroad Center at 612.626.9000 at any time. If it is after business hours, there will be a recording giving you a number to call. The Learning Abroad Center has someone on call to deal with emergencies and can contact the on-site director if needed.

In Cuernavaca
Cemanahuac Educational Community
San Juan 4
Colonia Las Palmas,
62051 Cuernavaca, Morelos
MEXICO
www.cemanahuac.com

Harriet Guerrero, Director
harriet@cemanahuac.com
Office Phone: 52.777.318.6407
Emergency Number: 52.1.777.120.3526

Office Hours:
Monday–Friday: 9 a.m.–2 p.m.
Saturday: 11 a.m.–1 p.m.

Know Before You Go
Before you leave the country, make sure that you have read and understood the information in your Confirmation Checklist, the Health & Safety Online Orientation (available in your orientation checklist), and the Learning Abroad Center’s policies (UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies). These materials will guide you on a safe and successful learning abroad experience.

Friends and Family Resources
Valuable resources for your friends and family members can be found at UMabroad.umn.edu/parents. Topics such as health and safety, program prices, logistics, and travel are discussed.

Program Health & Safety
Program health and safety information is available at http://global.umn.edu/gosafe/index.html.

Please make copies of this guide to leave with friends and family.
# Introduction

The Study Abroad in Mexico program provides the opportunity to experience the culture of Mexico firsthand while studying the Spanish language. Intensive courses will be with other Americans and are designed to help fulfill your second language requirement and emphasize listening and speaking skills through practice. Language courses are taught consecutively with emphasis placed on oral development. Classes of no more than five students each are small enough to allow students the individual attention that is so helpful with intensive classes. Living with a family will enhance your experience and immerse you in the culture of Mexico. The cultural and social activities organized by the program help you to experience the city and surrounding areas as well as to socialize with Mexican students.

Living in Cuernavaca provides a unique and exciting cultural experience. You will learn new traditions, taste different foods, and begin to master the Spanish language. It is important to prepare yourself for your upcoming experience by reading the enclosed information carefully and by preparing for unexpected differences in the new culture. This handbook addresses academic issues and considerations at your home institution. Take this handbook with you to Mexico because it contains information that will be useful before, during, and after your stay in Cuernavaca. Take into consideration that this handbook is not comprehensive and you are encouraged to read other sources of information available concerning Mexico and Cuernavaca.

You can expect to be challenged by immersion in a different culture and a whole new way of life. Study abroad requires independence and individual initiative. To encourage and guide you, the Learning Abroad Center provides a full range of services from preliminary program advising to assistance with re-entry. As you read through this program guide, do not hesitate to contact the Learning Abroad Center at the University of Minnesota or the study abroad adviser at your institution with any questions you may have.

¡Buen Viaje!
Preparation & Planning

Documents

Passport
A valid US passport is required to enter Mexico. Apply for your passport if you have not done so already. Your passport must be valid for the duration of your stay abroad. If it is due to expire within this period, you should renew your passport before departure.

If your passport is lost or stolen while in Mexico, notify the on-site staff and contact the US embassy:

Embajada de Estados Unidos
Paseo de la Reforma 305
Col. Cuauhtemoc
06500 Mexico, D.F
Phone: (01-55) 5080-2000

Visa
US citizens are not required to have a visa to enter Mexico. A student visa is not required for participation on this program.

Power of Attorney
We strongly encourage you to designate someone as your Power of Attorney while you are abroad. Your Power of Attorney can act as your legal representative in a number of situations. Review the information on the website at: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies/finances/powerofattorney and upload a copy to your confirmation checklist.

Packing
Remember to pack lightly and take versatile clothing that requires minimal care. In Cuernavaca, you should prepare for warm weather during the day and cooler, fall-like evenings. It's a good idea to dress in layers. Although November–April is considered to be the dry season, you should still be prepared for rain and bring along some warmer clothes. Refer to the climate charts later in the Geography & Climate section for more weather information. Mexican men typically do not wear shorts, but males on this program often do. Mexican women wear shorts, and women on the program are free to do so. Keep in mind that dressing more conservatively might help you avoid unwanted attention. Use your own judgment regarding what you feel most comfortable wearing. It is recommended that you use what the Mexican people wear as a guide for how you should dress. Eveningwear for women in Mexico tends to be more exaggerated and dressy than in the US.

We recommend that you check one suitcase and bring a carry-on bag with essential and expensive items such as any medication, electronic items, an extra set of clothes in case your luggage is lost or delayed, your arrival instructions, and a copy of this program handbook with important phone numbers.

It's a good idea to check with your airline about baggage allowance and weight restrictions. Also, be sure to leave some space in your luggage for things you want to bring home from Mexico.

On-site staff also asks students to bring a bottle of children's vitamins to donate to the VAMOS program if at all possible. VAMOS is an organization that works with mothers and children in the Cuernavaca area.

A packing list is included in the appendix of this program handbook.

Electricity
Mexico uses the same voltage as the US, so you will not have to bring along converters for your hair dryers, curling irons, and so on. The plug type is also the same as in the US; no adapter is required.

Health & Safety

Health
All participants are required to complete the Health Information sheet located in your confirmation materials. This information is used to advise the on-site director and the Learning Abroad Center and assist in making any necessary preparations. If there is any further information regarding your health that you would like to share with the program staff, please contact the Learning Abroad Center.

Bring all necessary prescription medications and vitamins with you. They should be stored in the original containers with a copy of the prescription. If you bring a large quantity with you, you should also have a statement from your physician explaining the purpose of the medication. Keep in mind that it is illegal to ship medication overseas, and any packages that are held at customs abroad will require payment of a high import tax before they are released. Bring all necessary medication (including such items as birth control) with you to your study abroad site.

