WESTMONT IN MEXICO

August 18 – December 13, 2017

Prof. Daniela Kostruba
Resident Director
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¡Bienvenidos!

Welcome to Westmont in Mexico!

You are part of a select group of students who have chosen to study abroad by immersing yourself in a foreign culture. You are not afraid of a challenge, for this certainly will stretch and grow you in numerous ways. You will leave the comfort of your family, your friends, your home church, and Westmont and will need to adjust to a new university, a new city, a new country. You’ll have to master a public transportation system and negotiate unique family dynamics. You’ll meet and worship with people who express their faith in markedly different ways than you. And you’ll do it all in a foreign language!

Rest assured, you will not be alone on your journey. Your resident director, Prof. Daniela Kostruba and her husband Leo, will be available to support you, along with our Querétaro on-site liaison Lic. Gabriela Castañeda and her generous staff. Your professors will also get to know you, and many will even travel with you to teach you more about the rich diversity of Mexico. Additionally, if you allow yourself to remain open, vulnerable and honest, you will develop deep and lasting relationships with the other Westmont students who accompany you on this experience, and make several Mexican friends as well.

We are all very excited for you! You have each been handpicked by God to be part of the WIM family, and you are here for a reason. We hope that during your time abroad you will discover the beauty of Mexico and its people. When we think of our neighbor to the south, oftentimes the first images that pop into our minds are of impoverished border towns, horrible drug violence, or perhaps a sunny beach in the Caribbean with tourists sipping margaritas. If you think you know Mexico because you’ve been on Potter’s Clay or visited Cancún, think again! The WIM goal is to help you delve deeper and experience a more complex Mexico—a nation marked by diversity, shaped by those both within and beyond its borders, profoundly affected by the Roman Catholic Church, and blessed with a rich cultural heritage.

As you prepare to begin this adventure, know that Professor Kostruba and I are praying for each and every one of you as you grapple with the complexities of living in different culture. We pray that this experience will enrich you profoundly as you learn more about your neighbor, about yourself, and about God’s rich and wonderful love.

Un abrazo fuerte,

Dr. Mary Docter
WIM Coordinator

A note about this handbook: While every effort is made ensure all information is current, at times things changes do occur. I consider this to be a living document. As such, feel free to send me suggestions, corrections, or updates to enhance this information for future users.
The WIM 2017 resident director is Professor Daniela Kostruba. Here is her letter to you:

¡Saludos a todos!

I’m delighted to be leading WIM 2017, living and learning alongside Westmont students in Queretaro, a beautiful city with a rich Mexican culture. I am no stranger to student extracurricular activities, having organized and led German student groups staying with host families in London for two summers.

When I was 18 I took a year to travel around the world before starting my study of German Literature and Linguistic at the University of Heidelberg and one of my best memories is staying with a host family for 8 weeks in Antigua, Guatemala. There I fell in love with the Hispanic culture, particularly the wide variety of music, visual arts, architecture, religious expression, history and food(!). Because of this great experience in Antigua I applied for a teaching position in a German school in Guatemala city after grad school. I was offered that position in Guatemala, but I also got another great offer for a position teaching in Germany. With only one day to decide, I took the position in Germany and since then I have longed for the opportunity to work and live in that fascinating Hispanic culture.

With my family I have traveled extensively in Honduras, Panama, Costa Rica and Mexico. I’ve enjoyed my trips tremendously, but there is a big difference between being a tourist, traveling from one place to the other, and really living in a place for a longer period of time, building up relationships and getting immersed in a new culture.

Three years ago, when Dr. Elias was leading WIM, I visited Queretaro because my 15 year old daughter attended a private high school there for one semester. She was so fortunate to find a very nice host family who took her in like their own daughter. She became not only fluent in Spanish but, what is even more important, she has made unforgettable friends and developed into a more diversified person, as much intrigued by and fascinated with the Mexican culture as I am. I was never worried having her in Queretaro, Mexico because it is such a safe town. My experience and hers exemplifies what an enriching time the Westmont students will have. It's so much more than just learning a language! I can't wait to share this wonderful experience with you together with my husband, Leo, and my 14 year old son, Jascha.
Contact Information

AT WESTMONT

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WIM Coordinator
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IN QUERETARO

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Resident Director, WIM
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American cell: 805-259-6662
Note: Once in Mexico, Prof. Kostruba will provide you with her address and Mexican phone numbers

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Felipe Luna Sur #23, Centro
Querétaro, QRO
MEXICO, 76000
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Dialing from the US: 011-52-442-214-5062 (office); 011-52-1-442-156-0672 (cell)

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Web: http://www.embassyofmexico.org
Before you go: Planning and preparing

In this part of the handbook, you will receive information to help you prepare for Mexico, including suggestions for summer reading; documents you will need; health information; money matters; packing; and travel to Mexico.

What you do in the United States now will have a significant impact on your trip to Mexico. Good planning is the key to being ready to leave for Mexico. It is also the key to a successful stay. Obtaining a passport, making the appropriate health consultations, and booking your travel arrangements are all time consuming. If you begin these essential pre-departure tasks immediately, you won’t have to worry at the last minute.

Additionally, here are some tasks to do now to make accidental loss or theft less damaging. Take a few minutes right now and do the following:

- Write down the numbers of your credit cards (or make a photocopy of both sides of your card) and check with the issuing institution for a telephone number you can call from Mexico to report lost or stolen cards (this is typically on the back of your credit card).

- Photocopy the passport page that has your photo and personal information.

- Photocopy the receipt part your airline tickets (usually the last page) or print an additional copy of your e-ticket confirmation.

- Empty your wallet of all items not essential for your Mexico trip, especially credit cards for oil companies and local department stores.

- Back up your computer’s hard drive (if you plan to bring your laptop).

Bring a copy of the above list of items with you to Mexico and leave a second copy with family back home.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SUMMER

To enhance your Mexico experience, you should continue reading and exploring about Mexico and Mexican culture this summer. Here are many optional—but highly recommended—activities:

1. **Mexico: What Everyone Needs to Know**  
   An excellent, quick introduction to Mexico is *Mexico: What Everyone Needs to Know*, by Roderic Ai Camp (Oxford, 2011). You can read this in little snippets; it is organized as brief answers to questions people ask about Mexico.
2. **Work on your español!**
   The more Spanish you know *before* you arrive in Mexico, the more you can potentially learn. Here's some basic ideas (but I'm sure you'll think of others):
   
   - Skim your old textbook and review your grammar
   - Buy a workbook and work through the exercises (and bring it to Mexico as well)
   - Practice with on-line tools, like Study Spanish: [http://www.studyspanish.com/tutorial.htm](http://www.studyspanish.com/tutorial.htm)
   - Watch a telenovela on TV or on-line (you'll start to *love it!*)
   - Find a friend to talk to in Spanish and get together often
   - Enjoy some movies on Netflix (or YouTube) in Spanish

3. **Stay current on news affecting Mexico and US Latinos**
   At least once or twice a week try to spend a few minutes reading an article or two about what is happening in Mexico, Latin America, or the US. Here are some suggestions:
   
   - Follow CNN en español: [http://cnnespanol.cnn.com](http://cnnespanol.cnn.com)
   - Read one of the main Mexico City newspapers, e.g., [http://www.excelsior.com.mx](http://www.excelsior.com.mx)
   - Check out the local Querétaro paper: [http://www.oem.com.mx/diariodequeretaro](http://www.oem.com.mx/diariodequeretaro)
   - Read or listen to stories on “Latino USA” (on NPR, [http://latinousa.org](http://latinousa.org)) or subscribe or download the Latino USA podcasts to learn what issues here in the US affect the Latino population. These are great to listen to on walks or in the car.

4. **Read about Mexican history**
   Former WIM students all agree that the history class is the most challenging for them, especially at the beginning. One way to help is to pick up a book now in English and begin reading. If you can learn about the basics of Mexican history *now,* you'll have a better chance of understanding what the professor is talking about in class. Here are some possibilities:
   
   - *A Compact History of Mexico* by Daniel Cosío Villegas (also available in Spanish)
   - *Mexico: A Brief History,* by Alicia Hernández Chávez (also available in Spanish)
   - *A Concise History of Mexico* by Brian R. Hamnett (Cambridge)
   - *The Course of Mexican History* by Michael C. Meyer (Oxford) > huge but excellent

5. **Work on your Action Plans!**
   Continue strengthening your personal autonomy, perceptual acuity, flexibility and openness and emotional resilience by continuing your work on your Action Plans this summer.
In addition to your airline ticket, the following travel documents are necessary for entry and departure to Mexico:

**Passport**
Passports are required for entry into Mexico and re-entry into the US. Make sure your passport is up to date: typically, it should be valid for at least 6 months from the day of your arrival. For further information, consult: [http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english.html)

**Mexican Tourist Card**
In addition to a passport, you will also be required to have a Mexican Tourist Card. This is free and distributed on the plane or available once you arrive at the Querétaro airport. WIM participants do NOT need a “student visa” for the purposes of this program. **Make sure that you mark “Tourist” as the reason for your visit.** When you go through Immigration at the Querétaro airport, tell the officer that you plan on being in the country to study the language and culture until mid-December. The officer should stamp your card for **at least 120 days.** (If you receive less than 120 days, do not panic. Do, however, advise your resident director, who will work to extend your Tourist Card.)

*Keep everything you receive as you go through Customs and Immigration. It is especially important to not lose your Tourist Card as you will need it to leave the country. Once you arrive at your host family’s home, store it and your passport in a safe place.*

**International Student ID (not required)**
An International Student ID is NOT required for your trip. Once in Querétaro, you will be issued a Mexican Student ID for the ITQ, which will give you discounts on bus transportation and entrance fees to cultural sites (museums and archeological sites).

**Absentee voting**
Arrange for an absentee ballet with your county election board if there will be an election in which you wish to vote while you’re in Mexico.

**Textbooks**
Most students will not need to take textbooks to Mexico. Many classes will distribute photocopy packets while others will allow you to “borrow” textbooks from the WIM “library.” When a text is required, your resident director will let you know over the summer what you need to purchase.
HEALTH

Immunizations
There are a number of immunizations recommended by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) for travel to Mexico. You should consult with your physician or your local county health officer for advice on immunizations needed for Mexico at least 4-6 weeks prior to your departure. Check specifically for tetanus, diphtheria and hepatitis. Others may be recommended based on your age and health condition. For additional information on up-to-date immunization information, consult the CDC website:  [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel).

Prescriptions
Be sure to take prescriptions for eyeglasses, contacts and medications. If you take prescription drugs regularly, bring a supply large enough to last for the duration of the program. Pack them in the original bottle with the prescription and your name on the label. *Note: medications cannot be mailed from the US to Mexico.* Additionally, if you wear contact lenses you may want to bring your solutions with you. Although many are available in Mexico, they are usually more expensive. *Note: over the counter medications such as Tylenol, Ibuprofen and Petpo Bismol are readily available in Mexico and cost about the same as in the States.*

Allergies & chronic ailments
For your safety, it is imperative that your resident director and your host family know the following information about you: all allergies (to food and medications), chronic ailments, current medications and dosages, and dietary restrictions. If you need to update the information on your health form (which you filled out prior to Mexico), make sure you do so immediately. For those with serious allergies or medical conditions, we recommend you purchase and wear a medical alert bracelet.

Medical Insurance
All Westmont students participating in International Off-Campus programs are automatically enrolled in health insurance coverage through AIG. The health insurance provides worldwide coverage for accident and illness; this insurance is a service that provides assistance in many types of emergencies including medical emergencies. AIG can provide medical facility recommendations in addition to assisting with medical evacuation or repatriation of remains if necessary.

An AIG card and explanation of these services and coverage will be provided during orientation. Please do remember that **AIG operates on a reimbursement plan:** any medical care you receive must be paid on-site and “out of pocket” at the time of service. (If necessary, Westmont can provide funds upfront but the student account will be
charged.) It is your responsibility to obtain receipts and medical paperwork for all services rendered (doctor bills, prescriptions, etc.) and to submit them for reimbursement to AIG upon returning to the US.

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**MONEY MATTERS**

Mexico’s monetary unit is the peso. The exchange rate currently fluctuates around 17 pesos to the US dollar; the symbol for the peso is the same as the US dollar ($).

There are many ways to handle money for your trip to Mexico. The easiest and most efficient way is to bring a debit card from your US bank, and then withdraw cash from the ATMs in Mexico. Because there is typically a small fee for each withdrawal (check with your bank), it is more economical to withdraw larger quantities (e.g. $100 or more) at once to only pay one fee, rather than taking out $20 various times.

You may also want to bring a credit card as well; Visa, MasterCard and American Express cards are widely accepted in Mexico. It is important to notify your US bank and credit card company that you will be in Mexico for an extended period of time (to avoid them freezing your card), and to check with them regarding any fees that may be charged.

Most students will also bring $20-100 in US cash, which can be used for emergency purposes. **DO NOT CARRY LARGE AMOUNTS OF CASH.** When you arrive in Mexico (or at the welcome meal), the resident director will give you some spending (about $20 USD) for your first weekend.

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**BUDGET**

The amount of money you should budget for your trip to Mexico depends in large part on your own, individual choices. Some students live very frugally, eating out only sparingly and purchasing very few souvenirs. Others enjoy going out more, make large gift and souvenir purchases, and/or travel on the weekends. Calculating the amount of money you will need for your stay in Mexico is not easy, and is very personal. The following might help you make an informed decision:

- Each student will receive a stipend each month (typically $100 dollars US) to help cover the cost of bus or taxi transportation, printing, and cell phone cards.
- You will have access to the ITQ computer lab, which is included in your program fees. Outside the university, the average cost of computer time in a Cyber Café is 10 pesos per hour, which does not include printing charges (usually a few pesos per page). Many cafés
and plazas throughout Querétaro also have free wireless internet and your host family may have wireless in their home as well.

• Students typically spend money on the following: bus or taxi transportation; coffee shops; light meals/snacks out (e.g. tacos, snacks between classes); gifts & souvenirs; entertainment (movies, cultural events, clubs, etc.); optional trips to nearby cities or events (bus transportation, overnight lodging, meals); incidentals (personal hygiene/toiletries). Think about these items and budget accordingly.

