

Universidad Panamericana

# PUBLIC HEALTH IN MEXICO PROGRAM HANDBOOK 2019

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# Program Information

## Program Team

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The **International Affairs Office** is responsible for orienting you to Universidad Panamericana and the Public Health in Mexico program, including the overall schedule, cultural adjustment, and safety and security. They coordinate the *Spanish Language* and *History and Culture of Mexico* courses, as well as hotel housing. **Norma Ávila** in the International Affairs Office is your primary emergency contact: if you are feeling sick and wish to see a doctor, if you have any concerns about your safety or comfort, or if you experience any incidents, Norma will support you.

The team in the **Schools of Medicine and Nursing** is responsible for all public health courses and programming. They will serve as academic resources to connect ideas, generate questions, and facilitate discussion around program themes.

## Tentative Program Schedule & Activities

Your program runs from Monday, June 24, 2019, to Sunday, August 18, 2019. Below is a basic schedule of program dates. A more detailed schedule will be provided when it is finalized. Please note that activities and dates are subject to change.

DATES	ACTIVITIES
Monday, June 24	Departures from the U.S. and arrivals in Mexico City Move into hotel housing
Tuesday, June 25	On-site orientation, UP campus tour, language placement test
Thurs, Aug 1- Mon, Aug 5 ( <i>tentative</i> )	Excursion to Oaxaca City
Sunday, August 18	Depart for United States

## Universidad Panamericana & Campus

Universidad Panamericana (UP), founded in 1966, is a private Catholic university with campuses in Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Aguascalientes. UP offers degrees in 15 different schools to over 11,000 students. UP's programs in Medicine, Business, Law, Nursing and Education are among the top ranked programs in Mexico. The main campus where you will be taking your courses is Mixcoac, located in Benito Juarez borough.

## Course Descriptions

This program offers a set curriculum, as follows:

### Public Health in Mexico

This course is designed to introduce students to the most common public health problems faced in Mexico. Students will learn about major communicable and non-communicable diseases and their incidence in particular regions and groups. Maternal and child health, mental health, injuries, and other public health problems that affect the Mexican population will be discussed.

### Healthcare System and Policy in Mexico

This course is designed to introduce students to the Mexican health care system and policy, as well as the unique challenge of chronic, non-communicable diseases. Health care systems are responsible for the provision of services aimed at maintaining and/or recovering the health of the population they serve. Key elements to evaluate the efficiency of health care systems are quality, equity, and financial protection. Health care systems vary from country to country, but invariably are under enormous pressure due to the high prevalence of chronic, non-communicable conditions, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and chronic pulmonary diseases; the progressive aging of the population; and the introduction of new and expensive medical technologies.

### Spanish Language

While there is no language pre-requisite to participate in this program, students are required to take a Spanish language class while in Mexico. Three to four levels are offered, depending upon students' skill levels.

### History and Culture of Mexico

This course provides students with a general overview of the different historical periods that have shaped Mexican history and culture, from the Pre-Hispanic period to the 21st century. The primary purpose of the course is to help students to understand present day Mexico through an exploration of past events.

### Transcript & Credit Transfer

You will receive a transcript issued by Universidad Panamericana. Courses will post as transfer credit to your Northwestern record as long as you earn course grades of C or better. If you are seeking to fulfill major/minor/distribution requirements, you must follow your [school's petitioning process](#).

### Public Health in Mexico Program: Reflections from Past Students

- *“Public Health in Mexico provided me the opportunity to view health from the perspective of a place that has a wide range of cultural influences and socioeconomic profiles. Mexico is our next-door neighbor, yet a country that we still seem to know very little about. Spending 8 weeks there helped me understand issues in public health in both countries.”* ~Connie Panton, 2015
- *“Public Health in Mexico is a wonderful opportunity that everyone should take advantage of. I was able to learn and compare the public health system of Mexico with the United States. I learned a lot about the history and culture of Mexico, even though I already had a lot of background given that my parents were born in Mexico. Overall, it was simply an amazing time and I absolutely loved it.”* – Cynthia Padilla, 2016
- *“I have learned so much about Mexico and the US through this program, and I felt like I got to see so much and experience many important cultural aspects of Mexico City. The Mexican people were all so kind and welcoming, the food was delicious, the classes were enriching, and the home stays were great opportunities to improve my Spanish. I can't think of anything I would change about this program.”* - Rebecca Sinard, 2016
- *“The program exposed me to topics of Public Health that I had never considered before in a new context. I enjoyed learning about the culture and history of a different country, but most of the experience necessitates a personal investment in the learning. I learned the most from candid conversations with Mexican students and teachers about what's happening in Mexico right now, the corruption in the government, and about cultural norms. You get out what you put in.”* Stacy Tsai, 2017
- *“Studying abroad in Mexico City was one of the best decisions I've made in my entire Northwestern career. Because of it, I learned that I want to pursue Public Health further, and I am closer to the Mexican culture than I ever was before.”* – Jazib Gohar, 2017
- *“Our public health classes were taught by real doctors and health care professionals who were highly educated in the field in general and specifically in regards to the Mexican health care system. We also had the chance to visit clinics and observe what they did without crossing any ethical boundaries. Our culture and history class visited most of the major tourist attractions, and they were so much fun.”*  
– Angelina Jose, 2018

### Friday Excursions & Study Trips

You will visit several sites important to Mexican culture and history, including:



#### Teotihuacan

The holy city of Teotihuacan ('the place where the gods were created') is an ancient Mesoamerican city located in a sub-valley of the Valley of Mexico, located northeast of modern-day Mexico City. It's considered today of the most architecturally significant Mesoamerican pyramids built in the pre-Columbian

Americas. Learn more: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/414>

#### Centro Historico: Prehispánico & Colonial

Built in the 16th century by the Spanish on the ruins of Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital, Mexico City is now one of the world's largest and most densely populated cities. It has five Aztec temples, the ruins of which have been identified, a cathedral (the largest on

the continent) and some fine 19th- and 20th-century public buildings such as the Palacio de las Bellas Artes. The Zócalo is the main square, and prior to the colonial period, it was the main ceremonial center of Tenochtitlan.

