

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MEXICO—2018

STUDENT HANDBOOK



FOR

**ANAR 100: ANCIENT ART AND CITIES OF THE MAYA
A UCSD DEPARTMENT OF
ANTHROPOLOGY STUDY ABROAD COURSE**

**Professor Geoffrey E. Braswell
Department of Anthropology, UCSD
9500 Gilman Drive, M.C. 0532
La Jolla, CA 92093-0532
gbraswel@ucsd.edu**

Introduction

Welcome to ANAR 100: Ancient Art and Cities of the Maya! This rather ungainly title describes a UCSD Anthropology course offered during Summer Session 2015. The course consists of an 8-day trip to Mexico during which we will visit 18 highlighting the ancient Maya civilization.

The goals of the course are:

To teach students about the history, art, and architecture of ancient within their actual context;

To provide an experiential approach to learning that is not possible in the classroom;

To act as a field complement to ANAR 153 (*The Mysterious Maya*)

To introduce students to indigenous and Latin American cultures by interacting with living people;

To provide a short, highly intensive course within the structure of UCSD Summer School that does not interfere with the Summer employment needs of students; and

To provide an Education Abroad experience that is less expensive and open to students who have program needs that require their presence on campus during the school year.

What you are now reading is a Student Handbook designed to answer some of your questions about the course, what we will be doing, where we will be going, how you should get to Mexico, what you should bring, and what my expectations will be as a professor.

Course Outline

ANAR100 is a Study Abroad course that will be held in Mexico from 24 March to 1 April. During this time, you will learn about the history, art, and architecture of ancient Mexico by visiting cities, pyramids, tombs, and palaces built by the Maya. We also will tour museums that house important collections of art and other artifacts produced by these cultures. If you have already taken ANAR 153: *The Mysterious Maya*, this travel course will greatly help you in understanding and contextualizing the lectures you have already heard. Ancient Mexico will come alive for you in a way that is impossible within the classroom. If you have not taken ANAR 153: Don't panic! By the end of this course, you should learn the fundamentals of the history of Precolumbian

Mesoamerica and develop a strong appreciation for the accomplishments of the Maya culture.

A Trip Itinerary has been provided to you in a separate handout and is also available through the Department of Anthropology website. The itinerary mentions the sites and museums that we will visit each day. In this section of the Student Handbook, I discuss such things as our typical daily schedule, the book(s) you should bring and read, and my expectations from you as students.

Daily Schedule: Room, Board, and Activities

Accommodations. While in Mexico, we will be sleeping in hotels. These are included in your course fees. The hotels will not be fancy places, but they certainly will not be dirty fleabags. According to the Mexican Board of Tourism, they will be three-star hotels. You can expect private bathrooms with running hot/cold water, fresh sheets, and generally well-kept and clean rooms. Most will have air conditioning and others will have fans. Some hotels will have televisions (remember: t.v. is in Spanish!), and a few may have swimming pools. In all places, you will share a room with another student, unless you have already paid extra for a single. You will be given the names and contact telephone numbers of the hotels shortly before the trip begins. You should bring a copy of this list with you (and have it on your person at all times) and should also leave a copy with your parents, in case there is an emergency at home and they need to contact you.

Typically, we will wake up rather early. Most days will begin for us at 6 AM, and a few may begin an hour or so earlier. You will get used to me saying “Time to get in the van!” at an hour when many of us would rather be sleeping! An important note: since this is a course rather than a packaged tour offered by a company, you will be responsible for getting your bags to and from the van. Please don’t expect me or our chauffeur to do it for you.

Our day of visiting sites will end when they close, typically at 5 or 6 PM. Some evenings, we may visit museums that are open until 7 or 8 PM. Many days we will leave an archaeological site, drive for an hour or two to a hotel, check in, and then eat dinner. Most days (in Merida, Palenque, and Xpuhil) we will stay in the same hotel for multiple nights. On these occasions, you may leave your “night pack” (clothes, most toiletries, etc.) in the hotel. If you are concerned about safety issues, please talk to me or to the chauffeur.