• Many students will want to have some cash available—in addition to the WIM stipend—for additional necessities and gifts and souvenirs. Make a list now of the people you may want to purchase for and do some calculations. Also remember that you may wish to give a few gifts for your family and friends in Querétaro toward the end of the program. Think about these issues and try to save some money this summer to put aside for your purchases!

How to save money in Mexico

✔ Split things with your compañeros: taxis, Uber, hotel rooms, etc.

✔ Stay out of cabs/Ubers in Querétaro, except at night; the bus will take you where you need to go, at a cost of about 50 cents (US).

✔ Check your list of “must haves” carefully before leaving the States. It will be less expensive to purchase medicines, contact lens solutions, and other special needs items in the US.

✔ Don’t phone the US unless you have to; let your friends and family call you. The price differential is up to 50%. If you must call, use SKYPE, What’s App or another free or low-cost streaming service.

✔ Avoid making discos or antros (dancing clubs) the center of your social life. They can be expensive and there are so many other options.

Changing money
If you bring US dollars, there are many places to change them. Most will require a passport and charge a fee for this service. Here are some convenient locations:

• Casa de Cambio de Querétaro: Corregidora Nte 10. Open Mon-Fri 9-4, and Sat 10-2.
• Casa de cambio (inside Banco Azteca): Corregidora Nte 156. Open every day 9-9.
• Eurofimex: Juárez sur 58. Open Mon-Fri 9-2.
• Casa de cambio, Corregidora 134. Open Mon-Fri 10-8, Sat 10-2.
Note that banks often offer a better exchange rate, but the hours are more restrictive and the lines are frequently long. Traveler's checks are accepted but changing them can be time consuming.

**Wiring money**

If you need to have money wired to you from the US, there are a few options:

- Western Union (1-800-325-6000) wires money to locations throughout Querétaro (check online for a full listing of locations). You will need to have the “control number” before you go the store, so make sure you get that number from the sender.

- Money can also be wired through “Elektra Dinero en Minutos” and pick up the money at one of the many Elektra stores in Querétaro. Two locations are: 80 Juárez and Zaragoza Ote 33.

- American Express (in the US at 1-800-926-9400) in Querétaro is handled by Turismo Beverly, where the money can be claimed.
**PACKING**

**TRAVEL LIGHT!**
Most students will want to take more than they need and they inevitably regret it. Our advice: *pack the absolute minimum*. You will probably need fewer changes of clothes than you wear at home. Additionally, most everything essential you can now find in Mexico (though some things at a higher cost), so don’t worry if you forget something or don’t have room to fit it. Exceptions to this availability are prescription medications and some specialized healthcare products. Still, at the Querétaro Costco, Walmart, OfficeMax or supermarkets you will probably be able to find all of your needs!

Generally, your airline will allow you to check one bag and carry on one small bag and one small personal item. Check with your airline for size and weight restrictions; most airlines enforce these strictly and if you exceed the limits (or check an additional bag), the fees add up very quickly. And, you will probably want to purchase things in Mexico to bring home, so leave some space in your bags. In other words, *travel light!!*

**CLOTHING**
For the most part, your Mexican peers wear the same styles of clothing that you and your peers wear at home. As a rule, however, Mexicans living in middle to upper class urban areas (as Querétaro) are more fashion conscious and cosmopolitan than most US students. Be sure to bring a couple nice outfits and at least one dressy outfit to wear on special occasions: for women, skirts or dresses; for men, a nice pair of slacks and shirt and tie; for both, a pair of dressy shoes.

Be aware that no matter what you are wearing in Mexico, you will automatically attract more attention to yourself than you are accustomed to. This is particularly true for women, so think twice about wearing tight or revealing clothing or short shorts. Except in coastal or tourist areas, wearing shorts, even for men, is rare and not considered “proper” dress at school.

The picture at the right shows students dressed for a typical school day: men in jeans and a T-shirt; women in jeans, dresses or skirts, along with a nicer top.

You will be doing a great deal of walking in Mexico, so bring at least one pair of sturdy, comfortable shoes that will last the entire program (sandals or nice walking shoes).
Because Querétaro is located at a high altitude (over 6000 feet), temperatures fluctuate. When you arrive in August, the weather is generally hot in the day, and cooler—though generally not cold—at night. Expect cooler temperatures when winter approaches, when it can get chilly, especially at night. Keep in mind that houses do not have central heating or air conditioning. To cope with the changing seasons, bring layers (e.g. light sweaters and jackets). Because rain and thunderstorms occur, bring a raincoat (with hood), small umbrella and shoes that can get wet. Bring clothes that can be easily washed and worn. Your host family will do your laundry once a week (washing your clothes in a washer, typically, and then hanging them dry on the line). Avoid bringing items that need to be dry-cleaned.

Here are some items you will need:
- Plane ticket & passport
- Debit card & (optional) credit card
- Light, machine-washable clothes
- Skirts and/or light skirts/dresses (for women)
- Jeans & casual pants
- Underware, socks, etc.
- Sweater
- Light jacket and/or sweatshirt
- One dressy outfit & nice shoes (for the ballet!)
- Shorts & swimsuit (for travel)
- Workout/running clothes (if desired)
- Raingear and (optional) umbrella
- Pajamas and flip flops or sandals
- Comfortable walking shoes and sandals
- Tennis shoes
- A small bag or suitcase for weekend trips
- Medical prescriptions
- Contact/eyeglass prescription and solutions (if applicable)
- Toiletry necessities (at least a small amount; you can buy much of it in Mexico)

You may also want to take:
- Laptop & flash drive (and all cords)
- Travel clock/alarm clock
- Camera and all chargers/cords
- Water bottle (you can buy in Mexico)
- Pictures of home—your family, Westmont, city (to show to your family)
- Paperback dictionary
- Small grammar textbook or workbook
- Journal or diary
- Small gift(s) for host family (see below for suggestions)
- Daypack, calculator, pens (for school; you can also buy in Mexico)
- Light-weight hiking boots (or good, sturdy tennis shoes)
- Wash cloth (note: sheets and towels are provided for you)
Gifts
Plan to bring a few gifts for your host family and special friends you may meet in Mexico. Suggested gifts for anyone in the family are: stationary (especially with pictures of your hometown, etc.), a photo book or calendar of your home state, small craft objects (e.g. candles, pottery), local food products (e.g. candy, jams, spices) from your hometown, sports memorabilia from your state or university team, or something you have made yourself. Children might enjoy T-shirts with university names or US designs or labels, stickers or games. Be creative!

ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES
Mexico uses the same voltage system as the US (110 volts, AC). You do not need a transformer or converter. However, our system of polarized plugs (left prong larger than the right) is not widespread there, especially in older homes. This means that you may have difficulty with their outlet being too small for the plug on your appliance. Additionally, some homes may not have sockets for 3-prong plugs. You can get an adapter at any travel or hardware store (in the US or Mexico) if this is an issue.

LAPTOPS
Most WIM students elect to bring their laptops. This facilitates writing and editing your assignments, storing your word documents and photos, and making SKYPE calls home. Make sure you bring a surge protector (or buy one in Mexico) and back up your laptop before going to Mexico. Note: laptops are easy targets for theft, so be prepared to watch your laptop carefully whenever you bring it outside your home. And, let me repeat: back up frequently.

Many homes now have wireless Internet. If yours doesn’t, there are multiple cafés and plazas that do. The ITQ campus also has wireless (though it is weak in many areas).

CELL PHONES & COMMUNICATION
In Mexico, all program participants will be “loaned” a basic cell phone to use throughout your stay. It is your responsibility to purchase phone cards (with your stipend money) to charge your phone each month (about $20 dollars). Therefore, you will not need to bring your cell phone with you, unless you choose. Normally, using a US cell in Mexico is very expensive unless you can bring an unlocked phone. Some students, however, choose to bring their iPhone to use for music, photos, and for iMessaging, which is free (assuming you are using a wireless connection). Using iPhone data is extremely expensive, so make sure you have a Mexico plan or disable the data and roaming functions on your phone.
Calling home & vice versa
There are many ways to communicate with your family back home. In general, it is less expensive for your family and friends in the US to call you. Many students arrange a time to SKYPE with their family and/or call home using SKYPE, which is easy and affordable. Your Mexican phone card will also allow you to make calls to the US as part of the monthly fee. You can also receive international calls on your Mexican cell phone free of charge.

International calls must include the international code, country code (52 for Mexico), and city code (442 for Querétaro) plus the phone number.
- To call Mexico from the US: 011-52-442-xxx-xxxx
- To call a Mexican cellphone from the US: 011-52-1-442-xxx-xxxx
- To call the US from Mexico: 001 + area code + xxx-xxxx

TRAVEL TO MEXICO
You are responsible for purchasing your round trip airline ticket to Querétaro and advising your resident director and Barb Pointer of your travel arrangements. There are daily flights to Querétaro from major cities, connecting in Houston and Dallas. Prices typically range between $500-700 for non-stop flights, though great deals are frequently available.

When you arrive in Querétaro, you will go through Customs and Immigration. See the information on the Tourist Card earlier in this handbook (under “Documents”). Your resident director will be waiting for the group at the Querétaro airport and you will all travel together in vans to the Centro Intercultural de Querétaro (CIQ) where you will meet and be whisked away by your host families!
In Mexico

CONTACT INFORMATION

During the first few days in Querétaro, you will want to store important contact information in your Mexican cell phone:

Prof. Daniela Kostruba, WIM Resident Director

This information will be provided to you via email in August

Centro Intercultural de Querétaro (CIQ)
Felipe Luna Sur #23, Centro
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Tel: 214-50-62 or 212-28-31

Gabriela Castañeda, Directora del CIQ
Email: gabrielacs_58@yahoo.com.mx
Tel: 214-50-62
Emergency cell: (044) 442-156-06-72

María Dolores Otero, CIQ
Tel: 212-28-31
Emergency cell: (044) 442-333-45-63

Nearest US Consulate (in San Miguel de Allende)
Dr. Hernández Macías #72
San Miguel de Allende
Tel: 415-152-23-57; 415-152-1588

US Embassy (in Mexico City)
Reforma #305, Col. Cuauhtémoc
México, DF
Tel: 55-5080-2000
ACADEMICS

In Mexico, students typically take 16 units, consisting of five 3-unit classes and the 1-unit dance class. All WIM students must take the history class and the Engaging Cultures seminar. Before arriving in Mexico, you will work with Dr. Docter and your academic advisor to ensure you are taking appropriate classes to fulfill your GE, major and minor requirements. Once you arrive, if you need to change or add a class, do not worry. The resident director and your professors will make sure you are in the correct classes and will take care of arrangements with the Registrar. You, however, are responsible for communicating any changes with your resident director.

Your Spanish courses (language, composition, oral skills, literature, etc.) will typically be held in the morning at the Instituto Tecnológico de Querétaro (ITQ, picture below on left). Following these classes, you will return to your home for the mid-day comida.

Your history, art, and dance classes will typically be held at the Centro Intercultural de Querétaro (CIQ, picture on right) in the late afternoon, after comida. All of your classes will be taught in Spanish by Mexican faculty. The one exception is the required “Engaging Cultures” course, which will be taught (typically) in English by the Westmont resident director.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Note: Availability of course options contingent upon specific needs of each group.

Intermediate Spanish: SP 005 & SP 006 (6 units)

An innovative program combining traditional classroom instruction with the resources of in-country immersion. Listening, speaking and communicative exercises based on Mexico-specific texts. Second year Spanish is comprised of two courses, Grammar/Writing (SP 005, 4 units) and Conversation (SP 006, 2 units). The Westmont equivalent is SP 3 & SP 4. Prerequisite: SP 2 or equivalent.
**Advanced Spanish: SP 100 & SP 105 (6 units)**

Two courses, **Composition** (SP 100) and **Language in Context** (SP 105), develop advanced language competence in the essential areas of composition and oral skills. Analysis of major Mexican cultural and historical influences and of cultural products—art, literature, film, music, etc.—provides the focus for both classes. Grammar is linked to accuracy of written expression in SP 100; conversation management, vocabulary building and listening comprehension are emphasized in SP 105. Prerequisite: SP 4 or equivalent.

**Advanced Composition & Linguistics: SP 120 (3 units)**

For advanced students who want to continue honing their writing and grammar skills. Exploration of and practice with complex grammatical structures in Spanish. Scope includes morphological and syntactical structures. Extensive writing under the guidance of a professor who makes suggestions for increasing accuracy and sophistication of written expression in a variety of forms. Prerequisite: SP 100 or equivalent.

**Advanced Oral Skills: SP 121 (3 units)**

For advanced students who want to continue honing their listening and speaking proficiency. Assignments involving interaction with Mexican people, as well as various cultural media such as radio, television, movies and possibly theater. Prerequisite: SP 100, advanced standing in the major & consent of instructor.

**Survey of Latin American Literature II: SP 104 (4 units)**

Historical overview of major authors, genres, and developments in Latin American literature from modernismo (1885) through the present. Prerequisite: SP 100.

**Seminar in Mexican Literature: SP 160 (3 units)**

Texts by modern Mexican writers: novel, short story, poetry and theater. Focus on the aesthetic qualities of the works and their relation to Mexican society. Techniques for improving students’ reading and writing abilities provided. Prerequisite: SP 100 & one literature class (or consent of instructor).

**Introduction to Literary Translation: SP 195 (3 units)**

Introduction to the theory and practice of Literary Translation in a bi-national class. Students will be paired with Mexican university students to collaborate on individual projects. Open to advanced students who have taken at least one literature class in Spanish.

