U.S. State Department Information

All travelers to Mexico should review the Department of State’s Travel Warning for Mexico that provides detailed information about security issues affecting parts of the country. Millions of U.S. citizens visit Mexico safely each year. However, crime and violence, much of it fueled by transnational criminal activity, affect many parts of the country, including both urban and rural areas. Visitors should remain alert and be aware of their surroundings at all times, particularly when visiting the border region. In its efforts to combat violence, the Government of Mexico has deployed federal police and military troops to various parts of the country. Government checkpoints, often staffed by military personnel, have been posted in many parts of the country, especially, but not exclusively, in the border area. U.S. citizens are advised to cooperate with personnel at government checkpoints when traveling on Mexican highways.

If traveling outside of Mexico, it is also advisable to review the Department of State’s travel warnings for your destination and neighboring countries.

US State Department Mexico Travel Warning:
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_5815.html

Stay up to date:

• U.S. State Department website which contains the current travel warnings and travel alerts, as well as the worldwide caution. http://travel.state.gov/
• Follow the U.S. State Department on Twitter and Facebook:
  o https://twitter.com/travelgov
  o https://www.facebook.com/travelgov
• Download the free Smart Travel iPhone App to have information at your fingertips.
• Call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free within the U.S. and Canada, or by calling a regular toll line, 1-202-501-4444, from other countries.
• Take time before you travel to improve your personal security. Here are some useful tips for traveling safely abroad provided by the U.S. State Department.

Contact Information

On-Site Program Information

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Health & Safety

Overall, Queretaro is a safe, mid-size town. Like cities all over the world, however, there are some things to look out for and to avoid in protecting yourself. The most common problems are stealing and price manipulation. ITESM has security and safety recommendations on their website: [http://www.study-in-mexico.com/safety-and-security](http://www.study-in-mexico.com/safety-and-security)
Queretaro
Queretaro is located in the central region of the country, about 125 miles north of Mexico City. Queretaro is the capital city of Queretaro State, the state linking Mexico’s northern, central and southern regions. The city’s historic downtown area has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage site and the city is located near nine other World Cultural Heritage sites. Queretaro is known for its Colonial-era architecture. It is one of the only places in Mexico where the Spanish built a settlement which co-existed side by side with the indigenous population. Querétaro has one of the most dynamic economies amongst Mexican States.

The historic downtown offers the visitor over 460 years of history and tradition through its aqueduct, temples, mansions and palaces that make of this city one of the most beautiful colonial spots. Parallel to this historical environment is the fresh and fun Queretaro, offering attractive options of music to dance or listen, different sorts of live shows and a great variety of international and Mexican cuisine.

Upon arrival in Queretaro the staff at Tech de Monterrey will provide you with an orientation. Prior to arriving in Queretaro, it is important to do research on the city and on Mexico in general to learn about safety issues. IAP also advises you to read the safety sections in the IAP Study Abroad Handbook. Below are some important things to keep in mind when in Queretaro and traveling in Mexico:

- Be cautious of the belongings that you carry; especially in crowded areas, such as busses and in marketplaces where you may be vulnerable to pickpockets.
- When walking on sidewalks carry your belongings (purses, shopping bags, etc.) on the side of your body furthest from the street; this prevents your belongings from being snatched while someone drives by.
- Look both ways before crossing any street; pedestrians do not have the right of way and cars do not slow down in crosswalks.
- In the evenings, stay on well-lit streets and walk in pairs whenever possible.
- Avoid walking alone at night or with unknown people. Always use a taxi.
- When getting money, only use ATM’s located in banks; avoid using machines on crowded streets.
- Only carry the amount of money you need with you; leave credit cards, debit cards, additional cash, traveler’s checks, etc. at your home stay family’s house. Keep copies of card cancellation numbers at your host family’s house as well.
- Photocopy your passport and tourist card and carry these copies with you at all times for identification. Keep originals at your home in Queretaro.
- If you are mugged give the mugger your possessions; do not resist.

It is important for women to know that they may hear cat calls or inappropriate comments from men when they walk down the street. It can be frustrating and overwhelming. Ignore the comments and learn from the women of Queretaro; how do they handle such situations? On crowded public transportation or bars, women might find themselves in a situation where a Mexican man acts too friendly. You might want to object or move away as Mexican women would do in the same situation.

Health Tips
Do not drink or brush your teeth with water that is not purified. Ask if you are not sure, even at home. Keep your mouth closed in the shower. Do not be misled by well-meaning reassurances to the contrary.

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Do not eat food or drink beverages sold on the streets or use ice in drinks (unless made from purified water). In good restaurants it is usually okay. Be careful of raw fruits or vegetables that are not peeled (tomatoes, lettuce, pears, etc). They should also be washed in purified water or peeled before eating. These precautions will help you stay healthy during your stay in Mexico. Avoiding health problems will be worth this extra effort!

Used toilet paper and Kleenex are to be disposed of in wastebaskets, not in toilets. Pipes are very narrow and cannot handle paper products.