Transportation. During the day, we will drive from archaeological site to archaeological site in a hired van. Most of your course fees will be applied to renting the private van, paying our chauffeur, and paying insurance. Our driver will be David Salas, who has worked for me in this capacity since 1999 and is a scrupulously honest and dependable person. He also is a licensed guide and a member of the guide union in Mexico, and is licensed and insured to drive a public transportation vehicle. This is important: it would be illegal to run the course in Mexico without a licensed guide, licensed chauffeur, and licensed public conveyance vehicle. David speaks English and is always happy to learn more. He also is a devoted bird watcher; if you have an interest in ornithology, you should talk to him about it and I am sure he will point out various birds to you. Like most educated Mexicans, he knows an awful lot about the history of his country (much more than a typical American would know about the U.S.A.). He will be

able to answer any question you may have about the colonial, independence, revolutionary, and modern periods of Mexican history.

The private van we will be driving will be clean, new, and well kept. It will have an air conditioner and will seat up to 12 students.

Archaeological Sites and Museums. Entrance to all archaeological sites and museums is provided as part of your course fee. Some museums may have additional charges for the use of a camera (although I doubt it), and flash is prohibited in all museums. Tripods are generally forbidden in Mexico. Recently, Mexican law has been changed to allow the filming of video at archaeological sites, but an additional charge is always required at the gate. This charge is typically about \$4 U.S. for each and every site, so it can get expensive. If you wish to shoot video, please keep in mind that you will have to pay this additional fee yourself.

On the way to each site, I will present a general background lecture consisting of information that you should know. Some of the sites are only poorly understood (i.e., archaeological work has been limited to consolidation or reconstruction rather than scientific research, or very little has been published to date), and these formal lectures will be short. My style is very different from that of a “professional” guide. If I do not know something, I will tell you.

We will tour each site as a loose group. Sometimes you may wish to go off with other students. This is alright, but I will ask you to stay within earshot. One reason is that I will talk about various features, buildings, and works of art that we will see; I do not want you to miss anything important. The size of our group is such that we often will be having conversations about what we see, rather than a more formal guided tour. I promise that I will not rush you by something interesting so that we finish quickly!

Perhaps the most important aspect about the course is this informal setting. You are encouraged—even required!—to ask questions and to participate in discussions about what we see. I very much doubt that you will have another chance as an undergraduate student to engage in so much one-to-one interaction with a professor. One of the goals of the course is to give you this sort of attention as a student.

Food and Beverages. Included in your course fees are breakfasts and lunches. Most often we will have sit down meals in restaurants, but from time to time we will have picnics. David is an excellent cook, and on these days he will prepare something while we visit a site.

We will always bring water with us in the van. You should have some sort of container for carrying it with you, like a Nalgene bottle or small canteen. Most sites will sell soda pop and other beverages, as well as purified water. Most sites will also have bathrooms, although their quality will vary dramatically. Be prepared and bring your own paper!

You should bring enough pocket money with you at all times to buy snacks and drinks (other than “van water”) as you wish. You will be asked to purchase your beverages at meal times; some people seem to drink a lot more expensive beverages than others, and it is unfair to split the cost evenly. A word about alcohol—the drinking age is 18 in Mexico. You will be expected to maintain civil behavior at all times, and drunkenness during the course hours of the day will not be tolerated. Please remember this is a university course and not a party. But I have never had this problem with a class, and I do not expect to this year!

We will share two dinners—on the first and last nights of the course—that are included as part of your course fees. The first night we will have a Welcome Dinner. The last night we will have Farewell Dinner and also a Final Examine (do not worry, you'll enjoy it!). During the other nights of the course, you will be free to eat wherever you choose. In part, this is to give each of you a chance to experience Mexico as you wish. It also is a chance to give each of us a little “down time” when we are not forced to be together in a big group. It will also allow some of us to save a little money by eating in inexpensive restaurants. Finally some of us may have dietary needs or requirements that are not easily met during the day. If you have to have your daily Big Mac, pizza, or tofu burger, this is the time to do so! You will need to bring enough money with you, therefore, to pay for six dinners. Please see the section on Money for more details.

