

A guide to help
you prepare for
studying in
Guadalajara.

A project for Spanish 451
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I. Bienvenidos

On behalf of the Spanish Department and the previous students that have attended the exchange program between UL-Lafayette and UAG, I would like to say thank you for choosing this program and Welcome to the program.

II. UAG- La Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara

The Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara is located in Guadalajara, Mexico. It was founded in 1935 and is the oldest private university in Mexico. The university offers a full range of undergraduate, graduate and professional degree programs, along with a Spanish and culture program for international students. The university's current enrollment is about 17,000 students, 85% are Mexican and 15% are international students. UAG has an extensive library, modern facilities and a highly qualified faculty. UAG also has an internet lab, a bank, a travel agency, bookstore and post office located on campus for your convenience.

On your letter of acceptance you will be informed of the date of orientation. It is wise to be in attendance. You will receive more information and a guided tour of the campus at that time. You will also be informed of the date of placement testing. The university's web address is www.uag.mx

III. The program

You will take a placement exam to determine your level of Spanish proficiency. There is a written test and a brief oral interview. Don't panic! You will not be graded. This is only to determine which level you should be placed in.

The exchange program offers levels 1 thru 8. However, if you test into level 5 you are given the option of taking classes with Mexican students. Again, don't panic, it is only an option. Also, if you feel you were put in the wrong level (too high or low) you will be allowed to move down, if you feel the level is too advanced, or up a level, if you feel you should be at a higher level. To move up a level you have to take the final exam for the level you wish to test out of.

Classes meet Monday through Friday, 9am to 1pm. Your first class consists of grammar and the second class is conversation. Every four weeks you will take a final for the level you are in and progress accordingly through the levels. Each level also contains partial exams. You will need an 80% or higher to move on to the next level.

During each 4 week period there is a cultural excursion that is offered by the Spanish Cultural Program. Your teacher will tell you if attendance is required for his/her class. You will pay a small bus fee of about \$.40, which is not very much considering that with each excursion you get a guided tour.

IV. Credit and Grades

UL-Lafayette credit for courses taken at UAG is awarded as follows:

- Levels 1-2 = Spanish 101
- Level 3 = Spanish 201
- Level 4 = Spanish 203
- Level 5 = Spanish 358

Levels 6, 7 and 8 are variable content courses on Mexican literature and culture. Three units of 300 or 400 level credit will be awarded for each level. It is a good idea to keep all syllabi exams and papers to bring home as proof of content of the courses.

Credit is transferable to UL Lafayette. However, since it is a foreign university letter grades are not transferable to UL Lafayette.

V. Expenses

Tuition is paid at UAG in Guadalajara. The cost is \$500 for one month during the summer and \$1,400 per semester during the academic year. Round trip airfare can range from \$300-700 depending on the season. I suggest you shop around on the Internet for a good price on a ticket. You will purchase your school books at UAG. Generally they are not as expensive as our course books here, books for the levels where about \$8.00 a book. You will probably want to site see, shop and enjoy many of the activities you are used to doing here (clubbing, going to the movies, etc.), so you can figure on spending about \$100 per week while in Mexico. This is not a set figure and can vary in either direction, but you will want to travel and take advantage of many cultural opportunities while in Mexico. Room and board with a host family is about \$100 per week.

<u>Estimated cost for summer</u>		<u>Estimated cost for a regular semester</u>	
Tuition	\$500	Tuition	\$1,400
Airfare	\$500	Airfare	\$500
Housing	\$400	Housing	\$1,600
Spending	\$400	Spending	\$1,600
Total	\$1,800	Total	\$5,100

VI. Identification

Passport

It used to be that a passport was not required to travel to Mexico. However, since the September 11th attacks and increased national security you now need a passport to travel to Mexico. It is a good idea to have a passport because it saves time and is more convenient than pulling out a form of identification and a birth certificate. Also, if you have to do any banking a passport is generally required.

If you don't already have a passport you can obtain an application at a US post office. Allow 6-8 weeks for processing and delivery of your passport. The cost is around \$65.