**US-Mexican Relations: POL 116 (3 units)**

An in-depth look at U.S.-Mexican history that has led to the current relationship. Topics include the economic interdependence of the two countries and immigration questions. Students will also analyze cultural similarities and differences. Prerequisite: SP 100 or equivalent.
Engaging Cultures: IS 193 (3 units) > WIM requirement

This seminar is a continuation of the orientation course you took in the Spring (IS 192). Once again, the goal is to deepen your understanding of Mexican culture and to help you get the most out of your experience abroad. This course complements the activities in your other classes and provides a framework for examining the issues and questions they present. Students will participate in several field trips and projects outside of the classroom designed to help them “engage culture.” A cultural journal, reflective essays, and regular participation will be required parts of this course.

History of Mexico: HIS 160 (3 units) > WIM requirement

An overview of Mexican history and civilization from the time of Mesoamerican civilizations to the present. Attention to current relations between the U.S. and Mexico, as well as to significant social and economic determinants in Mexico’s future.

Mexican Art: ART 121 (3 units)

This course will help students gain a basic knowledge of both contemporary and historical art, specifically in Mexico. Through the study of basic art principles and compositional elements, the students will come to understand artworks in general and the creation and interpretation of their own artwork. Because the study of art would be empty without experiencing firsthand what it means to create art, students will learn various art methods/techniques from local artists and gain an aesthetic awareness of art through their own personal creation. Another chief goal of this class will be for students to gain a broad understanding of Mexican art and its role in society through examples throughout art history.

Latin Dance: PEA 025 (1 unit)

A physical education activity course focusing on various forms of Latin dance, from pre-Columbian times to the present. At the end of the year, students put on a dance performance (in costume) for their host families and university friends.
NORMS OF ACADEMIC CONDUCT

Students are expected to comply with the norms of academic conduct in the Westmont catalog. Additionally, because you are in another country and culture, there are additional rules and expectations for academic behavior. The following code has been designed to help you fit into the expectations of the host university’s culture:

1. Class attendance is mandatory. (See attendance/illness policy below)

2. Participation is crucial to learning to speak a foreign language.

3. The language of instruction is Spanish. Refrain from speaking English to anyone while in class, as this is a sign of disrespect.

4. Late or make-up work will not be accepted, with the exception noted under illness. Even if you are absent the day homework is due, it is your responsibility to hand it in on time (via email or delivery by a friend). “On time” means at the beginning of class.

5. All essays and compositions must be typed, unless clearly indicated by the professor. If not typed, work must be done on clean paper in legible handwriting.

In Mexico, relations between teachers and students typically have a degree of formality that sometimes escapes the notice of students visiting from the US (especially California!). Observing the following will contribute to good relations with your teachers, and to a positive classroom atmosphere, and that in turn is to your personal benefit:

- Be punctual whether the professor is or not.
- Leave food and drink (except water) outside the classroom. Eating or drinking during lectures is often perceived as a lack of respect for their culture and for faculty.
- Come prepared to sit down and work during the period, refraining from getting up and moving around or leaving the classroom.
- Do not put your feet on the furniture.
- Arrive to class clean and dressed appropriately. If you arrive unkempt or sloppy, it can be considered an insult to your professors.

Note the common denominator in all four points above: they all involve demonstrating respect towards the professor and the activity at hand. Under circumstances of overt disrespect, including gross tardiness, the instructor has the right to dismiss the student from the classroom, with resultant grade penalty.
**Attendance/illness policy:**
In case of illness or absence, you must contact your professor directly as well as your resident director. When you communicate with your professors regarding absences via email, please copy the RD. Each professor will have her/his own attendance policy and each will interpret her/his policy as each sees fit. Be sure you are aware of your professors' policies so you can make informed decisions when you're considering being absent. Note that the protocol for student attendance, like many other things, is to some extent determined by culture. In all cases, however, even for excused absences, your grade may very well be affected by your absences.

Your host families should know that you are expected to be in class; hopefully they will take this into account when planning trips that they invite you to be a part of. We encourage you to participate in family outings, even if they should cause you to miss class, provided you are prepared to accept the consequences.

**FIELD TRIPS**
Throughout the semester, the group will take several excursions to experience and learn more about Mexico’s rich diversity.

A day trip to the town of Bernal is planned for the weekend at the end of the first week of classes. Bernal is located about one hour outside of Querétaro and is well known for the Peña de Bernal, one of the world’s tallest monoliths (by some accounts the fourth tallest and by some the third tallest monolith in the world).

Three long field trips are planned during the program. These are considered part of the academic program and are guided by a faculty member from our teaching staff. Attendance is mandatory. Once in Mexico you will receive detailed information about each trip with the specific field trip dates and itineraries (tentative dates are listed below under “Academic Calendar”). Field trip destinations will be:

- **La Sierra Gorda** (4 days)
- **Mexico City and Teotihuacan** (4 days)
- **Puebla and Oaxaca** (5 days) > over the weekend of the Day of the Dead

All costs associated with the field trips are covered in your program fees, including hotels, all meals, and museum and archeological site entrance fees. You must bring your Querétaro student ID card with you on all excursions, as this will allow you to enter many places free or at a reduced rate. If you forget or lose your student ID, you will have to pay any admission fees you may be charged. You will not be allowed to opt out of the activity.
In addition to the required academic excursions, your resident director may organize various day or weekend trips to different parts of Mexico. Unlike the excursions above, these are optional (but highly recommended). The resident director will alert you to the charges (bus fare, hotel, etc.) for each trip. Possible destinations may include Tequisquiapan, San Miguel de Allende, Dolores Hidalgo, and Guanajuato, among others.
ACADEMIC CALENDAR
Please note that while in Mexico, you will follow the Mexican calendar and not the US one. In other words, your holidays will NOT include an October “Fall break” nor Thanksgiving, but rather those celebrated by the Mexican people (listed below). The following calendar is for your reference; note that the dates below are subject to change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrival in Mexico</td>
<td>August 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome Comida</td>
<td>August 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITQ Orientation</td>
<td>August 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>First day of classes</td>
<td>August 22</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIELD TRIP 1: Bernal</td>
<td>August 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National holiday: Independence Day</td>
<td>September 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIELD TRIP 2: Sierra Gorda</td>
<td>September 21-24</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIELD TRIP 3: Mexico City</td>
<td>October 13-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIELD TRIP 4: Oaxaca &amp; Puebla</td>
<td>October 31-November 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National holiday: Revolution Day</td>
<td>November 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIELD TRIP 5 (optional): Guanajuato</td>
<td>October 18-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last day of classes</td>
<td>December 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departure</td>
<td>December 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
YOUR HOST FAMILY

Your host family has been carefully chosen to provide you a home during your stay. All of the families participating in the program are selected after going through a detailed selection process that includes a personal interview, a survey to determine the family's customs and lifestyle; an orientation workshop with the site coordinator, a visit to the home, and regular evaluations by students living with the families.

All host families are chosen to participate in WIM because of what they can bring to your Mexican experience. Almost all families have had WIM students living with them before and are familiar with the program. Most Westmont students report that the highlight of their WIM experience is the homestay.

General guidelines & expectations:
While each family is different, you can all expect the following:

• You will be living with a middle-class family in a middle-class home. The homes vary greatly in size—from simple (some families live in apartments) to large and spacious. Some are very modern and “fancy” while others are more humble. Some will have wireless Internet, others will not. Although there are homestays located throughout the city, an effort is made to group students near one another so that they can share transportation, etc.

• Family make-up differs there just as here. You might live with a single woman; a mother, father and two children; or a large extended family. Even in the case of an older woman now living alone, usually there are other family members living nearby and family gatherings are common. With the variety of families, a student should expect his or her relationship with the family to vary as well. That being said, these families are expected to integrate you into the family to the best of their ability.

• Each student will have his or her own room, with a bed, dresser/closet, and desk or table. Your señora will typically do your laundry (or give you access to machines) once a week. While some students may have access to their own bathroom, most will share with another member of the family.

• You will receive a key to your house. Please make every effort not to lose it! Keep your house keys separate from any form of ID that has your local address.
• Your señora will show you around the home and will usually ask about what foods you like. If you have dietary restrictions please communicate them to her directly (e.g., allergy to dairy products, vegetarian, etc.). The señora will do all she can to accommodate your needs.

• The first week, your señora should show you around your neighborhood and help you understand the bus system for getting to and from school as well as downtown. If something is unclear, do not be afraid to ask again.

• You should be the only foreign student/boarder in your home. If your family is renting a room to someone else, please communicate this immediately with your resident director.

• You will meet our on-site housing coordinator, Gabi Castañeda, when you begin your program. Gabi works with the señoras both before and during the program to ensure that expectations are met (both of the student and the family) and to keep the señoras informed about program events. Gabi will also be working closely with the resident director to oversee your housing. Please consult with either of them if you have any concerns about your housing. We want the home-stay experience to be a positive one.

*Please tell your resident director immediately:*  
• If your family is hosting a student who is not a member of the family or other relative, especially if it is a foreign student or Peace Corps Member. No or very little English should be spoken in the household.

• If, at any time, you feel unsafe or uncomfortable in your home.

• If you aren’t getting enough food. Usually the opposite happens.

**Family etiquette & behavioral expectations**

You are a guest in the home. After living independently on campus it will probably be an adjustment to live with a family again. Think of the experience as a cultural exchange. Your host family is really the best means by which you can observe and learn about Mexican culture and society, as well as to practice your Spanish.

Your family will be a great resource for you and will take responsibility for your wellbeing. The señoras take this “job” very seriously. You, in turn, should be a responsible “member” of the family. While each family is different, please keep the following in mind:

• Each member of a Mexican family has a **different role**. If you can be sensitive to the role of each household member and watch how they behave, you will be able to discover your own place in the family.

• When you meet various members of the host family, ask what **name or form of address** you should use, and let them know in turn what you like to be called.
• Perhaps the most important rule is to **communicate**! If you plan to miss comida one day or to go out at night with friends, *tell your señora where you are going and when you expect to return*. Your señora will worry about you if you arrive later than expected. Ask your host mother about the best way to let her know if you will be home later than planned.

• Remember to say your **greetings or good-byes** each time you enter or leave the house, and show concern and appreciation for each family member. It can be considered extremely rude to come into the house and go directly to your room. Always tell your host mother where you are going when you leave the house.

• Always ask permission before **inviting someone** to the house. Never take a friend of the opposite sex into your room.

• Remember that in Mexico, there are different expectations of public and private space. You should **keep your room straightened up** (i.e. bed made, clothes off the floor, etc.) at all times. This goes as well for the bathroom, especially if you are sharing with other members of the family. Additionally, ask before putting up pictures or making any changes in your room.

• Take your cues from other family members. For example, you'll probably notice that the **kitchen** is usually the señora's private domain. If she tells you to help yourself to water, things out of the fridge or cabinet, etc. then go ahead; otherwise (or just as a matter of courtesy) you should ask permission.

• Resources are limited and costly, especially water. Learn to **conserve resources**; ask (or figure out) when it’s a good time to shower. Water heaters tend to have a much smaller capacity than what we are used to here in the US. Some neighborhoods only receive water once a day and it is stored in a small capacity tank on the rooftop. Conserve electricity: turn lights off as you leave rooms, unplug appliances, and so on.

• **Never use the family phone** for long distance calls, unless you are using a charge card or phone card. Regardless, always ask first each time before using the phone, even for local calls.

• **Toilet paper disposal** is one of the best-kept secrets in Mexico. Sewage systems are narrow and clog easily. To avoid having to tell your señora of an embarrassing overflow, use the wastebasket to dispose of used toilet paper (as well as other items such as tampons, etc.). This is true throughout Mexico, e.g. at the university, your resident director’s home, restaurants, etc. Discarded items can be wrapped in an extra layer of paper to protect your privacy.
• Small “detalles” (little gifts, courtesies, thoughtful gestures) are greatly appreciated in Mexico. It is a nice touch to bring your señora a welcome gift from the states. This does not have to be anything expensive or fancy, but should be personal.

Suggestions to enhance living with a host family
There are many things you can do to enhance your living experience. Many of these suggestions also pertain outside the home as well. Here are just a few:

• First, remember to **pray for each member** of your host family individually, as well as for your relationship with them. Have faith that God has placed you with just the right family and He will bless you richly! Have positive expectations.

• **Show some forethought:**
  - Study the family information sheet you received in the orientation class. If you notice a birthday during the summer, send a card! If not, send a brief note or email to tell your family how excited you are to meet them!
  - Additionally, gather a few **photos of your home**, family, pets, friends, etc. to share in the first days after arriving in your new home. If the language barrier is tough, you can communicate instantly with your Mexican family (and later your Mexican friends) by showing and telling them what your life is like back home. Ask them about the photos you see in the home—who are the members of the family, including the extended family.
  - Finally, show your appreciation to your new host family with a **small gift** when you arrive. (See ideas for gifts in the “Before you go” section.) Plan ahead and pack anything else you may want to give them during your stay as well as a final gift when you leave (although some do purchase this gift in Mexico).

• Remember that the more you **invest in your family**, the more you will grow. Relax during comida and enjoy the **sobremesa**, the long conversations after the meal (even if you don’t understand everything at first!). If your family makes an effort to invite you to a family event, accept!

• You will benefit the most from your home stay by being **open-minded, observant, and sensitive** to both verbal and nonverbal clues.

• Do not expect to transplant your American schedule and lifestyle to Mexico. Instead, be **flexible and willing to adjust** to Mexico’s ways. Open yourself to change and new experiences.
• **Try new foods.** You will undoubtedly see fruits and vegetables that you have never heard of or seen before. Try them all, even the “odd” ones (such as *chapulines*, or grasshoppers, in the photo!). The willingness of past homestay participants to try rare and exotic foods has been a source of enjoyment for both the student and the Mexican family.

• **Always ask when you are unsure** what to do, and keep in mind what we learned in the orientation class about the indirect communication style. If you hear an answer of “sí”, analyze it to see if it really means “yes” or is a polite way of saying “no.” If you’re not sure, ask about it in class.

• Avoid the misconception that you will have the same liberties and freedom that you have had in the college dorm. Remember that you are now **part of a family**, and take this responsibility seriously.