In addition to following Center for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov) recommendations on immunizations, some basic health precautions are advised. First of all, you should eat and drink lightly for several days after you arrive until your system has had a chance to adjust to changes in climate and food. Always ask whether or not the water is safe to drink. Drink beverages without ice or boiled drinks such as coffee or tea. If you want drinking water, ask for bottled water or agua purificada. Avoid unpeeled fruits and vegetables.
and any raw food unless well washed in purified water. Avoid food from roadside stands and market vendors or from any restaurant that doesn't appear to be scrupulously clean.

Even if you take these precautions, you can expect to get diarrhea or minor intestinal upsets. Consider packing a bottle of Pepto-Bismol or something similar. Most drug stores in Mexico will have an appropriate remedy. If your symptoms are severe or persist for more than a few days, notify your host family and/or Cemanahuac staff. They can arrange a doctor’s appointment and can accompany you.

Cuernavaca is at a high altitude, which may cause minor headaches and tiredness initially. Students generally adapt within several days. The altitude and sun may also cause dehydration, so drink plenty of water throughout the day.

**Health Insurance**

All students enrolled at the University of Minnesota are required to have US health insurance. This includes students registered for education abroad. For more details and specific process information for students with University of Minnesota Student Health Insurance through the Student Health Benefits Office, visit the Learning Abroad Center’s US Insurance webpage: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance/ushealthinsurancerequirement](http://www.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance/ushealthinsurancerequirement).

In addition to your US health insurance, the University has contracted with Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI) to provide comprehensive international travel, health, and security insurance. This coverage is mandatory for all students and included in the program fee. You are covered by CISI only for the dates of the program. If you plan to travel before or after your program you should extend your CISI coverage or purchase your own insurance.

CISI does not include any preventive care, and individuals are advised to consult their medical providers for any check-ups or preventive care prior to departure.

Your CISI card and insurance policy will be emailed directly to you. Carry the card with you at all times. If you have any questions or need additional information about CISI, visit the Learning Abroad Center’s insurance webpage: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance](http://www.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance).

**Safety**

The Mexico program has been approved by the University of Minnesota’s International Travel Risk Assessment and Advisory Committee (ITRAAC) despite the current travel warning issued by the US Department of State. See [travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_5815.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_5815.html). Approval was granted based upon the following conditions and restrictions. Students on the Mexico program are expected to abide by these guidelines.

All students on the program must:

- Register at the US embassy at [https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui](https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui). This will be done for you by the Learning Abroad Center.
- Carry a cellphone for the duration of their program and provide their cell phone number to both the on-site staff and the Learning Abroad Center.
- Not travel to any location listed in the Travel Warning as a location where Americans should not travel or defer non-essential travel (see additional restrictions below).
- Follow all US State Department Warden Updates as well as University of Minnesota, on-site staff, host family, local police, and local Department of Public Safety recommendations including, but not limited to, those indicating Americans should avoid areas of the city, country, or regions for a period of time or for the term of the program.
- Exercise a high degree of caution around restaurants, businesses (hotels, theaters, bus stations, and schools), places of worship and other places associated with US interests or where there are known risks related to drug related violence.
- Practice good personal security when moving about and adhere to local cultural expectations of behavior and dress.
- Avoid walking or traveling alone under any circumstance but especially after dark.
- Avoid carrying large sums of cash or wearing expensive jewelry.
- Be aware of and comply with the university policies regarding education abroad.

Students are encouraged to stay updated about security issues through the US State Department’s website at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).

Cuernavaca is a large, diverse city comprised of people from various economic backgrounds. You should adopt a more cautious attitude when you are out and about, as you would in any larger city. In particular, you should never walk alone at night, and remain vigilant when carrying anything valuable—including your purse/wallet, passport and any electronic devices.

Petty theft and pick pocketing are perhaps the most common crime you may encounter. Be careful with your money, especially in bus stations and riding on the bus. Also take care in the crowded markets. In public places purses should be tucked under your arm or carried in front of your hip, and wallets should be carried in your front pocket. Keep valuables such as cameras, phones, and other electronics in an inconspicuous place close to your body. You will need to carry cash, since credit cards are not as commonly accepted as in the US. However, carry only the amount you will need for the day. Likewise, carry your credit/debit cards only on days you will need them.
The police in Mexico have a reputation of being corrupt. While this is not true of all police, it is definitely true of enough of them to warrant giving a warning to students. There have been reported cases of our own students being offered drugs such as marijuana, then discovering that they are faced with a police officer looking for arrests in hopes of receiving a bribe.

The Learning Abroad Center has a strong “no tolerance” policy on drug use in Mexico. If you use drugs while there, you will be expelled from the program, all credit will be lost, and there will be no refund of any kind. It is extremely dangerous for an American in Mexico to be caught with drugs. If you are at a party where drugs are being used you should leave immediately.

Taxis

Use caution when taking taxis. Not all taxis are legitimate. If possible, call a taxi in advance instead of hailing one. Also, it’s wise to agree upon a fare before getting into a cab. Cemanahuc will provide you with a list of radio taxis at orientation. Always sit in the back of a taxi and not in the front. If a driver says that his back doors are not working, get another taxi. It is best, especially for women, to travel with someone when taking a taxi at night. More information will be given during the on-site orientation.

Friends and Family Resources

Valuable resources for your friends and family members can be found at [UMabroad.umn.edu/parents](https://UMabroad.umn.edu/parents). Topics such as health and safety, program prices, logistics, and travel are discussed.

Communicating with Your Family

You may not be able to call home immediately upon arrival because this may be too inconvenient, complex, or difficult. Please share this reality with your family before departure.

During your time abroad, you will certainly experience challenging moments. While you’ll certainly want to communicate with family and friends about this, we strongly encourage you to reach out to your host family and on-site staff first. They are best suited to provide immediate assistance.

Relationships

For many of you, your stay in Mexico will be your first time out of the US. Some of you may have the opportunity to make some very good Mexican friends. These types of strong friendships are encouraged and can lead to future exchanges between you and your newfound friends. Nevertheless, please keep a few words of caution in mind.