### Xochimilco

Xochimilco lies 28 km south of Mexico City. With its network of canals and artificial islands, it testifies to the efforts of the Aztec people to build a habitat in the midst of an unfavorable environment. Learn more: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/412>



### National Palace

The *Palacio Nacional* is the seat of the federal executive in Mexico and is located on Mexico City's main square, the Zócalo. Diego Rivera's famous murals are located in the northern wing and chronicle life in the pre-Columbian city, during the Spanish conquest, and through the ensuing centuries of industrialization.

### Coyoacan & Frida Kahlo Museum

*Coyoacan* has housed numerous Mexican intellectuals and refugees from other countries of the world such as *Diego Rivera*, *Frida Kahlo* and Leon Trotsky, whose houses have become museums that illustrate part of their legacy and way of life: <https://www.visitmexico.com/en/actividades-principales/mexico-city/walk-in-coyoacan>

### Oaxaca (4 days/3 nights)

A UNESCO world heritage site, Oaxaca is home to Mexico's most vibrant crafts and art scene, some outstandingly colorful and extroverted festivities, a uniquely savory cuisine and diverse natural riches. At the center of the state in every way stands beautiful, colonial Oaxaca city: <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/mexico/oaxaca-state>

As part of the public health program, you will also visit several community health clinics, hospitals, and research centers. You will receive a final schedule during your first week of class.

## Accommodations & Meals

### Housing

You will stay in the [City Express Plus Insurgentes Sur Hotel](#). The hotel is within a 10-minute walk from the Universidad Panamericana campus, or 1 stop on the Metrobús Line 1 (bus stop directly in front of the hotel). You will live in double rooms and will be

placed with one other participant of the same gender. Your room is equipped with a bed(s), air conditioner, a small desk, TV, and a bathroom. Students also have access to hotel amenities such as free Wifi and a small gym. Coin-operated laundry facilities are located within walking distance.



There is a strict policy of **no overnight visitors/guests in your rooms**. The only people allowed to spend the night in your rooms during the program are you and your roommate. If people visit you

on the program, they must find their own accommodation. You are responsible for keeping your room clean and tidy, and also for respecting the property as a whole. All students will be held legally and financially responsible for any damage or disruption to the residence (refer to the *Infractions Policy in Appendix III* for more information on how any violations will be handled). You must be respectful of other people staying in the hotel, and obey any posted quiet hours.

## Meals

Daily breakfast is included at the hotel. Lunch is provided on class days (Monday-Thursday) at the UP cafeterias located on/near campus. On Friday excursions, a bagged lunch will be provided. You will be responsible for all dinners as well as lunch on the weekend. *Vips*, a local restaurant chain, is located next to the hotel and offers discounted meals for students. There are a number of restaurants, small grocery stores, and markets in the area. For the Oaxaca trip, some breakfasts and lunches will be provided. *The estimated cost of meals not covered in the program fee is included in the Personal Expenses category of the Student Budget sheet (see Appendix I, Student Budget).*

## Electricity

Mexico's electrical system is the same as that in the United States: 110 volts, 60 cycles, alternating current (AC). Electrical outlets are of the American type, designed to work with appliances that have standard double-bladed plugs.

# Mexico

Mexican history and culture is both rich and complex. We encourage you to do some research about the history of your host country, as well as general country information, including the political system, geography, the economy, population, culture, and current events. Your ability to take full advantage of your time abroad will be influenced by the amount of preparation and research you do before you go, so read as much as you can! Refer to the list of resources in the **Links & Recommended Reading** section.



## Fast Facts<sup>1</sup>

- Surface area: 1,964,375 sq km
- Government type: federal presidential republic
- Currency: peso
- Population: 124,574,795 (July 2017 est.)
- GDP per capita: \$19,500 (2017 est.)
- GDP growth: 2.1% (2017 est.)
- Major industries: food and beverages, tobacco, chemicals, iron and steel, petroleum, mining, textiles, clothing, motor vehicles, consumer durables, tourism

## Language

Spanish, which is the official national language and the language of instruction in schools, is spoken by the vast majority of the population. There are, however, more than 50 indigenous languages spoken by more than 100,000 people, including Maya in the Yucatán; Huastec in northern Veracruz; Nahuatl, Tarascan, Totonac, Otomí, and Mazahua mainly on the Mesa Central; Zapotec, Mixtec, and Mazatec in Oaxaca; and Tzeltal and Tzotzil in Chiapas. Many public and private schools offer instruction in English as a second language.

## Colonias

In *Mexico*, the neighborhoods of large metropolitan areas are known as *colonias*.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mx.html> (Last accessed May 17, 2018)



The hotel and Universidad Panamericana campus are located south of the historic center of Mexico City in Benito Juárez, one of the 16 *colonias* of Mexico City. Benito Juárez, a quiet and residential neighborhood, is home to a number of landmarks such as the [World Trade Center Mexico City](#), the [Estadio Azul](#), the [Plaza México](#) and the [Polyforum Cultural Siqueiros](#). It also borders the colonias of [Miguel Hidalgo](#), [Cuauhtémoc](#), [Coyoacán](#), [Iztapalapa](#), [Iztacalco](#) and [Álvaro Obregón](#).