Mexican Tourist Card

You are required to have a Mexican tourist card when traveling to Mexico. You can easily obtain one from a travel agency or on the plane trip over. However, this method of obtaining a tourist card only allows your card to be stamped for 90 days (3 months), which is fine if you are attending during the summer. However, a semester is usually 4 months long. If you are attending during a regular semester, to save yourself the trouble of having to renew your tourist card while in Mexico (trust me, it is a pretty long and bothersome process), it is recommended you go to the Mexican Consulate in Houston and obtain a tourist card stamped for 180 days (6 months). You will need to bring the letter of acceptance from UAG and proof of \$500 per month you are going to be in Mexico. Generally a bank statement in your name showing this amount of money or a personal credit card will do. The Mexican consulate needs to keep a copy for their records, only to assure you have sufficient funds to sustain yourself while staying in Mexico. It also ensures you will not work. Once you obtain your tourist card keep it with your passport, they both will be stamped when you enter the country. Once you are in Mexico it is a good idea to keep them together. The Mexican tourist card is turned in to Mexican authorities once you leave Mexico, so don't lose it.

Address and phone number for the Mexican Consulate in Houston:
10103 Fondren Road Suite 555
Houston, TX 77096
Tel: (713) 271-6800

Here are the web addresses for the Mexican consulate in New York and Houston:
<http://www.consulmexny.org/english.htm>
<http://www.sb.gob.mx/houston/documentation.htm>
Click on non-immigrant visa for students, to learn about the FM#3 visa.

VII. Health

Guadalajara is the second largest city in Mexico, so it has a lot of the modern conveniences we have here. The Mexican Consulate does not recommend any shots that would be needed before traveling to Mexico. However, you should probably make sure you are up to date on your tetanus shot at least within the last ten years.

Guadalajara is at a higher altitude than here in Louisiana; to be exact it is one mile above sea level. It may take your body up to 2 weeks to adjust to the higher altitude, so don't over exert yourself soon after you arrive. Sunscreen is recommended because you will burn more easily at a higher altitude and being closer to equator.

Diarrhea is common to most visitors. Major causes are bacterial agents found most commonly in food and less commonly in the water. However, it is recommended that you don't drink water from the tap unless there is a special filter. You will be able to find bottled water in almost every store (big or small) in Guadalajara.

If you choose to eat from street vendors use caution and check the stand for cleanliness. Eating out in a restaurant is no big deal. However, use caution when eating fresh vegetables; they should be treated with a disinfectant. Most good restaurants automatically do this but if you are unsure just ask. Since diarrhea is a common ailment you may want to take a long some Imodium AD, as a precautionary measure. If you have a bad case of diarrhea you wouldn't want to have to run to the pharmacy.

If you are currently taking any medications (ex. birth control pills, allergy medicine) you will want to have enough of a supply to last your stay in Mexico. Likewise if you have any special healthcare product that you can't live without (ex. specific shampoo, fragrance free lotion) you may want to make sure you have enough of a supply for your stay. However, Guadalajara has over 4 Wal-Marts and many neighborhood pharmacies, so you will be able to purchase many health care items while in Mexico. Their Wal-Marts are basically like our Wal-Marts, so don't worry.

You may be interested in purchasing an international insurance policy, which should cover any event during your stay in Mexico. If you don't obtain insurance here the Departamento de Intercambio Universitario can help you purchase insurance there. Insurance is your decision. I survived 4 months without it. The university also has an on campus medical office, which is free to students, which will be able to help you with minor ailments (ex. cold, cough).

VIII. Housing

There are no dorms or student residences on campus, so generally most students live with host families. When you filled out the application for UAG, you were probably asked personal questions, which were necessary to place you with an accommodating host family. Living with a host family will broaden your cultural and language experience in Mexico. Also, if you have no previous knowledge of the city or living abroad, it is the preferred way to go. The host family will provide you with a room and 3 meals a day. Some host mothers allow you to do laundry in the home, while others prefer you to use a laundrymat. However, if you are allowed to use the house facilities you should probably have your own detergent. The family will also be helpful in showing you around the city and the school.

