

In order to get the most from your trip, please ensure that you have read and understood all of the information provided, and do not hesitate to contact GVI with any questions. Note that information is regularly updated and reviewed by staff in the field and may be changed without notice. If you would like an updated copy of the information please contact GVI at any time.



Version 15.01

## Mexico Divemaster Internship - Program 134



### Arrival

Please note that arrival logistics may be altered at short notice – check for updates regularly to ensure you are aware of any late changes.

#### Where do I need to be?

Hotel Colorado in Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, Mexico.

#### When do I need to get there?

10:00 am on the expedition start date.

#### How do I get there?

Most volunteers arrange international flights to arrive at Cancun International Airport the day before expedition starts. You can either make your own way to Playa del Carmen using the ADO bus service, or you can request a GVI staff member to meet you at the airport 6-10pm, and can help you get to your accommodation.

The ADO buses run regularly and cost about US\$14. The bus will take you to the Playa del Carmen bus depot on 5th Avenue, and then you can get an onward taxi to your accommodation costing about US\$2. You need to confirm your arrival plans as soon as possible.



### Pre-Program Accommodation

Those arriving before the program start date will be responsible for arranging their own accommodation at their own cost. The following are convenient options that participants and staff have used in the past:

#### Hotel Colorado US\$30-50

Calle 4 entre Av. 20 y 25  
Centro Playa del Carmen, Q. Roo  
+[52] 9848730381  
contacto@coloradoplaya.com

#### Hostal Happy Gecko US\$20-50

Av 10 entre calle 4 y 6  
+[52] 984 147 0692  
happygeckohostel@gmail.com

#### Playa del Carmen Hotel H&A US\$50-60

Av. 20 entre calle 2 y 4  
+[52] 984 873 3177  
reservas@playa-del-carmen-hotel.de

(Say you're with GVI to get a special rate)



### Departure

At the end of the expedition it will be your responsibility to get to Cancun Airport. We will transfer you back to Playa del Carmen town centre by approximately 3pm. We recommend you do not book a flight out of Cancun until at least 6 pm, though you may want to leave time to explore a little more.

Please note that neither GVI nor our partners in the field can be held responsible for missed travel connections. You may want to keep plans flexible or allow a day or two after the programme end date before arranging onward travel.



### Visa Requirements

It is your responsibility to ensure you have the correct visa for your trip.

Field staff advise that you enter the country using a **tourist visa**.

For most nationalities this doesn't need to be arranged in advance. Check with the immigration authorities of the countries you intend to visit, or see [www.inm.gob.mx](http://www.inm.gob.mx).



### Communications

This program is run by GVI staff in Mexico. Our professional and experienced team will be your primary point of contact when in the field, and will do our best to help resolve issues you encounter and answer your questions.

#### Primary Contact:

Name: County Director  
Tel: +[521] 984 1164 208  
Local Tel: (044/045) 984 1164 208  
Email: [mexico@gviworld.com](mailto:mexico@gviworld.com)

#### Alternative Contact:

Name: Programme Coordinator  
Tel: +[521] 984 8762 067  
Local Tel: (044/045) 984 8762 067  
Email: [playaoffice@gviworld.com](mailto:playaoffice@gviworld.com)

#### GVI 24-hr Emergency Contact:

Tel: +44 208 0903080



Mailing address:  
(Post to participants/field staff)

Attn: Cynthia Arochi Z. FAO your name  
Apartado Postal 16 Centro  
Playa del Carmen, Solidaridad, C.P. 77710  
MEXICO



Physical address:  
(Delivery of larger items by courier, e.g. lost luggage)

Attn: Cynthia Arochi Z. FAO your name  
Edificio Bautista, Avenida 40 esquina con calle 3 sur, segundo piso, oficina 1 (edificio rojo con gris de 3 pisos) Centro, 77710, Playa del Carmen Quintana Roo, Mexico

If your bags go missing in transit, **don't panic!** This does occasionally happen, and you are usually reunited with your belongings within a few days. Consult airline representatives in the baggage claim area. You may be given a file/reference number; it is wise to also ask for a contact telephone number for follow-up.

