

# MEXICO GUIDE FOR MISSION VOLUNTEERS

Monterrey Missionary Team

We are pleased to know of your plans to join us in Mexico as a mission volunteer or work team. Your experience here is important to us. We pray that the Lord will teach you and stretch you as never before and that you will be His vessel here for the ministry that He has prepared for you. Before your arrival, we want you to be well prepared. It is also important to be aware of local customs and traditions. This guide will help make your experience more pleasant. The following are things to plan for and consider as you prepare to visit Mexico.

## Dress

Men are allowed great freedom in the clothes they wear. For work in the office, a nice casual shirt and trousers are appropriate. For ministry and teaching opportunities, a nice golf type shirt or shirt and tie and trousers are appropriate. Blue jeans are not appropriate for 'official' work. For work on the construction site, old trousers and shirts are acceptable. Just remember sun protection and the heat. Trousers and shirts with a polyester/cotton blend breathe easier and keep one drier in this climate. If you will be preaching or teaching, semi-formal type dress with a shirt and tie is appropriate.

Women must be much more conscious of their appearance. The farther one travels from the big cities, the more conservative one must dress. In the city of Monterrey, pants, dresses or skirts should be worn at all times outside the house. Long culottes, which look like skirts are also acceptable. Slacks are commonly worn by most women and other volunteers. Shorts should be worn only in the house. Please refrain from spaghetti strap type dresses and tops. In the large cities, slacks and dresses may be worn for most casual outings. Swimsuits are appropriate only at hotels with pools and at the beach (one-piece or very modest is best).

## Greetings

Greetings are one of the most important things a visitor to Mexico should learn. Even if you cannot speak the Spanish language, you should always greet anyone you meet. Use English or Spanish if you can. When you greet someone, the 'greeting' time seems very prolonged to our 'American culture'. The Mexicans will often ask about your family, how you are feeling, etc. It is appropriate for you to ask them the same even if you don't know their family! Getting 'right to the point' of a conversation is different to Mexican culture than to us. Enjoy their interest in you!

### English

### Spanish

	<u>One person</u>	<u>One or more People</u>
Good morning	Buenos dias	Buenos dias todos
Good afternoon	Buenos tardes	Buenos tardes todos
Good evening	Buenos noches	Buenos noches todos
Good night	Buenos noches	Buenos noches a todos
How are you?	Como estas?	Como estan?
How are things?	Como estan las cosas tuyo?	Como estan las cosas tuyos?
I am fine	Yo estoy bien	Estamos bien
Things are fine	Las cosas estan bien	Nuestras cosas estan bien
Good-bye	Hasta luego	Hasta luego

## English

Welcome  
(Response)  
My name is \_\_\_\_  
Thank you

## Spanish

One person  
Bienvenidos  
Gracias  
Mi nombre es \_\_\_\_  
Muchas gracias

One or more People  
Bienvenidos  
Gracias  
Mi nombre es \_\_\_\_  
Muchas Gracias

When greeting a group of people, you often will shake hands with everyone. As you face the group, always start shaking hands with the first person on your right side then work around counter-clockwise. If there is a group of you and a group of them, let them lead the procession to make it easier to follow the right procedure. They may shake hands with you several times during a welcome procedure. In the church men will also follow the handshake with a warm hug. For men greeting women and women greeting women hands are shaken and there is the kiss to the cheek (which is really a kiss in the air). It is best to watch and learn, let them lead and teach you. Relax and enjoy the culture. Women are allowed to hold hands with other women, even walking down the street. There is no sexual meaning, only friendship.

When exiting a vehicle, do not be surprised if someone wants to help you with whatever large or small parcel or load you may be carrying. Please **make sure** they are associated with our group. If they are, they just want to be courteous. They really do want to help. So let them, and thank them in Spanish. Say, "Muchas gracias."

## Customs

When entering a home it is common before you cross the threshold to ask permission to enter. Say, "Con permiso."

If you tell a Mexican that you like something they have or are wearing, they may think you want it. They might then go try to get it for you at whatever cost to themselves, even if it means going into debt.

