

# **COUNTRY NOTES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS**

## **2018-2019**



**Mexico**

# Notes for English Language Assistants appointed to Mexico 2018-19

Congratulations on your allocation to a post as an English Language Assistant in Mexico.

This document contains important information and advice regarding a variety of practical and administrative matters affecting UK assistants in Mexico. They should be read carefully, retained for reference and considered in conjunction with any papers issued by the Mexican authorities. It is important that you take this information with you during your assistantship in order to be able to consult it at all times when problems/questions arise. We recommend that you give a copy of this information on to your parents, guardians or carers, but please remember that under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) we cannot discuss an individual's personal situation and circumstances with a third party such as a parent/guardian/carer: information on a situation must be conveyed to us first hand by the assistant concerned.

If your permanent (UK) home address, personal e-mail or phone number should change at any time from now on, please inform us immediately by sending an e-mail to [languageassistants.uk@britishcouncil.org](mailto:languageassistants.uk@britishcouncil.org). We may need to contact you during the year with updates to these notes, invitations or urgent messages.

We hope that you find the following information useful and that you enjoy your time in Mexico.

Best wishes,

Language Assistants Team, British Council

# General Information

## 1. Introducing Mexico

Mexico's vibrant culture is evident wherever you look. You can find lots of murals, galleries, paintings and folk-art tradition. The country also is famous for its ancient civilisations, architecture and writers. It offers rainforests and beaches, deserts and snow-capped volcanoes.

Almost 90% of Mexico's just over 116 million inhabitants are Roman Catholic. The official language is Spanish, but around 68 or more indigenous languages are also still spoken.

## 2. Cooperating partner

The Language Assistants Programme in Mexico is administered by the British Council in Mexico and the Ministry of Education (*Secretaría de Educación Pública*).

### **British Council Mexico**

Lope de Vega 316, Polanco, Chapultepec Morales,  
11570  
Ciudad de México

The Language Assistants Programme in Mexico is administered by  
Dalia Carrizoza and Alinne Barrera:

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### **3. Role of a Language Assistant**

The role of a language assistant is a very important one and one that we hope you will enjoy. Please remember that you are a paid member of staff of the Ministry of Education with the responsibilities and required professionalism that this entails. Please refer to our website for more information on your [role](#).

As a language assistant you are also an ambassador for the UK and its culture. The way you behave will influence how those around you view the UK and you should endeavour to be a positive example. If you set a bad example, you could damage the reputation of the programme and adversely affect the experience of future assistants.

Your first-hand experience of life in the UK is an excellent resource and you should draw on this during your lessons. Please see the section entitled 'Teaching' for classroom tips and resources.

It is important to be proactive and use your initiative. If you do not think that you are being used sufficiently in class, make suggestions of topics that you could discuss with the students and activities you could do.

### **4. Period of appointment**

The period of appointment for UK assistants in Mexico this year will be for from 1<sup>st</sup> September 201 until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019. The number of hours worked will be around 14 per week (this does not include preparation for your classes and hours between classes).

There will be a break in December and one during Easter (*Semana Santa*), and you will be paid during this time. Please check the exact dates with your host institution before you book any travel and take into consideration that last minute changes in the agenda may happen and you should stick to them.

### **5. Tutor**

You will be given a mentor teacher who will be your main point of contact at the school. You should contact your mentor as soon as you receive their details, your tutor will be the person in charge of supporting you at your arrival, you can ask him for guidance in subjects related to housing, accommodation within the first weeks, transportation, etc.

Teaching is a demanding job and your mentor may not be able to respond to you immediately so don't leave it until the last minute! Ask them about the age and level of students so you can think about materials you could take with you from the UK.

Don't forget to cc the Mexico team in this communication so they can support you when needed.

## 6. Allowance

The monthly allowance for 2018-19 will be be \$8,000 (Mexican pesos) and this will provide a reasonable basic standard of living for one person.

Allowance payments are made in the first 15 days of each month.

### Payment schedule

September	Paid by September 31
October	Paid by October 15
November	Paid by November 15
December	Paid by December 15
January	Paid by January 31
February	Paid by February 15
March	Paid by March 15
April	Paid by April 15
May	Paid by May 15
June	Paid by June 15

Please note that assistants working in Mexico City will need to supplement this monthly allowance to maintain a comfortable standard of living. You are strongly advised to be sensitive when talking about your payment with other teachers.

