

Study Abroad in Mexico

PROGRAM HANDBOOK 2019–2020



LEARNING ABROAD CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Important Names & Addresses

In the United States

University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center
230 Heller Hall
271 19th Ave. S.
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

Contact Prior to Departure

Vanessa Walton, Program Director
Phone: 612.625.0195
Email: vwalton@umn.edu

Molly Micheels, Associate Program Director
Phone: 612.624.3949
Email: mollym@umn.edu

Abby Koshollek, Enrollment Specialist
Phone: 612.301.6807
Email: kosho005@umn.edu

Emergencies

In case of a serious emergency, contact the University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center (LAC) at 612.626.9000. If it is after business hours, a recording will give you a number to call. The LAC has someone on call to deal with emergencies and can contact the on-site administrators if needed. Once overseas, you should contact your in-country program staff.

In Mexico

Note: Please direct pre-departure questions to the Learning Abroad Center, not to the on-site staff.

Cemanahuac Educational Community San Juan 4
Colonia Las Palmas

62051 Cuernavaca, Morelos MEXICO
cemanahuacspanishschool.com

Harriet Guerrero, Director
Office Phone: 52.777.318.6407

Emergency Number: 52.777.120.3526
harriet@cemanahuac.com

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

Telephone Codes

To call a landline in Mexico from the US, dial:
011-52-55 + [phone number].

To call a Mexican cell phone from the US, dial:
011-521-55 + [phone number].

Time Differences

The local time in Cuernavaca is the same as in the US, year-round.

Program Health & Safety

Program health and safety information is available at global.umn.edu/gosafe/index.html.



Table of Contents

Important Names & Addresses	2	Academics	14
In the United States	2	Courses.....	14
Emergencies	2	Registration	15
In Mexico	2	Course Drop/Add/Withdrawal	16
Telephone Codes	2	Academic Culture.....	16
Time Differences.....	2	Grades & Transcripts	17
Program Health & Safety.....	2	Student Grievances	17
Introduction	4	Living in the Host Country	17
Purpose of This Handbook	4	History Resources	17
Overview of the Program.....	4	Geography & Climate	18
Preparation & Planning.....	4	Languages of the Country.....	18
Documents	4	Relationships.....	19
Coordinated Group Flight.....	5	Living in Cuernavaca	19
Packing.....	5	Communication	20
Electricity	5	Money Matters	21
Important Policies	5	Social & Cultural Adjustments	21
Health, Wellness & Safety.....	6	Student Identity	21
Health.....	6	Cultural Adjustment.....	23
Wellness.....	7	The On-Site Experience.....	23
Safety	8	Looking Ahead.....	24
Independent Travel	11	Career Relevance.....	24
Arrival & Departure Logistics.....	11	Re-Entry	24
Arriving at the Program Site.....	11	Appendix.....	24
Departure.....	12	Packing List.....	24
Initial Arrival Housing	12	Social Media Hashtag Guidelines	25
Program Information.....	12		
Orientation in Country	12		
Program Excursions.....	12		
In-Country Staff	12		
Program Center	12		
Housing Considerations.....	13		
Visitors	14		

Introduction

Purpose of This Handbook

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 confirmation checklist), and the information outlined in this handbook. These materials will guide you on a safe and successful learning abroad experience.

Valuable resources for your friends and family members can be found at UMabroad.umn.edu/parents. It discusses topics such as health and safety, program prices, logistics, and travel.

Overview of the Program

The Study Abroad in Mexico program provides the opportunity to experience the culture of Mexico firsthand while studying the Spanish language. Intensive courses with other Americans 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 you the individual attention that is so helpful for 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 will help you to experience the city and surrounding areas and 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. 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 University of Minnesota

Learning Abroad Center (LAC) 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 LAC or the study abroad adviser at your institution with any questions you may have. ¡Buen Viaje!

Preparation & Planning

Documents

Passport

A passport is required to enter Mexico. If you don't have a passport, you should apply for one right away. Passports can take 4–6 weeks to process, so it's important to begin this process early. More information is available at UMabroad.umn.edu/students/travel/passports.

Embassy Contact Information

Always keep your passport in a safe place. If your passport is lost or stolen, contact the local police, the American Consulate or Embassy, and the on-site staff. To identify the consulate or embassy nearest you, consult usembassy.gov.

Visa/Immigration Documents

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

Immigration & 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.

Non-US Passport Holders

Students who are not traveling under a US passport may have to follow different visa procedures in order to enter Mexico. Contact the Learning Abroad Center's Visa Specialist at lacvisa@umn.edu for assistance in determining the correct visa process.

Power of Attorney

We encourage you to consider designating 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, including banking and tax issues. For more information, review the information at UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies/finances/powerofattorney.

Safekeeping Important Documents

Copy all of your important documents and store the copies separately from the originals. Leave an additional copy with someone in the US and keep an electronic copy in a secure location.

Coordinated Group Flight

Flight & Transportation Information

You will fly in and out of Mexico City International Airport (airport code: MEX). Arrival transportation from the airport to Cuernavaca (about 90 minutes south of Mexico City) and return transportation from Cuernavaca to the airport are provided by our partner organization. The transportation times align with the group flight arrival and departure times.

You have two options for booking your flight: booking the coordinated group flight, or booking a flight independently with a similar arrival time.

Although we strongly encourage arriving and departing with the group, there is a public bus that runs between the Mexico City airport and Cuernavaca on an hourly basis.

Refer to the “Arrival & Departure Logistics” section on page 11 of this handbook for more information.

Purpose & Benefits of Village Travel

The Learning Abroad Center works with Village Travel, a local travel agency, to arrange a coordinated flight for the Mexico program. The flight is optional but strongly encouraged, and is arranged for those who want to fly with other program participants. When available, the coordinated group flight itinerary will be posted on Village Travel’s website at: villageinc.com/study-abroad/university-of-minnesota/learning-abroad-center/study-abroad-in-mexico.