If you will be sending or receiving post please check the additional information section on page 3.



### Keeping In Touch

You will have limited access to long-distance communications whilst on the programme. Typically you go out on weekends to Tulum / Playa del Carmen where you can use internet cafes. Please advise loved ones accordingly that they may not hear from you on a weekly basis.

Mobile/cell phone reception is limited on base. Reception is more reliable in the town of Tulum.



### Living Conditions

Facilities will be more basic than you are accustomed to – please travel with an open mind and a willingness to adapt to local conditions.

Accommodation is in shared (mixed sex) huts with shared rustic bathroom facilities. There is bottled water available for cooking and drinking only. Collected rainwater is used for showering and bucket flush toilet facilities. Bottled water is used for cooking and drinking water. Participants share base duties including cooking, cleaning and other chores.



### Food

Volunteers take it in turns to prepare meals for the group. Food is a very basic, mostly vegetarian diet, with meat available about once a week. Breakfast could be porridge, fruit or cereal, lunch is beans, vegetables, pasta and sauce, etc. and a typical evening meal may include lentils, pasta, beans, rice and vegetables.



### Electricity

Please ensure that you have the correct adaptors for personal electrical items.

Supply: 110V 60Hz  
Source: Solar energy & minimal generator support (on occasion charging for personal items is allowed - power permitting)

Sockets: US style (with earth pin)  
US style (no earth pin)



### Laundry

You can wash your clothes on base (hand washing) or take them to Tulum on your day off. Cost is around US\$1.50 per kilo with a minimum charge of around US\$3.75.

### UK & Europe

[info@gvi.co.uk](mailto:info@gvi.co.uk)

### North America

[info@gviusa.com](mailto:info@gviusa.com)

### Australasia

[info@gviaustralia.com](mailto:info@gviaustralia.com)

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## Getting Around

You will be based 45 kilometers (30 miles), over an hour away from Tulum within the Sian Ka'an Biosphere.

Travelling outside of base is reliant on taxi's, minimum US\$40 one way per taxi. Larger taxi's are cheaper depending on number of people going out. Public transport is easy and relatively cheap, travelling regularly between major towns.



## Exploring Further

In your down time you will be free to travel in the local area and will have two free days per week. In this time you could do daytrips such as visiting Tulum or Coba Mayan ruins, do some cenote diving, visit Playa del Carmen, etc.

Before and after your programme you could go to Merida, Chichen Itza, Chiapas or Central America - the possibilities are endless!



## Security

For information about security issues in the country you are travelling to please see the following resources:

UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office:  
[www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)

US Government State Department:  
[www.state.gov/travel](http://www.state.gov/travel)

Information for Canadians Abroad:  
[www.voyage.gc.ca](http://www.voyage.gc.ca)

Australian Government Travel Advice:  
[www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au)

New Zealand Government Travel Advice:  
[www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz)

Whenever travelling you should be aware of the risk of opportunist crime and take common sense precautions to minimise the chance of becoming a victim. The vast majority of visits to Mexico are trouble-free, but if you have any specific questions about your safety and security on the programme please contact GVI.



## Finance

Local currency: Mexican Peso

Participants typically spend approximately US\$70-100 per week for phone cards, internet, bottled water, buses, food, drinks, etc. and you may want to bring additional funds to allow for extra activities and travel. For those who want to sample more of the area and Central America before or after the program, we suggest an approximate figure of US\$40-50 per day. Accommodation costs vary, but throughout the Yucatan you can generally expect to pay around US\$15 for a hostel room or to share a basic hotel room.

We recommend that you travel with cash (pesos, US\$ are widely accepted) in bigger towns as your main source of funds, although having a credit/debit card as a backup is wise. The nearest ATM to base is in Tulum. In major towns (Playa del Carmen, Cancun, Merida, Mexico City) ATMs points are widely available. However, be aware that if you travel around small towns in the Yucatan Peninsula ATM points are few and far between!

When budgeting, you might want to know that there are some snacks and drinks for sale at the base.



## Shopping

You can find almost all sorts of items (food, toiletries) in Tulum. Dive equipment and more specialized items are better to be found in Playa del Carmen (90km/60mi) or Cancun (150km/100mi).