A final word about food: *If you have special dietary needs or requirements, it may be difficult to meet them.* In particular, if you keep strictly Kosher or are a Vegan or have certain life-threatening food allergies, you may have to bring your own food. It may be impossible to meet these requirements any other way. Please keep this mind when packing.

Grades and Expectations

This is a study abroad course, not a formal lecture-hall course. Moreover, simply by enrolling, each of you has expressed an interest that is far beyond that which is typical for an on-campus course. My expectations of you as a Study Abroad student are therefore quite different from my expectations of classroom students, and the final grades I assign reflect this difference in expectations.

I ask that you participate in discussions, ask questions, and talk. You will be assigned a short and simple textbook (see below), which I will ask you to read. There also will be a Final Examine delivered personally to you on the final night of the course. You should not fear this experience, but think about it as a way to recapture the things you have seen and experienced during the course. Your final grade will be based on our conversations, your questions, and on this final exam.

Textbook and Other Books to Bring

There is one required textbook for this course. You should order it through whatever vendor you like. I have chosen it because it is easy to read, inexpensive, and extremely compact. Please buy it and read it before we go, and then re-read it during the course. The textbook is:

Coe, Michael D., and Stephen D. Houston
2015 *The Maya*. 9th edition. Thames and Hudson, New York.

Please make sure you have the current edition. Earlier versions are now woefully out of date, incomplete, and inaccurate.

You also may wish to purchase a general guidebook to Mexico and Central America. I like the **Lonely Planet** and **Moon Publications** best, but the **Rough Guide** also is good. Guidebooks will help you decide where you want to eat and will help keep you oriented in the cities where we spend the night. Some people may want to bring a compact **Spanish Dictionary** or phrase book.

It is really useful and enjoyable to know where you are and where you are going. To this end, you may wish to buy a fold-up map of southern Mexico.

Finally, do not forget to bring a notebook and pen! Please *do not plan on using your phone for notes!* You also may wish to keep a diary, journal, or trip log.

Planning for the Trip: Documents, Money, Climate, and What to Bring

Passports, Visas, and Tourist Cards

All students are required to have passports. You cannot travel without one. If you are a U.S. citizen and do not have a passport, go to a major U.S. Post Office, bring your birth certificate (the original, not a photocopy), and fill out and mail the required forms. Be prepared to enclose payment, and make sure that you apply far enough ahead of time to get the passport back from the U.S. Passport Office. You should start this process now!

U.S. citizens do not require special visas to visit Mexico, but citizens of other countries (especially Asia and Africa) might. *If you are not a U.S. citizen, you should check with the Mexican consulate to find out if you require a visa. Please get your visa before the trip begins!*

If you fly to Mexico from the U.S.A., you probably will be given a Tourist Card to fill out on the airplane. Otherwise, you will receive one Immigration. If you fly from Tijuana—which I strongly suggest—you will fill out the form as you get to the airport. Don't lose this! You will need it to leave each country!

Money

The Mexican currency is the Peso. Currently, there are about 18 Pesos to the U.S. dollar. Don't bother changing money in the USA. You can get it in Mexico.

You should bring enough money for dinners, snacks, and souvenirs for your trip. The best way to bring money is to divide it between a relatively small amount of U.S. cash (no more than about \$100 U.S.) and a bank ATM card. Please do *not* bring travellers' checks! They are a total pain to cash.

ATMs: Your Friend. Perhaps the greatest change that has made travel easier for tourists is the installation of ATMs (called *Cajeros Automaticos*) throughout Mexico. ATMs are open all night and are as safe as in the U.S.A. If you lose your bankcard, it is no big deal. Your card cannot be used without your PIN, and we can call your family and ask them to cancel the card. The maximum you can withdraw in a day is about \$4000 Pesos.