Village Travel is a full-service travel agency and can help you extend your stay in Mexico or depart from a city other than Minneapolis.

All students are required to provide the LAC with a copy of their flight information.

Arriving Early

For safety reasons, we discourage early arrival. Students with extenuating circumstances should consult with the Learning Abroad Center *prior* to making flight arrangements.

Staying After the Program

Students are welcome to remain in Mexico for personal travel after the program ends.

Round-Trip Airline Tickets

Round-trip tickets are the best option, since many countries require travelers to purchase a round-trip ticket as part of the visa process. In addition, one-way tickets can be

expensive, and it is extremely difficult to find a return flight to the US.

Packing

Packing Principles

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. To learn more about Cuernavaca’s weather and climate, visit: timeanddate.com/weather/mexico/cuernavaca/climate. 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. Evening wear for women in Mexico tends to be more exaggerated and dressy than in the US.

Be sure to bring a comfortable pair of shoes for both everyday life and excursions, which will require a lot of walking. Flip-flops are not commonly worn outside the home. 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.

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.

Important Policies

Policies of the University of Minnesota and the Learning Abroad Center exist primarily for the protection and safety of LAC study abroad participants. The LAC expects all participants to read, understand, and adhere to the University of Minnesota and LAC policies, guidelines, and

contractual documents. These include academic policies, finance and cancellation policies, health and safety policies, and student rights and responsibilities:
UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies.

FERPA

Under Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, and University policy, college students are considered responsible adults and are allowed to determine who will receive information about them. As a result, the LAC does not share academic, personal, or financial information with a third party (including parents, spouse, guardians, etc.) without the student's written permission. As part of their application, all students designate two emergency contacts who will receive information only in the case of an emergency.

Official Communications

Your UofM email address is the official means of communication. LAC messages will be sent to your UofM email address.

Health, Wellness & Safety

Health

Health Information Form

The purpose of the form is to help the University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center (LAC) to assist you in preparing for your time abroad. It is critical to disclose fully any health conditions or accommodation needs you may have on the LAC's Health Information Form. If your condition changes after completing this form or you realize you forgot to fully disclose anything, contact the LAC and provide the updated information as soon as possible.

Timely disclosure allows the LAC to support your overseas experience effectively. The information provided will remain confidential and will be shared with program staff, faculty, or appropriate professionals only as pertinent to your own well-being.

For more information, visit: **UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/healthinfo.**

Mandatory Health & Safety Online Orientation

The mandatory Learning Abroad Center Health & Safety Online Orientation contains important information on health precautions, taking prescriptions overseas, and the mandatory insurance policy in which you will be enrolled as a program participant. Refer to your online acceptance checklist for the link to this orientation information and contact the LAC with questions.

Health Insurance

US Health Insurance

All students enrolled at the University of Minnesota are required to have US health insurance. This includes students registered for education abroad.

The travel, health, and security insurance coverage through CISI is specifically exempt from the requirements of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and was not intended to and does not satisfy a person's obligation to secure minimum essential coverage beginning in 2014 under the ACA. The University encourages travelers to consult with their legal counsel or tax adviser for information on their obligations under the ACA.

For more details and specific process information for students with University of Minnesota Student Health Insurance through the Student Health Benefits Office, visit the LAC's US insurance webpage: **UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance/ushealthinsurancerequirement.**

CISI Insurance

In addition to your US health insurance, the University of Minnesota 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 and a few days to allow for travel to and from the US. 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 checkups 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 LAC's insurance webpage: **UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance.**

Medication Overseas

Prescriptions

Bring all necessary medication (including such items as birth control), for the entire term of your program, with you to your study abroad site and bring it in your *carry-on luggage only*. It is illegal to ship medication overseas and will be rejected at customs. Contact the LAC if you need an enrollment verification letter to submit to your insurance company requesting prescription medication for your entire stay abroad.

Consult with your LAC program contact if you would like to consult with CISI about obtaining any medication once abroad. Some medications, including those that are commonly available over the counter in the US, are controlled or banned substances abroad. The LAC, in

consultation with CISI, will assist you in determining if you can travel with your medications or if alternative solutions must be explored.

Vaccinations, Immunizations, & Travel Medicine

The LAC recommends that all students visit a travel clinic before their program abroad. Make an appointment as soon as possible so that you can get a scheduled appointment in time to complete any required and recommended immunization series. Many travel clinics often book far in advance (especially around the holidays), and some immunizations need to be started months in advance of your departure. For more information, visit: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/preplanning.

Review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cdc.gov/travel and US Department of State travel.state.gov websites for general vaccination, immunization, and other travel medical information for the countries you will visit. However, only a travel clinic will be able to make a recommendation tailored for your specific travel plans and health history.

Rabies Vaccination

Consult with your travel clinic regarding rabies vaccination. The rabies vaccine is often recommended for travelers who may come into contact with wild or domestic animals. Keep in mind that it is not possible to initiate the vaccinations in

the US and then complete them overseas. Dosage and type of vaccinations differ from country to country. For more information, visit: www.cdc.gov/travel/diseases/rabies.