In Mexico, water is heated by small gas-burning water heaters. The water heaters are turned on just before showering, so there is not a constant supply of hot water like there is in the United States. If you want a warm shower, a “calentador” (heater) usually needs to be turned on. It usually takes 5-10 minutes to heat enough water for a warm shower. Water is in short supply and very expensive in Mexico. Keep this in mind, and keep your showers short!

**Transportation**

It is recommended that you do not walk alone at night, especially if you are female. Public transportation such as buses and taxis are inexpensive. Since most taxis are not equipped with meters, when taking a taxi, you will want to make sure to negotiate the price of the ride before you get in and begin the trip. It is also customary in Mexico and Latin America to sit in the back seat of the taxi. This is especially true if you are a female alone. The one exception is if the taxi is full, and it is best to ask permission of the driver first.

**Travel**

You are strongly encouraged not to travel to any areas designed as hazardous or unsafe by the U.S. State Department ([www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)). Make sure to check with the U.S. State Department, Embassy or Consulate regarding the safety of any areas that you are planning traveling to or through before you make any travel plans. It is advised that you leave a travel itinerary with someone in Mexico as well as a family member or friend in the United States in case someone needs to get hold of you, as well as for your own safety.

**Recommended Precautions**

Source: U.S. State Department

**Demonstrations**

Travelers should avoid political demonstrations and other activities that might be deemed political by the Mexican authorities. Even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and escalate into violence. Demonstrators in Mexico may block traffic on roads, including major arteries, or take control of toll booths on highways. U.S. citizens are urged to avoid areas of demonstrations, and to exercise caution if in the vicinity of any protests.

**Crime**

Crime in Mexico continues to occur at a high rate and can often be violent. Street crime, ranging from pick pocketing to armed robbery, is a serious problem in most major cities. While most victims of violence are Mexican citizens associated with criminal activity, the security situation poses serious risks for U.S. citizens as well. U.S. citizen victims of crime in Mexico are encouraged to report incidents to the nearest police headquarters and to the nearest U.S. consular office.
Personal Property
Travelers should always leave valuables and irreplaceable items in a safe place, or avoid bringing them at all. Avoid wearing obviously expensive jewelry or designer clothing, and carry only the cash or credit cards that will be needed on each outing. There have been significant numbers of incidents of pickpocketing, purse snatching, and hotel-room theft. Public transportation is a particularly popular place for pickpockets.

Passengers arriving at Mexican airports who need to obtain pesos should use the exchange counters or ATMs in the arrival/departure gate area, where access is restricted, rather than changing money after passing through Customs, where they can be observed by criminals.

Personal Safety
Visitors should be aware of their surroundings at all times, even when in areas generally considered safe. Women traveling alone are especially vulnerable and should exercise caution, particularly at night. Individuals who have been targeted were often walking alone in isolated locations. Be very cautious in general when using ATMs in Mexico. If you must use an ATM, it should be accessed only during the business day at large protected facilities (preferably inside commercial establishments, rather than at glass-enclosed, highly visible ATMs on streets). To prevent such theft, the Embassy recommends that travelers keep close track of their personal belongings when out and about and that they only carry what they need. Most restaurants and other businesses will bring the credit card machine to your table so that you can keep the card in your possession at all times. If travelers choose to use credit cards, they should regularly check their account status to ensure its integrity.

Buses and Public Transportation
Whenever possible, visitors should travel by bus only during daylight hours and only by first-class conveyance. Metro (subway) robberies are frequent in Mexico City, especially during crowded rush hours. If riding the metro or the city bus system, U.S. citizens should take extreme care with valuables and belongings.

Avoid taking any taxi not summoned by telephone or contacted in advance. When in need of a taxi, telephone a radio taxi or “sitio” (regulated taxi stand – pronounced “C-T-O”), and ask the dispatcher for the driver's name and the taxi's license plate number. Avoid “libre” taxis and the Volkswagen beetle taxis altogether. Although “libre” taxis are more convenient and less expensive, these are not as well regulated, may be unregistered, and are potentially more dangerous. Passengers arriving at any airport in Mexico should take only authorized airport taxis after pre-paying the fare at one of the special booths inside the airport.

Victims of Crime
If you or someone you know becomes the victim of a crime abroad, you should contact the local police and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. Do not rely on hotel/restaurant/tour company management to make the report for you.

The local equivalent to the “911” emergency line in Mexico is “066”. Although there may be English-speaking operators available, to avoid delay it is best to seek the assistance of a Spanish speaker to place the call.
Water and Food Safety
In many areas in Mexico, tap water is unsafe and should be avoided. Bottled water and beverages are safe, although, visitors should be aware that many restaurants and hotels serve tap water unless bottled water is specifically requested. Ice may also come from tap water and should be avoided. Visitors should exercise caution when buying food or beverages from street vendors. Eat only cooked food from street vendors. Once your stomach has gotten used to the food for a week or two, you might choose to be more adventurous. Do not be surprised if you are offered tripa, which is cow intestine and a local delicacy.

Additional information on safety issues can be found in the IAP Study Abroad Handbook.