## Packing Preparation

If possible, bring a purse or small case, one carry-on shoulder bag and one big suitcase. Most international airlines allow luggage pieces to weigh 70 lbs. Maximum. The airlines will also allow a second suitcase weighing 70 lbs if necessary. Please check with your airline for specific weight limits and other restrictions. We recommend that this second case be used to bring various supplies and goods for the team or mission's use during your stay. Pack all valuables, like camera equipment and jewelry, in carry-on luggage. Carry all essentials like toiletries, prescription medications, and contact solution in a carry-on bag. One change of clothing should be in your carry-on luggage also in event that your checked bags are lost in route. Pack as lightly as possible. You will want to save room for souvenirs on the return trip. If you check more than one piece of luggage, divide your clothing and other items between the bags so that if one piece is lost, you will still have half your things! Please be sure not to bring items in boxes, as far as possible, since it will require an inspection of contents at airport Customs.

You may want to carry \$10-20 American money in your pocket for small purchases in route to Mexico. You will need your passport, birth certificate, drivers license or ID card and airplane ticket easily accessible as there are checkpoints in each airport where you will be required to show them. Carry extra money and any other valuables such a credit card in an inside pocket or a pouch worn under clothing. Have photocopies of the first page of your passport made. Keep them in several separate places from your

passport so you will have the information available when your passport is not with you or if it is stolen.

Bring all cash in clean new bills, mostly \$50 and \$100 bills, \$20's are best if making purchases in stores. Larger bills draw a better exchange rate. Please do not bring Travelers Checks, as they are very difficult to cash and draw a significantly lower exchange rate. If necessary, you can buy prepaid calling cards in Mexico to call the USA much cheaper than calling home collect or with an AT&T card.

Keep in mind that long distance calls are very expensive from Mexico. So calling cards with few minutes on them will not give you much time to talk. For example a 575 minute card gives you about 55 minutes of calling time to the U.S. from Mexico.

An International Driver's License from AAA is not vital but it could come in handy, especially for longer-term mission volunteers.

Don't bring any supplies that are military in appearance like olive green or camouflage clothes, Army surplus footlockers or canteens. Also be aware of new restrictions in items than can be carried on the plane such a scissors, nail files, pocketknives, etc.

Please be sure to get your shopping and preparation done well in advance of your departure. Last minute preparations can wear you out before you get to Mexico and make you more susceptible to illness.

### **Things to Bring**

- Passport
- Copies of medical information, notification in case of death, liability release and medical release forms
- Copies of prescription drugs
  
- Lightweight clothing - temperatures average in the 70-80's at night and 90-100's during the day.
- Men should bring a dress shirt and tie with or without sport coat for church, polyester/cotton or khaki trousers, work pants, sport shirts or T-shirts, walking shorts, dress shoes for church, comfortable walking/working shoes, underwear and handkerchiefs.
- Women should bring summer dresses or skirts and tops, a church dress, long walking shorts (to be worn only in the house, at the beach or on the plane!), a pair of slacks/jeans, cool sleepwear, a light weight bath robe, T-shirt for swim suit cover up or with jeans, a light-weight sweater, dress shoes for church, comfortable walking/working shoes or sandals, a head scarf or hat for church, underwear and handkerchiefs.
- Modest swimsuit
- Hat, sunscreen (SPF 30), and sunglasses
- Curling iron and blow dryer.
- Quick snack foods for travel and any other time
- Easy package-meal foods such as peanut butter or other particular foods you like
- Any special dietary requirements – please let us know so that we can work that into the team menu plan (i.e. vegetarian or health restrictions on your diet)
- Water bottle with insulated bag (label it with permanent marker)
- Flashlight with good batteries and an extra set of long life batteries

- ❑ Personal toiletries - shampoo, conditioner, hair spray, cosmetics, toothpaste, deodorant, razor, shaving cream, moisturizer, Vaseline, lotion, baby powder, feminine pads, Pamprin, etc.
- ❑ Shower thongs or flip-flops
- ❑ Personal Medicines- antibiotic cream, antacids, Pepto Bismol tabs, powder for heat rash, eye drops, cold or sinus tabs, Tylenol, Band Aids, Calamine lotion, vitamins, Dramamine for motion sickness, Ibuprofen. The above medications are optional but please be aware that many of the familiar drugs you buy over the counter in America are not available here. If several people wanted to go together and bring medications for the team to use it would help reduce the cost for each person.
- ❑ Small amount of laundry detergent
- ❑ Wet wipes or antibacterial hand gel (optional but helpful)
- ❑ Individual Kleenex (optional but helpful)
- ❑ Work gloves and goggles
- ❑ Personal bed sheets and pillows are generally available, but you may bring your own if desired. Flat sheets work best, as mattresses are often odd sizes here.
- ❑ Bath towels, a hand towel and wash cloths (one to use and one to wash)
- ❑ Mesh bag or pillowcase for dirty laundry
- ❑ Alarm clock
- ❑ Extra pair of glasses and/or hearing aid batteries (small cell batteries are seldom available here)
- ❑ Money for exchange--50 and 100-dollar bills get the best rate, traveler's checks are more difficult to exchange draw up to 10-25% lower rate of exchange
- ❑ Camera - if desired, Mexicans sometimes like to have their picture taken. Always be sure to ask permission first! Print film is available, but slide film is generally not. Better to bring plenty of your own along with spare batteries.
- ❑ Bible and devotional book
- ❑ Notebook or journal and pens
- ❑ Stationery and envelopes
- ❑ Chewing gum or hard candy for take off and landing of the plane
- ❑ Insect repellent (6-30% Deet)