Wellness

Wellness & Study Abroad

In addition to any medications and required vaccinations, it is important to plan proactively for how you will maintain healthy habits abroad, both mentally and physically. Consider the following guidelines for your time abroad:

- **Physical self-care:** Be physically active for 30–60 minutes daily, sleep enough to have energy through the day, spend at least an hour outdoors, and eat a balanced and moderate diet mostly of wholesome, minimally processed foods.
- **Emotional self-care:** Talk to your medical provider prior to departure about effective ways to cope with the stress that can arise from experiencing unfamiliar surroundings and lack of family and friend support, as well as to identify new ways of centering and embracing change and new experiences. This is a valuable lifelong skill.
- **Stress reduction practice:** Participate in at least one practice to quiet your mind and body. Examples include deep breathing, time in nature, prayer, journaling, sensory grounding, meditation, yoga, tai chi, qigong, progressive muscle relaxation, autogenic training, biofeedback, imagery work.
- **Hydration:** Be certain to drink sufficient water and nutritious fluids as your body adjusts to a new climate and daily rhythm.
- **Making adjustments:** Monitor your stress levels while abroad and adjust your daily routine (sleep patterns, exercise, food balance, hydration) to meet the needs of your new location.
- **Positive attitude:** Try to keep perspective on the challenges that you may encounter and work toward your long-term study abroad goals.
- **Support structures:** Identify who in country is available to provide support and guidance when you feel confused or challenged.
- **Finding resilience:** Keep in mind that it is important to recover and grow from adversity and navigate difficult challenges with awareness, intention, and skill. Seek out healthy connections to others, focus on balanced self-care, keep an open, engaged mind, and work to address manageable challenges with patience and intention.

The following website provides additional suggestions: <http://globaled.us/peacecorps/maintaining-strong-mental-and-emotional-health.asp>



Mental Health

Learning abroad can be both fulfilling and challenging for all students and may present some additional challenges for those with mental health conditions. Even if you have no history of a mental health condition, it is possible that the impact of cultural adjustment or being in a foreign environment can influence your well-being.

The Health Information Form requires you to disclose any past and current mental health issues, family history of mental health, indications of mental health concerns, and current prescription medicines. It is imperative for Learning Abroad Center staff to receive this information before you study abroad to best support you and provide reasonable accommodations.

Past or current treatment for psychiatric and mental health conditions does not preclude you from studying abroad. However, if a healthcare professional recommends no travel or travel under certain conditions that cannot be met at a certain study location, you may be encouraged to focus on your health first and postpone program participation until a later time.

The following steps for managing mental health are important, regardless of where you will be traveling:

- Meet with your mental health professional prior to departure to discuss; learning abroad and implications of learning abroad, your plan to manage your health while abroad, and access to alternative support networks.
- Discuss a realistic communication plan for your time abroad with your support networks (e.g., family and friends).
- Understand that ups and downs are normal during study abroad. Check in with yourself often and seek support if you are feeling more intense ups and downs than expected.
- Connect with an LAC staff member prior to departure to set up on-site care with a mental health care professional, if required.
- Plan to bring sufficient amounts of prescriptions with you for the entire duration of your program. Work with LAC staff to ensure you can safely bring all necessary prescriptions abroad.

Resources for UofM Students

- Student Counseling Services (counseling.umn.edu) and Boynton Mental Health Clinic (bhs.umn.edu/east-bank-clinic/mental-health-services.htm): Staff in both settings can inform you about treatment options and offer immediate crisis counseling if needed.

- Behavior Consultation Team (BCT) (mentalhealth.umn.edu/facstaff/behavioral-consultation.html): If you are concerned about causing harm to yourself or others, call the University's BCT at 011.612.626.3030. For additional resources, visit mentalhealth.umn.edu.

Safety

Travel & Safety Considerations

State Department Travel Website

Consult the United States State Department Country Information sheets, travel advisories, and travel warnings at travel.state.gov for up-to-date information on travel precautions for the country where you will be studying or traveling.

CDC Information

Review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cdc.gov/travel and US Department of State travel.state.gov websites for travel and safety information.

Program-Specific Safety Considerations

ITRAAC

This program has been approved by the University of Minnesota's International Travel Risk Assessment and Advisory Committee (ITRAAC) in light of the current travel advisory issued by the US Department of State. For more information, visit: travel.state.gov.

Approval was granted based upon the following conditions and restrictions. Students on this program are expected to abide by these guidelines. All students on the program must:

- Review the **Travel Warning** and **Country-specific information** and follow the advice and safety recommendations contained within.
- Receive CISI insurance coverage for the duration of the program.
- Carry a cell phone and the contact details for on-site staff, University of Minnesota, and emergency contacts in the US with them at all times.
- Confirm the emergency communication plan and details with the LAC and on-site staff.
- Remain in close contact with the LAC and on-site staff during their time abroad.
- Follow all US Department of State and embassy warning and security messages as well as University of Minnesota, on-site staff, and local government recommendations including, but not limited to, those indicating that Americans should avoid areas of a city, country, or regions, exercise caution generally and as a result of demonstrations, offensives, or threats on specific dates and during specific times.

- **Not travel to Coahuila, Colima, Michoacán, Guerrero, areas of the state of Nayarit that border the states of Sinaloa or Durango as well as all rural areas and secondary highways, Sinaloa, Sonora, and Tamaulipas.** Travel to the coastal area in Guerrero including Acapulco must be avoided.
- Submit written information about their travel plans at least two days in advance if they plan to leave Cuernavaca overnight including date of departure, date of return, destination, name of hotel, name of other people traveling with the students, and means of transportation.
- Maintain a low profile.
- Exercise special caution during times when demonstrations are announced and avoid areas where demonstrations are occurring or crowds are forming.
- Exercise a high degree of caution in public places frequented by foreigners such as clubs, hotels, resorts, upscale shopping centers, restaurants, and places of worship.
- Avoid casinos, sports books, or other gambling establishments and adult entertainment establishments, specifically these establishments in the states of Coahuila, Durango, Zacatecas, Aguascalientes, San Luis Potosi, Nuevo Leon, Tamaulipas, Jalisco, Colima, and Nayarit.
- Remain alert in residential areas, at schools, and at outdoor recreational events.
- Avoid crowded bus stops or stations.
- Use only well-marked, official taxis.
- Cooperate at all government checkpoints along Mexican roads and highways when traveling by car or bus.
- Practice good personal security when moving about and adhere to local cultural expectations of behavior and dress.
- Not walk or travel alone under any circumstance, but especially after dark.
- Not drive any motor vehicles.
- Avoid carrying large sums of cash or wearing expensive-looking jewelry.
- Be cautious of unattended baggage in public places, including airports and bus depot.
- Be aware of and comply with the university policies regarding education abroad: **global.umn.edu/travel/approval/index.html**.