Credit Cards. Visa and Mastercard are also accepted in most city shops and fancier restaurants. If you plan on using a credit card, you should call your company ahead of time and notify them of your dates of travel. If not, the card may be automatically rejected when you try to use it.

Travellers' Checks: Don't Leave Home with Them! Travellers' checks are *not* recommended, and are largely a vestigial thing of the past like your appendix or

tailbone. They can be cashed at *Casas de Cambio* (see below), some hotels, and banks. But you may get a bad rate of exchange and—particularly at a bank—you may have to stand in line for an hour. We will not be able to make special trips to banks in the middle of the day to change checks for you. If you still want to bring travellers' checks, just realize that you may not be able to cash them. Think of them as emergency backup.

Casas de Cambio (Wechsel, Foreign Cash Exchange). Most major Mexican cities have special licensed money exchange booths. Some are open late at night. You can exchange U.S. cash or travellers' checks at them. They are safe.

Do *not* exchange money or travelers' checks with people in the street. Be aware that this is illegal, and almost always there is some sort of scam going on (e.g., you agree on a rate, sign the travellers' check, and then the person changes the rate on you).

The Big Question: How Much Should I Bring? The amount of money (cash, ATM cards, credit cards) you bring is up to you. One student I had brought only \$50 U.S. for two weeks and did not use it up. Another student brought \$500 and spent it all on souvenirs and tchatchkies during the first two days! Here are some tips that might help you plan.

Food. First, remember that you will be paying for six dinners. If you want to “do the trip on the cheap,” I would set aside about \$10 for each night or a total of \$60. This should be more than enough to buy you a fairly large supper and beverage. Keep in mind that food is cheap but alcohol is not. A full meal might cost the same as two beers or a glass of wine. Also bring a sufficient amount of money for daily snacks and soda pop. I would guess that \$3/day is sufficient.

Souvenirs. Mexico has a full range of touristic goodies from cheap, cheesy knickknacks to solid gold copies of the Aztec Calendar Stone. The important thing to do is to shop wisely. Do not spend your wad on the first ceremonial dagger you see. Do not be afraid to haggle, particularly if you are buying from a street vendor. In that context, haggling is expected. Finally, do not buy so much junk that it fills up the van!

Souvenir buying is really a personal matter. You may be the sort who prefers to take pictures and buy a couple of postcards. As a very general estimate, I would say that unless you are buying silver or gold jewelry in Mexico, or need to buy presents for a large family, \$50 should probably be enough.

Telephone Calls. Calling or texting home is easy from your cell phone, but make sure you check your company for rates first! Otherwise, you can use WhatsApp, Skype, or email from the hotel each evening. All will have wifi/

WiFi. All our hotels and most restaurants will have it. Please remember that we are in Mexico and Central America to experience these places. You can't do that through your phone, iPad, or computer.

Tip for the Driver. A final cost that ask you to consider is a tip for the driver. In Mexico, the general rate is about \$3 U.S. per person per day, or about \$25 U.S. for each of you. This is not mandatory, but I do ask you to consider it and please set it aside.

Geography and Climate of Southern Mexico

Mexico is a country of great extremes, from mountains with snow to hot tropical rainforests, to deserts. Throughout this trip, however, we will be in the humid tropical and subtropical lowlands.

Around Merida and in the northern Maya lowlands of Yucatan, you can expect very hot and fairly dry days. Temperatures will be in the 90s and it will be sunny most of the time. It should be pleasant, subtropical weather!

Farther south, we will be in the tropics and (what is left of) the tropical rainforest. It will be a bit cooler (especially at night), and a lot more humid. There is a chance it will rain a little, but in the dry season rain is rare.

Planning for the Trip, Part I—What to Wear

Because we will be outside in rural areas much of the time, your clothes should protect you from the sun and brambles. We also will be traveling in indigenous regions, where people have some traditional ideas about what constitutes appropriate dress for men and women. If you want to be treated with respect and not be stared at, you should dress respectfully.