• **Speak Spanish** as much as possible, even if one or two members of the host family speak or understand English. The more you speak, the more you will learn. Be aware, however, that at first it will be very hard to understand everything that is said to you. Avoid the temptation to pretend you understand if you don’t. Use expressions like “más despacio, por favor,” ”repite.” and ”otra vez.” If you can’t say what you want, use your hands, facial expressions, and pantomime! Plus, your Mexican host family will very much appreciate all your efforts, and will work with you to improve your language skills and build your vocabulary.

• Remember that in Mexico, you are almost never first seen as an individual. As a foreigner, you will be seen as a **representative of your country**, Westmont, and perhaps even Western Evangelism. Please keep in mind that your individual actions will reflect on the group as a whole.
FOOD & DRINK

At home
Your host family will prepare breakfast, comida, and supper for you each day you are in Querétaro. One of the easiest ways to experience a new culture is to be adventurous and sample the local foods. Not all Mexican food is hot (picante), but the spices add intriguing flavor. While living with your family, you’ll have the opportunity to try many new and exciting foods. And thanks to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), you’ll also be able to purchase food items from Costco or Wal-Mart.

It is common courtesy to compliment the señora on her cooking, but be forewarned: you’ll probably be expected to eat more than you would normally. It’s okay to politely refuse more. Anything you praise a lot, you will likely see again on the table, so be careful with false compliments. If you are a vegetarian or have special dietary requirements, be sure to let the señora know so that she can adjust her cooking for you accordingly.

Mexicans tend to regard the comida as family time. After eating, the group will remain at the table talking over the day’s events, making plans, and so forth. You would do well to plan on sticking around for these sobremesas, since this is when you are most likely to have real interaction with your family. Getting up and galloping off after the last bite is very American, but can be very offensive to Mexicans.

Although every family is different, the following are general guidelines for Mexican meals, times and menus:

- **El desayuno**
  7:00-8:00 a.m.
  eggs or pancakes; toast, beans, cereal
  coffee, juice or fruit

- **La comida**
  2:00-4:00 p.m.
  salad and/or soup; meat, poultry or fish;
  beans or rice, tortillas, vegetable, dessert

- **La cena**
  8:00-10:00 p.m.
  tacos or sandwich and/or soup
  tamales or pan dulce

Outside the home
Outside your home, be very careful or what and where you eat and drink. It is not recommended to eat food from street vendors. You can become dangerously ill from foods that look and smell delicious. Be careful to avoid fruits and vegetables that are unpeeled and salads that are uncooked. However, if a vendor is selling fruits or vegetables that need to be peeled (e.g. bananas, oranges, etc.), these are safe.
**Water**
Tap water in Mexico is NOT safe to drink unless it has been filtered, treated or boiled. The same is true for ice cubes. If you happen to drink untreated water, different bacteria than your body is used to can almost guarantee you a case of the *turista*. Moreover, there are diseases far more serious than diarrhea that are transmitted by water, including giardia (which has afflicted WIM students, and must be treated). Some of the most common "I forgets" are ice in drinks, swallowing water in the shower or while brushing teeth, and eating foods (especially fruits and vegetables) washed in unpurified water.

Do know, however, that if you are in a nice restaurant, the ice in your drinks and the food on your plate will be fine. The same goes for the food in your home, prepared by your señora.

Most likely in your home your family will have filtered water or a large *garrafón* (big Sparkletts-type water jug) from which you can serve yourself. Most students will purchase a small water bottle and take water with them, or purchase water or soft drinks when at school or on the road.

**ALCOHOL**

Alcohol is a standard part of social life for many Mexicans, and is frequently present at meals, family events, and parties and celebrations. For many of you, this will be the first time that you will be able to drink legally. It is a good idea to decide early on whether or not you will consume alcohol in Mexico. If so, exercise extreme caution. Be aware of how much you are drinking, and do NOT depend upon alcohol to make social situations more comfortable or to have “fun.” Abuse of alcohol WILL result in expulsion from the program!

It is extremely important to be in control of your actions, especially in a foreign country. If you expose yourself to danger by being out of control, you are jeopardizing yourself and the WIM program. One important piece of advice: if you choose to drink, *always go with a fellow student who is abstaining*. This is for your own safety.

If you suspect that one of your WIM peers is abusing alcohol or using it as a crutch, please share your concerns with both the student as well as your resident director. The student might be angry, hurt or embarrassed at first, but in the long run, s/he will greatly appreciate your concern for their health and safety.

The use of drugs is punished severely in Mexico; while in Mexico, you are subject to Mexican laws exclusively, not US ones. If you get in trouble with the law, neither Westmont College nor the US Embassy will be able to help. **The use of drugs of any kind is cause for immediate dismissal** from the program and disciplinary procedures at Westmont.
Expectations for Westmont Students Abroad

Be aware as well that you are part of a Westmont program and as such, the Community Life Statement and Behavioral Expectations continue to apply to you, even while in Mexico. Please review these documents before your departure. Here are Additional Expectations for you as a Westmont student participating on a Westmont abroad program:

Students and faculty in any off campus program form a unique Christian community. Even more than for life on campus, the smaller and more intimate group requires a high standard of accountability. Our community life may restrict some individual liberties; and we will need unusual levels of patience, concern, and love. Each of us must take responsibility of other members by providing support, encouragement, and an example of positive Christian conduct. Worship is extremely important for the health life of the group, and attendance at any student-led vespers or worship services in local churches is strongly encouraged.

Participation in practices forbidden in Scripture, such as drunkenness, sexual promiscuity, theft, dishonesty, or "sins of the spirit" are grounds for dismissal from the program. Honesty includes observing both the "spirit of the law" and the letter of the law, with respect to such things as our entitlement to food and other refreshments, transportation, and admissions— as well as integrity about course assignments and rules for academic documentation. Short of dismissal from the program, the leaders' response to infractions may include temporary academic suspension, referral to the Dean of Students, and other penalties.

Participants must respect and observe the laws of the communities and nations where they live. (Illegal use or possession of drugs is generally subject to severe penalties.) Everywhere we should behave in accord with local mores and standards. For example, urban Mexicans may be more formal in dress and behavior than Americans at certain occasions, places, or times of day. Boisterousness and public displays of affection are not acceptable behavior. When bathroom areas are outside individual rooms, appropriate clothing should be worn in hallways and public places (towels are not sufficient).

Guidelines For The Responsible Use of Alcohol

In addition to the suggestions above (under “Alcohol”), here are some guidelines from the Off Campus Programs Office.

The responsible use of alcohol is when:

- A student abides by the laws of the country of state in which they are living.
- A student does not miss any scheduled event because of the effects of alcohol consumption.
- A student does not become ill due to the effects of alcohol consumption.
• A student does not engage in inappropriate behavior toward other individuals that is the result of alcohol consumption.

• A student does not engage in destructive behavior toward property that is the result of alcohol consumption.

• A student does not engage in behavior that causes embarrassment to the other members of the group, the faculty member(s), or in the in-country host(s) as a result of alcohol consumption.

• Students in a group do not facilitate, encourage, or ignore a fellow student who is abusing alcohol. Providing alcohol to persons under the legal drinking age is illegal and against Westmont policy. Transporting quantities of alcohol to program sites with the intent of sharing the alcohol with members of the group is considered to be irresponsible use of alcohol.

• Students are encouraged to use good judgment if consuming alcohol at private homes and other accommodations.

• Student groups are encouraged to discuss issues related to alcohol abuse by other members of their group with the program director.

• If a student become incapacitated due to alcohol overuse, or if they are in need of medical attention, others are strongly encouraged to contact a faculty leader immediately, in order to protect the health and well being of the affected student. The individual needing medical attention will be referred to professionals to address issues of chemical use/abuse. Students are encouraged to make the responsible choice to notify college or emergency personnel quickly. The person(s) making the call will not be subject to disciplinary action.

Students are encouraged to use good judgment whenever consuming alcohol. In their choices regarding alcohol, students are also encouraged to be sensitive to others. Within any group, there will be a range of perspectives and practices regarding alcohol. As a result, there is an opportunity and a challenge to show Christian respect, grace, and charity towards one another on this issue.
Nearly everyone experiences some stomach difficulties (called the “turista”) on arrival—usually due to stress, fatigue, anticipation, changes in altitude, schedules and food. This will usually subside by itself in a day or two with proper rest and a regular schedule.

**TIPS FOR STAYING HEALTHY**
During the first couple of weeks, it is particularly important to take care of yourself to avoid illness. Here are some tips to stay healthy:

1. **Best health tip: Wash your hands** with soap after you use the restroom and before you eat. If possible, keep hand sanitizer with you.

2. **Keep hydrated.** You lose more fluid at higher altitudes. A good way to tell if you are getting enough fluid is when your urine is a light yellow. Alcohol and coffee are diuretics and not substitutes for water.

3. **Get plenty of sleep** at night. A new environment (and a new language) will physically and mentally wear you out.

4. **Eat only well-cooked foods.** Green salads oftentimes contain raw vegetables known to contain amoebas that can cause dysentery. Fruits that grow on the ground (e.g. strawberries) and are eaten without peeling can possibly carry amoebas. Ceviche consists of raw fish and vegetables marinated in lime juice, but not cooked, and is a risky choice. **Do not eat food purchased on the street:** those tortas or tacos may be only 5 pesos but they often come with extras, i.e. bacteria. Avoid the fruit vendors as well.

5. **Drink bottled drinks,** not the tap water. Only drink filtered, boiled or bottled water. Remember that this includes ice cubes as well (see “Food & Drink” section above).

6. **Keep cuts clean and covered,** preferably with a bandage and antibiotic cream. The word for bandage here is “curita.”

7. **Take it easy.** You may feel dizzy or winded during your first week because of the higher altitude. You may also have more gas, feel nauseous or have some diarrhea. You will also urinate more the first few days as your body is trying to concentrate your blood to make up for the lack of oxygen. Just take it easy.
**IF YOU GET SICK**

If you feel ill, especially during your first few days, follow the above “tips for staying healthy” to the letter! Additionally, keep the following in mind:

- For mild cases of diarrhea, Pepto Bismol tends to work well for students, both for prevention (taking one oral tablet two times a day during your first couple of days) or for treatment.

- Additionally, there are many **pharmacies** throughout Querétaro. The local pharmacist will helpfully recommend and sell you medications and antibiotics without a prescription. For correct dosage information, however, it is best to consult a physician (especially if you also have allergies).

- If you start vomiting or have diarrhea, you will lose considerable fluids. You should drink Pedialyte or Electrolita, or take oral rehydration salts (mixed with clean water and sipped slowly). Gatorade and soda are not good substitutes as they contain too much sugar for your body to properly absorb the electrolytes. Make sure your host mother knows of your illness so she can properly help you. Note that you should avoid dairy products, fat, alcohol, and spicy-rich foods until you are better. Get plenty of rest.

**Tell your resident director immediately** if you experience any of the following:

1. your diarrhea lasts for more than five days (with treatment)
2. you have bloody stools;
3. you have a fever over 101º for more than 24 hours;
4. you alternate between constipation with diarrhea, have increased gas, and have nausea after you eat. This might be giardia, an intestinal parasite, and you will need to submit a fresh stool sample for diagnosis.

In these cases, you will need to be seen by a doctor and your resident director will be happy to accompany you to a clinic. There are several excellent clinics and hospitals throughout the city. The cost is about $50 US for a visit; save your receipts to submit to your insurance company.

**Referrals:** consult your resident director or the CIQ for referrals for medical, dental, mental/psychological or other health related problems. Here is a brief list of clinics:

- **Sanatorio Núñez Lara**
  Corregidora #101 Nte, Centro
  Tel: 212-1388; 212-0161

- **Sanatorio de la Santa Cruz**
  Priv Circunvalación #6, Jardines de Querétaro
  Tel: 213-6451; 213-6511; 213-9109

- **Hospital Angeles**
  Bernadino del Razo #21, Col. Ensueño
  Tel: 192-3000
COMMUNICATION

PHONES
In addition to the information below, also consult the “Cell Phones & Communication” section in Part I of this Handbook.

Dialing in Mexico
- Cell phone to cell phone in Querétaro: 442 + 7 digits
- Landline to cell phone: 044 + 442 + 7 digits
- Landline to landline: 7 digits
- Calling the US: 01 + area code + 7 digits
- Calling the US collect: 090 (and ask for the international operator; “collect” is “por cobrar allá”)

Your cell phone
You will be “loaned” a cell phone during your first week in Mexico. Your Mexican cell phone will be the best way for you to communicate with members of the WIM group, your leaders, your Mexican family, and your new Mexican friends.

It is your responsibility to purchase phone cards (with your stipend money) to charge your phone each month (about $12-15 dollars). Note that this is not optional; it is a requirement of WIM. The CIQ will investigate the best plan for your group; in the past we have used “Moviestar,” which provides free texting and calls between all members of the group plus minutes for both national and international calls, all for $200 pesos ($12 US) per month. To keep your phone ready to use, you purchase “minutes” at providing supermarkets or drug stores throughout Querétaro, such as OXXO, Super Q, or Farmacias Ahorro. The CIQ staff will give you more detailed information about the plan and how to purchase minutes during the first week of your stay. Note: If you lose your cell phone, you will be responsible to replace it at your own cost.

Always bring your phone and charger on field trips, making sure you have plenty of minutes and a full battery charge before leaving home.

Your home phone
Using your host family’s home phone may be a source of friction in your relationship. Here’s why: Most homes have measured service, which means that even local calls are charged. Calls made to a cellular phone number are also charged to the calling party (“El que llama paga”) at the rate of $2.50 pesos a minute. Additionally, some local land lines are blocked from calling cell phones altogether. You should be respectful of this, and know in advance that the unlimited telephone usage you enjoy in the U.S. will not be part of your Mexico experience.

On arriving, discuss and understand your family’s expectations about your use of their phone. When you call locally from the home phone, make it a quick message call, not a lengthy conversation. NEVER use your host family’s phone for long distance calls, unless you are calling collect or using a calling card. And, in this case, let you family know regardless.
Calling the US
There are many ways to communicate with your family back home. In general, it is less expensive to have your family call you, rather than you calling them. There are many long distance discount phone services available in the US for calling Mexico (including Telmex). Some of these charge a monthly rate as well as a per-minute or a minimum charge. To call Mexico from the US, dial: 011-52-442 + 7-digit number.