### **Health and Living Conditions**

Most people find our housing arrangements to be reasonably comfortable. This is Mexico, however, and some things will not be like your favorite Holiday Inn.

Our homes have screens on the windows to reduce the threat of mosquitoes, which are a very real threat.

Washing your hands after shaking hands with many people and before eating, eating only "safe" foods, and drinking only filtered water will reduce the threat of illness and hepatitis A. Occasional diarrhea can still occur but is usually not a serious health threat.

There is running water in the guest quarters. The water is clean, but we do not recommend drinking it. We will help provide filtered water for drinking. As you may expect, one needs to drink plenty of water, ideally 3 liters per day, because of the climate.

Clothes can be washed if necessary. Please bring your own laundry detergent. Make sure that you have **labeled everything** before you bring it so that it will not be lost in the laundry. Clothes that hang outside usually dry quickly if the sun is shining. We will

provide an iron and ironing board for your use. With proper care this is not a major consideration.

Work team members are expected to help with food preparation, clean up, filtered water collection and storage, and general cleanliness of the guest quarters. House helpers will sweep, dust and clean the guest quarters regularly as a matter of routine for all work teams and mission volunteers.

Please note: There are a few snakes and scorpions in our area. We have never been bitten, but we know of people that have. Therefore, be extra careful!

Vaccination for Hepatitis A is strongly recommended. Tetanus and polio boosters should be up to date. All health workers must be vaccinated against Hepatitis B. Anyone coming from the USA or Europe during flu season should have an influenza vaccine. You should also consider getting the meningococcal vaccine as well. Please consult your doctor of travel clinic 3 months (six months for Hepatitis B vaccine) in advance for advice on all immunizations.

### **Odds and Ends**

Public telephones are commonly found and can be used through the purchase of a public phone card. We have a private phone in our home but it costs excessively more than a normal Mexican Telecom phone to use. It is no problem to receive calls in our home for friends or relatives, but it is too cost prohibitive for visitors to call out, except for emergencies. We suggest purchasing a phone card here in Mexico and using the closest public phones as needed for your personal calls.

Sometimes we have delays in obtaining emails, depending on our travel schedule please send important information with as much advance notice as possible. Please warn your friends and families under no circumstances should they send you or us large files such as pictures or graphics. These take a long time to download and can jam our computers.

The workday begins at 8 AM and generally finishes around 4 PM – 5 PM for construction teams and 4 PM – 9PM for evangelism teams. This is not always required for team members but serves as a guideline so you will know what the Mexicans are likely to do. After work hours are good times to walk around the village and meet people, shop, rest, play basketball, table tennis, football, or “soccer,” or any other games. The only limitation for any activity outside of Monterrey is transportation availability.

Many times individuals bring items as gifts for the Mexicans. Gift giving is an important part of the culture, especially among new friends. This can be a pleasurable or a miserable experience. Be aware that many of these people have very few possessions and believe all Americans to be very wealthy. They will indeed be quite appreciative. However, at times they may appear greedy and jealous if items are distributed in a haphazard fashion, especially when given en masse. Mexican people in general will also be quite bold in asking for anything that they think you can provide. They believe it does not hurt to ask, but they also respect a polite response of “No” or “I will have to pray and think about it first”. Please be advised. Above all else, pray first before you make any response. Ask yourself what kind of a message you want your visit and actions to convey? Many people will be watching how you respond to their plea. Please don't hesitate to consult with one of the missionaries for any advice.

Please do not make any future promises or considerations to Mexican's request that you will not or cannot keep. This may include providing copies of photos, gifts, money, supplies, letters of correspondence or any other expressed need by a new Mexican friend. A promise broken leads to mistrust, and a division in relationship is formed within the community, which lives on with the missionaries after you have left.