If you wish to supplement your income you should ensure that this does not interfere with your timetable at your host institution. You are strongly advised **not** to advertise in local papers or public places. (Please read the relevant sections of our [Personal Safety leaflet](#)). Also take into consideration that acquiring any type of formal job in Mexico will affect your migration status and you can be dismissed from the programme.

During your induction week in Mexico you will open a bank account with help of SEP in order to have your debit card. Your allowance will be deposited into this bank account every month.

We also recommend having access to your UK bank account throughout the year, making sure that you have sufficient funds in case of delays to your allowance payment.

## Before you go

### 7. Passports and Visas

Before leaving the UK you must be in possession of a full passport, valid for the duration of your stay in Mexico. Your visa can only be issued when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Mexico City has sent authorisation to the Mexican Consulate in London or wherever you selected to collect your visa from.

For your visa you will need;

- A valid passport for the duration of your stay in Mexico and photocopy of the pages where the personal details and holder's photograph are found.
- A completed visa application form (PDF sent by email).
- One UK-size passport photograph (it must be in colour, with the face clearly visible without glasses, white background and be taken within the last month).
- A copy of the acceptance Letter from the SEP signed by each applicant. (This document will be sent directly to the Mexican Consulate for you, but very soon you all should have a scanned copy of the document that you can print and sign just in case).

**Please state on your visa application form that you are sponsored by the Secretaría de Educación Pública to cooperate as a Language Assistant at the institution.**

After obtaining your visa in the UK, when you arrive in Mexico and have a permanent address you will need to **register as a 'cooperante residente temporal' locally in Mexico. You need to do this within 30 days after arrival or you may have to pay a fine.** Some assistants in the past have not been allowed to leave Mexico if they forgot to register. The British Council and SEP will give you more information on how to register and follow up during the induction week in Mexico.

Once you get your residence card you **cannot** leave the country without it or you would have to start the whole process.

*Please bear in mind that visa procedures may vary from year to year. The British Council tries to obtain the latest information on your visa requirements but we are unable to accept any liability if the information provided here differs from what the Consulate requires from you.*

### 8. Documents to take

We recommend that you scan important documents before leaving the UK and email these to yourself so that you have access to them while you are away. Documents you may need access to include; **birth certificate** (although you should not need the original) and scanned copies of the **photo page of your passport, visa and driving license** (take this with you). You should carry a photocopy of the photo page of your passport rather than the original and always have this on you as a means of ID.

**Whilst in Mexico, you should carry the following documents with you at all times: a photocopy of the photo page of your passport and visa, and a photocopy of your card confirming your status as a cooperante residente temporal (please carry the photocopies and not the originals). You should also carry your original driving license as a means of ID.**

## **9. Foreign and Commonwealth Information**

The FCO has a wealth of resources we recommend you utilise. Before travelling to Mexico you should:

- Check the FCO's [travel advice pages](#) and subscribe to updates so that you receive any important changes to the FCO's advice. During a crisis, advice for British nationals will be published on the travel advice website and updated regularly, so by subscribing you will ensure that you are aware of any updates.
- Read the 'Advice for Travellers' documentation provided by the FCO, which can be found [here](#)
- Follow the FCO social media pages for up-to-date alerts and information

## **10. Emergency protocol**

The telephone tree will be activated in case of natural disasters or national emergencies. You will be contacted by a British Council staff member, it's expected for you to reply within the first hour after the initial contact has been made.

### **Hurricanes**

The hurricane season in Mexico normally runs from June to November and can affect both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts. Monitor local and international weather updates from the US National Hurricane Center, and check with the local authorities or your tour operator for any changes to your travel plans.

See our tropical cyclones page for information and advice about what to do if you're caught up in a storm.

### **Earthquakes**

Most of Mexico is occasionally subject to earthquakes. Tremors occur regularly, particularly in the states of Oaxaca and Guerrero.

The US Federal Emergency Management Agency has advice about what to do before, during and after an earthquake or tsunami as does the Mexican Ministry of Civil Protection (in Spanish).