## Background Check

As a service to our partners in the field, and to protect the communities we work, with we require background checks for all participants who will be working unaccompanied with children or vulnerable adults at any point during their placement.

### United Kingdom

Criminal Records Bureau Check (CRB)

### Australia

Working With Children Check (WWC)

### Rest of World

Police Background Check (consult local)

**This program does not require a background check.** Further information on how to arrange a background check will be sent to you separately where relevant.



## Health & Safety

A change of environment, climate, food and lifestyle often results in minor, and occasionally more serious, illness. Please inform staff if you feel unwell at any time.

Please note that GVI cannot provide specific medical advice. Please consult your primary care provider (doctor, GP, etc.) or visit a travel clinic for further information

Please be forthcoming about any health issues **before** you begin the expedition as failure to do so may have serious consequences for you, the staff and other participants, including your removal from the expedition.

If you answer yes to any of the PADI Medical questions it is **essential** that you have a consultation with your doctor and your doctor must sign the PADI & GVI medical forms confirming you are fit to dive. It is also recommended that you take a credit card to ensure you can get immediate treatment in the event of a medical emergency (if suitable insurance is held, you will be reimbursed by your insurance company).



## Pre Departure Training

Staff in the field will be training you in diving and / or science skills required for the program activities. It will really help your progression if you study before you get here - it makes such a difference.

You will be allocated either fish or coral to study 8 weeks before the expedition begins. Use our really helpful online training resources or you can purchase the following ID books (there are plenty of shared resources on base):

- P Humann Reef Coral ID - Florida, Caribbean and Bahamas. (New World Press)
- P Humann. Reef Fish ID - Florida, Caribbean and Bahamas. (NWP)

### Access the GVI Mexico marine online training tool:

<http://www.gvidiving.com/HTML/INDEX.html>

Other online resources:

[www.pbcrrt.org](http://www.pbcrrt.org)

[www.fishid.com/learnctr](http://www.fishid.com/learnctr)

<http://coralpedia.bio.warwick.ac.uk>

**UK & Europe**  
[info@gvi.co.uk](mailto:info@gvi.co.uk)

**North America**  
[info@gviusa.com](mailto:info@gviusa.com)

**Australasia**  
[info@gviaustralia.com](mailto:info@gviaustralia.com)

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### Additional Information

**Physical fitness:** It would be a good idea to build up your physical fitness in the preceding weeks to the expedition. A program that includes a certain amount of aerobic exercise is recommended to achieve an appropriate level of fitness. The work that you will be doing is often physically demanding, and ranges from carrying dive tanks to beach cleans to building projects and all manner of other physical activities.

**Diving Requirements:** You should receive a PADI Medical Statement from GVI – you can also download a copy from the PADI website (<https://www.padi.com/english/common/courses/forms/pdf/10063-ver2-0.pdf>). You **must** answer all the questions regarding your medical history with YES or NO and have it **signed and stamped by a doctor this is mandatory otherwise you can not start your Divemaster training**; this should be current (i.e. within 6 months of starting your Divemaster course). If you go to a non diving doctor you should take the guidelines as well as the form, to ensure he/she understands what he/she is signing off on. GVI requires that you return to us the original signed medical statement certifying that you are physically and emotionally fit to scuba dive (**this must be current, i.e. within 6 months of departure and updated if there are any changes to your status**).

Please make sure you provide full details on the relevant forms contained within this pack. These should be completed and returned, with your PADI Medical Statement at least 12 weeks before you travel. It is essential that we have the most comprehensive information possible on your medical history / conditions to pass onto medical specialists in the unlikely event of an emergency. If you have any concerns about your diving fitness, or if your doctor needs more information on diving medicine please refer to the following websites. Please take particular note of this if you have any specific medical conditions such as asthma.

1. Divers Alert Network (DAN - [www.diversalertnetwork.org/join/index.asp?RC=1842280](http://www.diversalertnetwork.org/join/index.asp?RC=1842280)) is a highly respected industry body. The site features over a hundred articles and papers on medical issues facing divers.
2. The Diving Disease Research Centre ([www.ddrc.org](http://www.ddrc.org)) has some good articles on diving medical issues and contact details for practitioners at the Centre.