In addition to the travel restrictions required by ITRAAC, students on the LAC program in Mexico are not allowed to travel to the cities of Acapulco, Ixtapa, or Zihuatanejo or any area to which the US State Department travel warning recommends that US citizens defer non-essential travel.

Embassy STEP Registration

The LAC will register you with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), which makes your presence in Mexico known to the US Department of State. Once you are enrolled in this program, you will receive the travel updates and information directly as they are issued. Please carefully review these messages and contact the LAC or on-site staff with questions. For more information, visit:

step.state.gov/step.

In addition, the local embassy can be a source of assistance and information in the case of an emergency. Each of our programs has information about the local embassy, and you might even have an embassy visitor at your orientation. For more information, visit the Country Information sheet at **travel.state.gov** for the countries you will visit and study in.

In order to ensure that all official communication from the US Department of State is sent to the correct address while you are abroad, check your official contact information prior to departure. Visit **onestop.umn.edu** to verify that the information is correct. If your contact information changes, you must notify the LAC.

Sexual Harassment & Sexual Assault

The University of Minnesota and Learning Abroad Center take the risk of sexual harassment and assault very seriously. This topic will be covered in orientations in more depth, and LAC staff and our colleagues on site are trained and prepared to provide support to victim survivors.

Anyone who experiences sexual harassment or sexual assault while abroad must deal with the stress of this unwanted event in a place and culture that is unfamiliar. Being away from the support and comfort of home can exacerbate feelings of hurt, confusion, anger, and loss of control. This is normal.

Do not tolerate behavior that feels threatening or disrespectful by staff in country, faculty members, or homestay family members. When in any doubt, consult with someone with whom you feel comfortable.

Report any incidents of sexual harassment or sexual assault to in-country or LAC staff so that we can help you understand your options and supports available. The Aurora Center is a fully confidential resource for all students on LAC programs, even if you don't normally attend the University of Minnesota.

For more information on resources, including the Aurora Center, visit: **global.umn.edu/travel/assault/index.html**.

The University of Minnesota prohibits sexual harassment and retaliation. In compliance with Title IX, the LAC will work with the University's Title IX coordinator on any related inquiries and complaints. For more information, please contact the LAC or visit **diversity.umn.edu/eoaa/titleix**.

Alcohol & Drug Use

The University of Minnesota Code of Conduct and Code of Conduct for Education Abroad allow for responsible drinking if you are legally allowed to drink in your host country. Illegal, irresponsible drinking and/or misbehaving while drinking are violations of the University's policy.

The University of Minnesota has a no-tolerance approach to drug use while abroad. Students using drugs abroad may immediately be removed from the program at their own cost. You are subject to the laws of the host country while abroad, and penalties for foreigners using or possessing drugs abroad are often very strict.

For more information, visit: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/alcoholdrugs](https://umabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/alcoholdrugs).

Personal Safety

When you are traveling overseas, there are a number of precautions you should follow in order to travel safely. Consult the US State Department's resources and your orientation materials for up-to-date information on travel precautions for the country where you will be studying or traveling.

For more information on women travelers: travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/Women.html

For more information on students abroad: travel.state.gov/content/studentsabroad/en.html.

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 you should remain vigilant when carrying anything valuable—including your purse/wallet, passport, and any electronic devices.

Petty theft and pickpocketing 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, you should tuck purses under your arm or carry them in front of your hip, and you should carry wallets 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 LAC has a strong no-tolerance policy on drug use in Mexico. If you use drugs while there, you will be expelled from the program, lose all credit, and receive 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.

For more information on staying safe while abroad: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/safetyabroad](https://umabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/safetyabroad).

Emergency Procedures

All students are required to carry a cell phone for use in an emergency. On-site staff will contact you on your cell phone, and you will utilize your phone to contact on-site staff and/or emergency services. In a life-threatening emergency, please seek immediate emergency care; otherwise, please contact on-site staff for assistance and recommendations. On-site staff are trained and have resources available to respond to all types of emergencies including, but not limited to, civil disturbance, natural disaster, illness or injury, hospitalization, robbery or pickpocketing, sexual assault/harassment, hate crimes, and mental health.



The LAC will utilize on-site resources as well as insurance and security resources, including CISI. See more details above on insurance.

For more information, visit: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/emergency.

Independent Travel

Independent Travel Notification

You are encouraged to travel during official program break periods, over holidays, or after the program is completed. During the program, travel on the weekends should be limited to nearby locations to ensure that you are able to maintain good rest, health, and timely completion of all coursework. Students are not permitted to travel during the program dates, including on weekends or vacations, to countries currently under a US State Department Travel Warning. See travel.state.gov for the most up-to-date list.

Consult with the on-site staff, well in advance of your planned travel, to understand if there are other locations, beyond the Travel Warning locations, that you are not permitted to visit within your host country or region. These limitations are put in place for your safety and security and apply within the program dates. If you choose to visit a Travel Warning or other banned location before or after your program, you do so at your own risk.

All LAC program participants must notify the on-site staff of any independent travel that leaves the program location overnight. The required independent travel form is provided in the appendix of this handbook. Some sites will collect this form and others will have a slightly different way of collecting the same information, so refer to your on-site orientation for more specifics.

Travel Restrictions

During the Program

Students are not allowed to visit any country currently under a US Department of State Travel warning as a part of personal travel. Please visit travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html for up-to-date information about travel warning countries. If you have questions about travel restrictions, contact the LAC.