## Volcanoes

The Popocatepetl and Colima volcanoes are active and closed to the public. There are danger zones around both volcanoes, the size of which can change depending on the current level of activity. The latest information on the current status of the Colima volcano can be found on the website of the University of Colima's Volcano Observatory. For updates on the Popocatepetl volcano, visit the website of the Mexican Disaster Prevention Centre.

## Health

### 11. Vaccinations & Medication

The British Council is unable to pay for your vaccines but we recommend strongly that you consult your GP and get information on the vaccinations needed for Mexico before you travel. [Fit for travel](#), NHS website will be a useful starting point.

Make sure that if you need medication you bring a large enough supply. Label it clearly before boarding a plane. If you have to carry syringes or needles, please remember to get a letter from your GP explaining their medical necessity. We also recommend checking your airline's website to see whether any other documentation is needed. Country specific information and advice can be found on the National Travel Health Network and Centre [website](#).

### 12. Insurance

You are required to take out comprehensive insurance to cover you during your time in Mexico. It is important to cover medical and other expenses, personal accident and personal liability, luggage and personal possessions and cancellation charges. We recommended you research the various options available and consult other/ former assistants before purchasing a suitable policy. However, any insurance you purchase should include cover for emergency treatment and repatriation. Please note that no insurance company will cover you in the event of a natural disaster or the outbreak of war.

The British Council will not be responsible for you while you are in Mexico, although we will offer support when necessary.

If you do fall ill make sure you keep copies of all medical bills, receipts or other documents. You will then need these to make a claim.

The British Council is unable to advise on private insurance packages, so you are recommended to consult an insurance broker for professional advice and to check whether you are covered by your parents' insurance policy. Undergraduate assistants may find that a "study abroad" policy purchased online is an option. Please be aware that some insurance policies, usually 'backpackers' insurance, do not allow for trips home during the year and it



is important to check the small print of your policy to make sure that you are covered. We recommended you research the various options available and consult other/ former assistants before purchasing a suitable policy. However, any insurance you purchase should include cover for emergency treatment and repatriation. Please note that no insurance company will cover you in the event of a natural disaster or the outbreak of war.

If you do fall ill make sure you keep copies of all medical bills, receipts or other documents. You will then need these to make a claim.

**Please send British Council Mexico details of your health insurance immediately to [dalia.carrizoza@britishcouncil.org](mailto:dalia.carrizoza@britishcouncil.org)**

## **On Arrival**

### **13. Induction**

Assistants should arrive in Mexico between 21<sup>st</sup> and 26<sup>st</sup> of August; British Council Mexico will welcome you at the airport. There will be an induction week between the 27<sup>nd</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of August organised by British Council Mexico and the SEP. British Council Mexico will inform you about finalised dates very soon. Please inform British Council Mexico of your flight information when you book your flight so that transportation can be arranged. If you do not arrive on these dates, then you will be expected to make your own transport arrangements. You should confirm with your tutor the arrangements for travelling to your final destination before your arrival.

Accommodation will be reserved for you at a hostel for the duration of the induction and you will need to cover the cost. Further information about hostel details will follow soon. Your booking confirmation will be done when you send your flight information to British Council Mexico.

### **14. Accommodation**

Temporary accommodation should be arranged for the first 1-2 weeks in your town/city, but you will probably have to sort out permanent accommodation yourself. Please check this with your tutor who should be able to tell you what to expect and give advice and help. You may also wish to check with your predecessor if applicable.

The first thing to do when looking for permanent accommodation is to ask your tutor if they can recommend anything. For example, they may know a local family with a room to rent, or already have somewhere in mind for you to stay. If your school cannot help, your best contacts are your predecessors at the school or in the area. Past assistants have emphasised the need to look for accommodation as early as possible. The first weeks of your assistantship will be busy as you will be finding your way around an unfamiliar town,

dealing with bureaucracy and trying to make a good impression at school. Having temporary accommodation in a hotel/hostel etc lined up can make this easier.

Do not take out a contract on your accommodation until you know the location of your institution and have viewed the property. Please note that the British Council is not able to provide or to help find accommodation.