If you choose to call the states from Mexico, there are numerous ways listed below. Note that to call the US from Mexico, dial: 01 + area code + number.

• Use SKYPE on your computer. This is quite inexpensive and usually very convenient, provided you have wireless internet in your home.

• Use your Mexican cell to communicate briefly with your family, provided you still have minutes on your plan.

• Purchase a Mexican pre-paid phone card for international calls. This will enable you to use your host family’s phone without burdening them with long distance charges. There are several available which use a pay-in-advance system; as you call, the card’s value is diminished by the cost of your phone call.
  - **Ladatel** phone debit cards are available at supermarkets, lottery stands, and other places.
  - **Telmex** (Mexico’s equivalent to AT&T) offers a “Traveler’s Phone Card” with a $.25/minute rate in Mexico and a $.50/minute rate from Mexico to the US. Visit [www.temexusa.com](http://www.temexusa.com) to purchase a card on-line.
  - **Bueno, Amigo** or **Ahorro** cards can be purchased at various locations (OXXO, Farmacias Ahorro, etc.).

• Go to a “Larga distancia” office location:
  - Andador 5 de mayo (open Mon-Sat 9-6 & Sun 12-4; charges 4 pesos/minute to US; they also have a Western Union office inside)
  - Zaragoza pte #150-31 at the Comercial Mexicana (open Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat 9-2).
  - Note that calling collect (“por cobrar allá”) can save up to 50%.

• Many US cell phone service providers have discounted rates or special plans for calling the US (as well as within Mexico). Check with your provider before arriving in Mexico. If you go this route, however, make sure you clearly understand the terms of your contract (i.e. rates, number of minutes, etc.) to avoid unpleasant surprises.

As always, remember your **COMMUNICATIONS PLEDGE** regarding contact back home. Avoid the temptation to call home frequently, which often distracts from the adaptation process and interferes with your development of Spanish. You will enrich your Mexican experience greatly by spending your time and mental energy *in Mexico*, and not calling home excessively.
**POSTAL SERVICE**

You can receive snail mail during your time in Mexico, but it can be quite slow. Letters tend to take 10-14 days from Mexico to the US and vice-versa. It is often more efficient to bring American stamps with you and send letters back with friends visiting Mexico.

The Querétaro post office is located in the centro at Arteaga Pte #5 near the Biblioteca del Estado and the Parque Alameda. MexPost (2-day delivery to the US) is at this location as well. Cost varies according to weight, and delivery is usually from 3-5 days.

If you plan to receive a package that needs a signature (e.g., via DHL or UPS), consider sending it to the CIQ address, where there is someone available to sign for you. Urgent correspondence and shipments of small articles can be done by DHL or Estafeta. The CIQ staff will assist you with this. To or from the states usually requires 2 business days and cost for a document begins at about $25 dollars.

**TRANSPORTATION & TRAVEL**

Most students will enjoy walking as one of their main forms of transportation. Once you arrive, consult your city map and note the main east-west and north-south avenues that intersect the ITQ, the centro (CIQ), and your home.

**Busses**

Most of you will have to take the bus on a regular basis. Try to learn the bus system, your stops and the bus numbers that will take you to and from your classes. Your host family will be your best source for this information, but there are also small booklets available with routes and numbers. Busses cost less than $.50 US (currently 8.5 pesos).

If you decide to travel on weekends to locations outside Querétaro, the bus is an excellent option. There are several wonderful bus lines that offer inexpensive service. A one-way trip to Mexico City, for example, is approximately $24 US on a deluxe bus. See the information below on “Independent Travel”.

**Taxis & Uber**

Taxis and Uber are an alternate mode of transportation if you are short on time. Most taxi and Uber drivers are friendly and you should have no problems getting around. Make sure, however, that you ONLY use authorized taxis or Uber drivers: check that the taxi number and rate decal are easily displayed inside the cab.

If in a cab, always ask the driver how much he will charge before getting in the cab to avoid surprises. Here are some guidelines for taxi use:
• Always ask the charge before getting into the cab. You do not need to get in if you feel the rate is too high. Feel free to negotiate! A typical fee within the city centro is $40-50 pesos for one stop. Cabs will, however, charge more at night and for more than one stop.
• Note that tips are not common for taxi rides. Give one, however, if you feel the service was exceptional in some way (i.e. he helped you with your luggage or groceries, etc.).
• Make sure you are in an “authorized” cab (one with the decal and number clearly displayed). Jot down the cab number and company as a precautionary measure.
• **Avoid taking taxis alone at night, especially women.** Go in a group. This will help you save money and keep you safe.

If possible, consider taking radio taxis (or Uber). This is a service that most companies provide at no extra charge. The cab will pick you up at your destination and take you where you want to go. This is especially convenient if you are out late, or have to get somewhere very early (call the night before). It is a good idea to have at least one Radio Taxi number saved in your cell phone contacts. Here are a couple:

- **Radio Taxi:** 212-33-51; 212-56-77; 212-36-66 (24 hours a day)
- **Taxi Tel:** 212-40-50

**Motor Vehicles**

You are NOT allowed to drive a motor vehicle while on WIM and could be expelled if you do. You will be held responsible for accidents, if any occur. Your US insurance will generally not cover accidents that occur while you are driving in Mexico.

**INDEPENDENT TRAVEL**

If you wish to travel outside of Querétaro—whether with your host family, Mexican friends, or other WIM students—you **MUST advise your resident director** of your travel plans. Travel that requires passing through any regions posted with the US State Department travel advisories (see: [http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings/mexico-travel-warning.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings/mexico-travel-warning.html) for a list) is neither advised nor approved. Any student planning such travel is in violation of the WIM participation agreement, and as such, the college assumes no responsibility for their safety. Students who insist on such travel should be strongly encouraged to notify their US family of their plans.

**EXERCISE & RUNNING**

You will have access to the ITQ weight room (for a nominal fee) during your time in Mexico. The ITQ also offers intermural sports activities in which you can participate. Students in the past have played soccer and basketball with ITQ teams. Additionally, some have found friends to play tennis with, have played on neighborhood soccer teams, or have participated in capoeira, a Brazilian martial art that combines elements of dance, music and acrobatics.
Many students have also enjoyed running in various locations throughout the city. Querétaro is a city that has embraced running, and it seems like every other weekend there is some kind of marathon in the city. Gabriela Castañeda, an avid runner, can let you know where and when the next race is!

For now, here are various locations in which you can run, jog and walk. Do be aware of the altitude and the heat (during the day), and if you run in the evening, exercise caution and run with a partner. Additionally, women should remember that even while running, Mexicans tend to cover more of their bodies than Americans. Here are some parks in which to run:

- **The Alameda** – dirt, 1/2 mile track. Free. On Zaragoza, in the centro, a few blocks from Jardín Zenea. Closed Wednesdays. *(See photo at right)*

- **Queretaro 2000** – Dirt trails and a paved, oval track. Two pesos. Open 7 a.m.–8 p.m. every day. Off Libramiento near Plaza del Parque. This facility also has numerous courts (e.g. tennis, baseball, soccer, etc.), walking and running paths, and a swimming pool. *(See photo at bottom of page)*

- **Parque Alamos** – paved and dirt track along Circuito Alamos (in Alamos 2ª sección), divided into various sections. Free.

- **Parque Alcanfores** – Trails through playground. Two pesos. Open 6 a.m.–6 p.m. every day. Near Universidad and the train station.

- **Cerro de las Campanas** – Hilly trails through park. One peso. Open for running 6 a.m.–6 p.m. every day. Next to the Universidad Autónoma de Queretaro (across from the ITQ). *(See photo at right)*

- **La Casa de la Juventud** – Behind the Convento de La Cruz. Free. Open 6 a.m.–10 p.m. every day. There is a swimming pool at this facility. Inquire about registering for swimming classes and/or public access.
WORKING & VOLUNTEERING

Working
Remember that you are in Mexico to experience the culture and to study, not to earn money. Because of the visa you have, it is technically illegal for you to work for compensation during your stay in Mexico. If you are considering taking a job illegally, keep in mind that you are violating Westmont’s expectations and that you may be taking a job away from a Mexican national.

Volunteering
Did you know that every Mexican university student is required by law to complete at least 100 hours of community service? Many of our WIM students have also volunteered in a variety of places and have grown a great deal through these opportunities, which offer rewarding and much needed work. Think of it as a way of giving back to your community, as well as an opportunity to learn about a Mexican organization, to practice Spanish, and to work with Mexican nationals.

The staff at the CIQ will let you know about volunteer opportunities. Some recent sites include the following:

- **Teaching English at the ITQ**: Work after class during the week with fellow ITQ students who are trying to improve their conversational English (see picture at left). It is also possible to have an Intercambio, to work individually with ITQ students on a regular basis to practice your Spanish (half the time) and for them to practice their English.

- **Niños y niñas**: Work as an instructional aid with orphans at this wonderful organization (picture at right).

- **Gigi’s Playhouse**: Work with children with Down Syndrome. Limited space available.
Students who have invested themselves in a local church community have been richly blessed. Take your first few weeks to explore local churches and find one in which to worship on a regular basis. Or, commit to attending mass (*misa*) with your host family, even if you are not Catholic yourself. It is a way to learn more about the worldwide Christian Church and your host family’s faith, and demonstrates to them your interest in their lives.

Protestant churches (*Iglesias evangélicas*) abound in Querétaro. Keep in mind that Mexican evangelicals tend to be more conservative than their North American counterparts (i.e. regarding dancing, the role of women, etc.). Below are two options that students have chosen in the past, as well as a webpage listing other options. Find a place that feels welcoming and comfortable to you, but allow yourself to be stretched and challenged as well.

- **Iglesia Bautista Betel**: In Bolaños (not far from Alamos or Arboledas). Many students in the past have gotten involved in this Baptist church, which has a large college/youth group with activities on weekend evenings (generally Friday or Saturday).

- **Iglesia Presbiteriana Betania**: In Arboledas. More traditional Presbyterian service.

- **Horizontes**: Calvery Chapel service (in Spanish), meeting three times each Sunday (9:00, 11:00 & 1:00). [http://www.horizonteqro.org](http://www.horizonteqro.org)

- **Consult this webpage** for many more opportunities: [http://www.portal-queretaro.com/regional/dir/iglesias.html](http://www.portal-queretaro.com/regional/dir/iglesias.html)
SECURITY & SAFETY

Whether traveling abroad as a tourist, student, or intern, you will likely be entering an unfamiliar environment. As a participant in a Westmont Off Campus Program, you have the advantage of a program infrastructure and/or individuals on-site to orient you to local safety issues and to support you in the event of a security or safety emergency. You also have a personal responsibility for your own safety and security. Even though as a student the risk of your being involved in a dangerous situation is statistically low, we advise you to take certain precautionary measures against any risk. Your security will—as always—depend on your own conduct.

The crime rate in Querétaro is among the lowest in Mexico. Still, as in any major metropolitan area, crime can and does occur. To avoid the risk of being the victim of crime, the best piece of advice is to use simple common sense—to be aware at all times of your surroundings. Here are some other precautions you can take:

• Always advise your host family and your resident director if you plan to travel outside the city. It is important that others know where and with whom you are and when you expect to return. Before you travel, consult the State Department website for travel warnings (see “Independent Travel” above).
• Make sure you have the emergency contact info—including a radio taxi number—programmed into your cell phone.
• Don’t go into unfamiliar places alone or at night, and when out late, always have a partner (and preferably travel in a group with a man). A single woman, if possible, should not be the last one out of a cab after dark.
• Walk with a purpose: briskly, looking ahead. Avoid being distracted—especially texting or talking on the phone while walking.
• Never accept food or drinks from strangers, especially in clubs or bars. Never go alone.
• Avoid carrying large amounts of cash. When withdrawing cash from an ATM, do so in daylight and be aware of others nearby.
• Be wary of individuals who pose as tourists or other foreign visitors and claim to be in need of financial help, usually for some “emergency.” These are known scams. Do NOT give these individuals money, do not go with them to a bank to withdraw money for them, do not give them personal information, or fulfill any other request they may have.
• Avoid calling attention to yourself. This might mean, for example, dressing more modestly, speaking more softly (Americans are notorious for how loud they speak), and not traveling around in large groups with other Americans.
• Keep informed and alert of local issues/news, especially during times of political turmoil. Avoid political demonstrations. Try to maintain a relatively low profile and integrate into the host culture as much as possible.
• Women: see the “Tips for Women” in the “Social Customs” section below.
LOCAL TIME & MEASUREMENT SYSTEMS

TIME
Querétaro is on Central Standard Time (two hours ahead of Pacific Standard Time). Time changes for daylight savings in spring and fall typically take place one week before the change in the US. Thus, on Oct. 25, 2015, Mexicans will move the clock back one hour; in the US, the clock moves back on Nov. 6, 2016.

MEASUREMENT
Mexico uses the metric system. Unless you carry a pocket calculator and the formulas for converting from one system to the other, it’s best to simply begin thinking metric—guess the temperature, then verify it by a bank thermometer or by asking someone; estimate how many kilometers it is from your house to the center of the city, then check it with your family or on a map.

TEMPERATURE

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<th>-17</th>
<th>-10</th>
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<th>10</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>32</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>212</td>
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</tbody>
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Note: “Normal” body temperature: 98.6 F or 37 C

WEIGHT

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<td>450 grams</td>
<td>1000 grams / 1 kilogram</td>
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LENGTH & DISTANCE

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<td>2.54 cm</td>
<td>91.44 cm</td>
<td>1 kilometer</td>
<td>1.6 km</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIVING IN MEXICO: SOCIAL CUSTOMS

Much of the information below was covered in the orientation class. Here, however, are some additional tips (or good reminders!) from the CIQ staff for you:

Among your goals is a desire to get to know Mexican culture. You are about to discover the “other,” and to do so successfully, you need to use your flexibility, suspend your judgment until you can understand the internal logic of the other culture, and above all, open yourself up. The more you do, the more you will receive.