### **Immigration and Visas**

A current passport and visa is required for entry into Mexico past the 26 kilometer check point. Make sure that you plan in advance so that you will have them ready.

When you arrive in the airport terminal you will need to proceed through Immigration. If possible, someone will be waiting to pick you up, but non-passengers, like your missionary hosts, may not always be allowed to come into the baggage area. Please stay together as a team to help each other with the bags. Carts are available to help you move your luggage through the immigration area.

If there is nobody to meet you inside the airport, proceed through Customs as a group, explaining to any officials that you are a work team going to help the Methodist Church with whatever the project may be. If your bags are checked, video cameras can require a 10% of cost deposit fee for bringing it into the country. Any other work related item or personal item should attract no fee whatsoever. You will be required to fill in an immigration form on the airplane before landing in Monterrey. This card should be kept with you until you have cleared customs in the airport. Keep it inside your passport. The immigration form you must fill out on the plane will ask for your address in Mexico.

If traveling by car you must obtain the same tourist visa as well as a car permit to travel past the 26 kilometer check point. You will also need to purchase Mexican car insurance before crossing the border. There are several places to do this, **but it must be done before crossing the border. As US auto insurance is not valid in Mexico.** The cost is about \$20.00-\$30.00 USD per day.

You will need the following to obtain a car permit:

- 1) **Original Title or registration. The owner is considered the Name or Names on the title only. Even if same family members, they may be denied permits, if their name is not on the title or registration.**
- 2) Original proof of citizenship. Birth certificate or passport. The passport is the best proof of ID.
- 3) Regular credit card for auto permit. Check cards are not always accepted. Only VISA, Master Card, and American Express. The card must be in the same name of the title or the same as the person bringing the cart into Mexico. There will be a \$24.00 USD charge to this card for the permit.
- 4) A valid driver license. This must have the owner's picture, name must be the same as on the title or registration.
- 5) A notarized letter of permission. This is required if the vehicle is financed, a rental, leased, company owned or in a school or church name.
- 6) Tourist permit (for individuals) Individual tourist permits (VISAS) are \$24.00 USD.
- 7) **Remember no borrowed vehicles or borrowed credit cards. You are importing the vehicle to Mexico. You will sign a promissory note to return the vehicle to the U.S. and must return all permits in person to the same department that issues the permit. *Failure to turn in your vehicle permit to the proper department will result in heavy fines.***

- 8) **Remember Mexico now offers a free tourist visa for 7 days.** But the car permit with this type of visa is only valid for 6 days. This means you have to cancel your car permit prior to the expiration date on the permit.

## **DRIVING DIRECTIONS**

- 1) **1) If you are entering Mexico through Laredo, TX by car, follow the signs to bridge number two.**
- 2) Cross over on bridge #2 and proceed to the customs traffic lights.
- 3) Enter this area one car at a time and wait for the either a red or a green light.
- 4) If you get a green light follow the directions of the custom agent.
- 5) If you receive a green light (or after you finish with the custom agent) make the first left that is possible. Calle "Bravo"
- 6) At this point you should see some blue signs that say "CAR PERMITS".
- 7) Follow this street until it "T" intersects this will be a little ways. Turn right and get in the left hand lane.
- 8) Follow this to the traffic light.
- 9) Make a U turn at this light and get to the far right as possible.
- 10) Then follow the signs to the immigration/car permit office.
- 11) After you finish, call and let me know you are on your way to Monterrey. Proceed back the way you came until you come to the traffic light again.
- 12) Proceed from this point on the four lane road called "Collosio" until it intersects with an overpass which is Mexico 85, go under the overpass and turn left and proceed onto 85. This is the road that will take you to Monterrey.
- 13) Follow the signs on this road that say "Quota" this is the toll road. It is worth the extra cost.
  - a. If you follow the sign "Libre" the road is free but you will have to contend with the reckless driving of the trucks. Once is enough to change your mind about doing it twice.
  - b. We will meet you in the parking lot of an airport before you enter Monterrey along side the highway "Areopuerto del Norte" This will be on the right. There is a silver twin engine airplane on a pedestal in the parking lot,

### **If you are entering Mexico from McAllen, TX**

- 1) Cross over on the "Pharr" bridge
- 2) This will enter Mexico on "Calle de Tejada"
- 3) Follow this to "Calle Miguel Aleman"
- 4) Turn left on "Miguel Aleman"
- 5) Follow this until it intersects with "Calles"
- 6) Turn left on "Calles"
- 7) Then Follow the signs to the Car permit office
- 8) After you are done with all your paperwork, call the missionaries and let them know that you are leaving. Then go back to "Miguel Aleman" And turn right.
- 9) Follow this until it intersects with " Calle L.Echeverria".
- 10) This will turn into "Rio Mante"
- 11) Follow "Rio Mante" until it intersects with "Blvd. Hildalgo"
- 12) This is Mexico 40 and will take you to Monterrey.