Be careful of persons wanting to make your acquaintance very quickly because they may have an ulterior motive. Meet people in public places, preferably with a friend or two of yours. Do not give out your host family’s phone number or address freely, since this can lead to problems for you and your host family as well. Agree to meet the person at a specific time and place.

Entering into a relationship abroad should be approached with the same precautions as at home. The idea of a once-in-a-lifetime Latin romance can be tempting, but you should consider any relationship carefully. There are different cultural values and rules regarding dating and relationships. Proceed cautiously, realizing that you are only in the country for a short period of time.

Some female participants are flattered by the masculine attention that they receive in a Hispanic culture like the one found in Mexico. However, you should proceed with caution with any relationship and only enter into a close relationship after knowing the partner for a sustained period of time. American women are often stereotyped as being an easy sexual partner and each year women find themselves in difficult situations because they were not cautious.

Do NOT go to the home or apartment of someone you do not know well, especially if there is drinking involved. The concept of date rape is almost unheard of in Mexico and the general feeling is that if a female goes home with a man she is willing to sleep with him, regardless of her saying “no.” Keep in mind that you will be judged on your actions, not by what you say. Most date rapes are alcohol-related. Be extremely careful when drinking in Mexico. There have also been reports in many bars of drinks being drugged, so it would be a good idea to ask to have your drink opened while you are watching and do not accept a drink brought to your table and paid for by “an admirer.”

Emergency Procedures

The Learning Abroad Center has worked closely with Cemanahuc to develop contingency plans for various types of emergency situations.

Considerations during Planning

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Issues

Mexico has very strong Catholic roots. More traditional, conservative families may not feel comfortable hosting openly gay students. However, there are other families who are open to hosting LGBT students. If notified in advance, the on-site staff can arrange an appropriate host family.

In general, students should be aware that it is less socially acceptable to be “out” in Mexico than it is in the US. Sexual orientation and sexuality are considered private matters that will likely not come up directly in a host-family conversation. However, Mexican culture is very family-oriented. Questions about family, marriage, and children—which may reveal sexual orientation—are common.

An LGBT community exists in Cuernavaca, and several clubs and bars in town are LGBT-friendly. On-site staff can help students identify LGBT clubs/bars and events. Find more information at [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/identity/glbt](https://UMabroad.umn.edu/students/identity/glbt).
Students of Color
In general, Mexican people are very open about physical appearance. People are commonly referred to by their height (el alto), hair color (la rubia), or body type (el flaco). Likewise, students of color may find that Mexicans refer to them by the color of their skin or perceived national origin in ways that would be considered offensive in the US (e.g., la negra, el chinito). This is a cultural difference that students should be aware of. Malintent should not be assumed. Students with questions or concerns are encouraged to consult the Mexico program team.

Students with Disabilities
Many of the disability accommodations or services that are provided at US universities may be different or unavailable overseas. Being in a new environment can also be stressful, and accommodations that you may not have needed at home may become necessary in an unfamiliar setting.

To learn more about the availability of accommodations on the Mexico program, visit: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/identity/disabilities/checklist.

To request specific accommodation, you must register with disability services and complete the following form: UMabroad.umn.edu/assets/files/PDFs/access/student/AccomReqForm_12.pdf.

Arrival Logistics
The cost of your flight to Mexico is not included in the program fee. A coordinated flight is offered by a Twin Cities travel agency, Village Travel, in consultation with the Learning Abroad Center. While participants are not required to choose this flight, it is designed to offer the option of traveling in the company of other program participants. The coordinated flight is met at the airport in Mexico City by a representative of Cemanahuac. To check on times for the group flight go to www.villageinc.com. Information, booking, and payment are handled directly by Village Travel. If you have not received information about this coordinated flight, please check the website and contact Village Travel immediately.

If you choose to arrange your own flight, you should select a flight that arrives at the same time as the coordinated flight or earlier that same day. We discourage arrival on any date other than the official arrival date.

The Mexico City airport has two terminals. The new terminal, Terminal 2, is connected to the old terminal by a monorail system for passengers. The transfer time is around 5 minutes.

More detailed arrival information will be emailed to you one week prior to the departure date. You should print this information out and carry it with you.

Immigration and Customs
US citizens must obtain a free tourist card (FMM), which you will receive on the plane or upon arrival in the airport. It will be validated by an immigration officer when you go through customs in Mexico. Request a 90-day authorization so that your card is valid for the entire length of your stay (it can be extended for up to 180 days). Keep it safe; you will need it to leave Mexico. It is recommended that you carry a copy of the FMM and your passport and store the original(s) in a safe place. A lost FMM is very time consuming to replace and must be done in Mexico City.

After passing through immigration, you will pick up your luggage and pass through customs. Participants on the coordinated flight will be met outside of customs by a Cemanahuac staff member who will escort you to the bus that will take you to Cuernavaca. If you arrive on a different flight, refer to the arrival instructions you received by email to determine where to meet the group.

Directions to Cemanahuac from Mexico City
Cuernavaca is approximately 1.5-2 hours from Mexico City. A bus from Cemanahuac will meet the coordinated flight at the airport in Mexico City outside of customs. If you are unable to take that bus for whatever reason, there is a convenient and inexpensive shuttle bus service from the Mexico City airport to the Casino de la Selva bus station in Cuernavaca.

Detailed instructions, including photos, are available online at www.cemanahuacspanishschool.com.

Public Bus Transportation
Look for signs in the terminal for public bus service. Different bus lines travel to different locations. You are looking for Autobuses Pullman de Morelos, which travels to Cuernavaca. Purchase a ticket from the Pulman de Morelos bus line. The fare, which must be paid in pesos, is the equivalent of about $14 US dollars. With your ticket in hand, you need to go to street level. Your ticket is for an assigned seat, so be sure you are on time. The buses are very punctual.