Once you get to Mexico the following suggestions may be of interest:

- advertise on the school/staff notice board and ask around the staff; do NOT advertise in local papers or public places
- ring the local university halls of residence or check their flat share adverts and notices, or advertise on their notice board that you are looking for a room
- ask local friends'/acquaintances' landlords if they have any further accommodation to let
- contact any student or youth organisation in the area that might have details of available lodgings: the local tourist office may have a list of such organisations
- accommodation agencies may be able to help but you should be very wary of paying large fees and deposits, and always read the small print in any leases or agreements to be signed. Look for small agencies as their fees are often lower
- search for a room or flat on the internet

When looking for accommodation please follow the advice given in our [personal safety leaflet](#).

We recommend that you take photos of your room and the flat when you move into your long-term accommodation and when you leave to help you get back any deposit you may have to pay, which is usually dependent on the accommodation being in the same condition as when you first arrived. When you do find accommodation, please ensure that you have checked health and safety issues (temporary and long term) such as fire alarms and exits, gas leaks, electrics, water etc. Once you have found somewhere to live, even if it has been arranged for you, do not sign any agreement you are not comfortable with and make sure that there is a period of notice written in the contract to avoid problems should you decide to change your accommodation during the year. When you leave your accommodation, remember to cancel any personal contracts e.g. internet or utilities.

## Teaching

### 15. Observation period

The size of the class can vary from 10 – 60 students depending on the institution, and assistants' experiences will all be different.

When you first arrive, you should ask for a period of observation of 1-2 weeks (please note that this may not be offered to you automatically). Observation will allow you to familiarise yourself with the environment, to experience classroom management techniques as well as to get to know the names, faces and personalities of your pupils and gauge their level of English.

Try to note the following:

- how the teacher starts and ends the lesson
- how the teacher speaks to pupils
- how the teacher involves all pupils, including shy ones, in the class activity
- what the teacher's attitude is to pupil errors and error correction
- how the teacher controls disruptive behaviour, lateness and lack of effort

## **16. Absence from your institution**

Please remember that you are a member of staff and must therefore adhere to the holiday dates set by the institution. If you cannot work because of illness you should inform your tutor, institution(s) and local education authority (if applicable) immediately by telephone. You may be asked to provide a letter from a doctor. This should cover the entire duration of the absence and must be sent to the institution and, if applicable, local authority as soon as it is issued. Any prolonged absence because of illness should be reported as soon as possible to your tutor, institution, British Council Mexico and to the British Council in the UK.

Requests for leave of absence for any other reason should be made in advance to the head of the institution(s), who is within his/her right to refuse it and once confirmed to British Council Mexico. You are reminded that if you are absent from institution without prior authorisation your allowance will be discontinued from the first day of your absence. You should get any authorisation for additional leave in writing.

In the unlikely and unfortunate event that it becomes necessary to resign from your post, you must give a **month** prior notice in writing of your intended departure to your tutor, institution and the British Council, setting out your reasons in full, following the process stated by SEP. If you are an undergraduate you must also inform your university/college in the UK.

Your last working day should be at the end of the month and the formal resignation letter must be provided no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> of every month.

## **17. Teaching Resources**

The British Council produces and co-produces a range of resources specifically for Language Assistants. Making use of these will help you greatly to deliver interesting and useful classroom activities and will support you in solving problems in the classroom.

The British Council is also closely involved with the teaching of English abroad. Local branches develop useful resources and organise a range of cultural activities, which may be of interest to you and your institution. For information on forthcoming events, go to <https://www.britishcouncil.org.mx/>

Please note that many foreign institutions are anxious to establish links with UK counterparts in order to share information and arrange pupil exchanges. You may wish to find out if your institution has any eTwinning projects or set up a project yourself: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/etwinning>

## **18. TeachingEnglish Website**

[TeachingEnglish](#) is an online resource centre produced jointly by the British Council and the BBC which has a specialised Language Assistants micro-site.

On the site you will have access to:

- Teaching tips
- Essential UK: Seasonal lesson plans based around UK topics
- Primary tips: Help getting started with primary-level students
- Classroom games

## **19. LearnEnglish Website**

The British Council Learn English [website](#) is an excellent free online resource for students of English with lots of games, stories, listening activities and grammar exercises:

This may be a useful tool for you to use for your teaching but also to pass on to your students for them to access from home.