IX. The City of Guadalajara

Guadalajara is the second largest city in Mexico and has an estimated population between 5-7 million people. There is enough to do in Guadalajara alone to keep you busy. There are several modern shopping malls, La Gran Plaza, Plaza Patria, Centro Magno, Plaza Mexico and Plaza del Sol, to name a few, which contain tons of shops, restaurants and movie theaters.

The historic center of Guadalajara, "*El Centro*", contains many *sitios de interés*, Palacio de Gobierno, Plaza de los Mariachis, San Juan de Dios (a huge market), Hospicio Cabañas (cultural center with murals by José Clemente Orozco), several art museums and la Catedral de Guadalajara, just to name a few. *El Centro* alone can provide you with enough entertainment while in Guadalajara. I spent 4 months in Guadalajara and visited

El Centro on the average of once a week and have not seen all the sites of interest that are there.

The city of Guadalajara is said to have an eternal spring. The weather is generally cool (not cold) in the morning and warms up by mid day. The average temperature year round is in the 70s. The rainy season is from May to September. Outside of these months rain is usually rare. During the rainy season showers generally occur every day and generally happen in the afternoon or evening. If you would like more information about the city of Guadalajara just type the name in your computer's search engine and you will find enough sites to keep you busy for awhile. You can also find out more about the city at www.mexico-info.com.

X. Public transportation

Getting around the city is fairly easy, there are buses and taxis.

Buses

The majority of the buses have 1 or 2 major destinations written on the front window and all the buses have the bus number in the front window. The buses generally run from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm. It is generally recommended that if you can find a bus after 10:00 pm don't take it because it may not be safe. Usually you don't have to wait very long for a bus, except during rush hours (7:30-9:30 am, 2pm, and 9:00-10:00pm). During rush hours the buses can be absurdly crowded, in fact so crowded that the bus may not stop for you. Most bus stops are marked with "*Paradas*". However, the majority of the stops can appear like any regular street corner. Your host family should be able to inform you of bus stops near your home and the stops elsewhere will be fairly obvious, you will see other people standing waiting for the bus. Hailing a bus is pretty tricky at first. You have to be really assertive, especially if you are at a benched bus stop or a stop with a lot of people. When you see the bus you need to take coming, you have to stand fairly close to the road (okay, not close enough to get knocked out) with your arm out with a pointed finger. This signals the driver that you want to get on. When the bus stops get on and pay the driver. Bus fare is about 3 pesos (about \$.35). To get off you have to press one of the unlabeled buttons, generally located at the back of the bus, to signal the driver and he will stop at the nearest stop. A general rule of thumb there are two doors on the bus, the one in the front is for getting on and the one in the back is for getting off. You will want to be careful with your stuff on the bus especially if it is crowded. Keep your back pack or bag in front of you. Here are some useful phrases for bus riding:

<i>¿Pasa por El Centro?</i>	Do you pass by the center?
<i>¡Bajan!</i>	Stop
<i>¡Bajan en la esquina!</i>	Stop at the corner.

Taxis

Taxis are usually always on the road. They are fairly easy to hail because most of the time the drivers are looking for business. When you see a taxi just stick out your

hand and if it is not occupied the driver will stop. Remember you should negotiate a price before you get in the taxi.

XI. Money

The method of handling your money in Mexico is your decision but here are some options. The rise in the use of the ATM (*cajero automático*) has made it easy for you to access your bank account from Mexico. However, in the event you misplace your ATM card you will still want to have access to some money whether it is cash or travelers checks, so perhaps a combination of means is the way to go. Use caution when carrying cash. Try not to carry large amounts. Travelers' checks can be replaced if lost or stolen, but the process for exchanging travelers' checks is not as simple as cash. Your ATM will allow you to get money in pesos. Which ever means or combination of means you decide is best for you, use caution and be sensible and you shouldn't have any problems.