Program-Specific Restrictions

In addition to the travel restrictions required by ITRAAC, students on the Learning Abroad Center program in Mexico are not allowed to travel to the cities of Acapulco, Ixtapa, or Zihuatanejo or any area that the US State Department travel warning recommends that US citizens defer non-essential travel to.

Driving & Renting Vehicles Abroad

It is against University and Learning Abroad Center policy to drive or rent motor vehicles (including motor scooters or motorcycles) while a participant on an LAC program. These

limitations extend from the start date to the end date of your program and are put in place for your safety and security. Traffic accidents are the leading cause of injury and death of students abroad.

Arrival & Departure Logistics

Arriving at the Program Site

Coordinated Arrival

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. A representative of Cemanahuac will meet the coordinated flight at the airport in Mexico City.

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.*

Upon arrival in Mexico City and 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.

Independent Arrival

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 cemanahuacspanishschool.com/travel-tips.html.

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. 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 LAC before purchasing your flight.

Departure

Cemanahuac will provide group transportation to the Mexico City airport at the end of each session. The cost of this transportation is included in the program fee, so there is no additional cost. The group transportation will depart in accordance with the coordinated group flight for the program.

If you have booked a flight other than the group flight and need to arrive at the airport earlier/later than the group, you will be responsible for making your own way to the Mexico City airport via public bus at the end of the program. Buses depart nearly every hour from the central bus terminal in Cuernavaca. For a schedule, visit: pullman.mx.

Bus service is an inexpensive, comfortable, and safe way to travel to the airport. Budget approximately \$20 for the taxi to the bus station and the bus fare to the airport. We recommend purchasing your ticket several days in advance. Be aware that you should arrive at the Mexico City Airport at least three hours prior to departure.

Initial Arrival Housing

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 after arrival.

Program Information

Orientation in Country

Orientation begins the day after arrival. 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.

Program Excursions

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 A.D. 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.

The program also spends a full day in Mexico City, exploring the city’s historic center. This includes a visit to the National Cathedral, the Templo Mayor architectural site and museum, the Palace of Fine Arts, and the National Palace to view Diego Rivera’s famous mural *The History of Mexico*.

In-Country Staff

The LAC has partnered with Cemanahuac for more than 30 years to offer this program. They have a number of experienced staff members who are there to support you while on the program.

Charlie Goff is one of the directors of the school. Charlie is an expert in Mesoamerican history and archeology. He leads many of the field trips offered by Cemanahuac, including the excursion to the ancient pyramids of Teotihuacan.

Harriet Guerrero is the Academic Coordinator, and the Learning Abroad Center’s main contact at Cemanahuac. Harriet also coordinates the host families and can help you if you have a concern about your host family.

Blanca Santana is the Teaching Assistant for the University of Minnesota program and is your primary contact for any academic issues or questions.

In addition to these staff members, Cemanahuac hires several Spanish instructors to teach the intensive language classes. All of them are experienced teachers and native Spanish speakers.

Program Center

All classes are held at Cemanahuac Education Community, a language institute with more than 30 years’ experience teaching Spanish. Cemanahuac is situated in three large villas on a quiet street in the Las Palmas section of Cuernavaca.

Housing Considerations

Housing Options

All students live with local host families. A shared room is included with the program fee. You may request a single room for an additional \$70 per week.

Notification of Placement

Students will be notified via email of their housing placement approximately one week prior to departure. The email will contain the family's address and phone number as well as a brief description of the names and ages of everyone living in the house. Roommate information will also be included.

Housing Concerns

Students often cite their homestay experience as one of the highlights of their study abroad program. However, living with a new family can also be challenging at times. If you have any concerns about your homestay family or roommate(s), contact Harriet Guerrero, the Housing and Academic Coordinator at Cemanahuac. She can assist in resolving the issue. In some cases, the issue is simply due to a misunderstanding or cultural difference and can be resolved. In the case of a serious or unresolvable issue, Cemanahuac will place you with a different host family.

Homestay Families

The Placement Process

As part of the application process, students will complete a homestay placement form, where they can submit basic information about themselves and their preferences for a host family. The housing coordinator matches students according to this form. Students are notified of their homestay placement 7–10 days prior to departure.

Homestay Conditions

Homestay families are typically very experienced and have hosted many students in the past. Families on the Mexico program often host more than two students at a time. Students on the program may be placed in housing with students from other university programs.

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, & 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

Laundry service is not included with the program. Some host families may offer to do your laundry, in which case you should provide the detergent. However, most students utilize a drop-off service at a local laundromat. Laundry service is quick, convenient, and economical.

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 refrain from inviting 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. Here are some gift ideas

for your host families that 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

Tips for a Successful Homestay

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 troubleshoot your situation but 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.

Liability Insurance

Regardless of your housing arrangement, you should consider your insurance coverage and needs. Does your renter's or homeowner's insurance cover your items if they are lost or stolen abroad? You may also wish to buy additional insurance in case you accidentally damage your accommodations, since any damages will be yours to pay.

For more information, visit: global.umn.edu/travel/insurance/outgoing.html#personal-tab.

Visitors

Program Housing

Students' personal guests (e.g. friends, family, etc.) are not allowed to stay overnight in program housing, including apartments, dorms, and homestays.



During Program Period

Friends or relatives may visit during official program breaks or before or after the program, but not while classes are in session. Visits during this time interfere with your ability to focus on the program and host culture. Visitors are not allowed to stay with you in your official program housing.

Academics

Students are responsible for understanding and adhering to the academic policies for study abroad as published on the University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center (LAC)'s website: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies/academic-policies.

Courses

Overview of Program Courses

Participants can choose one course between Spanish 1001–3015 or 3011 during any three-week term.

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. Winter Break students will sometimes have classes on Saturdays depending on the start and end dates of the program. 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 have the opportunity 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.

Language of Instruction

All courses are taught in Spanish by faculty members of the Cemanahuac Education Community.