## **20. Teaching Materials**

One way of making language learning real for your pupils is bringing authentic materials from the UK into the classroom. Take the opportunity to collect a variety of resources while you are still at home. Past assistants have found that the following materials worked well: Photos of family and friends and your home town, postcards, examples of UK coins and notes, train tickets and timetables, stamps, posters and tea towels to decorate walls, posters and games, UK TV programmes and listings, magazines and local newspapers, CDs, photos of school uniforms, a school timetable and school report, flashcards, word searches,

maps, tourist brochures, UK food (marmite, jelly, chocolate, custard, mince pies, gravy granules, etc), adverts, menus, cartoons, comic books, DVDs (e.g. Ready Steady Cook for catering students), simple recipes e.g. scones, recordings of the weather forecast, London tube map, recordings of friends' accents and conversations, bingo, Taboo etc. The more materials you can find the better. Think about what worked well for you as a language student and about which items you find interesting when you are in a foreign country. You can also ask your host institution whether there is something specific they would like you to bring and to find out about topics you are likely to be asked to cover during your assistantship.

### **21. Facebook group**

British Council Mexico team will create a Facebook group where you can share ideas and they will upload important information, travel advices and interesting posts about Mexico, it is also the main contact point in case of any emergency.

## **Life in Mexico**

### **22. Life in Latin America**

In Latin America there is often a culture of anti-formality, which might give the impression of a lack of organisation and forward planning. Things tend to happen at the very last minute, and many assistants from the UK find it hard to adjust to what they consider to be a disorganised society. Usually what is lacking in forward planning is made up for in making newcomers feel welcome. However, you will need to prepare yourself for certain frustrations, particularly at bureaucratic level, even prior to departure; especially when it comes to finding out specific details regarding your post and visa applications.

Showing an interest in Mexican culture will certainly endear you to the locals. We recommend you read up as much as possible before you go as this will help you make conversation and talk knowledgeably to people you meet in the first few weeks.

### **23. Culture Shock**

Even if you have travelled to non-European destinations before, you might feel slightly overwhelmed in the beginning by your experience. Some areas can be very poor and you might struggle to accept this. Latin America is also known for its alleged chaos. Be open to changes of plans (social and at work), lessons cancelled at the last minute etc. A different climate and location as well as feeling jet-lagged after a long flight and struggling with speaking Spanish all day long might lead to temporary disorientation, self-consciousness and exhaustion, weather can also have an impact on you, so please make sure you are well prepared for sudden climate changes, and regular temperatures as well. This usually leads to feeling homesick, but please be assured that this is a very common and normal feeling which usually disappears after a few weeks or even days.

There are some ways which might help you to overcome this initial culture shock. Try not to be too hard on yourself; yes, you have come to Mexico to live and work there but that does not mean that you must be like one of the locals within a week. Give yourself time to get over the jet lag and to explore your area. Do not stay in contact only with UK assistants during your assistantship as this might lead to your feeling alienated for the whole time of your appointment. However, it is important that you contact them and your family and friends back home in the beginning to tell them about your experiences. Other assistants can be a great support as they are going through the same process. Once you have met local people and have tackled bureaucracy you will realise that life in Mexico gets much easier and you will have an enjoyable time. Religion and family play an important role in everyday life, so although you may at first feel like an outsider, once you have proved your interest in local people and their culture, you will be welcomed into these tight-knit groups.

The way you behave and represent the UK will shape the view of the UK of those Mexicans with whom you are in contact. There are several frustrations that Language Assistants to Latin America frequently feel; for example, attitudes towards timekeeping in Latin America can be somewhat lax, particularly in social settings (although you will be expected to be punctual to your classes). Machismo and general gender issues might be something with which female assistants struggle to manage, and unwanted attention in the street should be expected by female assistants. Discourage this by dressing appropriately and trying to blend in. Bureaucracy can also be very tiresome. Do not get angry as this usually does not lead to any result, especially when dealing with people in authority.

Ultimately, remember that you are an ambassador for the UK and is expected that you follow the British Council Equality, Diversity and inclusion policy – do not criticise what you cannot change and above all, keep your sense of humour!

Politeness and respect are seen as important everywhere in Latin America. People generally shake hands when they meet each other and start a conversation with a formal greeting. If you are unsure, always use the more formal *usted* and remember to use *señor/señora* particularly with older people.

Check with your tutor what the dress code is at your institution before your arrival. Observe the local dress code and remember that shorts, flip flops and bikinis are for the beach only.