Buses leave about every 40 minutes until 11:30 p.m. Visit www.pullman.mx for a more complete schedule.

We discourage students from arriving early to Mexico City. If you have an extenuating circumstance, you must consult with the Learning Abroad Center before purchasing your flight.
Practical & Program Information

On-Site Support
The Study Abroad in Mexico program is based at the Cemanahuac Educational Community, a language school located in the Las Palmas area of Cuernavaca. The staff you will work with at Cemanahuac include Harriet Guerrero (Registrar), Blanca Santana (Teaching Assistant), Hortensia Peralta (Secretary), and Charles Goff (Admissions Coordinator). There are several other staff members at Cemanahuac who you will meet during your time on the program.

The staff at Cemanahuac are friendly and want to make your time in Mexico a success. Although you will get to know many of them, Blanca will be the main University of Minnesota contact to whom you will be introduced upon arrival. She will be the first person to go to if you are having any academic issues.

On-Site Orientation
The bus from Mexico City to Cuernavaca will drop you off directly at the school. The families will all be there ready to take you “home.” The first day you are usually able to rest. The following day you will have an orientation at the school. Your host family will either show you how to ride the bus to arrive at the school or they will take you. You will receive a tour of the city either during the orientation or during the first weeks of the program. You will also receive information on academics, living in Mexico, travel, safety, and many other important issues. Use extra caution during the first few days of the program until after you have completed on-site orientation and are more familiar with Cuernavaca.

Accommodations
All students will live with a local host family. Students will share a room with another student, unless they have requested a single room and paid the additional cost. Families will often host more than two students at a time. Students on the program may be placed in housing with students from other university programs.

Staying with a family can be the highlight of your time in Mexico. The family is just as interested in learning about you as you are in learning about them. They may introduce you to their friends and relatives. This is a wonderful opportunity to get to know Mexico and its people; make the most of it!

Communication and adaptability are keys to having the best housing experience possible. If you encounter difficulties, first look within yourself to see what changes you can make. In general, any initial housing problems can usually be resolved by talking about it and remaining open to change. If you continue to have difficulties, speak with the on-site staff. They will help you work through your situation. If you have tried to make your situation work and it just isn’t working, on-site staff can move you to a new family. Remember, study abroad is a cultural experience and things will be different, but entering into the experience with an open mind can make the daily challenges of living in Cuernavaca one of the most rewarding parts of your study abroad experience.

Rules of the House
The rules of the house will be explained to you by your host or hostess upon arrival. These will include meal times, laundry, how to lock the front door, and some of the things covered here but which vary from house to house. Always remember that you are in someone’s home and not in a hotel. Courtesy and common sense should be your guide. Always ask your host or hostess if you have any questions about what they expect from you.

Water
Drinking water will be provided for you by your family. It will be boiled, filtered, or taken from jugs of purified water. Your host or hostess will show you where the drinking water is kept. Cuernavaca has periodic water shortages, so be aware of this when bathing. Host homes will have hot water, although it may not be as hot or plentiful as students are accustomed to.

Sheets, Towels, and Bedding
Sheets, towels, and bedding will be provided and changed at least once a week. However, it is a good idea to bring a towel of your own for traveling.

Laundry
Most students have to pay to do their laundry. There is a laundromat at Cemanahuac that provides one-day service for a nominal fee. You should provide your own soap (this can be easily purchased when you get to Cuernavaca, unless you need a certain brand of soap). All homes have laundry facilities. If you make arrangements to have your laundry done for you, your host or hostess will let you know the fee for this. Generally, past students have found it more convenient and
economical to clean their hand washables at home. If your host family does not do your laundry, they will be able to refer you to the nearest lavandería.

**Keys**
Families will provide you with keys to the house. You will be responsible for them. You will be shown how to lock the door. If you lose your keys you will be charged for changing the locks and making extra keys. Remember to return the keys when you depart.

**Guests**
We recommend that you not invite guests to your home because it infringes on your host family's privacy. However, each family varies and your host family may encourage you to invite guests. Your best bet is to play it by ear and make sure you are clear with your family. You are welcome to visit with friends at Cemanahuac until the building closes at 5:30 p.m., or sometimes later. Many people in Cuernavaca like to meet in the Zócalo.

**Meals**
All meals will be provided by your Mexican host family. Breakfast may be somewhat similar to breakfast in the US: eggs, bacon, fruit, coffee, and toast. It will vary from family to family as it would in the US. The big meal of the day is the comida, usually served between 2 and 3 p.m. and followed by a siesta, afternoon rest period. The evening meal, la cena, is late, often around 9 p.m., and usually consists of sandwiches, tacos, or something light. Because of the class schedule at Cemanahuac, your eating habits may vary somewhat from what is the norm in Mexico. Snacks and soft drinks are not provided by your host family; you will have to purchase your own.

If you will not be home for a meal, please let your host or hostess know (you will not be refunded for individual meals missed). Your family is concerned about your well-being and safety and may worry about you. If you plan to be away on a day trip, or plan to stay at Cemanahuac over the lunch break, you may ask for a bag lunch.

**Host Family Gifts**
It is a traditional practice to bring some type of thank you gift for your host family. It’s best to bring items that can be shared amongst family members. Below are listed some gift ideas for your host families which have been suggested by previous participants.

- Items with your university logo
- Local food items from your region (for example, maple syrup, wild rice, honey, Wisconsin cheese, or jam made from Minnesota berries)
- Local interest wall calendars
- Handmade crafts
- Picture frames or a scrapbook

**Money Matters**

**The Peso**
The peso is the monetary unit in Mexico. Bills come in denominations of $10, $20, $50, $100, $200, and $500. The coins are 5, 10, 20, and 50 cents, $1, $2, $5, and $10.

The symbol for the Mexican peso and the US dollar are the same. When you see the symbol “$” in Mexico, it usually means peso, unless accompanied by “dlls,” or simply “US.” Occasionally the $ symbol will be accompanied by the initials MN (moneda nacional) referring to the peso.

