Economics 496 Travel Information

Documents

You should keep your passport with you at all times while traveling in Mexico. It may be required as a source of identification when checking into hotels, changing money, and obtaining other services. Please keep a photocopy of the first two pages of your passport. This copy can be used to obtain new travel documents in the event that your passport is lost or stolen. Take one or two passport size photos of yourself. You can get these at the Study Abroad office in the Union.

Also keep a photocopy of any credit cards or bank cards you may have, including the customer service number on the back.

You should obtain an International Student Identity Card through the Study Abroad Center located in the Memorial Union or at AST travel in campustown. The cost is $30. Among the benefits are supplemental health insurance, evacuation and repatriation expenses insurance in case of emergency, discounts on future airline tickets, and access to a toll-free travel assistance number (when all else fails).

Money Matters

You should take about $200 cash to pay for meals, souvenirs and other incidental items not covered in the course registration fee. Do not take traveler’s checks. Money can be changed at the airport, banks, and most hotels. Smaller bills like $20’s and a few $10’s are easier to cash, especially in hotels and restaurants. We will try to change money at the Mexico City airport when we first arrive.

There are ATM machines in Mexico where you can get cash (in pesos), but they may not take every type of bank card. The present exchange rate is about 11 pesos for one U.S. dollar.

Beverages

Bottled water and bottled or canned soft drinks, juices, and other beverages are readily available anywhere. Water served in restaurants is bottled. Don’t drink water from the tap. Water for washing is OK.

Things to Bring

We will be visiting Mexico during the "dry" season, so it probably won’t rain, at least more than a drizzle. Temperatures will be about 75 to 80 in mid-day, but a low as 45 to 50 at night and early morning, so take a sweater, jacket or sweatshirt.

It's best to travel as light as possible. Limit yourself to one carry-on bag and one suitcase. Pack a few extra clothes and any items that you can't do without for a day or two in your carry on, in case your checked bag gets lost.
Recommendations

Clothing:
2 pairs of jeans or equivalent, 1 pair of dressier pants or skirt (for Folklore Ballet)
One pair of shorts (optional—they aren’t usually worn around Mexico City, but maybe at night in your room)
Several shirts (t-shirts are ok in the country, dress up a little more for Mexico City)
Socks / underwear (we won’t have access to a laundry, but you can wash things out and hang them up)
Light jacket, sweatshirt or sweater
Hat or cap for the sun, sun glasses
Shoes: two pair for walking plus sandals or thongs for the pool or shower
Swim wear for the hotel in Huatusco
Toothpaste, soap, shampoo, etc. You can buy anything you forget, though, at the campus store.

Medications, first aid, and health supplies:
Aspirin, Tylenol, Advil, etc.
Dramamine for motion sickness, if this is problem for you
Pepto-bismo or some other remedy for heart burn
Immodium AD (anti-diarrhea)
Antihistamines if you need them
Antibiotic crème, bandaids
Sun block
Insect repellant
Anything else you normally need. Most things can be purchased in the country.
Leave all medicines in their original containers.

Other items:
Hip or fanny pack for camera, film, sun block, etc.
Inside pack for passport, money, cards
Notebook or journal to record your impressions, pens.
Camera and film (film is available, but is more expensive)
Travel alarm clock or watch
Towel (optional—they are provided, but they’re thin)
Spanish/English dictionary (optional)
Map of Mexico (optional)

It is unwise to bring any unnecessary valuables with you when you travel. Leave expensive jewelry and extra credit cards or ID cards at home. Carry only what you need. It is best to carry all items of value such as plane tickets and money on your person.

Customs and Immigration

You will need to show your passport when you check in at the ticket counter in the Des Moines airport, and again when you arrive at the Mexico City airport.

When we leave Mexico you will have to show your passport to the airline desk and again to the immigration official when you proceed to the departure gate. You will have to press a button. If you get a green light, go on through. If you get a red light, you will have to open your bags.

On the flight to Dallas you will get a form to fill out declaring what you have purchased in Mexico and its value. When we arrive in Dallas you will have to show you passport to the U.S. immigration official, then collect your luggage and pass through Customs. You may be asked to open your suitcase, but probably not. You are allowed to bring in duty-free up to $400 worth of goods. There are some restrictions on the quantity of alcoholic beverages and tobacco products you can bring in, also.