

MIT-Mexico Living Guide

Before You Arrive in Mexico

Passport/Visa

All participants need a valid passport and visa and in most cases “visa de cooperante”. To obtain a passport please visit any US post office or go to <http://travel.state.gov/passport/>.

Students in need of a visa will be informed separately by the program coordinator. To apply for a visa in Boston: Consulate General in Boston, 20 Park Plaza, suite 506 Boston, MA (617) 426-4181 y (617) 426-8782 Before you go, please check their schedule and requirements at: <http://www.sre.gob.mx/boston/>

Health Insurance

You will receive a health insurance for emergencies which will be covered by your host institution or by MIT-Mexico: <http://www.imglobal.com/> The policy is called Patriot Travel Medical Insurance.

Flights

In most cases we will book your flight, this will be coordinated through the program coordinator make sure to give the dates/gateways if you haven't done so.

Before you leave you should get a check (if applicable) with your stipend –this could be divided into two checks (where you would receive the second amount into your american account), while you are in Mexico and reimbursement of visa fee and your tickets and health insurance.

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Rents

Rents vary considerably in Mexico. They tend to be higher in the larger cities, such as Mexico City and Monterrey but it varies a lot depending on the area you will live.

If you are going to Mexico City it is very important that you try to live as close as possible to work not to have to deal with a long commute every day, another key aspect is for it to be in a safe area and the program coordinator and/or host institution can help you with that. A great way to practice Spanish and meet locals is to share an apartment. A more or less centered neighborhood is Condesa, which is a very lively place with lots of restaurants with outdoor seating, cafeterias, etc. If you will be working south of the city Coyoacan is a great place to live in!

Have a look at the following websites to check out apartment costs, both entire apartments as well as shared apartments. There is also a websites for homestays:

http://www.sublet.com/State_Rentals/Mexico_Rentals.asp

http://www.moveandstay.com/mexico_city/apartments-for-rent.asp

<http://mexicocity.craigslist.org/>

<http://www.homestayweb.com/?qclid=CND-gJbh4IsCFSMKGgod-xcocw>

Money

Most of students participating in the MIT-Mexico program will get stipend/salary in full before you leave the country. Your American ATM card is the best way to withdraw some cash from your home bank account (but check with your bank what the fees are), if you visa will be “de cooperante” you won’t be able to open a bank account. Check with your bank if they have a partnership with banks in Mexico to see if you incur less fees from ATM’s and when charging your credit card. Traveler’s checks are not recommended since not all of the establishments accept them. Always carry some cash as not all establishments will accept debit/credit cards.

When You Arrive in Mexico

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At the Airport

When you arrive at the airport make sure to take an authorized taxi from the airport, there will be stands inside the airport. Show them in a piece of paper the address where you are going or tell them in Spanish. You will pay cash, USD will be accepted and you will get a receipt, outside you will see the lines of taxis and you will give the driver the receipt. Tipping taxis in Mexico is not required.

Mexico City Airport: <http://www.aicm.com.mx/> Monterrey Airport: <http://airport.skyteam.com/airport-Monterrey.html>

If you are a US citizen it is recommended once you are in Mexico you register on-line with the American Embassy.

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration_1186.html

Commuting

There is extensive public bus service and Mexico City has a very good metro system. There are many taxis as well, but you should only take “stand” taxis or radio taxis, never flag them of the street, because a small percentage of those are not real taxis. (This applies in Monterrey as well). Mexico City Metro:

<http://www.metro.df.gob.mx/red/index.html>

Taxis/Radio Taxis: <http://www.metro.df.gob.mx/red/index.html>

Staying in Touch

To call the United States from Mexico, you can buy pre-paid calling cards “tarjetas ladatel” to use at public phones, you insert the card into a slot.

Making long distance phone calls in Mexico can be quite expensive. Many students find it's best to purchase a local mobile phone and buy pre-paid phone cards. The largest companies are: **Telcel, Usacell and Movistar**. All offer similar calling plans. Unlike in the US, where you are given minutes to make calls, in Mexico, you are charged an amount for every call you make and you don't get charged for incoming calls unless they are not local! So you want to pay special attention to how long your phone calls are as well as what time of day you are calling. It's quite common to communicate using text messaging. You can also check with your cel phone company in the US if they have a plan for Mexico, that could be a good option as well.