### Transportation

Many modes of transportation are available in Mexico City, some of which are safer and more reliable than others. Most program-related transportation will be provided, but below is some basic information about how to get around, but also refer to the **Health, Safety, and Security section** for tips about safe travel.

- **Foot:** The hotel is within walking distance of the UP campus. The colonia of Benito Juárez – where UP is located – is safe to walk in during the day.
- **Metro:** The subway is used by millions of Mexicans and is the largest system of its kind in Latin America. System maps are available at tourist booths and underground, as well as online: <http://mexicometro.org/>. Routes are each assigned a number (or letter) and color, and each station is represented by symbols (in case you have difficulty pronouncing some of the more interesting station names, like Tezozomoc and Azcapotzalco). Metro fares are subsidized by the Mexico City government.
  - **Women's Cars:** Women traveling alone – both foreign and Mexican – may receive unwanted attention on the Metro. To avoid these issues, the Metro includes train cars designated for woman and children only, which operate during peak hours on some Metro lines (generally located at the rear of the train).
- **Metrobús:** This bus rapid transit (BRT) system runs along main thoroughfares that traverse the city and connect with the Metro. The two lines that you are most likely to use are Line 1, which goes along *Avenida Insurgentes* (said to be the longest street in the world) and Line 4, which goes to the Centro Historico. A smartcard, similar to a Ventra Card, is necessary to ride the Metrobus.
- **Peseros:** Small buses called peseros (also micros) can be found throughout the city. They have large green stripes across the body of the bus. They are cheap and make more frequent stops than the aforementioned transportation options, but they are largely unregulated, inefficient, and seen by many residents as unsafe. The city is currently working to restructure the microbus system to be more efficient, user-friendly, and eco-friendly, with energy-efficient vehicles replacing existing minibuses.

- **Sitio and Radio Taxis:** It's always safer to take registered or *sitio* taxis rather than hailing taxis on the street in Mexico City. Like regular taxis, *sitio* and radio taxis run on a metered rate, with a base cost and a per-kilometer charge that is slightly higher than regular cabs. *Sitio* taxis can be hired by phone, and passengers will be given the license plate number. General precautions when hiring a taxi: Official taxis have special stickers on the back bumper and a photo ID of the driver will be visible inside the vehicle. Meters are very important to avoid being overcharged during the day, and at night, when many drivers shut off their meters, be sure to confirm the price before getting in.
- **Rideshare.** Uber and a number of other ride sharing services operate in Mexico City. Like in the U.S., these can be safe, convenient, and inexpensive options for getting around.

### Transportation To/From Airport

On the official arrival/departure dates, group transfers will be arranged from the airport to the hotel. More information about airport transfers will be provided closer to departure.

If you arrange any personal trips outside of Mexico City, **you must first consult with the International Affairs Office about your travel plans.** Note: travel to certain locations within the Mexico City metropolitan area and to several other high-risk areas within the country is not allowed due to safety concerns. You must have your travel itinerary approved by the International Affairs Office before making any independent travel plans to ensure your safety. See **Travel Advisory Policies** below for more instructions about this policy.

### Visas

U.S. citizens must present a valid passport or U.S. passport card to enter Mexico, but no visa is required. U.S. permanent residents also do not require a visa to enter Mexico, but they must present their valid Permanent Resident Card of the U.S. and a valid passport. International students who are not permanent residents do not need a visa, but they must present their valid U.S. visa along with their valid passport.

**IMPORTANT:** Upon entry into Mexico, you must fill out a tourist/entry card (*Forma Migratoria Multiple* or FMM) and present this to the immigration official before exiting the airport. You must keep your tourist card (FMM) in a secure location with your passport – you will be required to present this card upon departure. If you lose your FMM, you will either need to pay a fee to get a replacement tourist card, or you will be fined upon your departure.

### Life in Mexico: Customs & Etiquette

According to Moon Mexico City<sup>1</sup>, though you'll notice different attitudes and customs throughout the country, Mexicans are generally charming, courteous, and polite. Even in casual encounters, Mexicans generally address each other with formality and respect.

## Greetings & Terms of Address

Mexicans are generally polite and formal when interacting with people they do not know well. When speaking to an elder or to someone with whom you will have a professional relationship, it is customary to use the formal pronoun *usted* instead of the informal *tú*. If you are unsure which pronoun a situation requires, you can always err on the side of caution by using *usted* with anyone you've just met.

It is also common practice to speak to someone you've just met using a polite title, such as *señor* for a man, *señora* for a married or older woman, and *señorita* for a young woman. When speaking with a professional, Mexicans may also use the person's professional title, such as *doctor/doctora* (doctor).

When greeting someone in Mexico, it is customary to make physical contact, rather than simply saying "hello." A handshake is the most common form of greeting between strangers, though friends will usually greet each other with a single kiss on the cheek. The same physical gestures are repeated when you say goodbye. When greeting a group of people, it is necessary to greet and shake hands with each person individually, rather than address the group together.

If you need to squeeze past someone on a bus or reach over their shoulder at the market, it is customary to say "*con permiso*" (with your permission). If you accidentally bump into someone (or do anything else that warrants a mild apology), say "*perdón*" (sorry).

When you are sharing a meal, it is customary to wish other diners "*buen provecho*" before you start eating. *Buen provecho* is similar to the well-known French expression *bon appetit*.