If you arrive laden with strong beliefs, attitudes and habits, you may find it more difficult to truly know Mexicans; you won’t understand how they could do (or say or eat) what they do, and your stay will most likely be unpleasant and full of frustration. Remember that you are a guest in a foreign country: being critical is resented. If you find some things frustrating, whether customs or processes, try understanding what bothers you from within the culture of Mexico, and not from your own ethnocentric perspective. Being overly judgmental is a likely indicator that you expect everything to be the way it is back home. On the other hand, you do not have to embrace everything if something goes against your personal ethics or sense of propriety. Still, if you remain open and observant, by the end of the program you will probably have real insight and understanding into the Mexican people and their culture.

DIGNITY & RESPECT

Mexicans value personal dignity in ways we might not. “Respect” for others, especially teachers, parents and other persons older than oneself is expected of all. It is often said that Mexicans are more “formal.” Elaborate and effusive forms of greeting one another, lengthy preliminary conversations, and sensitivity to slights mark a culture in which personal dignidad is valued and defended above all.

Although many customs differ from US practices, common courtesy travels quite nicely across the border. “Gracias,” “por favor,” “con permiso,” and a few other expressions will help you overcome many differences.

PERSONAL SPACE

Mexicans, like other Latin Americans and people from Mediterranean countries, are generally much more animated in their speech than Americans and Northern Europeans. You’ll find your personal space to be greatly reduced, and touching, a hand on the shoulder or an embrace is common in conversations and greetings. Unless blatant, there’s probably no impropriety intended.

TIME

The favorite phrase of the stereotyped Latin is “mañana” and, in part, that image comes from a different interpretation of the importance of time: Mexicans, as you remember, are polychronic as opposed to their monochronic North American counterparts.
Keep in mind that for social gatherings, Mexicans will usually arrive between 30 minutes and one hour after the stated start time. Nevertheless, family meals will generally start on time; do not be late for comida! Classes also start on time (but they may end late).

Also be aware of the other side of the coin: Mexicans consider US people to be too much in a hurry. Mexicans linger over the dinner table to converse long after the meal is done—almost the exact opposite of the “gotta go” mad exodus which abruptly ends the American meal. Similarly, to broach a serious subject with someone, in Mexico you “warm up” with chitchat or talk of other matters; when you and the other feel comfortable, the real reason for the conversation is brought up. This is the respectful way to converse.

SIESTA
Traditionally, schools, shops, and government and business offices close from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. for comida and a midday break called la siesta. Nevertheless, this is changing more and more and the American rapid lunch is becoming more frequent. Today in urban settings (like Querétaro), major stores in shopping centers will likely remain open. The Casa de Cambio will also be open, and many banks have adopted the horario corridor, remaining open straight through from 9 until 5 or 6:00 p.m. in some cases.

DRESS
Although this is changing, Mexicans tend to dress much more formally than Americans and are generally very conscious of their appearance, especially when going out. While T-shirts and sandals may be acceptable for school, or shorts fine for sporting activities, you will feel uncomfortably out of place wearing these clothes going out to dinner or to an evening movie. Some clubs and antros have a dress code; some, for example, will turn you away if you sport tennis shoes. Shorts, especially, are also considered extremely improper for church or even when just visiting a religious building.

More important than what you wear is how clean you are. If you dress inappropriately or if you are unkempt or unclean, you may not be criticized openly, but it is not acceptable to most professors and families and is considered an insult to them. Try and respect their culture and realize that you are not only perceived as an individual but more as a representative of Westmont and the United States. (Pictured: Gabriela Castañeda and her daughters.)

FAMILY
For the Mexican, the family is the most important thing in his or her life. The word familia encompasses the entire extended family, not just the nuclear one. From a Mexican standpoint, one always relies on the family for help, friendship and support.

Much of Querétaro’s large and growing middle class is made up of emigrants from other areas who have arrived with only their immediate, nuclear family. This is a big change from the
traditional extended family model, and makes family relations somewhat more similar to those in the US. Nonetheless, whatever the configuration of your new family, you’ll quickly note differences from back home.

**RELIGION**

Most Mexicans are Roman Catholic, though many in name only. For over 70 years, Mexico has observed separation of church and state. Nevertheless, under former President Salinas, the government relaxed the constitutional restrictions dating back to the Revolution on various religious displays and practices, and in 1993 the government established diplomatic relations with the Vatican. The influence and power of the church, both economic and social, are reasserting themselves. And, in the countryside, even the poorest village is most proud of its church.

The Catholic Church was responsible for much of Mexico’s cultural development—both negative and positive—and continues to play an important role today. Many of the convents and churches in Mexico are of great artistic and historic interest. Please be aware as you enter these buildings that others are there for religious purposes and may be offended by improper dress or behavior. Respect others as they worship.

In many areas there is a syncretism (mixing) of indigenous and Catholic rites, which forms a special and unique type of Catholicism. The Virgen de Guadalupe and the Fiesta de la Santa Cruz provide wonderful demonstrations of this syncretism.

Don’t hesitate to ask your family to be included in their Sunday worship, if you wish. On the other hand, one’s chosen form of worship is a personal choice. While we encourage you to visit a variety of different churches, we hope you will become actively involved in one.

**LANGUAGE**

In general, the Spanish spoken in Querétaro differs little from what we consider “textbook” Spanish. No, they don’t speak any more rapidly than anywhere else in the Hispanic world, but it does sound that way when you first arrive! By the end of the second week, this “oral spaghetti” will begin to make some sense, and by the end of the program, the speed of spoken Spanish will probably not be an issue. Your fluidity, on the other hand, will have dramatically increased.

One of the principal differences between Mexican Spanish and that of Spain is the incorporation of many native American words into the Mexican vocabulary. A Mexican says *guajolote, tecolote* and *carro*, where a Spaniard says *pavo, buho*, and *coche*. However, these differences are relatively minor, similar to Americans saying *garbage can* and *flashlight* instead of the English
Also different, of course, are the names of regional plants, animals and foods. (Ask for guacamole, flautas or durazno in Spain and they’ll have no idea what you’re talking about.)

However, a greater difference is seen in the use and development of argot, or jerga (slang). Be careful as you learn these slang words, as many words have more than one meaning (doble sentido) and their improper use may result in an embarrassing situation. Additionally, be aware that words you may hear frequently from your ITQ peers may be grossly improper to use in your home or with your teachers. Make sure you clearly understand what words mean before using them.

You’ll also have to get used to the –ito. The diminutive forms (-ito, -ita), which show affection or familiarity, are used constantly, such as in casita or chiquitito (actually a double diminutive), and ahorita.

One of the most confusing aspects of the Spanish language for many people is when to use usted and when to use tú. The best advice is always to begin using usted, rather than risking offending someone by being overly familiar. Your Mexican friends will tell you right away if they expect to be called tú. A general guideline: If you would normally call someone by their first name, you’re probably OK using the familiar tú.

**MEN & (AMERICAN) WOMEN**

Many Mexicans, both male and female, have stereotypes about North American women, which they gain from American movies and television. These generally unfavorable notions—that American women are sexually loose or “easy”—could initially work to your disadvantage, but it could also give you an opportunity to dispel them.

On the street, you will be called “güera” by the men and whistled or shouted at in an attempt to get your attention. This term is used widely within the Mexican population and refers to a light skinned or light-eyed person. It is not disrespectful or negative in nature. Your best bet is to ignore it—they’re hoping you’ll react, so disappoint them! (Note: this activity will generally not occur at the ITQ where men tend to respect their university female peers.)

Some of the best methods of avoiding hassle are to fit in and try to understand the role of the sexes in the culture in which you are traveling. Flexibility means observing how the host country’s women dress and behave and following their example. What may be appropriate or friendly behavior in the US may bring you unwanted, even dangerous, attention in another culture. Try not to take offense at whistles and other “gestures of appreciation” (piropos), regardless of whether they are compliments, invitations, or insults. Realize these gestures are as much a part of the culture as the food, history, and language. To discourage further interaction, it is generally more effective to give no response than a negative response. However, if your intuition tells you a situation is dangerous, then act as if it is. Avoid being out alone at night in unfamiliar territory.
Tips for women
So, to review, here’s some tips for women to remain safe:

• Be aware of your clothes and body language
• Don’t go into a bar or club alone
• Don’t get into a taxi with two men in it
• At night, take a radio taxi rather than hailing one from the street
• **Never be alone past 10 or 11 p.m.**, and in general travel accompanied
• Walk as if you are going to a specific place: eyes ahead, brisk pace
• Don’t walk alone distractedly (talking or texting, etc.); you will make yourself a target
• Do not turn and smile when someone says something to you (the standard American response); in Mexico, women do not acknowledge remarks from strangers.
• When out dancing, be careful about alcohol intake, which may lower inhibitions and reaction times

**QUERETARO**

**HISTORY**
Querétaro, located 120 miles northwest of Mexico City in the fertile agricultural region known as the Bajío, is “on the road.” It was on the “Camino Real” for the missionaries in the 16th Century, eagerly spreading out from Mexico City to preach the Gospel. Perhaps by coincidence that road led to the silver mines of Guanajuato and Zacatecas beyond. Today Querétaro is on the “NAFTA Highway” (Route 57) between Mexico City and the US border. More than 200 export industries have located here, and it is quite possible that your “US-made” car has parts made right here in the industrial northwest side of the city.

Querétaro, now over one million in population, was originally inhabited by the Chichimeca Indians before being established as a Spanish town in 1531 by Hernán Bocanegra. Querétaro was important in Mexico’s early independence movement in 1810, when the city’s Corregidora Josefa Ortiz de Dominguez (pictured at left) notified conspirators that their plans had been discovered. The actions of this female Paul Revere prompted Father Miguel Hidalgo in the town of Dolores to call his people to rise up in arms.
(the famous “Grito de Dolores”), beginning the war that eventually led to Mexico’s independence. Important treaties have been signed in Queretaro, and it was here that the Emperor Maximiliano, sent by France to rule over Mexico, met his death on the Cerro de las Campanas. In 1917, towards the end of the Mexican Revolution, the nation’s constitution was written in Querétaro’s Teatro de la República.

Beginning in the 1970s, Querétaro’s governor established a historic preservation district in the center of the city. Zoning legislation made possible the restoration of many square blocks of buildings dating from the 18th Century. The system of andadores (pedestrian ways), coupled with restricted traffic on some streets, has brought the heart of the old city back to life. Your city map identifies many of the historic sites worthy of your attention, which you should try to visit during your time here. Today the city is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Queretaro is economically booming; the city attracts new residents from all over the country, and especially from Mexico City. You will definitely see a variety of influences from different regions.

A note about poverty: One source of frustration for some who visit and live in Mexico is the economic disparity between the “haves” and “have-nots.” You’ll be studying in an environment with the “haves” as Querétaro is a very middle class city. You will also witness the economic gap that manifests itself in poverty, poor health, and little opportunity for upward mobility. How one reconciles these economic extremes is an individual matter. However, unless you’re willing to commit yourself to making a constructive change through your actions, it does little good to complain. Know that poverty and class distinctions are a reality in Mexico, as they are in the U.S., and many parts of the world.

WEATHER
In general, the weather in Querétaro is pleasant year round. The city is at an altitude of over 6,000 feet, so nights tend to be cool at any time of the year. The heat is dry and, when broken up by an occasional rainstorm, manageable and even pleasant. Homes are not heated or cooled.

When you arrive, it will be summer. Summer is a treat—usually warm: high 80s, occasional low 90s, and every two or three days—usually in the afternoon—a heat buildup will produce an awe-inspiring thunderstorm. The rain generally lasts 2–3 hours, the temperature drops 10–15 degrees, and then the rain stops, the sun comes out again and the air is fresh.
Fall, especially October and November, offers warm days and cool evenings. The rains slack off, and except for the occasional mosquitos, it is absolutely delightful! In December, when you will leave, winter begins: expect sunny days with highs in the 70s, and nights in the 40s. Every once in a while, a “norte” blows in from Texas and the temperatures can plunge into the 30s for a couple of days at a time. This can seem very cold with no heating.

**EL CENTRO**

The following is *only intended to get you started* exploring and enjoying Querétaro. By the end of your program you’ll be an expert. When you are in Querétaro, *do* explore, ask questions and listen to the many answers: This is where the language will take hold. Ask your family; start by walking to the neighborhood store.

There are several areas in Querétaro to discover. Downtown (“el centro”) is one: The many plazas, often near churches or civil buildings of historic importance, are great places to meet with friends. Often, outdoor musicians will be performing. The shops all along the plazas and streets carry everything from jewelry to bakery goods. Many artisans live in and around Querétaro and sell their work in other, high traffic tourist spots. If you look along the little streets and behind doors covered with bougainvillea you will find them. Start at the Plaza de Armas, and work out from there.

**BANKS**

In the centro, there are three main banks with ATM machines facing the main square in the Jardín Zenea: Bancomer, Banamex and Santander. In the Alamos and Arboledas area, there are multiple banks located by Plaza Bulevares and Plaza del Parque, all with ATMs.

Banks in Mexico are open weekdays from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. The hours for changing money in banks are more limited, but ATMs tend to be open all the time. If a bank machine “eats“ your card, it will often reboot in 15 minutes or so. You should wait around at least that long to try to retrieve your card. If not, see that bank manager as soon as possible.

The peso is the monetary unit. The exchange rate is about 18.5 pesos to the US dollar although it fluctuates frequently. Please check website data for more current information. The symbol for the peso is the same as the US dollar ($).