Visit [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com) for the most current exchange rates.

An easy, safe, and cheap way to deal with finances in Mexico would be to have the following forms of money:

- 100 dollars US in cash
- ATM/debit card (with 4-digit PIN)
- Credit card for larger purchases or in case of emergency

Personal spending habits vary too greatly to state exactly how much it will cost to live in Mexico. The amount you spend will be determined largely by your personal lifestyle and your budget. Refer to budget estimate on the Learning Abroad Center website for an estimate of the additional money you can plan to spend.

Be careful with your money, especially in bus stations and riding on the bus. Also take care in the crowded markets. A money belt worn inside your clothing or a pouch worn around the neck is recommended for safekeeping. In public places, purses should be tucked under your arm or carried in front of your hip, and wallets should be carried in your front pocket. When eating in a nicer restaurant or using services for which a tip is customary, the standard tip is 10-15%. In cheaper restaurants, tipping is not expected although a small tip is always appreciated.

**Cash**
In Minnesota you can exchange money at major banks, at the Twin Cities airport, or any major airport in the US. You can also exchange dollars for pesos upon arrival at the Mexico City airport or once you arrive in Cuernavaca.

**ATM/Debit Card**
One of the easiest and least expensive means of obtaining money is at an ATM machine. If you have a debit card, you can withdraw pesos directly out of your US bank account. The drawback is that if you have a problem with your magnetic strip or if your card is lost, you will have to wait for another card to be sent to you. This problem can be avoided by having a back-up method, such as a credit card.
It is very important to contact your bank for information about ATM fees abroad and to notify them that you will be using your card outside of the US. Failure to notify the bank may result in your account being frozen by the fraud department.

Credit Card
A credit card is a good resource for larger purchases or for emergency situations. Without it, it can be very difficult and time consuming to have large amounts of money transferred to you from home.

Contact your credit card company for information about foreign currency conversion fees and to notify them that you will be using your card outside of the US. Failure to notify the credit card company may result in your account being frozen by the fraud department.

Traveler’s Checks
Traveler’s checks are less widely used and accepted abroad today than in the past. Therefore, we do not recommend that students use traveler’s checks, but instead rely upon a combination of cash, an ATM/debit card, and a credit card in order to access funds and make purchases while in Mexico.

Communication

Internet
You will have limited access to computers and Internet at school. Cemanahuac does have wireless Internet; however, the connection is not as fast or reliable as the Internet here at the university. Cemanahuac also has a few computers available for student use. Most host families have Internet in their homes and there are plenty of inexpensive Internet cafes throughout Cuernavaca with faster computers and Internet connections that students can utilize.

Social Media
Not all countries share the same laws about freedom of expression that we have in the US. Students should keep in mind that derogatory comments, especially on social media, can result in legal claims and have extended legal implications even after a student has returned to the United States.

Laptops
Figuring out whether or not to bring a laptop to Mexico is a personal decision. You will not need a computer for your coursework, since hand-written assignments are always acceptable. However, you may wish to bring your laptop in order to have access to your music or download photos to share with your family back home. The choice is yours; however, you should carefully consider the risks of bringing your laptop abroad before choosing to do so.

Cell Phones
Due to safety concerns, all participants are required to carry a local cell phone while on the Mexico program. You will be provided with a local cell phone upon arrival in Cuernavaca. The cost of the phone and a limited amount of credit are included in the program fee. However, you are responsible for the cost of additional credit.

Because of the added difficulty and cost of dialing an international phone number from Mexico, students are not permitted to use their US cell phones in lieu of a local cell phone.

Cellphones in Mexico use a “pay as you go” system rather than a monthly or yearly service plan. Also, incoming calls are generally free, so it is often more affordable to arrange to have friends and family call you.

Landline Phones
There are public telephones available for student use at Cemanahuac. You may purchase a Mexican phone card in the Cemanahuac office for use in most public phones. Long-distance calls may be made from many public phones, in some downtown drugstores, or at the office of the telephone company located near the Zócalo.

Mail
The postal service in Mexico is slow and can be unreliable. Having packages sent from the US is strongly discouraged as the contents may be damaged or stolen in transit.

Friends and family can mail letters to you at the following address:
Cemanahuac Educational Center
San Juan 4
Colonia Las Palmas
62051 Cuernavaca, Morelos
MEXICO

Excursions & Travel
There is a one-day excursion to the ancient city of Teotihuacán included in the program. Here you will visit the Pyramids of the Sun and Moon. These massive pyramids were built around 100 AD with the Pirámide del Sol being completed first. Little is known about its inhabitants. Even the name Teotihuacán, meaning “The Place Where Men Became Gods,” is a name given to them by the Aztecs hundreds of years after their demise. This trip is usually preceded by a short tour of Mexico City.

Cemanahuac also offers several optional trips in Cuernavaca and nearby sites. Information about these optional excursions can be found at the activity board located at the front of the school.
Medical Spanish students will participate in several course-related excursions. These are open only to students enrolled in the medical Spanish course.

**Work Abroad & Work Permits**

Program participants enter Mexico on a tourist visa and are not allowed to work.

**FERPA**

It is important to be aware that the Learning Abroad Center and the Office of Student Finance, in compliance with the Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and Regents policy, cannot share financial information with a third party (including parents, spouse, guardians, etc.) without your written permission. You can download a Student Information Release Authorization at onestop.umn.edu.

**Academics**

All students should carefully read through and understand the academic policies described on the Learning Abroad Center website at UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies/academic-policies.

These policies cover registration, grading, credit, transcripts, petitions, and forms.

**Registration**

**Registration through the UofM**

*University of Minnesota Twin Cities Students*

Before registering, you should meet with your academic adviser(s) to discuss the courses you plan to take and complete the Academic Planning form.

All University of Minnesota Twin Cities students will be responsible for registering themselves using the University of Minnesota online registration system.