**Please also bring 2 photos, passport size, for your Divemaster application.**

### Flying via the United States

Previous volunteers flying through the United States have experienced problems with return flights of longer than 90 days - some airlines treat Mexico as a USA state. If travelling through the US, please check with US immigration authorities and your airline to ensure you have completed any necessary documentation required.

### Learning Spanish in Mexico

Although not essential on the expedition base, some knowledge of the Spanish language is useful when travelling around the region. If you are interested in spending a week or two in Mexico learning Spanish before your expedition, please contact your Country Expert for information about courses nearby.

### General additional information

Most days you will be up with the sun, around 6am, to help prepare base for the day. Everyone helps to keep the base running smoothly by filling tanks, manning the radio and taking it in turns to clean, cook, tidy the grounds, prepare the boats, and relax in the hammocks!

### Sending or receiving post

Please note that the postal service is not that reliable in Mexico, so normal delivered parcels can take over 2 months to be delivered. If using a courier service like FEDEX they will not deliver to a post box so please use the physical address. Also some items might get hold in customs and you will have to pay taxes in order to be delivered e.g. dive equipment, electronics, food, medications, old clothes, etc.

**UK & Europe**  
[info@gvi.co.uk](mailto:info@gvi.co.uk)

**North America**  
[info@gviusa.com](mailto:info@gviusa.com)

**Australasia**  
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### Cancun airport

There are three terminals in Cancun airport, many taxi drivers and tour operators will try to get you to go with them, some of them can charge a lot so ask around for prices. The cheapest option is to take the ADO bus which runs every hour from 8am to 10pm (the schedule varies depending on the season [www.ado.com.mx](http://www.ado.com.mx)).

### Terminal 3-mostly all international arrivals

#### GVI pick up

Exit the arrival terminal and when you are outside turn left. You have to pass through the security barrier as GVI staff are not permitted in the tour operators pick up area. A GVI staff member in a GVI shirt and with a GVI sign board will be waiting for you. If there are several people requiring pickups and arriving at different times you may have to wait with the GVI staff member, but there is a restaurant called Berry Hill where you will be able to get refreshments.

#### Pubic transport to Playa del Carmen

Exit the arrival terminal and continue straight ahead to the ADO bus stop (ignore the taxi drivers and tour operators). You can purchase a ticket here.



### Terminal 1 & 2, mainly national and charters flights-

If you arrive to terminal 1 or 2, there are two exits and many options of transportation. If you have arranged staff from GVI to pick you up please make your way to terminal 3 to meet GVI staff at the indicated meeting point above; there is an inter-terminal shuttle available running every 20 minutes.



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Please note that this kit list is intended to help you pack for your trip but should not be taken as a comprehensive or compulsory list of items to take. Some people are comfortable travelling lighter than others, and there may be some items which you feel you can survive without. If travelling alone you should ensure you can carry all your belongings for a short distance without assistance.

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## Essential Equipment

These are items which staff in the field have deemed as required, or which previous volunteers all agree are must-haves. Check the boxes as you pack!