Global Identity

Global Identity: Connecting Your International Experience to Your Future

This optional, one-credit course will provide opportunities for you to “make meaning” of your learning abroad experience and prepare you to communicate your intercultural competence to future employers, graduate schools, or law schools. As global connectivity becomes increasingly important, you are asked to think beyond the borders of your own perception and better understand the world based on the new ideas and experiences to which you are exposed. Your ability to work in a multicultural setting and succeed in different cultural contexts is vital to your future. This course will help you apply these skills to your post-graduation plans.

For more information, visit: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/academics/globalidentity.

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 schedule on the MyU website. The numbers required for registration can only be obtained from the LAC. 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 by the stated deadline in the registration instruction email from the LAC. Check online for holds or required registration approvals that would prevent you from registering for classes and clear them before the registration deadline. The LAC 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.

UMN System Students

Students from the University of Minnesota—Morris, Crookston, Rochester, or Duluth will be set up as a multi-U student by their home campus. Please contact your study abroad office to verify that your multi-U status has been set up. You can then register as a UMTC student (see above).

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 the MyU website.

Maintaining Full-Time Status

Students are required to maintain full-time registration status as defined by their individual program throughout the duration of their study abroad program. Dropping or withdrawing from a class will not be allowed if it will bring a student below the required full-time enrollment.

Post-Program Registration

While abroad, University of Minnesota students and most other students will need to register for classes for the following term on their home campus. You must make any necessary arrangements prior to departure so that you are

able to register while overseas. In many cases, students are able to register online.

Course Drop/Add/Withdrawal

Course Changes

These must be made in consultation with the on-site staff and per the deadlines as outlined on the LAC's Academic Policies website.

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 LAC prior to changing your registration. You should also contact your academic adviser.

UMN 13-Credit Policy

University of Minnesota students are required to maintain a minimum enrollment of 13 credits per semester or maintain the minimum credit enrollment determined by their study abroad program, whichever is greater. For certain semester programs, 12 credits is considered a full-time course load.

Academic Culture

Teaching Styles

Although courses taught in Mexico cover the same core content as those taught here on campus, students should expect differences in teaching style, textbooks, assignments, and exams.

Academic Rigor

The program is designed to be academically rigorous, and it is each student's responsibility to maintain good study habits and complete assignments on time.

Books & Materials

Suggested Materials

Past participants strongly suggest bringing an English–Spanish dictionary with you if you already have one. Students taking SPAN 3011W or SPAN 3015W will need to purchase their textbooks in advance. SPAN 1001–1004 students will purchase their books at Cemanahuac. See below for details.

Cemanahuac can accept cash (in US dollars) or credit card payments via Visa or Mastercard. However, note that credit card payments are processed in the local currency.

SPAN 1001: Purchase course packet at Cemanahuac: USD \$25.

SPAN 1002: Purchase textbook at Cemanahuac: USD \$25.

SPAN 1003 and SPAN 1004: Purchase textbook at Cemanahuac: Dicho y Hecho (title), USD \$50. Please do not try to purchase on Amazon or other sites. This is a different book than used on campus for 1003/1004. The syllabi posted for these courses will reflect this title update shortly (replacing Asi Hablamos).

SPAN 3011W: Purchase textbook at UofM Bookstore: Composicion (title), Valdes (author), 9780073513140 (ISBN). This is the book used for the course on campus. If you plan to continue with 3015 on campus, you may wish to purchase the package available, but it is not required for the course in Mexico. We recommend purchasing this book at the U of M bookstore.

If you find the same book/same ISBN number you may choose to purchase from another source, but make sure it's the same book and that it includes the workbook.

Note: bring the workbook that accompanies the textbook with you to Mexico.

SPAN 3015W: Purchase textbooks at U of M Bookstore: Composicion (title), Valdes (author), 9780073513140 (ISBN) and Tradicion Y Cambio (title), Heyck (author), 9780072496437 (ISBN). These are the books used for the courses on campus. You may wish to purchase the package available, but it is not required for the course in Mexico. We recommend purchasing these books at the U of M bookstore. If you find the same book/same ISBN number you may choose to purchase from another source, but make sure it's the same book and that it includes the workbook.

Note: bring the workbook that accompanies the textbook with you to Mexico.

We recommend the U of M bookstore because the books are a U of M edition. That being said, you may find these books cheaper on Amazon and we believe they are nearly identical. You may choose to purchase from Amazon at your own risk.

Grades & Transcripts

Grades will be posted to the University of Minnesota transcript 6–8 weeks after the LAC has received them from the program. Grades will be converted into US equivalents, if necessary, prior to being posted on the University of Minnesota transcript. The LAC will provide one free transcript to the home institution of all non-University of Minnesota students. Additional transcripts can be ordered separately on the One Stop Student Services website: onestop.umn.edu.

Incompletes

Students are generally expected to complete all course requirements by the end of the term. In very rare circumstances, students can arrange an “Incomplete” in consultation with the instructor, the on-site staff, and the LAC, whereby the remaining work can be finished shortly after returning to the US.

Grade Appeals

If you wish to question a grade issued for a particular course after the program is completed, you must provide evidence that the professor made an error in his/her grade calculation. The following are not reasonable grounds for grade appeal:

- Differences between US and host country educational systems
- Personal disappointment in the grade outcome
- Comparison with one's own prior academic record/GPA
- Failure to complete one or more assignments
- Minimum grade requirement of college/department or home university
- Health concerns/missed classes

Consult with your program contact in the LAC if you believe an error has occurred and you wish to complete the Grade Petition Form.

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 Learning Abroad Center or affiliated programs offered through the LAC, students should make inquiries and appeals to the appropriate University officials, in the following order: the program representative in the LAC, the Assistant Dean for Learning Abroad, the Student Conflict 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.