## Smoking

Smoking tobacco (including electronic cigarettes) is prohibited in restaurants and bars throughout Mexico City. Though many people still smoke, they are required by law to smoke outside (patios, sidewalk seating, and open-air terraces located inside restaurants are all places where smoking is permitted). In spite of the laws, many establishments opened open-roofed segments of their restaurants or allowed patrons to smoke near entryways, leading to more lax rules. Past students have reported that the high prevalence of cigarette smoking on the street and outside of restaurants was an adjustment.

## Attire

In Mexico City, you will not see locals wearing shorts. While this could be attributed to the cool year-round climate, it also demonstrates that *capitaleños* tend to be more conservative in dress than Mexicans in other cities. Even when it is warm outside, students at Universidad Panamericana wear long pants or skirts, not shorts.

## Business Hours

Standard business hours are 8am to 6pm Monday through Friday, with lunch breaks taken between 1 and 3pm. Banks are usually open from 9am to 5pm Monday through Friday, though hours may be longer and include Saturday at some branches.

## Tipping

When dining out with friends or acquaintances, Mexicans rarely split the bill. Usually, one of the parties will treat the others. If you were the one to invite a friend or business associate to a meal, you should also plan to treat. Usually, whomever you've treated will pick up the tab the next time. In a restaurant, waitstaff receive a tip of 10-15 percent on the bill, though foreigners are generally expected to tip on the higher end of the scale. In bars, a 10 percent tip is standard. Though it is not necessary to tip a taxi driver when traveling within city limits, tips are always graciously welcomed. At gas stations, a small tip of about 5 percent of the sale is customary for gas station attendants (all gas stations are full service in Mexico).

## Timing/Punctuality

Mexico has a well-earned reputation for running on a slower clock. Certainly, there is less urgency in Mexico, and it is not considered excessively rude to arrive tardy to a social engagement. In fact, guests are usually expected to run about a half hour (or more) late for a party at a friend's home. However, when it comes to your classes, doctor's appointments, business meetings, bus schedules, or any other official event, punctuality is just as important in Mexico as it is anywhere else.

## Identity in Mexico City

Below is basic information, summarized from the Diversity Network Country Diversity Climate Notes for Mexico<sup>2</sup>, and reflections from past students about the cultural climate of Mexico. Also refer to [Identity Abroad](#) for general guidance and resources.

## Cultural Adjustment

Studying abroad can be one of the most exhilarating learning experiences of your life. It can also be disorienting, frustrating, and leave you feeling homesick. Everyone experiences cultural adjustment differently, with varying emotional and physical reactions to the experience. However, understanding the common stages of cultural adjustment will allow you to recognize that what you are feeling is entirely normal and are part of the cultural learning process. Review the cultural adjustment page for common stages and reactions and managing expectations upon arrival:

<https://www.northwestern.edu/abroad/study-abroad/prepare-and-go/cultural-adjustment.html>

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from [Moon Mexico City](#). <sup>2</sup> Adapted from the Diversity Abroad Network. (2017).

### Cultural Adjustment: Reflections from Past Students

- *“Aggressive driving required an adjustment, both from a passenger standpoint and a walking pedestrian standpoint.” ~Harmony Arcilla, 2015*
- *“Getting used to the style of dress in the city - while it is very hot, almost all people wear long pants rather than shorts or skirts at all times. If at times I did choose to wear a skirt or shorts, I would often be the target of stares and whistles. This was at times frustrating and at others frightening, and we had to do our best to not look like such outsiders always.” ~Connie Pantan, 2015*
- *“One of the biggest challenges was trying to make the most of my experience there and fully immerse myself into Mexican society. Because those from Northwestern on this program take classes together, live together, eat together, and basically spend the majority of our time in Mexico together, it is easy and tempting to make your own NU bubble in Mexico, only using Spanish when absolutely necessary or refraining to go out of your comfort zone.” ~Joo-Young Lee, 2016*
- *“I got accustomed to traveling in traffic/in Ubers mostly everywhere. Another adjustment was getting used to less access to water (buying bottled water became a somewhat significant expense and I felt that it had a mostly negative environmental impact).” – Stacy Tsai, 2017*
- *“Some of the social adjustments I made in the country were to challenge the person and not the idea. When people made assumptions about the United States, I did not assume they were attempting to be malicious. Instead, I held conversations around cultural differences and how certain things can come off as offensive.” – Kiana Jones, 2018*

### Gender Roles and Issues

According to the Diversity Abroad Country Climate Notes for Mexico, although strides have been made toward gender equality, traditional roles for women prevail, and Mexican women may not exercise some freedoms to which North American women are accustomed. Students, especially women, are sometimes bothered by the machismo aspect of Mexican culture.

### Gender Roles & Issues: Reflections from Past Students

- *“Being female in a country like Mexico is sort of difficult. There are certain expectations that I had trouble accepting, such as cat calls from men when walking on the street. Aggressive driving required an adjustment, both from a passenger standpoint and a walking pedestrian standpoint.” ~Harmony Arcilla, 2015*
- *“Mexico City is very conservative, towards females.” ~Stephanie Garcia, 2015*
- *“People do dress more conservatively in Mexico. I would just warn other students about taking public transportation and to be aware of pick pocketing and harassment.” ~Cynthia Padilla, 2016*
- *“The female students were advised to not wear skirts and shorts as to avoid being catcalled.” – 2018*

### Sexual Identity

While opinions about homosexuality are mixed among the Mexican population (as in the U.S.), and relatively fewer people are openly gay, there are more active LGBTQ communities in Mexico City and other larger cities. Furthermore, while the existence of gay males in Mexico is recognized and generally tolerated, there is perception that lesbian females do not exist in Mexico, only abroad.