The following clothing suggestions are based on what *I think* will meet your needs:

- (1) Light weight but durable long pants (two pairs; you will be miserable in jeans, leave them at home!);
- (2) Light weight short-sleeve shirts (three is enough), cotton tee-shirts are much hotter and more constricting than light button downs);
- (3) Light weight hiking boots;
- (4) Alternate closed-toe footwear for the evenings and days;
- (5) A hat or cap you can wear in sun or rain;
- (6) Sun glasses;
- (7) Something fairly nice or dressy (skirt and blouse for women, nicer pants and shirt for men) for evenings in the city;
- (8) A pair of shorts for informal relaxing;
- (9) A bathing suit for hotel pools, the waterfall, and *cenotes*!

Some of you may wish to go out in the evenings, and you should be aware that many places have dress codes, particularly for men. Shorts and jeans are never appropriate for “clubbing.”

A Tip on Packing. Please *limit your bags to two*: a regular sized backpack, duffle bag, or suitcase for access in the evenings/nights/mornings, and a daypack or handbag for the day. Just two bags, please! If you bring more, there will be less room for everyone else! And don’t bring some ridiculously huge bag or suitcase, please.

Laundry. We will not have time to do laundry. If you want to be a real pro traveler, bring less clothes and some Woolite. You can wash your ginchers and socks in your hotel room, or bring enough for the trip.

Planning for the Trip, Part II—What Else to Bring

You should bring the course textbook, one or two other suggested books (see above) a camera, and all personal items and medications you need. Also, do not forget a notebook and a pen! Here is a list of things that are suggested:

- (1) All medications you require on a daily basis;

- (2) Personal toiletries and hygienic items;
- (3) Camera and film/digital cards, as well as spare batteries;
- (4) Notebook and pen;
- (5) YOUR PASSPORT, which should be with you at all times!;
- (6) Sunscreen (important!);
- (7) A water bottle or small canteen;
- (8) Textbook and one or two other books (see above);
- (9) A map;
- (10) Sufficient money for small purchases (see above);
- (11) A personal music device for chilling in the van;
- (12) A roll of toilet paper to share;
- (13) A big bottle of Pepto Bismol or the equivalent and Imodium;
- (14) THIS HANDBOOK;
- (15) The list of hotels and contact numbers (to be distributed later).

Most of these items should go in your “Day Pack,” which will be available throughout the day. Some of your medications, toiletries, and hygienic items—as well as money or credit cards well stashed—can go in your “Night Bag,” which will be locked up in the back of the van during the day.

What Not to Bring: Drugs and Alcohol

Please understand that if the van is searched and someone has illegal substances, we *all* will go to jail. The van will be confiscated by the government, and expenses will be enormous. You have been asked to sign a liability waiver that includes, in part, a statement that you agree to keep to the standards of a Drug Free Workplace. If you are caught bringing drugs to/from the U.S.A., you could end up in a U.S. Federal Penitentiary. If you are caught with drugs in Mexico, you and anyone with you will end up in a Mexican jail, which is worse.

Please respect the laws of Mexico and the U.S.A., and understand that by engaging in illegal activities, you will be putting all of us in jeopardy. If you are taking drugs, you will be sent home. There will be no second chance.

Getting to Guatemala & Flying Home from Mexico

Our itinerary and even the precise dates of the trip are still provisional. Don't buy an airplane ticket until specifically instructed to do so! The field portion of the course officially begins when you are met at the airport in Villahermosa on Saturday, 24 March. We will meet you at the airport and take you to the hotel in Palenque, about 90 minutes away. The course officially ends on Sunday 1 April with a drop off at the airport in Merida. If you choose to leave Mexico later than 1 April, you will be on your own from hotel checkout time.

By far the cheapest way to fly is from Tijuana. From the USA, the best way to do this via the new Cross Border Xpress (CBX). There is a terminal on the USA side in Otay Mesa. You go through customs, walk through a tunnel, and you are in Mexico.

Coming home, there is no wait! This is not like going by car or even on foot through the Tijuana port of entry. It is simple and takes five minutes.