Living in the Host Country

History Resources

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 began in 1810 when Mexicans began their struggle for political independence. The Revolution of 1910 marked 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 over-crowded 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.

On July 1, 2018, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, a former mayor of Mexico City, was elected as Mexico's 58th president. Commonly referred to by his initials, AMLO, he has been in office since December 1, 2018.

To view an interactive timeline of Mexican history, visit: www.history.com/topics/mexico/mexico-timeline.

Other Resources

- **CIA World Factbook**—an overview of Mexico history, people, government, economy, geography, communications, transportation, military, and transnational issues
- **“The News”**—an English newspaper based in Mexico City

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 cooler during the night. Cities at high altitudes like Mexico City (7,349 feet/2,240 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. The coldest months are December and January.

You can find up-to-date weather at: www.accuweather.com/en/mx/cuernavaca/234277/weather-forecast/234277.

Languages of the Country

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 they attempt to speak Spanish.

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.

Relationships

Dating Apps

Be cautious when considering online dating applications or other venues for meeting people. This is particularly



important when seeking to meet new people because there are different cultural norms and values that surround relationships of all kinds. What might be considered a casual drink or meal with a person of interest can have a much more significant meaning in a different cultural context. Online dating applications can carry different connotations or serve different purposes than they do in the United States. It is important to remember that it is very difficult for you to safely determine who might be genuinely interested in you and who has ulterior motives (such as stealing your passport or money, or seeking a visa to the US). Given the significant cultural differences between the US and countries abroad, the Learning Abroad Center strongly encourages students to prioritize their academics and be mindful to seek out cultural experiences that are safe, such as through homestays, local staff, and program activities.

Living 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 because 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.

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 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 in the Borda Gardens, including theatre, art shows, recitals, concerts. 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. 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. Cemanahuac 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.

Transportation to the Mexico City Airport

Cemanahuac will provide group transportation to the airport at the end of each session. The cost of this transportation is included in the program fee. If you need to arrive at the airport earlier/later than the group, you will be responsible for traveling to the airport via public bus. For a schedule, visit: pullman.mx.

Communication

Email & Internet

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 you can use.



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 handwritten 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.

Social Media

Not all countries share the same laws about freedom of expression that we have in the US. Keep in mind that derogatory comments, especially on social media, can result in legal claims and have extended legal implications even after you have returned to the United States.

Phones

Cell Phones

Due to safety concerns, all participants are required to have a working cell phone number while on the Mexico program. One option is to carry the local cell phone provided by the program. You will receive this 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.

You also have the option of using your US cell phone in lieu of the Mexican cell phone that is provided by the program, as long as you get cell reception on your US phone in Cuernavaca. Please note that there may be additional fees associated with using your phone abroad, so it is important

to check with your service provider in advance about international service and fees.

Cell phones 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.

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

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 “dls,” or simply “US.” Occasionally the \$ symbol will be accompanied by the initials “MN” (moneda nacional) referring to the peso.

Visit 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

Credit Cards

A credit card is a good resource for emergency situations and for obtaining cash advances, including cash for emergency situations, as long as you have a personal PIN. It is important to know your PIN in both letters and numbers. Please note that some ATMs require that the card have a metal “chip” visible on the front for added security. Many

US credit cards now have this chip, but it is wise to ask your credit card company whether they can issue you a “chip credit card” if you do not yet have one.

Keep in mind that you may incur fees for using your credit card abroad. Be sure to notify your bank and credit card company that you will be traveling abroad for the semester/summer. If you do not, they may assume your foreign transactions are fraudulent and may deny further transactions.

Financial Planning

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.

Social & Cultural Adjustments

Student Identity

As a foreigner in Mexico, you will need to take the initiative to meet people. Don't be afraid to start a conversation with others.

Race & Ethnicity

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. Bad intent should not be assumed. Students with questions or concerns are encouraged to consult the Mexico program team.

You may wish to consult the resources available at the University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center (LAC) related to students of color and learning abroad. For more information, visit: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/identity.

Gender & Relationships

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."

Sexual Orientation

Attitudes toward sexuality vary greatly from country to country. Some cultures are open about homosexuality, and strong gay communities exist in many cities. However, some cultures and peoples are intolerant of different sexual preferences, and strict taboos or laws against such relationships may exist. As a result, it is important to disclose to the program staff either through the program housing form or by contacting the LAC program staff directly for guidance. For more information, visit: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/identity.

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.

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. Participants with any kind of disability, whether apparent or non-apparent, should contact the LAC early in the process to discuss their particular needs. Students should plan to submit their Accommodations Request Form at least eight weeks before the start of the program. For more information, and to download the form, visit: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/identity/disabilities.

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.