- 13) Follow the signs that say "Quota" this is the toll road. It is worth the extra cost.
- 14) As you enter Monterrey there is a "Walmart", "SamsClub" and a restaurant "Vips" the missionaries will meet you at the "Vips" parking lot.

### **The Work Team Experience**

We believe the work team and mission volunteer experience to be an excellent way of serving the Lord, enriching your own spiritual journey, helping those in need and having an experience you will never forget. To make these things happen does require a willing and flexible attitude and an effort on the part of each mission volunteer, team leader, and host. We will do our best to prepare for your time in Mexico. We will also be open to comments and suggestions. One will need to realize that occasionally problems might arise for various reasons. Together we can work through each one to God's glory. Please remember we are all here to serve and glorify Him, not any one else or any project.

A team leader and an assistant team leader should be identified and given responsibility for various details of the team experience. These persons will coordinate the work team experience with the missionary hosts. We do expect an emphasis to be placed on the importance of team selection by the team leader. Each team is expected to comprise Christian volunteers who have a desire or calling to serve the people of Mexico. The selection should include such factors as a profession of faith in Jesus Christ, skills and abilities, health status, and a servant's attitude. Volunteers should be able to share a brief 2-3 minute testimony about Christ's impact on their life and their commitment to follow Him. **The team leader must send to the missionary host a list of team members indicating the skills and abilities of each member, as well as a list of allergies, dietary requirements, medications and any medical illnesses of each team member, at least two months prior to arrival. These skills and health matters may be identified with use of an application sheet. The team leader should also obtain written permission for a medical release, including process for medical evacuation according to insurance, a liability release, as well as contacts for emergencies and notification of death, from each team member.**

There are different types of work available as part of the ministry in Mexico. In addition to the various medical services and construction projects, there is also a need for Bible study leaders, church leadership trainers, primary school teachers, children's ministry activities, preachers and devotion leaders, videographers, agriculture workers, nutrition counselors, and literacy promoters. Skilled people are necessary, but young or older people without experience in any of the aforementioned areas are also welcome. A willingness to work and serve others is the most important prerequisite.

Meals for work teams will be together with members of the missionary team. Each team will be expected to have members lead at times of devotions and sharing, usually after breakfast in the mornings and at the house in the evenings. These experiences will serve as opportunities for us to relax and enjoy Christian fellowship and spiritual growth. Your team leader will work with us to decide how each member can best contribute and benefit from our time together. Since we will be sharing our meals together, everyone will be called on to help with food preparation and cleanup.

All volunteers are expected to refrain from the use of alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, inappropriate clothing and profanity from the time of departure until the return home.

We do look forward to individual and team visits. It is a wonderful time of refreshing and encouragement for us as a team, besides being a vehicle for ministry to the people of Mexico. You will be a big encouragement to our entire ministry team. Please remember that you are coming to stay with families...so our homes are always busy with the daily activities. We see your visit as a part of our ministry and an extended part of our missionary family too!

May God bless you and encourage you as you prepare to come to Mexico for His ministry here!!

### **Costs**

Each volunteer and team is responsible for the purchase and booking of airline tickets to Mexico. The most important consideration in booking flights is the arrival time. It is best to arrive on a Saturday if this is not possible other arrangements can be made. Please book airline reservations only with major airlines. Of these, Continental, Delta and American airlines are the only US airlines that fly into Monterrey.

For work teams or individuals coming to Monterrey, all costs including room and board should be discussed with the missionary team host before the visit. Costs for transportation to and from Monterrey, including excursions to nearby cultural events, will be borne by the team. The team will also be expected to cover the cost of food, lodging and transport for the Monterrey missionary staff that will accompany them. These items cover the basic expenses with the exception of personal needs, souvenirs and meals eaten away from the worksite. A Project Fee will also be determined for each team member in order to obtain materials and supplies for the work team to complete priority ministry projects.