Prior to departure, you will receive an email with all the necessary information for registration. Do not look for your class number to appear on the class list on Onestop. The numbers you need for registration can only be obtained from the Learning Abroad Center. If you register for a course that is listed online, you have registered for the wrong course and may be subject to tuition charges.

Complete your registration no later than two weeks prior to the start of the term during which you will be studying abroad. Check online for holds or required registration approvals that would prevent you from registering for classes and clear them before the registration date. The Learning Abroad Center cannot remove holds on student accounts. Failure to complete registration may result in late registration fees and may delay or prevent financial aid disbursement.

If you do not register for study abroad, your grades cannot be processed. Failure to register before departing for study abroad may result in no credit for your study abroad program.

**UM System Students**

Students from the University of Minnesota Morris, Crookston, Rochester, or Duluth will be set up as a multi-U student on their home campus. Please contact your study abroad office to verify you are enrolled for study abroad.

**Non-University of Minnesota Students**

Students from other institutions will be registered by the Learning Abroad Center and do not need to register themselves through Onestop.

**Change of Registration**

Students cannot drop or add a class but may change to a different language level. If you feel that you should be in a different language level, speak with one of the staff members at Cemanahuac. Any changes must be made before the first exam at the end of the first week and ideally should happen within the first two days so you do not miss an excessive amount of the material covered in the other class.

University of Minnesota students should note that if you switch to a lower language level and repeat a Spanish course you already took on campus, the grade you received the first time will be “bracketed” and replaced by the grade you receive in Mexico, regardless of whether it is higher or lower than the first time you took the class. The credits earned by repeating the course will not count toward graduation requirements.

You must speak with the on-site staff and the Learning Abroad Center prior to changing your registration. You should also contact your academic adviser.

**Coursework**

Participants can choose one course between Spanish 1001-3015 or 3011 during any three-week term. Medical Spanish (SPAN 1044) is offered during a separate four-week term. All courses are taught by faculty members of the Cemanahuac Education Community.

Although courses taught in Mexico cover the same core content as those taught on campus, students should expect differences in teaching style, textbooks, assignments, and exams.
Class Schedule
Participants enrolled in a three-week program will have class for four hours each morning Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.–1 p.m. plus the afternoon grammar workshops and discussion groups from 1–2 p.m. Due to the intensive nature of this course, you will not be able to miss any classes. If you are sick, you will need a note from a doctor.

Grammar Workshops, Intercambios, & Tutoring
Grammar workshops are organized by Cemanahuac and meet Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday after class from 1–2 p.m. They give you an informal and non-intimidating atmosphere in which to practice your oral Spanish. Attendance at the workshops and discussion is a required part of the Study Abroad in Mexico Program and one that you will find useful in your pursuit of fluency in the Spanish language.

Students are required to participate in a weekly intercambio. An intercambio is a conversation exchange with a Mexican student who is learning English. This is an excellent opportunity to meet native speakers, who may introduce you to their own friends. Past participants have mentioned this as one of the best aspects of their experience.

Individual tutoring sessions are available to students on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons. Speak with Blanca to sign up for a 30-minute session.

Books & Materials

Suggested Materials
Past participants strongly suggest bringing a Spanish-English dictionary, 501 Spanish Verbs, and perhaps notes from previous courses to help you with your studies. Books purchased in Mexico are in Spanish only.

Spanish 1001–1004
Students receive two books upon arrival at Cemanahuac. The cost of textbooks is included in the program fee.

Spanish 1044: Medical Spanish
The following book must be purchased prior to departure:


Spanish 3015 & Spanish 3011
The following books must be purchased prior to departure:


You will also purchase a Mexican novel in Mexico for about $10. (SPAN 3015, 3011)

Language of Instruction, Grades, & Transcripts
All Spanish classes are taught in Spanish.

All classes on the Study Abroad in Mexico program must be taken with an A–F grade base.

University of Minnesota students will receive resident credit for courses taken on this program. Each course will be listed on your transcript as University of Minnesota credits. Grades will figure into your GPA just as they would in Minnesota.

It often takes 6–8 weeks from the end of the program for the Learning Abroad Center to receive grades and post them to students’ transcripts. Students are asked to check their grades online rather than contacting the Learning Abroad Center to see if they have been posted. Visit http://onestop.umn.edu/grades_and_transcripts/index.html to view your grades.

Students from other institutions will have their official University of Minnesota transcript sent to their home institution at the address listed on the Transcript Request Form that was submitted as part of the confirmation material.

Student Grievances
Academic grievances are complaints brought by students regarding the provision of education and academic support services affecting their role as students. For grievances concerning University of Minnesota sponsored or cosponsored learning abroad programs offered through the Learning Abroad Center, students should make inquiries and appeals to the appropriate University officials, in the following order: the program representative in the Learning Abroad Center, the Director of the Learning Abroad Center, the Student Dispute Resolution Center, and the Office of the General Counsel. For complaints concerning non-University of Minnesota programs, students should make appeals to the program sponsor.

About Mexico
Before you leave, you should read as much as possible about where you are going in order to gain some perspective about the experience. This might include reading guidebooks, international newspapers, magazines, novels, plays, poetry, and political and economic analyses. You may also want to talk to international students and returned students who have been where you are going.
Geography & Climate
adapted from: gomexico.about.com

Mexico is the world's eighth largest nation, covering nearly 770,000 square miles (2 million square km). It is divided politically into 31 States and one federal district.

Mexico's topography is marked by various mountain ranges:
- Sierra Madre Occidental in the West
- Sierra Madre Oriental in the East
- Cordillera Neovolcánica in the center

There are lowlands along the coasts and in the Yucatan Peninsula and high plateau in the center of the country.

The weather in Mexico is determined not only by latitude but also by altitude. Mexico has tropical forests, dry deserts, fertile valleys, and snow-capped mountains. Since Mexico's terrain is extremely varied, so is the weather. On the coast the climate is generally balmy year-round, but some months are rainy and others dry, and Mexico City can have days—and nights—that are quite chilly.