According to the Diversity Abroad Country Climate Notes for Mexico, even though homosexuality is not criminal, civil liberties are sometimes ignored, and students may

be hassled in bars or on the street. Lesbian women may have to deal with being asked frequent questions about boyfriends, marriage, and sex, while gay men may have to deal with talk of conquests, girl watching, and dirty jokes. LGBTQ students may want to be discrete and get to know their peers and host families well before disclosing their sexual orientation.

#### **Sexual Orientation & Identity: Reflections from Past Students**

- *“While Mexico City is a very metropolitan city [and] things like same-sex marriage are legal in the city specifically (not the whole country), the country is still a very Catholic-heavy place and a person might feel less safe to disclose their sexual orientation there.” ~Connie Panton, 2015*
- *“Being gay, it was sometimes tough not being able to be who I wanted to be. I really found solace in confiding with the other Asian Americans and other LGBT students in the program. We would talk out our feelings and validate each others’ experience while supporting each other. I also found it useful talking to people back home.” ~Alexander Furuya, 2016*
- *“If you are not heterosexual, prepare to spend 2 months in a very straight society. If you are a man, you will be expected to act in very hetero-normative roles and be a “caballero” to every girl you meet.” ~Austin Stults, 2015*
- *“Sex and sexual orientation were taboo topics often left undiscussed, but there is a pretty awesome queer scene if you know how to look for it!” – 2018*
- *“One of the biggest challenges I faced abroad was in the heteronormativity and conservatism in Mexico and especially at the Universidad Panamericana. As a queer person, the transition from a queer-affirming school like Northwestern to a very traditional Catholic school like UP was drastic for me, and I kept my sexuality a secret to only a couple close friends. I never felt in danger, but it just felt different. Additionally, machismo culture in Mexico City is overwhelmingly present, and my roommate (also a female) and I were often catcalled while walking down the street, even if we were dressed modestly. To navigate all this, I was lucky enough to have an amazing and supportive roommate to unpack these experiences with.” - 2018*

#### **Race and Ethnicity**

Dating back to the Spanish conquest, issues of race and ethnicity in Mexico are historical and complex. You will learn about some of these complexities through your courses and interactions, but you can prepare yourself for the situations you may encounter by researching the minority, majority, and plurality racial and ethnic composition of your host country and exploring its history of racial and ethnic relations.

According to the Diversity Abroad Country Climate Notes for Mexico, most Mexicans are mestizo, a mix of Spanish and Amerindian ancestry. Students of color have reported experiences of being stared at, touched, or photographed without permission, especially in rural areas. African American students may be called *negro/ito* (black), the local word commonly used to describe black people, whether used in a derogatory way or as a term of endearment. Students may have difficulty finding certain ethnic beauty products found in the United States. Hispanic American students may not be perceived as being North American. They may be expected to speak Spanish fluently because of a Hispanic surname. They may be considered Puerto Rican or Ecuadorean and ascribed stereotypical attributes of those cultures. Mexicans may assume that Hispanic Americans understand the culture and language and thus expect them to interact

socially with more ease. Asian American students may be identified by their cultural heritage, not by their American citizenship, and may generally be referred to as *chino/ito* (Chinese), regardless of their cultural heritage. Muslim students or students with Middle Eastern heritage may be called *moreno/ito* (brown) and asked questions that may reflect ignorance with cultural and religious practices, such as diet.

#### **Race and Ethnicity: Reflections from Past Students**

- *“Obviously since Mexicans have little experience with people outside of their ethnic background, they are not fully aware of the racial dynamics of the United States. It was not uncommon for people to be confused when I said I was from the United States given that I look visibly non-white. This is usually not with malice, but is something to get used to.” – Stacy Tsai, 2017*
- *“The further away you go from urban hubs, the population becomes more ethnically homogenous with little exposure to diversity. As a result, students who don't "look Mexican" were often stared at, touched, and photographed without permission by local people.” – 2018*
- *“African American students should be aware of the reactions the people of Mexico might have when seeing them, such as overly admiring their hair, due to the lack of encounters with black individuals.” - 2018*
- *“I also had to get accustomed to all the stares I got for being Asian, with some people even asking to take pictures with me.” - 2018*

#### Additional Resources:

- Being Black in Mexico: <https://atlascorps.org/being-black-in-mexico/>
- Black visibility in Mexico and the U.S.: <http://www.seattleglobalist.com/2015/08/13/black-visibility-mexico-u-s-mvot-afro-mexican-race/40547>

## Religion and Spirituality

In Mexico, the majority of Mexican citizens are Catholic and it is assumed that everyone else is Catholic as well. In reality, there are a fairly large number of religious denominations and people of other faiths, especially in Mexico City. If you wish to attend church on Sundays, you will have an abundance of options; however, students who practice other faiths may have more difficulty locating places of worship. Additionally, people will occasionally ask what religion you belong to and whether you go to church.

#### **Religion & Spirituality: Reflections from Past Students**

- *“This is a very conservative, Catholic country. If you are unfamiliar with Catholicism, it might be helpful to learn a little more about it before coming to Mexico.” – 2018*

#### Additional Resources:

- [Mexico City – Places of Worship](#)
- [Synagogues in Mexico](#)
- [Mexico Islam Community Site](#)

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# Health, Safety, and Security

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The sections below provide information about health and safety risks and resources in Mexico, including reflections from past students. Refer back to the **Health, Safety, and Security** section of the Orientation Guide for more comprehensive information about preparing for and responding to health, safety, and security concerns.