*In addition to the information above, consult the "Money Matters“ section in Part I of this Handbook.*
**BOOKSTORES**

Downtown in the area of Jardín Zenea you’ll also find many bookstores:

- **Correo del Libro** (also called Librería Cultural del Centro): next to Tienda del Sol
- **Librería Cristal**: next to the Plaza de la Corregidora (corner of Corregidora and Angela Peralta with another branch in Plaza de las Américas)
- **Librería Ricardo Pozas**: at Próspero C. Vega #1& 3, on the corner of Av. 16 de septiembre
- **Librería Porrúa**: corner of Morelos and Juárez

There are also two amazing bookstores in Colonia Alamos:

- **Librería Ghandi**: Circuito Jardín #1, Alamos 3ª sección
- **El Sótano**: Prolongación Corregidora Nte #350, Alamos 3ª sección

**MERCADOS**

Two traditional markets—the **Escobedo** and **la Cruz**—will give you the real experience in market exchange as it survives in Mexico today. This tradition has existed among the people of Mexico since long before the Spanish touched foot in the Americas. There you’ll find that the handmade tortilla still lives. Markets like these are found in every town in Mexico. They are the perfect place to shop for goodies for a picnic lunch: **aguacates**, tomatoes, fruit, **queso de Chihuahua**, **carnitas**, and of course, the freshest tortillas imaginable.

**MALLS**

There are several malls and shopping centers in Querétaro, many of them quite upscale. In Alamos you’ll find the **Plaza Bulevares**—with a Starbucks and a wonderful movie theater—and **Plaza del Parque**, with a Comercial Mexicana, movie theater, and Costco. Immediately behind Costco, you’ll find several blocks with a variety of US businesses, including Wal-Mart, Sams, Office Depot, Office Max, Home Depot, Blockbuster and McDonalds. Other malls include **Plaza de las Américas** and **Liverpool**. They are currently completing construction of the largest mall in the Americas in Juriquilla.

**CULTURAL EVENTS**

To find out what is happening in Querétaro, visit the “De paseo” site at: [www.de-paseo.com](http://www.de-paseo.com) (also on the WIM webpage). Another good place for information about upcoming attractions in Querétaro is the Consejo Estatal para Cultura y las Artes, or CONECULTA, located in the centro: Andador V. Carranza #4. They are open Mon–Fri: 8:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m.; Tel.: 212-0255, 224-0570, 214-2259. You can also visit their website at: [www.culturaqueretaro.gob.mx](http://www.culturaqueretaro.gob.mx)

**RESTAURANTS & NIGHTLIFE**

Querétaro is a lively town. There is music, dancing and more in the center of the city until 2 a.m. There are sidewalk cafes along the **andadores** (16 de septiembre and Cinco de mayo); cinemas located in the shopping malls outside the center, and many huge dancing clubs and antros around the city.
Some of the favorite evening hangouts for university students and queretanos are located in el Rincón de la Corregidora, where you’ll find a half-dozen outdoor cafes and restaurants. Another (more upscale) place is the Plaza de Armas. After class at the CIQ many students enjoy an inexpensive snack or meal at Haga su taco, just up the street on Felipe Luna (near el Templo de la Cruz). Others frequent the many cafés along Carranza or in the Plaza de Armas.

Among the many other excellent restaurants, try Tirreno, Chiquilín, Arcangel, La Mariposa, or La Rosa for great Mexican food. Having breakfast in La Mariposa, you may be struck by the feeling that you are in the real Mexico. For authentic Oaxacan food, try María y su bici and if you’re not on a budget, try Doña Urraca, Mesón de Santa Rosa, or Chucho el Roto, all in the centro. Vegetarian? Try Natura at Vergara #7, or Ibis at Juárez #47 Norte.

**INFORMATION FOR VISITORS**

**VISITOR POLICY**
If family or friends plan to visit you on WIM, please be aware of the following guidelines:

- Program leaders must be notified of the arrival of visitors at least 2 weeks in advance.

- Visitors should show sensitivity to students regarding the length of their stay. Staying too long may make it difficult for students to focus on their work or commitments in Mexico.

- Students must plan any visits with friends or relatives so as to not miss activities of the program listed in the schedule or otherwise announced. Students should not miss class due to visitors.

- Visitors are NOT allowed to attend required field trips with students; they may join the group for day trips or optional excursions only upon prior arrangement with the program leaders.

- Visitors should not “bunk in” with students —they must make their own lodging arrangements.

- Visits should NOT be scheduled in the first half of the semester (see below).

Be aware that some past participants have discovered that having visitors can be wearing, as their attentions become divided between their visitors and ongoing activities and classes. Nevertheless, provided the timing is right, it can also be a delightful experience. It is usually best to have visitors in the last third of the semester (e.g. the month of November) when students are well settled and feeling secure in their language abilities. Do note, however, that we follow the Mexican calendar so Thanksgiving is not an official holiday for our students.
TRAVEL INFORMATION (for visitors)

Direct to Querétaro
There are daily, direct flights into Querétaro, connecting in Houston (via United) or Dallas (American Airlines). Fares can range from $400-800 for a round trip ticket, depending upon tourist demand, special packages and the cost of fuel. Many on-line services such as Orbitz or Travelocity often have competitive rates. Once you arrive in Querétaro and pass through customs and immigration (usually a very speedy process), go to the taxi window in the airport and purchase a ticket for your destination, which is currently about $30 dollars to downtown, where your student is living.

Arriving in Mexico City, Bus to Querétaro

Flying into Mexico City is also an option and the fares are usually considerably less expensive. Once you pass through customs and immigration (which tends to be a more lengthy process in the DF due to the volume of travelers), use one of the ATM machines or currency exchange windows to obtain pesos.

There are first class busses that leave from the airport regularly (every 30, 45, 60 or 90 minutes, depending upon the hour of day) and travel to Querétaro direct. The ride is approximately three hours, and the one-way fare costs about $30 dollars. The bus line is Primera Plus; you can check on-line for the schedule at www.primeraplus.com.mx/ and in general it is not necessary to purchase tickets in advance. In the airport, follow the sign (or ask someone to direct you) to the “Zona de Autobuses”, and purchase your tickets at the booth (“Boletos”).

You will arrive in Querétaro at the Central Camionera (bus station). Once there, purchase your cab voucher from the taxi booth in the bus station to get to your student’s home. Usually the trip is 10-15 minutes and costs about five dollars.

HOTELS IN QUERETARO

There are numerous lodging options in Querétaro, ranging from bargain posadas to five-star luxury hotels. You may want to check out websites like TripAdvisor, Hotwire, etc. to explore the options (and at least for the more expensive hotels, there are oftentimes great deals on these sites). Here are just a few options, ranging from least expensive. All are conveniently located in the historic downtown.

Posada Mesón de Matamoros
Andador Matamoros #8 & 10 (between Guerrero and Allende streets)
Tel.: 442-214-0375
Room prices per night: Single or double – in the $25 range

Hotel Señorial
Guerrero Norte #10A (Centro Histórico, between Hidalgo and Morelos)
Tel.: 214-3700 or 214-1945
Price: Single or double – in the $45 range
Hotel Hidalgo
Madero #11 (Centro Histórico)
Tel.: 212-0081 or 212-8102
Price: in the $40-60 range

Hotel Dos Patios
Cinco de mayo #109
Tel: 442 214 3894
Price: in the $150 range

Mesón Santa Rosa
Plaza de Armas Luis Pasteur #17
Tel.: 442-224-2623
Price: $120–200

Casa de la Marquesa
Andador Madero #41
Tel.: 442-212-0092
Price: $135–245 + tax

Please feel free to send Dr. Docter (docter@westmont.edu) your hotel recommendations to be added to the handbook in future years!

Pictured below (from top left): Casa de la Marquesa, Hotel Dos Patios (lobby), Mesón de Santa Rosa
Leaving Mexico & Coming Home

Saying Adiós

At least 2-3 weeks before you return home, think about how you will "leave well." Plan how you will say goodbye to those who have become your friends and family. Are there gifts you would like to purchase? Perhaps you’d like to get some pictures developed and framed to give to your host family. Or maybe you’d like to write a letter to a special friend or your host mom. These things take some thought and they definitely take time. Don’t wait until the last minute. Leave well!

Make sure you get phone numbers, email or Facebook addresses so you can stay in contact with your new friends. Get some dates on the calendar now to see your amigos, so you’re not caught off guard and leave without having the opportunity to say goodbye or get contact information.

In your last weeks, also think about special places you want to say goodbye to. Do you want to see the arcos at sunset one last time? Or share a meal at a special restaurant or taco hangout with a friend? Make time in your schedule to go! If there’s a special present you want to buy, don’t wait until the last minute, as your final few days will undoubtedly be full and hectic.

Travel back home

Remember the following as you pack and get ready to return home:

• Weigh your bags. Exceeding the weight limit comes with enormous fees!
• Think about things you might want to leave behind; you can donate clothes, shoes, and school supplies to Niños y niñas.
• Do not pack prohibited items, such as fresh fruits, vegetables, food products with dried chilies, etc.
• Make sure you have your passport and Tourist Card. It is also a good idea to have a copy of your ticket, and if possible, to confirm your flight in advance.
• Westmont will arrange to have vans to take the group back to the airport at one designated time, depending upon students’ schedules. Should you choose to not go to the airport with the WIM group, remember to arrive 2 hours prior to your flight.
• Remember to declare all purchases made in Mexico as you go through customs in the US.
Challenges of reentry
Just as your entry into Mexican culture presented you with challenges and confusions, so will your re-entry into your home culture. Many students are caught off guard by this “reverse culture shock.” One of the best ways to prepare for re-entry is to be aware of the challenges and to develop effective coping strategies. Your resident director will help you with this, as will the reentry class in the spring (IS 197), which is highly recommended.

Your friends and family can be an enormous source of support during this time. I include here a selection from the book *The Art of Coming Home*, which gives specific advice for your loved ones as they help you in your transition home. Please share this with them!

“What Family and Friends Can Do”

1. Show interest. Returnees very much need to share their experiences with you. They overdo it, of course, and show far too many pictures (and never ask you about your life during the last [semester], but try to be kind. They don’t mean to be rude; they’re just excited.

2. Don’t be offended when they criticize their home country (which is also yours) and constantly compare it unfavorably with their overseas [experience]. They don’t include you in their sweeping generalizations, and they don’t mean you’re a fool to like it here, so don’t get defensive. They’re just on edge and a little lost. Just smile and offer them another helping of their favorite ice cream.

3. Don’t make them feel defensive. Sometimes, by not understanding how hard reentry can be, you make returnees feel that there’s something wrong with them, that they should be happy and content, that there’s no reason they should be having a hard time. Even if you don’t understand, act as if you do.

4. Don’t pressure them to visit all the time. Parents and grandparents take note: give your loved ones some breathing room. Yes, it’s rude of them not to come often and stay longer, but at least they’re back in the country.

5. Don’t spring family problems and responsibilities on them too soon. No doubt it’s time they started shouldering their family duties again, but give them a few weeks to get their balance.

6. Above all, be patient: They’re not going to act like this forever. Whatever irritating, insensitive, disturbing, or alarming thing they do or say, don’t take it too seriously. If they’re still acting or talking like this after a couple of months, then you can start to worry.
Appendix: Additional Safety Information

HARASSMENT

WESTMONT Title IX Officer  
Mr. Chris Call  
(in the case of harassment/assault/rape)  
805-565-6023

Advice to all travelers
It is important to realize that most cultures are very different from ours and you may find yourself in the position of being harassed or endangered without realizing it. Memorize the emergency numbers in the countries you visit and keep change for the phone and cab money with you at all times.

- Find a place to stay before dark. Be cautious of people who offer you rooms.
- Leave your travel itinerary with your program director and a friend.
- Always be aware of the location of your closest exit.
- Always be alert for distractions that may be staged by pickpockets, luggage thieves, and purse snatchers.
- Keep briefcases and purses in view or in hand when using telephones. If you are using a credit card, block the view of the keypad when entering the number.
- Be cautious when entering public restrooms.
- Inspect any gifts received in a foreign country before packing.

Advice to women travelers
Women traveling alone may encounter more difficulties than men. Never travel alone, and try to understand the role of the sexes in the culture in which you are traveling. Observe how the host country’s women dress and act. What may be appropriate and friendly behavior in the US may bring you unwanted attention in another country. Remember to speak clearly and emphatically if you want to be left alone. Do not wear expensive clothing or jewelry. In many countries it is advisable to avoid wearing clothing that could be considered provocative. In some parts of the world, mere eye contact from a woman is considered flirtation. When you check into a hotel, notice who gets into the elevator with you. If you are uncomfortable, get off the elevator. Have your room key in hand so you won’t have to fumble for it in a dark hallway. Always lock your door.

Internet resources
US State Department Tips for a Safe Trip Abroad: 
SEXUAL HARASSMENT & PREVENTION IN COLLEGE STUDENTS STUDYING ABROAD

An article by Nancy Newport, RN, Licensed Professional Counselor & Consultant to the Peace Corps

It has been my experience over the years as a Consultant to the US Peace Corps that the issue of sexual harassment for women can become a major stress factor that can greatly affect the entire overseas experience.

The information included in these pages comes directly from the work I have done with hundreds of inspiring and courageous Peace Corps Volunteer females as well as my own personal experience as a 22 year old Peace Corps Volunteer in Brazil many years ago. I have listened to and experienced the struggles, fears, frustrations, dilemmas, as well as joys of being a female in a developing culture. I have learned a great deal from the experience and from the incredible women with whom I have had the privilege of counseling. My life and my clinical work have been immeasurably enriched by the experiences we have shared together.

Cultural Sensitivity

We all want to be culturally sensitive, to get along, to be respectful, to fit in, to not offend. In training, cultural sensitivity is emphasized and highly valued. It can be the doorway through which a college student studying abroad gains entry to and acceptance with the community abroad.

It is very important that the cultural sensitivity training provided never requires that you submit to behaviors that invade your personal boundaries and that feel unsafe or even uncomfortable to you. If it feels inappropriate or makes you uneasy, get yourself out of the situation. Never sacrifice yourself or your sense of safety for the sake of cultural sensitivity.

Personal Boundaries

Personal boundaries are the personal space around us, physically and emotionally, that serves to preserve our physical and emotional integrity. When someone gets "too close", an alarm sounds inside. We need to listen for, respect, and respond to that alarm. We also need to respect the personal boundaries of each other. These areas can be very confusing for students for several reasons:

Reason One: The issue of personal boundaries tends to be confusing for people. Some of us were raised in families with broad rigid boundaries, lots of secrets, locked doors, distance from people, and perhaps even distance from our own emotions. Others of us were raised in families with loose boundaries, or inconsistent boundaries where people did not consistently allow personal respect or require privacy, where frequently no one knocked on bedroom doors before entering, where people shared common space and little personal space was available. And some of us (a very few) were raised with more of a balance of closeness, respect, and honoring of privacy and personal space.