My suggestion is that you purchase:

- (1) A one-way ticket to Villahermosa that arrives on 24 March.
- (2) A one-way ticket leaving Merida, Mexico, on 1 April. Any time of day is fine, but you will be dropped off at the airport in the morning.
- (3) As of 20 November, 2017, the cheapest flight is about \$250 total.

In order to ensure that we meet you at the airport in Villahermosa, please make sure that you both e-mail me and send me a letter by U.S. postage with your entire flight plans (all legs and all flights, not just your arrival times! Please include times, departure and arrival cities, and flight numbers). We need your entire itinerary to track you down in case you are not on your flight. This is critically important!

David Salas and I have never missed a student at the airport. But if, for some reason, you do not find us at the airport, *please wait for us!* We will not forget you. I will send you contact information for him later. You should call him if we are not at the airport. If you are unable to make a connecting flight and are stuck, you also should call David on his cell phone.

Health

If you are suffering from any chronic health problems or have special needs for accommodation (including dietary requirements or preferences), you should have already made these clear in the application and health form. The University of California will *not* provide any special accommodation on this trip (again, including dietary needs). The combination of walking, hot sun, climbing pyramids, and a busy schedule will take its toll on you by the end of the course. For this reason, you should be aware of your health situation and take steps to maintain your health during the two weeks of the course.

Do What Your Doctor Says!

I am an archaeologist, not a medical doctor. You should consult your doctor and do whatever s/he says about malaria prophylactics, immunizations, and other preventative measures.

There *is* malaria where we will be going, but *almost* all of it can be treated with orally administered quinine. Hepatitis A is always a concern everywhere in the world, and it would not be a bad idea to be inoculated. You should always have a tetanus booster on a regular basis. Beyond these common diseases, there is little else you can prepare for. But do whatever your doctor says.

Health & Travel Insurance

You must have health insurance to participate on this trip. You must provide evidence of such insurance before participation, so be sure to bring your documentation

along. It is important to be able to pay for any medical treatment in advance, because most insurance policies are on a claim-back basis. I recommend that you have a credit card you can use to draw on funds if necessary. You should also find out if your insurance company has a toll-free hotline number in case of severe emergencies, and keep this with your insurance documents.

I will see to it that you have UCSD travel insurance. This is rather minimal, but does do the trick.

You also may purchase Emergency Evacuation and Repatriation Insurance. This will cost about \$30-\$50 U.S. and may already be included in your health plan. This is optional and not a requirement of the course.

What is Evacuation/Repatriation Insurance? If you have a severe injury or accident, you may wish to return to the U.S. for treatment. Evacuation insurance will pay for you to return on a special chartered medical jet. If you do not have this kind of insurance, it could cost up to \$50,000 to bring you back for treatment. Repatriation Insurance pays to have your mortal remains brought back in case of death. It will not help you, but could save your family many thousands of dollars. Please understand that UCSD will not pay for you to get back to the U.S. if you are involved in an accident. You will need to pay for that yourself.

Common Health Problems to Watch out for

Dehydration. You will be traveling in a very safe and controlled environment. Your greatest health worry should be hydration. It is important to drink above normal quantities of fluids. I recommend that each student drink at least 1-2 liters of water per day beyond normal beverages at meals. Again, we will always have potable water in the van. Dehydration can be caused by a number of factors: too much sun, too much exercise, too much alcohol, and—especially—a stomach bug. If you get a stomach bug, your danger is dehydration. If you do not hydrate yourself, your condition may get much worse quickly.

If you are suffering from dehydration, David and I will monitor your intake of fluids. We probably will give you rehydration fluids (such as Pedialyte) to drink. You may not want to do so, but it is important to drink enough water. Nothing will spoil your trip faster than dehydration. If you require further medication, such as antibiotics for a bad stomach, we will see that you get it.

It is especially important to drink a lot of extra water if you have been indulging in alcohol during non-course hours, because nothing dehydrates you more quickly than a few beers in the hot sun of the tropics.

Please note that it is important that you do not resist our suggestions for rehydrating or getting quick medical treatment. Because of the pace of the course, we cannot wait a few days in a hotel for you to get better on your own schedule. If your condition deteriorates to point where you are no longer able to participate, you will be asked to return home alone.