## Staying Healthy

Mexico City has a range of excellent private hospitals and clinics, with well-trained doctors and nurses, advanced medical equipment, and staff who speak English.

## Food & Water

As a rule, you should not drink tap water in Mexico. The water is purified at the source, but the distribution system can contaminate. Bottled water is readily available throughout Mexico, and ice served in restaurants is made from purified water and is typically safe. Regardless, you should always wash your hands with soap or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before eating. If you are traveling out of Mexico City, be sure to do some research on food and water safety before you go.

A number of students have reported gastrointestinal distress, typically caused by eating street vendor food. **Do not eat food from outdoor street vendors or market stands.** If symptoms are unusually severe or persist for more than a day, ask UP to arrange a doctor's visit.

## Altitude Sickness

Mexico City is 7,347-feet above sea level, and some students have experienced mild altitude sickness shortly after arrival. Symptoms include headache, dizziness, shaky stomach, breathlessness, and general malaise. The body needs time to acclimate to the change in barometric pressure and lesser amounts of oxygen, and air pollution can exacerbate symptoms. If you feel ill, take it easy for at least a week by avoiding strenuous exercise and alcoholic beverages. Drink plenty of water!

## Air Quality

A haze of smog typically lingers above Mexico City most days, blocking the view of the surrounding mountains. Since the late 1980s and early 1990s (when air pollution in Mexico City was at its worst), the city has made progress improving air quality. However, air quality continues to be an ongoing problem in the capital, specifically due to the heavy volume of automobile traffic. Students with respiratory issues should consult with their doctor about steps to stay healthy.

## Safety and Security<sup>3</sup>

You are advised to follow these precautions during your time in Mexico:

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from U.S. Department of State: <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country/mexico.html>



- The Mexican government makes a considerable effort to protect foreign visitors traveling to major tourist destinations, so tourist areas generally do not see high levels of crime. Nevertheless, petty crime does occur at airports, on public transportation, and in tourist locations. Be vigilant – keep an eye on your phone, wallet and/or purse in crowded subway cars or busy markets. Carry limited cash and credit cards – no more than needed for an outing – and avoid wearing expensive jewelry and clothes.
- Avoid taking any unofficial taxi. **If you need a taxi, order a radio taxi or "sitio," and ask the dispatcher for the driver's name and the taxi's license plate number. Uber is also available.**
- Civil protest in Mexico over various social issues is quite common, and this typically takes the form of peaceful demonstrations. As a reminder, students are not permitted to participate in—or attend—any kind of public demonstration. **Be advised that the Mexican Constitution prohibits political activities by foreigners, so students must avoid participation in any activity or demonstration that might be deemed political by Mexican authorities; such action may result in detention and/or deportation.** In the event of severe civil unrest, students should return to (or remain at) Universidad Panamericana or the hotel, avoid the demonstration route, and stay there until the situation stabilizes. On-site directors will contact students with information about demonstration routes, dates, and times.

Refer to the [U.S. Department of State Country Information Sheet for Mexico](#) for safety and security guidelines.

### Travel Advisory Policies

According to the U.S. Department of State (DOS) Travel Advisories, Mexico is currently listed at [Level 2 - Exercise Increased Caution](#).

However, some areas of Mexico fall under the U.S. DOS Level 3 - Reconsider Travel and Level 4 - Do Not Travel advisory levels. In accordance with [Northwestern University's Undergraduate International Travel Policy](#) and taking into account areas of heightened risk in Mexico, students enrolled in this program will be required to adhere to additional security measures, which are outlined below. If you have any questions, contact the International Affairs Office at UP or ULA.

- Absolutely no travel is permitted to risk zones, including areas within the greater Mexico City metropolitan area, located to the north and east of the Federal District in the Estado de Mexico, which are known for high rates of crime and insecurity: Coacalco, Ecatepec, Nezahualcoyotl, La Paz, Valle del Chalco, Solidaridad, Chalco, Ixtapaluca, and Tlatlaya. These areas are far from UP, and there is no reason to visit. Also, travel to high-risk locations outside of Mexico City, including states in the northern border regions of the country (Chihuahua, Coahuila, Colima, Nuevo León, Tamaulipas, Sinaloa, Sonora, and Durango) and

the central states of Guerrero, Jalisco, Michoacán, Morelos, Nayarit, San Luis Potosi, Zacatecas and certain areas of the state of Mexico, is prohibited. **Any student found traveling to prohibited areas could face immediate dismissal.**

- Students are required to report any independent travel, including a written itinerary and contact information, to the International Affairs Office. All restrictions will apply, and students must receive approval from the International Affairs Office before arranging any independent trips.
- Students must have their cell phones on at all times. You must provide your cell phone number to on-site administrators and GLO, so that you can be contacted in case of emergency.
- Students will receive specific security information during orientation at UP, including emergency procedures and action plans, as well as guidelines about safe travel within the city and to popular destinations outside of the city. Since nocturnal street crime poses the main threat to travelers to Mexico City, students will receive specific information about strategies for avoiding or mitigating these risks, as well as other information about personal safety.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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### Food & Water

#### *Can I drink the water?*

No. Do not drink tap water. Purified water stations are available on the Universidad Panamericana campus. Bottled water is available and can be bought in large containers. Buy plenty and often.

#### *What is typical food?*

Mexican cuisine is not lacking in diverse textures and tastes! It is considered one of the richest in the world with regards to proteins, vitamins, and minerals. Popular dishes include tacos, enchiladas, pozole, and tamales. Spices such as cilantro, chilies, and lemon zest often add a specific flavor to most dishes. Many common ingredients include: chicken, beef, sweet corn, tomatoes, peppers, chilies, onions, squashes, peanuts, avocados, and guava, to name a few.