XII. Telephones

Home phone

The phone company in Mexico is different than here in the US. Customers are charged a monthly rate, plus a rate for every call made, so phone service can be expensive. Receiving calls at home generally isn't a problem, just be aware of the time you spend on the phone. If you want to make a call to the US make sure you have an international calling card, as not to incur any expensive charges to your family's phone bill. It is always best to ask before using the phone. Most families will let you use their phone but there have been cases where students could only receive calls on the house phone and to use public phones to make calls.

Public phones

The public phones in Mexico require a prepaid phone card to make a call. You can't put coins in them. Prepaid cards are sold in almost every local store. The phone cards come in different denominations 30, 50, or 100 pesos. You can also use these cards to call the U.S. You will probably get a rate of about a dollar a minute with these phone cards calling the U.S. So before you leave you may want to shop around for an international calling card with good rates but pay attention to the details because the rates for calling Mexico from the U. S. are different than the rates for calling the U.S. from Mexico. Generally the rates an international card is around a dollar a minute.

XIII. Packing

You can find most of the essential items in Mexico; it may be a little bit more expensive, but if you forget something don't worry. However, any prescription medicines should not be forgotten. What I am about to say (speaking from experience) can't be stressed enough. "Don't over pack!" You'll probably need fewer changes of clothes in Mexico than you wear at home. The clothes you bring should be light wash

and wear items. A sweater or light jacket is nice to have early in the morning or for going out at night. You may want to bring a swimsuit, in case there is a pool nearby or you decide to travel to the beach. You will want to have a comfortable pair of walking shoes, because as you will come to figure out your two feet will be your most accessible means of transportation. A backpack or small bag for weekend trips will come in handy. You will want to bring a nice outfit or two for going out, since Guadalajara is a major city and has a lot of nightclubs. A travel alarm clock comes in handy also. Of course don't forget the film and the camera, because you will want to take lots of pictures, but if you forget them don't worry. You can buy a camera and film in Mexico, it just may be a little more expensive. If you like listening to music, a walkman and some favorite CDs are a good idea to bring. A pocket dictionary is useful to carry when out and about. You may also want to take a dictionary that is a little more extensive for doing school work. It is also a good idea to take your Spanish 1 and 2 books. Just remember the less you take the easier it is to carry.

XIV. Traveling in Mexico

While the city of Guadalajara has enough to keep you busy for 4 months. You may want to take advantage of the chance to travel around and see some of the smaller cities nearby, like Tonalá and Tlaquepaque. These cities are great for a days exploring and you can get to them by way of the city bus.

You may also decide to do weekend excursions to places that are a little bit farther away, like Mexico City, Puerto Vallarta and Mazátlan. These are also accessible by bus but not the city bus. There are several bus lines that leave out of a central bus station in Guadalajara and travel to these destinations. The buses are fairly inexpensive and are like Greyhound buses. Okay maybe nicer. Yes I said nicer, the 2 top end bus lines Primera Plus and ETN are really nice and comfortable and affordable. A bus ticket round trip from Guadalajara to Puerto Vallarta was about \$60.00. The university does have a travel agency and they are generally helpful. Perhaps if you are thinking of traveling and don't know where to start planning, you could stop in the travel agency and ask for help.

XV. Cultural Information

A usual greeting is a hello or a handshake but once you get to know some people a kiss on the cheek is very common. You should be polite and greet a person before asking for help.

When eating at the table, both hands are usually kept above the table. Be polite and wait for everyone in your family to be at the table before beginning to eat. *La comida*, which is our lunch, is usually seen as a time for the family to gather and spend time together, so rushing off after finishing up could be viewed as rude; if you have to go just ask to be excused. Also if you will not be there for a meal it is good idea to let your Señora know. Meal schedules are different in Mexico, breakfast is usually between 8:00-

10:00 am, lunch is between 2:00-4:00 pm, and dinner is between 8:00-10:00 pm and is a light meal. Your *señora* will let you know the exact meal schedule of the house.

Living with a host family is a great experience but you should not impose extra work upon your host family, try to keep your area neat and try to be helpful. You shouldn't invite people over without checking with the family first. Most families are glad for you to have guest over. However, in the home a guest of the opposite sex is not allowed in your room.