## **24. Practicalities**

- The electrical current in Mexico is 110 Volts, and they have different styles of plugs (a plug with two parallel flat blades and a plug with two parallel flat blades above a large circular grounding pin) so make sure that you get proper adapters. The 110V current means that electrical appliances that do not have dual voltage (110V~220V) will not work. You can check this on the appliance itself.

- Mexicans use the metric system for weights and measurements. Distances are measured in km.
- The time difference between Mexico and the UK varies. Mexico is between 6 and 8 hours behind GMT, depending on where you are in the country, and observes daylight saving.

### **Important numbers:**

Country code 0052

Fire 911

Police 911

Medical emergency 911

### **British Embassy in Mexico**

Please take note of the address of the Embassy below in case of emergency or loss of your passport.

Torre Cuadro (3rd floor)  
Cda. Blvd. Avila Camacho, 76-3  
Col. Lomas de Chapultepec  
11000 México D.F

Phone +52 (55) 1670 3200 (option 4) for help with an emergency involving a British person

General enquiries

[ukinmexico@fco.gov.uk](mailto:ukinmexico@fco.gov.uk)

Consular enquiries

[mexico.consulate@fco.gov.uk](mailto:mexico.consulate@fco.gov.uk)

## **25. Creating Social Networks**

Even if you have been to Mexico before, it is possible that you will find some things strange at first and will need a little time to settle in. On arrival, the thought of making friends and mixing with the locals can seem like a daunting task, but as long as you are prepared to put yourself out there, it is a part of the experience which previous assistants have found the most enriching.

The best way to start when you are in country is with colleagues at your host institution. Make sure you always seem positive, enthusiastic and willing to learn. Socialise as much as you can with colleagues and accept all invitations to events, dinner etc. Tell people what

your interests are and ask them to let you know what's going on in the local area. Do keep in mind that teachers can be very busy, especially during exam periods.

Apart from your work in the classroom you may be able to attend other classes in subjects which interest you. You will find that you become much more integrated into university life and gain considerably more from your stay if you become involved in activities organised by the institution, such as sports days, theatre or music productions or modern language societies. Go to school 'open days' or parent evenings as these are also a good way of meeting people. If you hear about something which interests you, ask if you can become involved. Don't wait to be invited as people may assume that you're not interested.

It is also a good idea to get in touch with other people in the area before you leave. One useful way to do this is to get in contact with a previous assistant in your region and ask them to give you any e-mail addresses or numbers of contacts they made.

- You should be very careful about how you use social networking sites while you are an ELA. Keep your profile private so that it can only be seen by people you intend to see it. If you invite other teachers to be 'friends', remember to remain professional in what you say on your wall and be careful what you say about your employer.
- You should not exchange personal contact details with students, invite them to be 'friends' or accept similar invitations from them. This is likely to be regarded as inappropriate behaviour. Check with teachers about the school's internet policy, particularly regarding any online communication involving students either in or outside school.
- It is exceptionally important that you understand issues around child protection, both to protect the students and to protect you from any damaging and potentially serious accusations, please refer to our [Child Protection Policy](#).

Here are some ways to meet people within the area:

- Live with other students/native speakers
- Enrol for an evening class, join a sports club, music group, choir etc.
- Get involved in the local culture and join clubs that you couldn't join in the UK
- Volunteer for a charity, society, festival, etc.
- Set up a language exchange with locals who want to practice their English
- Join an Erasmus group at a local university
- Join a Facebook group for new people in your allocated town/region



Former assistants have recommended not spending all of your time with other assistants, as you won't be able to integrate into your community and life in Mexico. On the other hand, don't feel that you must cut yourself off from them – assistants can provide a very good support network for each other, as you understand each other's experiences. While the British Council only allocates around 20 ELAs to Mexico each year, you may find there are French, Americans and Canadians from similar programmes in your area. You may wish to ask your employer if they have contact details.

As a golden rule, **try to say yes to every social opportunity presented to you** that does not compromise your personal safety. Accept invitations to places and activities even if they do not sound interesting as you might meet other people there who do share your interests.

## **26. Travelling around Mexico**

Ask your teaching centre to provide you with a credencial de Estudiante/ Profesor, with which you will be able to claim discounts on flights/bus travel and entrance fees.