- 1 Large Rucksack (Backpack):** (65+ litres / 4,000+ cubic inches) for use throughout the expedition (preferable to a suitcase or hold- all
- 1 Daypack (Backpack):** (25+ litres / 1,500+ cubic inches)
- Mask and Snorkel** A tempered glass mask is recommended. For wearers of glasses / contact lenses: Glasses and hard contact lenses cannot be worn beneath a mask, so we would recommend to use soft or disposable contact lenses (although be aware that you have to shut your eyes when mask clearing) or a prescription mask. Bring spare mask clips and strap.
- Blank dive slate and pencil** to write underwater
- Fins** There are two choices, moulded slip on fins or strap fins. It depends on personal choice. They need to be comfortable as you will dive every day and blisters can be very painful. Moulded fins do not require wet suit boots and are also less expensive. If you decide to bring strap fins, then please bring spare clips and straps. Getting to the boats means walking through seagrass and stones, as such some volunteers prefer to wear boots.
- Wetsuit** The water temperature is normally 24-30°C and GVI recommend a full length wetsuit (3mm body, 2mm arms and legs). However if you feel the cold you may prefer a 5mm suit for the winter months and if you do not feel the cold you may prefer a shorty or no wetsuit for the summer months.
- Waterproof watch** A watch or other timing device for diving is **essential** to keep track of your bottom time. GVI does not have a collection of underwater timing devices. Members will not be able to dive without one and buying timing devices in Mexico can be pricey.
- Inflatable Surface Marker Buoy with spool reel** (at least 30 meter long line). A **DSMB** (Deflated Surface Marker Buoy) is an important piece of dive safety equipment. It is important that you have it with you on every dive. Please don't bring the permanent ones, bring the ones which will blow up during the safety stop. Ask at a dive shop or buy it in Playa or Cancun. See the example image at the end of this manual.
- Shorts** board shorts or baggies are great, quick drying items. Also an alternative for diving in during the summer months.
- Swimwear** Ideally two or three costumes/pairs of trunks, one of which should be suitable for wearing beneath a wetsuit. You will be spending most of your time in your swimwear, so spares are highly recommended! Rash vests (rashies) are also very useful and in summer days you can use them instead of wet suits.
- T-shirts** an essential! Quick drying, lightweight materials for shirts or t-shirts. Avoid holes to prevent insect visitors.
- Sandals (flip-flops / thongs)** are strongly recommended.
- Water proof jacket** as in all tropical countries, storms and sudden showers occur often.
- Towel** an old and worn towel will dry more quickly, or you can buy a quick-drying travel towel. A sarong is definitely a useful extra.
- Sunglasses** Good quality sunglasses are essential - make sure they offer 100% UV protection. Cheap glasses can cause more damage than good
- Personal first aid kit**
- Sun hat** the sun is very strong. A hat is essential. For winter months a beanie could be useful
- Insect repellent** Unfortunately every paradise has its downside. The sandflies, mosquitoes, and horse flies can be a pain in Mexico. Baby oil also helps to reduce bites. Insect repellents are available locally but it is best to make sure you have a decent supply with you as you won't be able to live without it! You should get tropical strength mosi repellent.
- Certification cards** Copies of any certification/qualifications that may be relevant e.g. scuba diving, boat driving, driving licence, first aid, radio operator, vaccinations etc. Any valid student cards/internationally recognized discount I.D. cards
- Photocopies** It is **ESSENTIAL** to photocopy all important documents before leaving home, such as passports, air tickets, insurance certificate, medical forms, receipts for traveler's cheques and serial numbers if you bring them.
- Any prescribed medication** you need during your entire trip. Make sure it bears your name, description of reason and dosage
- Sun cream** high factor, at least SPF25/30+ or 45+ if you are very pale skinned. Please ensure it is water resistant and biodegradable preferably
- Torch/Flashlight** (you will use this A LOT!) A head torch is recommended, ones with LED bulbs tend to be a lot more efficient with batteries. Bringing a spare as backup is also recommended. Red filter is needed if you come between May & October due to turtle nesting season.
- Mosquito net** bring a fine mosquito net to fit a 3ft wide bed. A single bunk bed and **box net** styles are better than wedge shaped ones. A net treated with DEET will be more effective and a 'Kathmandu' net will also help to keep out sand flies.
- Bedding** bed sheets (1 fitted and 1 loose top shet) and pillow case. In general you will find that bed sheets are enough however temperatures can drop at night in winter so either bring a sleeping bag or you can buy a nice Mexican blanket locally for about \$5.
- Stationery** you will need a notebook and pen for lectures and self studying
- Water bottle** metal water bottles are recommended as they are environmentally friendly and last longer.
- Warm clothing** a fleece or warm jumper or sweater is ideal. From November to March the temperature drops at night.
- Long-sleeved clothing** as in all tropical countries, insects can be a nuisance in Mexico, especially in the evening. Long sleeved shirts and trousers/pants offer the best form of protection. Be aware that the colour blue may attract mosquitoes.
- Diving computer** **LVKLKOUHERPPPHGHGKRRAHULIRGRRWKDHRHRPWWKDHDWLPLGHLFHDGDIRUPRIWKHBWDEOHRUHBPOI**  
**WRSODRUGLHVTKRROGSUHTIHUWRVHDERPSWHURFUDUHWWKHPGULRURUNLSODFHPHWWDWKDOTSULFHSUIGLIGD**
- Pocket Mask** basic rescue item to have when diving. DAN make the most common ones.
- Dive slate** you will need this when you get to your dive placement.
- Underwater compass** a wrist compass is a basic Divemaster tool, and **WKEH** dive centre require all their interns to have their own
- Diving knife and/or line cutter **VLEHRXOOEHZUNLBDJULBSDUNWKHGLYDQIFHDQWEHORBUWKDDKHLVLEO&LQ**  
**WKHEODGHDGKLOW**