How to Avoid *Turista* (Travelers' Stomach Bug). Travelers anywhere in the world often get stomach bugs. When I have been in Mexico for a long time, I frequently get sick when I *return* to the U.S.! Often, it is simply a matter of your system getting accustomed to the local micro-flora and -fauna.

Once upon a time, Mexico was famous for “Montezuma’s Revenge,” which is locally called *turista*. Nowadays, this reputation is—for the most part—unjustified. But there are a few “Does and Don’ts” that apply for both visiting tourists and local residents.

First, do not drink water from the tap. Use “Van Water,” water from coolers, bottled water, and water provided by hotels in pitchers. This is purified and probably safer than the water you drink out of the tap at home.

Second, think before ingesting ice. If you are in a sit-down restaurant, the ice is almost certainly made from purified water. If you are on the street buying from a street vendor, who knows?

Third, avoid “street meat,” unless you are willing to take the risks. Food sold by street vendors can be delicious, but hygiene is generally poor. The food may have been outside without refrigeration for many hours. Moreover, the vendors may not be clean and harbor germs on their hands. Finally, some beverages (such as *pozole* or *atole*) are served in vessels that may only get a cursory rinse between customers. If you must eat street food, try breads, nuts and the like, but avoid meats, anything with mayonnaise, raw seafood, icees (or *nieves/nevadas/raspadas*) and those really wonderful looking sliced fruits and vegetables. You may think veggies and fruit are clean and safe, but they are the most dangerous because you do not know where they were washed.

Fourth, make sure you wash your hands and face frequently, particularly before eating. Soap kills an awful lot, even if you are washing with tap water. Most of the germs you ingest come from your hands, not your food.

Fifth, you may consider brushing your teeth with purified water rather than tap water. I do not do this, but my gut is somewhat accustomed to Mexican and Central American bugs.

Seventh, be careful with raw fruits and vegetables. Fresh produce is one of the joys of Latin America, but uncooked items can carry bacteria. Specifically, think about whether or not the item has absorbed a lot of water (like lettuce or strawberries) or is not protected by a thick skin or rind (again, like strawberries). Avocados and other thick-skinned fruit are fine. The best restaurants will have their own sources of clean fruits and vegetables, but cheaper street vendors may not.

How to Get over *Turista*. The best medicine is prevention. The next best is avoiding alcohol, drinking a lot of clean water, and getting a good night’s rest. Your third defense is good old **Pepto Bismol**. Liquid works much better than the pills. This is a harmless natural product that is much better for you in the long run than antibiotics. You can drink a whole bottle a day, and you will have no long- or short-term ill effects. People often hate Pepto because of the taste. But it is really good for getting rid of both the symptoms and the cause of *turista*. And remember—stay hydrated! Everyone should bring a bottle of Pepto and should use it freely.

The next step is Imodium or Lomotil. These will quickly and effectively relieve your symptoms (particularly bad cramps) but do little to kill the bug. Your final line of defense is antibiotics. If you have a fever—often a sign of acute food poisoning—David will almost certainly insist that you take antibiotics. He knows what kind to get for you. Food poisoning is rotten, and generally hits you within four to six hours of the meal in which you ingested the bug. It should pass in 24-48 hours, but will leave you shaky and quite weak, and relapses are possible. Antibiotics will greatly increase the rate of healing. If you need a doctor or medic, we will take you to one.

Sunburn. Perhaps the most common problem will be sunburn. Make sure you have sunscreen and that you use it! Also, you may wish to wear a hat outdoors.

Heat Rash. People with poor circulation may develop heat rash on their legs, particularly just above the ankle. Mild heat rash is expressed by small, itchy blisters that exude a clear liquid that dries and gets crusty. You probably will think you have bug bites. More serious cases will look like bad bruises with very tender red and running sores. Try to keep your feet elevated, and do not scratch!