Please remember that we only pass on information. It is up to you to carefully research and compare each company before booking travel and take into consideration the safety tips the British Embassy will give you and notify **British Council Mexico and your tutor about your traveling plans at all times.**

All large cities in Mexico have passenger airports. The country's largest airline is Aeroméxico. Interjet and Volaris are becoming more popular but are more expensive. It is up to you to carefully research and compare each airline before booking your flights but remember that flights are usually much more expensive than the bus.

Most cities and towns have a central bus terminal and intercity buses are frequent and go nearly everywhere. Bus fares vary depending on company and season so please make sure to check thoroughly before buying tickets. More expensive and comfortable companies include ADO, Primera Plus and ETN and they each have websites.

If you intend to rent a car in Mexico please keep in mind that you must have valid driver's licence (your home license is OK). It might be worth checking locally which renting agencies are recommended. If you wish to rent a car you must be at least 21 years old (sometimes 25) and must have a valid driver's licence plus a credit card and a passport. Please make also sure that you are adequately insured.

For all travel advice in Mexico please see:

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/north-central-america/mexico1?ta=safetySecurity&pg=2>

There is a lot of very useful information including road travel safety and advice. Ensure that you read this thoroughly and that you check it regularly.

If you intend to travel around Mexico or other Latin American countries, remember to take photocopies of important documents (e.g. plane ticket, passport, etc) and keep them separate from the original. Again, scans of all documents sent to yourself via email are recommended.

Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey are cities with an underground system (metro) but taking the bus is a much better way of getting to know the area to which you have been appointed. Past assistants have found <http://www.ticketbus.com.mx> and [www.ado.com.mx](http://www.ado.com.mx) useful for finding out bus and coach times and booking tickets. City buses stop only at specific bus stops (*paradas*) that may or may not be marked. Please check this with your tutor.

It is recommended that you keep all your valuables in a backpack or bag under your constant supervision. We strongly advise you not to leave your valuables in the luggage that you will put in the baggage compartment.

An International Students Card (ISIC) might also be helpful to get, for example, discounts on public transport and admissions to museums. Information can be found on [www.isiccard.com](http://www.isiccard.com)

**If you are planning to travel to another country don't forget to bring your residence card with you.**

## **27. Security in Mexico**

Consider this advice and remember to avoid insecure situations and stay alert.

Being aware of potential dangers and taking precautions not to stand out will make a considerable difference to your personal security. You should be aware that looking like you are not in a familiar environment or have something worth stealing may mark you out as a victim of crime.

You should try to be inconspicuous and look as if you know where you are. Leave expensive watches and flashy jewellery at home. You should avoid carrying large quantities of cash and valuable objects (cameras, etc), but if you must carry them then keep them concealed. Do not carry your passport with you, but you should carry photocopies of the main pages (including number, identification and visa, if any) **always** as a means of identification if stopped by the police.

The drugs war is a serious issue in Mexico, with armed cartels possibly matching the Mexican army in size. It would be impossible to overstate how serious the consequences of getting involved in drugs could be. Drug-taking and drug related crime is a serious offence in Latin America. If convicted, you could be fined or even receive a prison sentence. The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office will not be able to get you out of prison or detention, and you will not receive special treatment because you are British. The FCO also cannot prevent the local authorities from deporting you upon release. Furthermore, you will

be dismissed with immediate effect from the Language Assistants programme, without a university report and without a reference.

In many Mexican regions, drinking alcoholic drinks outside, such as in the street, a park etc. is not allowed, and if caught you may face imprisonment.

You should always ask for and balance this with local advice. You must check this website frequently to get the most up-to-date advice.

## **28. Miscellaneous**

Co-operating partners abroad have requested that the attention of British visitors be drawn to the severe penalties imposed for drug offences and for taking part in unlawful political demonstrations, which may result in heavy fines and prison sentences. You are therefore strongly advised not to become involved in these activities.

Married language assistants should note that the allowance is intended to provide for one person only. However, if an assistant's spouse remains in the UK and is unemployed, he/she may be barred from income support or be required to refund whatever was received as such since the start of the assistantship. Enquiries should be made well in advance in order to prevent financial difficulties from arising during a married assistant's period of appointment.

Please note the British Council is not the employer of UK assistants abroad and should not be given as a referee in future job applications. In general, the head of the school would be the most appropriate referee.

*¡Buen viaje! We hope you enjoy your assistantship in Mexico.*