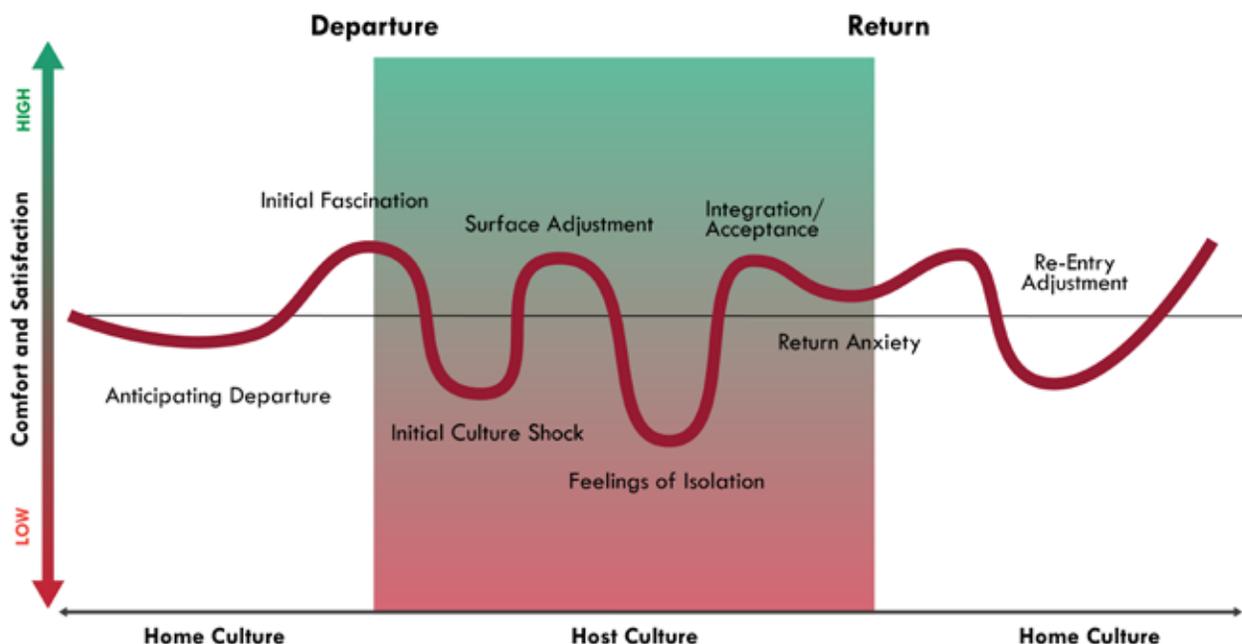
Feelings of Isolation: Difficulties in your new culture seem to stubbornly remain and you grow frustrated with the process. A sense of isolation sets in. Boredom and a lack of motivation often follow. Unresolved personal issues often surface during this stage.

Integration/Acceptance: After continued effort you find yourself more at ease with language, friends, and 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 who 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.



Adjusted from Oberg (1960) and Gallowhorn (1963)

Cultural Adjustment Curve

Looking Ahead

Career Relevance

Learning abroad can help you develop and enhance intercultural competencies that are appealing to potential employers and graduate schools. Think about your academic and career goals before, during, and after your experience abroad. For more information, visit: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/career-rel.

Re-Entry

Students often find that it is just as difficult, if not more difficult, to readjust to life in the US after studying abroad. You may find that your perspectives have changed significantly and that you may not connect with friends and family in the same way you did before going abroad. The LAC offers a variety of resources and opportunities to help you readjust to life in the US. For more information, visit: UMabroad.umn.edu/students/process/reentry.

Appendix

Packing List

Be sure to consult the “Packing” section on page 5 of this guide. Cemanahuac also includes packing tips on their website: cemanahuacspanishschool.com/what-to-pack.html.

Necessary Items

- Comfortable, low-maintenance clothing. Bring enough to last approximately 7–10 days and remember to pack clothing for both warm and cool weather. You can learn more about Cuernavaca’s climate at: timeanddate.com/weather/mexico/cuernavaca/climate.
- One or two nicer outfits for going out and more formal occasion
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Supply of prescription medication to last your entire stay

Recommended Items

- Small backpack for day trips and independent overnight excursions
- Reusable water bottle
- 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 require a specific type or brand)
- Travel-size toiletries for weekend trips
- Cold/cough remedies
- Aspirin or other painkiller
- Antacid (Tums, Pepto-Bismol, etc.)
- Sunscreen, hat and sunglasses
- Contraceptives (condoms)
- Children’s vitamins for donation to VAMOS (optional)

Social Media Hashtag Guidelines

Basic guidelines

- Keep hashtags on topic, always related to the post
- Place hashtags at the end of the post
- Always add a geotag based on the photo location
- Capitalize multiword hashtags for clarity

Number of hashtags to use

- Facebook: 0
- Twitter: 1–2
- Instagram: 9–11

Required hashtags

- #UMabroad
- #UMNProud
- (NOT #UMNabroad)

Recommended hashtags

- #communityengagement
- #globalseminar
- #goglobal
- #internabroad
- #internationaldevelopment
- #lifeonthemove
- #studyabroad
- #studyabroadlife
- #theworldasaclassroom
- #workreadyworldready

Program-specific usernames

- @accentflorence
- @accentrome
- @alc.fes.alif
- @capalondon
- @capasydney
- @cemanahuac
- @fogaargentina
- @fomtoledo
- @isdsithailand
- @warawarc

Program-specific hashtags

- #LACFSA
- #MSIDEcuador
- #MSIDKenya
- #MSIDSenegal
- #MSIDThailand

STUDENT INDEPENDENT TRAVEL FORM

This form must be completed for all independent travel as indicated by the release and waiver you signed prior to participation. Failure to complete in full and submit prior to departure will be grounds for review and sanctions as outlined in the Policy on Student Conduct in Education Abroad Opportunities (UMabroad.umn.edu/assets/files/PDFs/policies/rightsResponsibilities/Student_Conduct_17_web.pdf).

Note:

1. You are not allowed to travel to a country or region under US State Department Travel Advisory Levels 3 and 4 or a country or region not recognized by the US government (e.g., North Korea) without prior approval. A copy of the suspension committee approval is required with this form.
2. Independent travel should not interfere with academic work, classes, or events. On-site staff has the authority to deny travel due to such conflicts.
3. Failure to return on time may be subject to dismissal. Travel with your program contact details and keep the staff updated on any changes to your plans.

Complete one form per student, per trip.

Student name _____ Cell phone (if applicable) _____

Proposed destination(s) _____

Departure date _____ Return date _____

US emergency contact name, email, and phone number _____

Contact information while traveling (below):

Dates at this location	City and country	Name of hotel or host	Phone number	Email address

Transportation Information:

Additional Information:

Signatures

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Authorized On-Site Staff Signature _____ Date _____

Acknowledge receipt: The form must be signed and dated by both the student and the authorized on-site staff person prior to travel and kept on file for the duration of program period.