In Mexico there are two main seasons—the rainy and dry seasons. The rainy season throughout most of Mexico falls roughly from May through September or October. During the rest of the year there is little or no rain.

Inland central Mexico has spring-like weather—it's warm or hot during the day then nights cool down. Cities at high altitudes like Mexico City (7,349 feet/2240 m) can be quite cold at times, particularly at night, so pack accordingly. The warmest months of the year are April and May, then the rains start and temperatures go down. Rainy season lasts from May through September or October, and the coldest months are December and January.

History

The history of Mexico falls into three major epochs: the pre-Hispanic (sometimes called pre-Columbian) period when pre-Hispanic culture flourished, from 1500 B.C. to 1521 A.D.; the Colonial Era of Spanish domination which began in 1521 and lasted for 300 years; and the Modern Period, which begins in 1810 when Mexicans began their struggle for political independence. The Revolution of 1910 marks the beginning of a new era within the Modern Period, an era devoted to carrying out the ideals of the Revolution.

Since 1910, the reforms initiated by the Revolution have supposedly been implemented with varying degrees of success. Today Mexico continues to be plagued with economic problems, with many rural people moving to the already overcrowded urban centers where most of their needs are largely ignored by what is in reality a one-party system.

The Mexican constitution provides for a representative form of government with an executive and a judicial branch and a bicameral legislature. In reality, the power of the president resembles that of a monarch; however, the president cannot run for re-election at the end of his six-year term, and his influence over the government virtually ends the moment he leaves office.

The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) won every national election for 71 years after its founding in 1929. As a centrist party, the key to the PRI's power was that nearly every major power group in the nation is represented. Electoral fraud had traditionally contributed to the PRI's longevity, too.

Vicente Fox Quesada was elected as Mexico's president on July 2, 2000. This election ended the years of rule by the PRI. Fox, a candidate of the conservative National Action Party (PAN), is a former Coca-Cola executive who was elected governor of Guanajuato in 1995. When Fox took office on December 1, 2000, it was the first democratic transition of power in Mexico's history.

In presidential elections held in July 2006, PAN candidate Felipe Calderon defeated Mexico City mayor Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador of the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). Electoral authorities gave Calderon a 1% margin over his rival, although claims of massive fraud and inconsistencies at the poll marred the election.

Shortly after taking office in December 2006, Felipe Calderon launched an ambitious attack against the criminal organizations that control the Mexican drug trade. The initiative resulted in a spike in drug-related violence and killings. Since 2006, more than 50,000 people—including politicians, journalists, and law enforcement officials, as well as those involved in the drug trade have been killed as a result of the violence.

In the July 2012 elections, PRI candidate Enrique Pena Nieto won 38 percent of the vote and the PRI returned to power after 12 years.

To view an interactive timeline of Mexican history, visit: www.pbs.org/kpbs/theborder/history/interactive-timeline.html.

Other Resources
- CIA World Factbook—an overview of Mexico history, people, government, economy, geography, communications, transportation, military, and transnational issues
- Lonely Planet—entry on Mexico
- “The News”—an English newspaper based in Mexico City
Life in Cuernavaca

Cuernavaca is located at 5,000 feet above sea level in a warm climate (average temperature 75°F). Known as the city of eternal spring, this capital of the state of Morelos has a population of approximately 500,000 people. Mexico City is only a 90-minute drive away. Throughout Mexico’s history Cuernavaca has remained prominent. As early as the pre-Hispanic period, at the height of the Indian civilization, Cuernavaca was famous for its mineral baths. Cortes built a fortress there, intending to make Cuernavaca his retirement home. The Palace of Cortes served for many years as offices for the Morelos state government and now houses a museum. The city is unusual in that it has two plazas that are connected diagonally. Downtown streets are narrow and tangled. Due to the semitropical temperatures a multitude of flora bloom all year. Flowers grow so abundantly in Cuernavaca and the surrounding area of the state of Morelos that they are one of the state’s main exports to the US. Many of the roses sold in the Twin Cities come from farms outside of Cuernavaca.

Language

Spanish is the language of Mexico, but in some outlying areas ancient Indian languages are still spoken. You may be able to use English in the markets and airports, but communicating in English may be more of a challenge in bus terminals and train stations. Generally, a non-native speaker of Spanish is well received in Mexico if an attempt to speak Spanish is made.

Store Hours

Businesses are usually open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. in Cuernavaca, as in most small towns, stores often close between 2 and 4 p.m. for siesta. Banks are usually open only until 1:30 p.m. It would be best to try to get most of your business done in the morning.

Entertainment

Cuernavaca is a popular resort area for Mexicans and visitors from all over the world. While in Cuernavaca, be sure to catch a soccer (fútbol) match, which is the national sport. The bullfights are also an exciting spectator sport. Swimming, golfing (quite expensive), playing tennis, horseback riding, mountain climbing, or enjoying the area’s architecture and many parks are only some of the ways to experience the pleasures of Cuernavaca. Movies are inexpensive and provide a relaxing way to practice listening to the language.

Cemanahuac’s pool is open to students seven days a week (if main door is locked, you can reach the pool by entering through Sala Bolivia). Daniel Gutierrez and family live on the premises and he is in charge when the office is closed.

The Instituto de Cultura de Morelos schedules many events, including theatre, art shows, recitals, concerts, in the Borda Gardens. The Museum in the Palacio de Cortés has special monthly shows aside from the ongoing museum, which is mostly about the archeology of the state of Morelos. They frequently sponsor lecture series on different topics related to history and anthropology.

Discoteques and cinemas are also a good way to spend some free time while incorporating Mexican lifestyle and the language.

Local Transportation

There are several ways you can choose to travel within Mexico. Ask about the availability of student discounts before buying tickets.

