

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.



Mexico Community - Programs 353, 357

Version 14.01



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. If requested, GVI staff will be at the airport from 6pm onwards, and can help you get to your accommodation (see below).

If you are arriving before the scheduled meeting time you may want to arrange your own transport to Playa del Carmen. ADO Buses to Playa del Carmen are regular and cost roughly US\$12 (an onward taxi will be about US\$2). Please ensure field staff are made aware of your arrival plans.



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\$30-40

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

Hostal Happy Gecko US\$9

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 your placement you will be transferred back to Cancun International Airport, unless you are travelling on afterwards.

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.



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: Country director
Tel: +[521] 984 1164 208
Local Tel: (044/045) 984 1164 208
Email: mexico@gviworld.com

Alternative Contact:

Name: Programme coordinator
Tel: +[521] 984 8762 067
Local Tel: (044/045) 984 8762 067
Email: 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
Avenida 40 entre calle 8 y 10. dpto.
2A (edificio blanco y cafe)
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.



Keeping In Touch

You will have good access to long-distance communications whilst on the programme. Participants typically buy a SIM card for their cell phones or buy a cheap cell phone once here. Alternatively there are many internet cafes to keep in touch, with access daily. International calls cost between \$0.50 to \$1 per minute.



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 a shared (mixed sex) room with shared bathrooms in a house, flat or studio. There is running water and the showers are generally warm to hot. Bottled water is available for drinking.



Food

All meals are cooked by volunteers in the accommodation facilities. Breakfast could be cereal, fresh fruit, eggs, beans or pancakes; lunch and evening meals are generally meats, vegetables, rice and pastas. Vegetarians are catered for, though with less variety than in your home country.



Electricity

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

Supply: 110V 60Hz
Source: National Grid
Sockets: US style (with earth pin)
US style (no earth)



Laundry

There are many laundry facilities in Playa del Carmen, which charge by weight and will wash and dry for you, to be picked up a few hours later.

UK & Europe

info@gvi.co.uk

North America

info@gviusa.com

Australasia

info@gviaustralia.com

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Mexico Community - Programs 353, 357

Version 14.01



Getting Around

You will be based in Playa del Carmen. The accommodation is outside downtown but still close to the central area, about 15 minutes by public transportation. You will be working in the toy libraries in Playa del Carmen. Travelling around the local area is easy and is best done using public buses with cheap and reliable buses between all 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 Tulum or Cancun, 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

US Government State Department:
www.state.gov/travel

Information for Canadians Abroad:
www.voyage.gc.ca

Australian Government Travel Advice:
www.smartraveller.gov.au

New Zealand Government Travel Advice:
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\$30-60 per week for socializing, exploring, etc, though this is entirely up to the individual. As all food is provided on base, your extra costs can be minimal.

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) as your main source of funds, although having a credit/debit card as a backup is wise. There are plenty of ATMs in Playa del Carmen and in any major town. However, be aware that if you travel around small towns in the Yucatan Peninsula ATM points are few and far between!



Shopping

Playa del Carmen has many shops and amenities, including clothes, electrical items, photo shops, spas and pharmacies.



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 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.

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).

The nearest emergency medical facilities are located in Playa del Carmen. We have emergency procedures in place and a 24 hour doctor available. GVI staff are first aid trained. You will be briefed on Health and Safety on arrival in the orientation meeting.



Pre Departure Training

Staff in the field will provide training on the skills required, but you may benefit from learning more about local history, culture and customs before you travel.

You will be sent a vocabulary list of words in Spanish you will come across. It is vital that you learn this list.

You will also be sent a GVI Training Manual. Please do read through this before arrival.

UK & Europe
info@gvi.co.uk

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Additional Information

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.

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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.



Mexico Community - Programs 353, 357

Version 14.01



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) or a suitcase/holdall.
- 1 Daypack (Backpack):** (25+ litres / 1,500+ cubic inches)
- Waterproof liners** for important and non-waterproof items.
- 1 pair of walking boots / trainers / sneakers (closed shoes are a requirement for the program)**
- 1 pair of sandals (flip-flops / thongs)**
- 1 set of bed sheets & pillow case**
- 2-3 pairs of light-weight trousers or pants (there is a dress code in the toy libraries, you need to wear trousers or capri pants, they need to be of neutral colours, & can't have crazy patterns or flowers, they need to be plain.**
- 2 working shirts** bring any quick drying old shirts or t-shirts. Avoid holes to prevent insect visitors (no tank tops are allowed in the toy library)
- Casual clothing t-shirts, jeans, shorts for walking around Playa del Carmen.**
- Light long-sleeved clothing**
- Waterproof jacket / Poncho**
- Swimming trunks / costume / bikini**
- Underwear**
- Towel**
- Sunglasses** make sure they offer 100% UV protection. Cheap glasses can cause more damage than good.
- Hat, wide-brimmed**
- Insect repellent** we recommend using a natural based product such as citronella and eucalyptus, as DEET-containing repellent is harmful and believed to be carcinogenic.
- Water bottles / Camelbak / Platypus water bladder**
- Toiletries**
- Hand sanitizer**
- Any prescribed medication you need during your trip.** Make sure it bears your name and 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
- Watch**
- Alarm clock**
- Money belt (bum bag / fanny pack)**
- Electrical adaptor**
- 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.
- Stationery you will need a notebook and pen for lectures and lesson planning.**

Highly Recommended Equipment

- Camera**

Optional Equipment

- Warm clothing** a fleece or warm jumper or sweater is ideal.
- Headscarf / shamrag / bandana / baseball cap**
- Vitamin tablets**
- Pen knife / Leatherman**
- Travel games / Cards**
- Books**
- CD players / MP3 player / World Service Radio**
- Umbrella** A small, sturdy, strong umbrella can be very useful for sun and rain. Allows for better ventilation than waterproof rain gear.

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.

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 or wellies are strongly 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.

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