Government Travel Warnings. From time to time, the US State Department issues travel warnings for Mexico. We take them very seriously. It is important that you are aware of them, and that you understand that all travel—in Mexico, anywhere abroad, and in the USA—entails risk. In fact, several European governments have issued official travel warnings about travel in the USA because of racism, police brutality, the out of control gun violence epidemic, and homophobia.

Warnings issued concerning Mexico most often focus on continuing drug violence created by American drug use, American weapons, and American political pressure. These problems are mostly limited to the far north of Mexico, Michoacan, and Acapulco. Other warnings have to do with the lawlessness that has followed the drug war. Again, for the most part, this is limited to the northern part of the country.

Two issues are particularly worth noting. The first is kidnapping for money. Nearly all victims are Mexicans who have relatives in the USA, but some wealthy American residents of Mexico also have been subject to “virtual kidnapping” or “Express-ATM kidnapping” (for quick use of an ATM card, usually just before and again just after midnight). The second issue is vehicle car-jackings and holdups while travelling on the road, sometimes with violence. These typically take place late at night in isolated places that are not well travelled, on roads that are not toll-roads, and in places where there is no cellphone coverage. Almost always, they involve private vehicles driven by one or two people.

I would like to note several commonsense precautions that we take to ensure that our trip is safe. ***In 20 years and with more than 300 students, we have never had a problem.*** First, I ask you to be careful and to think before you go out at night. Students are required to go out in groups, never alone. Students are expressly forbidden from going to strip clubs and places where gambling is taking place; when violence occurs, it is most often at these establishments. Please remain sober and aware at all times, and try to be home well before midnight. In regard to travelling on the roads, we never drive in the dead of night. We do not go to rural places off major highways after dark. On this particular trip, cellphone coverage is available on all but two short sections of road, and we will travel them during the day.

Most importantly, this trip is nowhere near the center of the kinds of problems discussed in most travel warnings. Yucatan is thousands of kilometers away from the drug war in the border. ***You are much closer to the problems here in San Diego than you will be in Yucatan!***

You should check the current State Department warnings before deciding on going on this trip. We check them frequently, and, if needed, we will adjust our plans taking them into account.

<https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/alertswarnings/mexico-travel-warning.html>

Other Considerations. Please wear closed-toe shoes at all times because there are lots of rusty metal objects lying around and it is easy to stub your toe at the ruins. You may be from SoCal, but leave the flip-flops for the hotel.

As in any place, women should not take their safety for granted. It is wise, therefore, to know the rules, and here are a few well-tested guidelines. Women traveling alone may experience problems, and it is wise to travel with a friend and if possible with a male companion. In rural parts of Mexico, foreign women are treated as “honorary men,” that is, you can get away with lots of things that local women would never try. It is, however, always wise to be conservative and respectful in your behavior. Idle chat with strange men, particularly if you or they have been drinking, is often taken as a sign of your interest in them (invariably sexual), and should be avoided. If you are harassed (unlikely, but it can happen), it is useful to avoid speaking and simply walk away and ignore the person concerned. In most situations, the presence of other women is the safest retreat. Try not to go into a bar or cantina where the only patrons are men. If you are afraid, start shouting as loudly as you can.

Despite these caveats, you should not let fear ruin your experience of Mexico. Keep in mind that many Americans have an isolationist, unjust, and often racist view of Mexico and Mexicans. They are not all “drug dealers, killers, and rapists.” The truth is, ***violent crime is much more rampant in US cities like Detroit, St. Louis, Oakland, Atlanta, and Washington, D.C.*** than in any of the cities we will visit!

Most people are very friendly, and typically are *much* more welcoming of foreigners than their American counterparts. Many people enjoy being hosts and sharing their country with guests—an attitude that is fairly uncommon in the U.S. When you return to the U.S.A. and pass a Mexican or in the street, you should ask yourself why we do not treat them with the same sense of courtesy, respect, and hospitality that you will experience. Mexico’s most famous president once said “el respeto al derecho ajeno es la paz.” You will see in Mexico that many more people live by those words than in the USA.