Reason Two: Social conditioning in college has influenced boundary understandings by increasing tolerance for loose, fluid boundaries. Many college students have been acclimated to a very loose boundaried college culture. Students may "crash" in each other's dorm or apartment...males and females may share sleeping space for convenience without sexual expectations. They may have become accustomed to, and therefore have a high tolerance for loose personal boundaries.

Reason Three: We "assume" every one has the same understanding about personal boundaries as we do. Now enter another country and find the whole issue of boundaries and personal space
is highly influenced by cultural norms and very different from what you are accustomed to. And the amount of personal space has a certain meaning in one culture and a different meaning in another culture. Like learning a foreign language, customs and personal boundaries in a new culture are not to be "assumed" to be known, but must be learned for your safety.

**The Ultimate Boundary – Your Body**

In some cultures, allowing a man to enter your house is symbolic of letting him enter your body. Many men have told women that they "assumed" she wanted sex just because she allowed entry into her house. Staying outside on the porch is a safer way to receive male guests. Where is the best place to entertain men in a safe way without misunderstandings where you live in the US? Where will the best place be to entertain men in a safe way without misunderstandings where you live/study abroad?

**Concept of Male Friendship – A Boundary Misunderstanding**

American women are accustomed to the concept of male friendship. It has a meaning that may not translate in the new culture. Being seen with a man, talking with a man, going out with a man may have a different "meaning" in the culture than a female student may intend. What does it mean in the culture you are in? Is that your intention? If no, change your behaviors to send the message you intend.

**Strokes – Finding Deeper Meaning in Communication**

Strokes are the measure of the exchange of communication between people. When interacting with others, we are constantly exchanging numbers of strokes. When we are communicating with peers, we tend to exchange a comparable number of strokes, a balanced exchange. In communication with those in authority however, the exchange may tend to not be balanced. The employee, for example, may tend to deliver more strokes than he/she receives from the boss. With friends, coworkers, spouse, children, authority figures, parents, strangers, strokes are delivered in varying amounts of balance or imbalance. Notice how this plays out in your life. Normally we are not aware of this measure of exchange as it operates at an unconscious level.

So it is, that when someone is being approached by a stranger or unwelcome individual, the amount of strokes should be kept to a minimum. In Latin culture, for instance, a man may sit next to a female student on a bus and begin an uninvited conversation with "Oh, baby. I love you." There is a tendency on some women's part to give a lecture on love to that individual ("How can you love me? You don't know me.", etc.)—providing a lot of strokes. Remember it’s the number of strokes that are important, not the quality or content (negative or positive). This woman is then surprised to discover that the man continues and even escalates the harassment rather than moving away. It is more effective to:

- Ignore the harassment/pretend ignorance
- Feign confusion/lack of understanding
- Move away/remove your self from the situation

Confrontations of any type serve to encourage harassers who want attention, even negative attention will do. It’s important to know about the power of strokes. When people come at you with strokes that you don’t want, don’t give away any strokes in return. Don’t offer explanations. Get up and move, say no, but do not equalize the number of strokes exchanged as it may only escalate into getting you into more trouble.
Notice how strokes play out in your life. Notice the relationships where strokes are not equal—where someone is giving you far more strokes than you are giving out, and notice how it feels inside. Does it make you uncomfortable? This is true in all kinds of relationships, and can be used to help identify predators.

Harassment behavior and language varies from one culture to another. How do men harass women in the culture in which you are visiting? How do national women in that culture deal with it? Notice their effectiveness and use their response as a model.

**Assertiveness and Actions**

Actions speak louder than words. Make sure your body language is congruent with your words. If you say no with a smile on your face or in a weak, unconvincing voice, the words lose their force and power. Say no firmly and swiftly and follow that up with removing yourself from the situation and getting assistance if needed to back you up.

**Persistent People**

Use the broken record technique when faced with a situation when someone will not take no for an answer. Do not be coerced into backing down from your position by the persistence of the person insisting. Just because they did not accept your "no" does not mean you now need to come up with another reason or excuse. Keep saying the same answer over and over again, without developing a new reason or excuse each time the other person doesn’t accept it. You don’t have to be creative. Stick to your answer and just don’t budge.

Example:
"Would you like to go to the movies with me?"
"No, thank you. I can’t go."
"Oh, come on. It’s just a movie."
"No, thank you. I can’t go."
"I’ll get you home early. I’ll be a perfect gentleman."
"No, thank you. I can’t go."
"Oh, you’re too good for me, is that it?"
"No, thank you. I can’t go."
"Oh, you can’t go?"
"No, thank you. I can’t go."
"Oh."

Trust needs to be earned. Many people have the mistaken notion that people should be trusted until proven otherwise. Actually, it is prudent to stay in a neutral position about a person, neither trusting nor distrusting them at first. Gather information from this person that will help you determine the trustworthiness of the person. In a new culture, watch for clues and cues from people who know the person and figure out how trusted he/she is by the community.

**Harassment Burn Out**

Harassing behavior is annoying at best and threatening and dangerous at worst. All students should seek assistance if harassment towards them becomes out of control and/or causes increased anxiety and anger. Many students reach a point, after which time they can no longer can tolerate the catcalls on the street with the same humor they had when they arrived in country. For some, the irritation escalates to anger and retaliation. Some students have acted out toward men on the street (yelling at them, insulting them, throwing things, hitting them) out of exasperation. This aggressive behavior is dangerous. It is a warning sign that needs to be
addressed for your protection. It is very understandable that the harassment has "gotten to you," but exhibiting aggressive behavior back can put you at risk. This "burn out" is a signal that it's time to take a break. Get out of town. Take a vacation. Go talk to your teachers, staff, and/or counselor. Do some stress relieving exercises that work for you. Talk to someone. Do something different!

**Predators/Prey**

In the wild, when an animal is either separated from the herd, is weak, young, injured, or otherwise vulnerable, it is likely that a predator will spot the animal, consider it prey and attack.

It is essential to your safety that you never allow yourself to be vulnerable to attack, that you avoid behaviors that can make you prey. You may have the right to walk down the beach at 2:00 in the morning, but if you do, you are making yourself prey to a waiting predator. You may want to go to a bar or a party and have some fun, let off some steam, kick back and have a good time but if you drink alcohol or use any mood altering substance, you are now potential prey. It’s as if you said to the strangers/acquaintances around you, "I’m going to relinquish control of myself/my body now. I put myself in your hands." Being at the effect of substances of any kind sets us up to be vulnerable to the attack of a predator.

It’s not fair. Of course, it’s not. But it’s true—and staying in control of yourself can save your life. Being awake and aware allows you to pick up on warning signs that alert you that something is wrong. In the book, The Gift of Fear, Gavin deBecker describes the "gut feeling", the intuitive sense, that something is not right—that some danger may be present—as the gift of fear. Fear alerts us if we are awake and aware and respectful of the feelings we get. We must not override our sense of fear by saying to ourselves, "I don’t know what I’m worried about, I’m sure nothing’s wrong here", instead of paying attention to that little voice in our gut that says, "I don’t know what’s going on here, but something’s up". It is really, really important to pay attention to our intuition, that little sense of knowing that something is amiss here, and not to dismiss it or deny it.

In his book, deBecker describes seven (7) ways that predators manipulate people to become prey. Learn all of these strategies so that you will not fall prey to them yourself. The tactics are:

- Forced teaming: intentional and directed manipulation to establish premature trust, example: "we’re in this together"—a form of false rapport
- Charm and niceness: manipulative, deceptive, for self-gain
- Too many details: a tactic used when people are lying
- Typecasting: a slight insult designed to manipulate a woman to feel compelled to prove its inaccuracy
- Loan sharking: unsolicited giving designed to create a feeling of indebtedness
- The unsolicited promise: false promises
- Discounting the word "no": when someone refuses to accept "no" for an answer

More about these tactics can be learned from reading the book, The Gift of Fear. It is a highly recommended resource for anyone wanting to be more savvy about ways to protect themselves.

**Potential Predator Behavior—Progressive Intrusive Invasion of Boundaries**

If in a situation there is someone giving you more attention that you want, or is finding excuses to touch you, this can be potentially dangerous to your safety. For example, a guy comes up to a woman and gently brushes his shoulder up against her, flipping her hair off her shoulder,
grazing her hand. She’s thinking, "This is creeping me out, but I’m sure I’m overreacting, I’m sure he doesn’t mean anything." This is where danger begins. He is thinking, "How much will she tolerate and allow? How long can I get away with this without her calling me on it? How far can I go?"

- Touch: Uninvited, seemingly "unintentional" touching (brushing up against a woman’s leg or arm, touching her hair)
- Escalated touch: If not acknowledged and objected to, the touch will escalate (hand on thigh, hand on arm, sitting very close)
- Forced sense of indebtedness: Creating a sense of indebtedness (buying an unsolicited drink or meal for example) and then expecting her attention in return (a dance, to walk her home, to spend time with her)

**Conclusion**

While some men are harassed, women experience the majority of sexual harassment and sexual assault. If you are a female student, this reality undoubtedly frustrates and angers you to have to be so very aware of your safety. If you are a male student, it likely dismays and angers you that women are ever treated disrespectfully.

There are steps to take to minimize risk in while traveling abroad and maximize fun and a rich cultural experience. It is important for women to:

- Integrate into their community
- Make friends with the women of the village
- Learn from the women about self protection and practice what you learn
- Dress according to local customs
- Interact with men according to the local customs
- Behave according to the local customs
- Stay in control; staying sober and alert keeps your senses in place to protect you
- Have a buddy system: having at least one other person with you that you trust can help you in regular circumstances as well as in problematic situations (what if someone spikes your drink).
- It is generally a good idea to travel in groups
- Pay attention and respond to any inner signal (intuition) that "something isn't right" and remove yourself from the situation

Do not try to behave like you would in the States. You are here to experience a different way of life, one that allows you to assimilate into your village, to "join" the community, to have a full, rich cultural experience. Enjoy it. You are not giving up Yourself—you, indeed, are expanding on your choices as a female. This article has been created as an invitation to you to be awake and aware and to acknowledge the realities of potential safety issues around you. To live your life as if this isn’t so is to deny yourself adequate protection. Treat yourself well.

Nancy Newport is a psychotherapist in private practice in Fairfax, Virginia. She has been a counseling consultant to the Peace Corps since 1992 and has a specialty in treating trauma, especially sexual and physical assault. Ms. Newport conducts the Peace Corps Medical Officer Training on sexual harassment and assault treatment. She is certified in Clinical Hypnotherapy, NLP and EMDR and uses these modalities extensively in her trauma work. Ms. Newport is a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (Brasil). Her website is: [http://www.nancynewport.com](http://www.nancynewport.com).

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EMERGENCIES & INSURANCE

American Embassies & Consulates

Should you be the victim of a crime, encounter serious social, political, health, or economic problems, the American Embassies and/or Consulates can offer some, but limited, assistance. They can provide the following services:

- list of local attorneys and physicians;
- contact next-of-kin in the event of emergency or serious illness;
- contact friends or relatives on your behalf to request funds or guidance;
- provide assistance during civil unrest or natural disaster;
- replace a lost or stolen passport

They cannot, however, provide the services of a travel agency, give or lend money, cash personal checks, arrange free medical service or legal advice, provide bail or get you out of jail, act as couriers or interpreters, search for missing luggage, or settle disputes with local authorities. Remember that their primary occupation abroad is to help fulfill the diplomatic mission of the United States government; they are not there to play nursemaid to American travelers. It is recommended that U.S. citizens residing abroad for any extended period of time register with the local U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are on a study-abroad program, this will usually be done on your behalf by program staff, but this is not always true. Check to be sure. For further information on what the State Department does in a crisis, see http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1212.html

Office of Overseas Citizens Service

Should you be the victim of a crime, or should your family need to contact you while you are traveling (e.g. after the program is over), emergency assistance is available through the Citizens' Emergency Center of the Office of Overseas Citizens Services (OCS), operated by the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs. Call 1-888-407-4747 (from overseas: 001-202-501-4444). This office can transmit emergency messages from your family, provide protection in the event of arrest or detention while abroad, transmit emergency funds to destitute nationals when commercial banking facilities are not available, etc. It would be wise for you to provide your family with at least a tentative itinerary so that in an emergency, they can give the State Department some idea where to begin looking for you. (Please go to website: http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1212.html for particulars).

Westmont Insurance & Emergency Services

Every student participating in an international off-campus program is automatically covered under accident and sickness coverage and has 24-hour emergency services available to them. The health fee charged to participants in off-campus programs provides enrollment in the Worldwide Assist program. Worldwide Assist provides emergency services covering assistance ranging from help in finding a local consulate to replacing lost passports to assisting in arranging medical evacuation in the event of serious illness or injury. Each student will be given a Worldwide Assist card with a phone number that can serve as an emergency hotline anytime, day or night. See the Worldwide Assist brochure for more information.

Because Westmont no longer covers your for health insurance, we have purchased a medical policy included with your ISIC card (International Student Identity Card) for $100,000 worth of medical (physical and mental health) coverage, although deductibles apply. Thankfully the cost of medical care is more reasonable than in the US in some locations.
Should you need to be seen by health care professional while studying abroad, you will need to pay “out of pocket” for the services and keep all paperwork (receipts, Rx’s, discharge paperwork). The director of your program should be able to help you contact the appropriate physician or other medical authority when attention is required. If you do not have the resources to pay “out of pocket” you can usually work it out with program leaders to advance funds to cover costs, but these will eventually be charged to your student account. It will be up to you to seek any possible reimbursement for these services upon your return to the US. If you are covered internationally through a parent’s insurance, this is where you would begin on the reimbursement process. ISIC coverage would be the next place to explore for reimbursement if necessary.