#### *Is the local cuisine vegetarian friendly?*

Meat features prominently in many Mexican dishes, but there are also many options for vegetarians. The UP cafeterias also offer vegetarian options. For meals that students will prepare themselves, there is easy access to lots of delicious fruits and vegetables.

### Climate

#### *What is the weather going to be like?*

Mexico City is at altitude, so temperatures are mild throughout the summer. You can expect temperatures to range from about 50 degrees Fahrenheit at night to the mid-70's during the day. June to October is also the rainy season – expect fairly consistent and

sometimes very heavy rainfall. **Pack a rain jacket and umbrella.** You may also want to invest in a pair of rain boots once you arrive in Mexico City.

## Money

### *How much does the program cost?*

See **Appendix I** for a breakdown of the program costs.

### *Are meals included in my Program Fee?*

Some. See Accommodations & Meals for details on which meals are covered.

### *How much money should I plan to spend?*

Refer to the student budget in **Appendix I** for an estimate of costs for additional meals and discretionary expenses. The figures included in the budget represent averages reported by past students.

### *How do I access money?*

Mexico's currency is the peso. Plan to use cash for most purchases! ATMs and exchange offices are widely available. Credit cards are accepted in many midrange and top end hotels, restaurants and stores. You can use a checking **bankcard**, **credit card** or **debit card**, and will find ATM's at every bank, in or near many supermarkets, in shopping malls, grocery stores and occasionally in hotel lobbies. **Call Bank and Credit Card Companies prior to trip to inform them of the locations where the card may be used to prevent it from being deactivated.** For safety, you should stick to ATMs in or attached to bank branches. There have been instances of phony ATMs or ATM facades put up in non-bank locations to harvest card numbers and personal ID codes (this applies to the U.S. too!). More tips on accessing money and planning a budget: <https://www.northwestern.edu/abroad/money-matters/budgeting-planning/money-management.html>

## Transportation & Travel

### *Will I be picked up from the airport?*

Yes. More information about airport transfers will be provided closer to the date of departure.

### *What if my flight is cancelled or delayed?*

Universidad Panamericana and GLO have access to your travel itineraries, but if you will not arrive on your scheduled flight, or your flight will not arrive at the scheduled time, please email and call your Program Director and GLO to let us know when to expect you.

### *How much free time do I have? What can I expect to do outside of class?*

There is free time after classes, and you will have many weekends free. Contact program returnees to get suggestions for things to do in your spare time: <https://www.northwestern.edu/abroad/student-experiences/connect-with-students/index.html>

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# Links & Recommended Reading

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## Program & Country Information

- Public Health in Mexico Program Page: <https://www.northwestern.edu/abroad/study-abroad/explore-programs/americas/public-health-in-mexico.html>
- CIA World Factbook Mexico: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mx.html>
- Mexico Tourism Official Website: <http://www.visitmexico.com/>

## Books & Movies

It's worth getting a good pocket guidebook, such as Lonely Planet or [Moon Mexico City](#). Here are a few other recommendations:

- *Fire & Blood: A History of Mexico* by T.R. Fehrenbach
- *Mexico: From the Olmecs to the Aztecs* by Michael D. Coe and Rex Koontz
- *Down & Delirious in Mexico City: The Aztec Metropolis in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* by Daniel Hernandez
- *World's Busiest Cities*, Netflix documentary
- *Malinche* by Laura Esquivel: A fictional account of Malinalli, a member of a tribe conquered by Aztec warriors who was the interpreter for and then lover of Hernán Cortés when he first arrived.
- *Sons of the Shaking Earth* by Eric Wolf: A wonderfully readable introduction to Mexican history
- *Mexico* by Michael D Coe: Learned, well-illustrated and not over-long account of the great cultures of ancient Mexico. His book, *The Maya*, is also a valuable read.
- *Aztecs* by Inga Clendinnen: A fascinating, thought-provoking and vividly dramatic look into the heart of the Aztec society.
- *Timing among the Maya: Travels in Belize, Guatemala and Mexico* by Ronald Wright: Follows the author's travels in Mayan territory as he investigates the ancient Maya and their view on time.
- *History of the Conquest of New Spain* by Bernal Diaz del Castillo: An eyewitness account of the Spanish arrival by one of Cortes lieutenants.
- *Year of the Jaguar* by James Maw: Captures the feel of Mexican travel superbly. The book's young protagonist goes in search of the father he has never met, journeying from the US border to Chiapas.
- *All the Pretty Horses* by Cormac McCarthy: A marvelous, poetic tale of three young latter-day cowboys riding south of the border.
- *Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel: This book created a huge interest in all things Mexican when it was published in 1989. Set in rural Mexico at the time of the revolution, the novel manages to combine fantasy with recipes.
- *The Labyrinth of Solitude* by Octavio Paz: A probing examination of Mexico's myths and the Mexican character by the celebrated poet and essayist.