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### Highly Recommended Equipment

- Camera** a good dry box or bag filled with lots of silica gel will help to prevent humidity damaging your equipment.
- Money belt/bum bag/fanny pack**
- Alarm clock**

### Optional Equipment

- Dry bags** offer excellent waterproofing for clothing and kit.
- Vitamin tablets** We will always try to ensure that fresh fruit and vegetables form a part of the regular meals supplied, however, you may also wish to bring a supply of vitamin supplements with you. Other Team Members have suggested natural antiviral / antibacterial products, e.g. oil of oregano, garlic oil, emergency vitamin C.
- Sewing kit**
- iPod / Mp3 Player / World Service Radio** with headphones for personal use or travel speakers
- Travel games / Cards**
- Books** some novels have been left at camp by others.
- Snacks / sweets** luxuries from home that you may miss - English teabags, chocolate, Marmite, etc.
- Herbs & Spices** there is a selection on base, but if you have any preferences you're welcome to bring more!
- Favourite DVDs** for movie nights
- Electrical adaptor** to convert both socket style and voltage if necessary (US sockets).
- Bungee cord** – very useful for washing lines, hanging things in your room etc.
- Work gloves** a pair of cheap suede or leather garden work gloves for maintenance work around the base camp, beach cleans, community projects, etc.
- Pen knife / Leatherman**
- Batteries and spare bulbs** can be purchased in Playa del Carmen
- Computer** can be useful if you have brought a camera and would like to update photos or when you are off base for the weekend using the internet in a coffee shop or hotel.

Many of these items can be purchased in Mexico. Playa del Carmen is a fast developing city, with most facilities and shops that you can think of. However, you'll need time to do any shopping you require, so please schedule this into your itinerary. You may prefer to have everything sorted before you depart for Mexico.

### Hints on Buying Kit

The climate is hot and humid and shorts and T-shirts are essential. You won't need very many clothes as you will spend most of the time in your swimwear and sarongs, but do pack a few items for those evenings out! Sandals or flip flops/thongs are also strongly recommended. Even outside the rainy season, short bursts of rain are not uncommon and so some form of lightweight waterproof clothing is also recommended. It can also get cold in the evenings in the winter months so a fleece or jumper is recommended. As in all tropical countries, insects can be a nuisance in Mexico, especially in the evening. Long sleeved shirts and trousers offer the best form of protection. We also recommend bringing either trainers or walking boots to help cover your feet in the evenings to protect them from the mosquitoes and sand fly bites. Walking boots are recommended if you want to do any off road walking or trekking.

Before setting off in search of your essential kit, compile a list of everything that you need. When buying your kit you may find that by mentioning to the store assistants (or ideally the manager) that you are joining a volunteer project enables you to negotiate a discount on your purchases. Often stores are authorised to offer a discount (typically 10-15%) at their discretion, so it is always worth mentioning that the kit is required in aid of a good cause.

Shop around for kit. If you are never going to use items again then it is not worth going for the top brands! Cheap lightweight clothing is sometimes just as good if not better. Remember that clothes will get damaged and very dirty!

### Example of the Inflatable Surface Marker Buoy or Deployable surface marker buoy (DSMB) with 30 meter spool reel



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