Bus

Bus transportation within Mexico is probably the best buy for touring; it is frequent and inexpensive. Buses leave Cuernavaca for Mexico City approximately every hour. Buses are also heavily used, so advance reservations for longer trips are advised. Mexican bus lines don’t allow stopovers on a through ticket, so remember to buy your ticket in segments if you’re not traveling directly to a final destination. Travelers are strongly advised to travel on the top two classes of buses and to travel during daylight hours whenever possible.

Car

Because of the inherent dangers of driving abroad and the general condition of Mexican roads, driving a car in Mexico is not allowed.

Mexico City Metro

If you spend time in Mexico City, the metro is the most efficient and affordable way to go. It is usually crowded, and for this reason, no baggage is allowed. Plan on taking either the Metro or bus to get around the city. Be extremely careful on the metro and don’t take it after dark.

Taxi

Taxi drivers may charge you a higher fare unless you are able to negotiate with them in Spanish and agree on the rate before entering the cab. Note the additional information on taxis under Safety Precautions.

Transportation to the Mexico City Airport

There is NOT a group bus from Cuernavaca to the airport in Mexico on the final day of the program. Students are responsible for arranging and paying for this on their own. Your host family may be able to assist you with purchasing a bus ticket. You should allow at least two hours for the trip to the airport.

Social & Cultural Adjustments

You can minimize the stress involved with adapting to another lifestyle by preparing adequately. The cultural differences
you encounter will enrich your life by presenting you with different worldviews and new methods of solving problems.

Mexicans greet each other and part with a slight embrace and a kiss on the cheek. The usual greeting among Mexican males is a handshake. Good friends will often add a pat on the back and, if they have not seen each other for some time, will give an abrazo (embrace). Family names and titles, such as señor (Mr.), señora (Mrs.) and señorita (Miss) may be used to address older people or professionals. First names may be used among close friends and young people.

## Coming Home

By the time you return home from Mexico, you will have grown and changed significantly. You will probably find yourself experiencing reverse culture shock. Many students find that returning home is harder than leaving was. It is very normal to experience these feelings and you aren’t alone. You are encouraged to tap into the resources available in order to make the transition home easier.

To stay connected to your study abroad experience, you may want to:

- Become a Global Ambassador Intern: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/process/reentry/internships
- Become a classroom visit intern
- Serve as a past participant at pre-departure orientations
- Stay in contact with friends from your program

These are just a few ways to stay connected. More information can be found at: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/process/reentry.php.

Stop by the Learning Abroad Center office any time. Staff enjoy talking to students who have returned from study abroad and would love to see your pictures and hear your stories.

## Appendix

### Packing List

#### Necessary Items

- Comfortable, low-maintenance clothing. Bring clothing for both warm and cool weather.
- One or two nicer outfits for going out and more formal occasions (including some for Medical Spanish excursions, if you are on that program)
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Supply of prescription medication to last your entire stay

#### Recommended Items

- Camera, memory card, and batteries
- Small backpack for day trips and independent overnight excursions
- Alarm clock
- Reusable water bottle
- English/Spanish dictionary and “501 Spanish Verbs” book
- School supplies (notebooks, folders, notecards)

### Toiletries and Over-the-Counter Medicine

These are available in Mexico but you may want to bring a small supply of some medicine/first aid items or a larger supply of toiletry items if you must use a specific type or brand because they may not be available in Mexico.

- Travel size toiletries for weekend trips
- Cold/cough remedies
- Aspirin or other pain killer
- Antacid (Tums, Pepto-Bismol, etc.)
- Sunscreen or sun block
- Contraceptives (condoms)
- Children’s vitamins for donation to VAMOS (optional)
Cultural Adjustment

The On-Site Experience

What happens when you suddenly lose clues and symbols that orient you to situations in everyday life? What happens when facial expressions, gestures, and words are unfamiliar? The psychological discomfort and adjustment period in a foreign country is commonly known as culture shock or cultural adjustment.

You will almost certainly experience some form of culture shock. It might hit you after two days, two weeks, or two months—timing varies widely for different people. Six common phases of cultural adjustment are listed below. These may be out of order for you, one phase may last longer than another, or you may skip a step entirely.

Initial Fascination: On arrival your surroundings seem glamorous and exotic, you feel like the focus of attention and activity.

Initial Culture Shock: The initial fascination and euphoria fade as you settle in and you enter an emotional decline.

Surface Adjustment: After the initial “down” (a few days to a few weeks for most), you begin to truly adjust and settle into your surroundings. Language skills begin to improve, and you’ll feel less fatigued. Often you’ll be forming a small group of friends at this stage as well.

Feelings of Isolation: Difficulties in your new culture seem to stubbornly remain and you grow frustrated with the process.

Integration/Acceptance: After continued effort you find yourself more at ease with language, friends, professional, and academic interests. The culture you are living in is more easily examined. Differences between yourself and the society you live in become understandable and you come to accept both the situation and yourself in it, allowing you to relax and feel at home.

Return Anxiety: Just when you feel at home in the new country it’s time to go. Thoughts of leaving new friends raise anxiety similar to those felt before departure. You sense that you’ve changed as a person and apprehension grows when you think about people at home that may not understand your new feelings and insights, yet you may feel guilty for wanting to stay.

When in any of the above phases you may experience: changes in sleeping habits, feelings of helplessness or hopelessness, loneliness, depression, unexplainable crying, placing blame for difficulties on the program or host culture, homesickness, getting angry easily, increase in physical ailments or pain, compulsive eating, or lack of appetite.

Other symptoms may manifest themselves as well. It is important to understand these are part of a normal process of adjustment, however, if uncomfortable feelings persist for extended periods or seem unbearable, seek assistance from your program’s on-site support staff.

A sense of isolation sets in. Boredom and a lack of motivation often follow. Unresolved personal issues often surface during this stage.

Adjusted from Oberg (1960) and Gallahorn (1963)