# Appendix I: Student Budget

**PUBLIC HEALTH IN MEXICO (Mexico City, Mexico)  
SUMMER 2019  
Program Cost Information**

<b>FEES CHARGED BY NORTHWESTERN</b>		
<b>PROGRAM FEE</b>		
<b>Tuition: \$5,300</b> The tuition fee covers all program expenses, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lectures and instruction for four courses</li> <li>• field visits and excursions to locations in/around Mexico City (including all related travel costs)</li> </ul>	<b>\$7,200</b>	
<b>Room &amp; Board: \$2,000</b> Room and board covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accommodation in a hotel in Mexico City</li> <li>• breakfast daily and some group meals</li> <li>• accommodations in a hotel or guesthouse during overnight excursions <i>(Students are responsible for the cost of most lunches and dinners)</i></li> </ul>		
<b>GeoBlue Health Insurance: \$100</b>		
<b>STUDY ABROAD ADMINISTRATIVE FEE (SAAF)</b> Students participating in this program are exempt from the SAAF.	<b>\$0</b>	
<b>TOTAL FEES CHARGED BY NORTHWESTERN</b>		<b>\$7,400</b>

<b>ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL COSTS</b>		
<b>International Airfare</b> Students are responsible for making arrangements to fly round-trip to Mexico City, Mexico, on the dates provided. Cost estimates are based upon travel from Chicago. International airfares vary greatly based on the point of departure, carrier, and type of ticket purchased as well as volatility of airline industry pricing. Students may choose to take advantage of frequent flyer or other airline awards available to them, which could significantly lower their travel costs.	<b>\$700</b>	
<b>Books &amp; Supplies</b>	<b>\$100</b>	
<b>Discretionary Expenses</b> Personal expenses vary based on individual spending habits and budgets. Discretionary expenses include non-program transportation and meals not covered by the program. Students who plan to do personal travel outside of the program location should estimate an additional \$500-\$1,000.	<b>\$1,500</b>	
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL COSTS</b>		<b>\$2,300</b>

<b>TOTAL STUDENT BUDGET (Fees + Estimated Additional Costs)</b>	<b>\$9,700</b>
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For more information about billing, finances, and financial aid for study abroad, please refer to the Money Matters resource page of the Study Abroad Office website or contact Krista Buda Bethel ([krista@northwestern.edu](mailto:krista@northwestern.edu)) in the Financial Aid Office. Also refer to the Withdrawal and Refund Policies for Northwestern-Sponsored Programs for information about refunds in the case of withdrawal or dismissal.

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## Appendix II: Packing List

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**Leave valuables at home.** Petty theft can be a problem in Mexico City (as it can be in other large cities) and you must take responsibility for your belongings to help ensure that they do not get stolen. We recommend purchasing travel insurance for any valuables you bring abroad, including your laptop.

**Pack lightly and prudently.** You are responsible for carrying your own baggage at all times. We recommend packing once, walking around the block with all of your things to see if it's manageable -- if it isn't, remove at least half! Returned students always lament about how they ended up packing too much.

### **Clothing:**

Bring a hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, and a rain coat. Be sure to pack clothes that are semi-professional for days when you will be visiting clinics (cotton slacks, blouses or collared shirts, skirts knee length or lower). Casual clothes are totally fine on weekends, but keep in mind that most Mexicans dress conservatively. Even when it is warm outside, students at Universidad Panamericana wear long pants or skirts, not shorts.

**Shoes:** Bring more than one pair of comfortable, multi-purpose shoes. You will often be walking on cobblestones and uneven surfaces. You will be walking more in general in Mexico City than you would in the U.S. so sturdy, comfortable footwear is important. Consider purchasing inexpensive rain boots once on-site.

**Purses/bags:** You will be taking day trips and overnight excursions, so you will want things that travel easily. We recommend that you bring a backpack, duffel bag, or moderate-sized suitcase and a daypack. Choose a bag, purse, or backpack that closes and can be worn securely. Purses and bags worn with a strap across the chest are a good idea to prevent purse-snatching. We do NOT recommend bringing clutches since they are easy targets for thieves..

**Medicines:** You should bring a basic first aid kit with you. Some useful items to bring include: Band Aids, Tylenol, Benadryl, Immodium AD, an antacid, cold medicine, insect repellent and ointment, and aloe gel for sunburns. You should bring an adequate supply of any prescription medication in the original bottles that you take on a regular basis, accompanied by a note from your doctor explaining your supply. *Note: any prescription medication should be carried-on and never checked!*

**Toiletries:** Bring only the most important and basic items with you, or anything for which you have a specific brand preference. (If you wear contact lenses, we recommend bringing enough solution for the duration of your trip). Once you get there and get settled, you can purchase everything you need (and you can avoid paying excess luggage fees to the airline). Contact lens

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## Appendix III: Conduct Expectations

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As indicated in the Student Agreement you signed at the time of application, you agree to abide by the NU Code of Conduct and all program and host institution rules and regulations for the duration of the program.

Most first-time incidents that involve minimal disruption/disturbance will be addressed through an oral warning from the program director. This warning will include the following components: a brief description of the infraction (time, date, incident), an explanation of the incident's effect on the program, participants, staff, etc., a request to cease such behavior, a review of potential consequences for repeated or additional infractions, and a statement that the program director will be notifying NU of the conversation.

If repeated infractions or a serious violation that requires more than an oral warning occur, a phone or Skype conversation will be scheduled with at least one Global Learning Office (GLO) member, one Dean of Students Office (DSO) staff member, and the Director of Global Safety and Security. If the infraction is serious, the potential consequences may include:

- Behavioral agreement
- Loss of privileges
- Referral to judicial hearing on campus post-program
- Dismissal from program
- Suspension or exclusion from NU

Immediate dismissal from the program may occur if you seriously disrupt the group learning process, or if your behavior gives the program director reasonable cause to believe that your continued presence in the program poses a danger to the health or safety of persons or property, or impedes, disrupts or obstructs the program in any way. Before you may be removed from the program, you will have an opportunity to explain your conduct to the program director, at least one GLO staff member, one DSO staff member, and the Director of Global Safety and Security. A decision to dismiss you from the program would be final and no refund would be made. Transportation back to the United States would be at your own expense.