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BY E-MAIL

We recommend MIT web mail to stay in touch. Usually your host institution provides you with internet access. In addition, you can find inexpensive internet access in **Internet Cafés** in all cities. If you will be checking your other email account you should also let us know.

While You are in Mexico

Troubleshooting

Please address difficulties concerning your internship as soon as they occur. The MIT-Mexico Program stands ready to address these problems before or during your internship. If you have problems with a particular arrangement in the department you are working in or the people you work for, please address these problems in a polite way right from the start with your mentor in the company. In addition, I will meet with you during your internship. You can also get in touch with me at anytime by email gomezg@mit.edu and phone (617) 252-1483.

Dress Code

Dress codes vary from company to company, however, in general, Mexicans dress quite formally. Working for a bank obviously requires a more formal outfit than working in a lab. A good style to start your internship is "business casual". Once you get a feeling of how everybody else is dressed you can adapt to the "code" in your department. Don't forget to bring a suit and tie or skirt/dress for more formal events, such as meetings, receptions, and dinner parties. You can also ask your host institution what their dress code is before you arrive to Mexico.

Cultural Differences

Although Mexico and the US are neighbors there are a lot of cultural differences

http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_/culxcomp.html

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Safety

The best tip is to use common sense as you would in any city/country you don't know well, be aware of your belongings at all times (pickpockets) and don't go out alone in neighborhoods you don't know and don't go out alone at night, try to always be in a group. Don't withdrawal money from an ATM in a place that looks empty, do it during the day when it is busy and the bank is actually open.

The number one rule is to never flag down taxis as they might not be authorized taxis- both in Mexico City and Monterrey always use taxis on local stands called "sitios" look for the one nearest to you and/or use radio taxis. <http://www.mexicocity.com.mx/taxis2.html> Save in your cel phone two or three radio taxi phone numbers and when you call them they will ask for the pick up address and they will give you an estimated time the taxi will be there and the taxi number.

For more information please refer to the state department travel warning link:

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_970.html

MIT-Club of Mexico

You may want to contact the MIT Alumni club of Mexico. The club's main contacts are Adrian Gonzalez in Mexico City adrian_gonzalez@alum.mit.edu and Jorge Treviño in Monterrey. Jorge_trevino@alumn.mit.edu

Traveling

Traveling by bus is a great way to see other parts of the country! As long as they are first bus classes they use toll roads, buses are very comfortable and safe.

http://www.differentworld.com/mexico/common/pages/bus_info.htm

There are some low cost airlines that you can check out as well www.volaris.com.mx, www.vivaaerobus.com

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Nightlife and Entertainment

Mexico's major cities have lot's to do!

Mexico City:

http://www.frommers.com/destinations/mexicocity/41_indnight.html

Monterrey:

<http://www.allaboutmonterrey.com/nightlife.htm>

Food

You will be able to finally have real Mexican food!! :)

<http://mexicanfood.about.com/>

<http://www.differentworld.com/mexico/common/pages/food.htm>

Drinking Water

The tap water in Mexico in most cases is not drinkable so to be on the safe side you can purchase bottled water which is inexpensive. When ordering at a restaurant, make sure to specify if you want "agua con gas o mineral" or "agua natural" depending if you like sparkling water or still water. "agua embotellada" would be bottled still water.

Driving/Cars

Try to avoid driving especially in Mexico City and be aware of cars when walking as they are not very friendly with pedestrians.

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Places to see!

Mexico City or close by:

Piramides de Teotihuacan; Palacio de Bellas Artes; Zócalo (downtown); Museo Frida Khalo;
Museo de Antropología;

Some cities you could visit on weekends: Queretaro, Guanajuato, San Miguel de Allende, Taxco,
Cuernavaca, Puebla, Morelia, Acapulco.

Monterrey or close by:

Barrio Antiguo, Cola de Caballo waterfalls, Chipinque National Park (hiking, etc).

Weekend trips: Zacatecas and Real de catorce

Please refer to the links below for more information about Mexico

Mexico City:

<http://www.mexperience.com/guide/majorcity/mexicocity.htm>

Monterrey:

<http://www.mexperience.com/guide/majorcity/monterrey.htm>

<http://www.allaboutmonterrey.com/>

Xalapa:

<http://www.xalapa.net/>

Cuernavaca:

<http://www.clickoncuernavaca.com/>

Enjoy Mexico!! :)

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