In the Mexican society family and marriage are very important. Girls do not go out to bars alone, they go with friends and accepting a drink from someone you don't know is not a good idea. Girls also don't walk the streets at night alone.

Mexican men are very forward and enjoy seeing a good looking woman. They display their ideas by whistling and cat calling (*piropos*, is the Mexican term for cat calls) women they think are attractive. Okay girls, at one time or another (or every day) you will be whistled at. My best advice to you is if it bothers you just ignore it. I'm sorry I know that sounds weak but in a society where women generally don't speak up about these things and where the women most often welcome this sort of thing it is the best advice I have. I was told by several Mexican women that *piropos* are a way of knowing you are attractive. Also if you don't appear to be Mexican you may attract a little more attention. Don't let the stares or the attention bother you. It is not a personal attack on you, most people are just curious. Regardless of your self-confidence, being immersed in a new culture makes you a minority and you can be vulnerable. You don't have to adopt their ideas but don't try to change them either.

You will also see that Mexicans concept of time is a little more relaxed than ours. They generally don't rush around like we do. It is not uncommon for someone to be a half hour or an hour late for something. Relax and have patience.

Mexicans take pride in their appearance. They tend to dress up a little bit more than we do. You will notice at school some people dress as if they are going to a club and they definitely don't wear shorts to school.

XVI. Adjusting

You will be overwhelmed with many new things, food, schedules, and language. Try not to get frustrated it will take a while to get adjusted to everything. You will be exposed to many new and different foods. Have an open mind and try them, if you don't like something don't eat it again. Your family will be understanding, just explain to them when something doesn't agree with you. Always remember politeness is a virtue. If you are not used to spicy food you should try to ease in to the spicier foods, but don't worry, your family won't automatically spice up your food. The *salsa picante* is usually separate and you can add it yourself.

A different schedule will also take sometime to get used to. Don't be too stressed about having a set time to do things. You will see when you are in Mexico things have a way of coming together. Before you know it you will be going with the flow of things.

XVII. Precautionary measures

Before you leave you should have the name, address and telephone number of your host family. It is a good idea to call them and let them know your arrival date, time and flight number. They should pick you up at the airport. However, I am aware of an instance where a student was not picked up and had to take a taxi. For this reason it is a good idea to have your family's information along with the schools information readily available, just in case this happens. If this should happen to you don't panic. The airport in Guadalajara is not too big. After you pass through immigration and customs you will exit out of a door. There are usually a lot of people waiting to pick up people from their flight. Your family should be holding a sign with your name. However, if no one is there and you have waited for a long time, you will want to take a taxi. There is a taxi booth right outside the airport. You can pay for a taxi there. You will need to show them the address, so they can know where you need to go. This is not meant to alarm you. Your family should be there to pick you up. However, since this has happened before I think it is wise to make you aware of the situation and what to do in this type of situation. The key to getting through all of the unpleasant situations you may encounter is to remember to stay calm.

XVIII. American Consulate

You will probably be given the address of the American Consulate again with the information provided by UAG. However, I am providing it here for you.

American Consulate General
Progreso 175
Guadalajara, Jalisco
Tel [52] 3825-2998/2700

XIX. Have a good trip!

You may begin to think some of the inconveniences and mishaps are a Mexico thing. However, you will realize it is life. We encounter inconveniences everyday here in the Unites States, so try not to let too much frustrate you. Relax and have a good time.

¡Que te vaya bien!

XX. Maps

The next few pages are maps of part of the city of Guadalajara. The first map is of all the major roads that run through Guadalajara. The second map is the area of the city near the university. The third map is of *El Centro*. The Web version of this document does not yet include maps. Maps available online include:

1) A map of downtown Guadalajara at:

www.mexconnect.com/mex_/guadalajara/guadmap.html, with a link to a more detailed map of the historical center at

www.mexconnect.com/mex_/guadalajara/historic.html

2) The excellent collection of maps of Mexico, including maps of Guadalajara, housed at the Perry-Castañeda Library, University of Texas at Austin:

www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/mexico.html