

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 Jaguars Pumas - Program 254

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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?

Weary Traveler Hostel Mexico in Cancun, Quintana Roo, Mexico.

When do I need to get there?

09:00 am on the project start date.

How do I get there?

Most participants arrange international flights to arrive at Cancun International Airport the day before the project starts.

If you are arriving before the scheduled meeting time you may want to arrange your own transport to Cancun center and hostel. Buses from the airport to Cancun are regular and cost approx. US\$5 (an onward taxi will be approx 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:

Weary Travel Hostel Mexico - \$20-40

Calle Andador Palmera 30 Esq. Ave.
Uxmal, Centro, Cancun, Q. Roo
(0052) 9988870191
www.hostelsclub.com/hostel-es-7320.html

Hostal Meson de Tulum US\$15-20

Av. Tulum num 21, Mz 1, SMz 2, Centro,
Cancun, 77500
(0052) 998 898 3142
www.hostaltulum.com
info@hostelplaya.com



Departure

At the end of your placement you will be transferred back to Cancun.

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 program 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 our in-country partners, El Eden. 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: Daniel Ponce-Taylor
Tel: +[521] 984 1164 208
Local Tel: (044/045) 984 1164 208
Email: dan@gviworld.com

Alternative Contact:

Name: Cynthia Arochi Zendejas
Tel: +[521] 984 8762 067
Local Tel: (044/045) 984 8762 067
Email: mexico@gviworld.com

GVI 24-hr Emergency Contact:

Tel: +[44] (0) 7960 820 695



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: Marco Lazcano Barrero
Teocaltiche 207, SM45, M4, L3, Villas del Sol
Cancun
Benito Juarez, C.P. 77506
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 limited access to long-distance communications whilst on the program, so make sure friends and family know how often they can expect to hear from you. Participants typically use internet cafes to keep in touch, with access to phone and internet available in the city of Cancun, about 35km west of the project location.

Mobile/cell phone reception is not available on base.



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 bathroom facilities at the field station. There is bottled water available for cooking and drinking only.



Food

Our field team will provide 3 meals a day. Breakfast could be eggs, fruit or pancakes, lunch is salads and sandwiches and a typical evening meal may include rice or pasta, meat and salads.



Electricity

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

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



Laundry

You can wash your clothes on base (hand washing).

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Getting Around

You will be based 35 km / 25 miles away from the city of Cancun. Travelling outside the base is reliant on field staff and you will be able to leave base if you are on base for less than 2 weeks. 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

If you are taking part in this project for more than 2 weeks time, in your down time you will be free to travel in the local area. In this time you could do day-trips such as visiting Tulum or Coba Mayan ruins, do some cenote diving, visit Playa del Carmen, etc.

Before or after your program there are countless attractions that can be reached after a day or two of travelling. You could visit the famous Mayan ruins at Chichen Itza and Chiapas, see the historic city Merida, dive the Blue Hole in Belize, or explore the rest of 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 program please contact GVI.



Finance

Local currency: Mexican Peso

US\$100-200 per week will be sufficient funds to allow you to undertake a few extra off-base activities, enjoy a few drinks in the evenings and meals out on weekends! For those who want to sample more of the area and Central America after the Expedition, we recommend an approximate figure of US\$40-50 per day.

Participants typically spend approximately US\$40-50 per week for calling cards, internet, bottled water, buses, food, drinks, etc. We recommend that you travel with cash (Mostly Pesos, although US\$ are also widely accepted) as your main source of funds, although having a credit/debit card as a backup is wise. The nearest ATM to base is located in Cancun. 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, access to banking facilities is few and far between!



Shopping

You can find almost all basic items (food, toiletries, etc.) in Cancun. More specialized items can be found in Cancun (35 km / 20 miles) or in Playa del Carmen (300 km / 186 miles).



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.

The nearest emergency medical facilities are located in Cancun (35 km / 20 miles). We have emergency procedures for foreseeable events, the staff is first aid trained and you will receive a safety briefing on arrival.

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 course.

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

www.visitingmexico.com.mx

www.visitmexico.com.mx

www.mexonline.com

www.travelucatan.com

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Additional Information

Flying via the United States

Previous Expedition Members flying through the United States have experienced problems with return flights of longer than 90 days. Some airlines consider Mexico to be an American 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 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 program coordinator for information about courses nearby.

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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).
- 1 Daypack (Backpack):** (25+ litres / 1,500+ cubic inches)
- Dry bags** offer excellent waterproofing for clothing and kit.
- 1 pair of closed-toe footwear** Bear in mind shoes will often get wet and take a long time to dry in a humid environment. Lightweight, quick-drying and comfortable footwear is essential. Previous volunteers have suggested trail shoes and Crocs (or similar) are useful to have.
- 1 pair of sandals (flip-flops / thongs)** to wear day-to-day to dry your feet out (not leather as mould is a problem in the high humidity!)
- Casual Clothing** T-shirts/tops and shorts for general day-to-day use. (Remember you will be working, casual is fine but nothing to revealing!)
- Long-sleeved clothing** (less frequent use 1 or 2 of each) as in all tropical countries, insects can be a nuisance, especially in the evening. Long sleeved shirts and trousers offer the best form of protection. Be aware the colour blue attracts mosquitoes.
- Waterproof jacket / poncho** it's the rainforest, it does rain! Former participants recommend bringing both. Cheap ponchos rarely last the first week, so it is worthwhile buying a good quality one.
- Dark clothing** dark-coloured long sleeved clothing for night turtle surveys is very important to have, and a couple of outfits, as you might get wet one night and it will not dry for the next night.
- Underwear** cotton underwear is best (less hot), at least 5 pairs and 6-7 pair of socks (light hiking), sports bras. Additional long socks are useful to prevent rubbing when wearing rubber boots. Dark colours do not show dirt easily, as the water is cold for washing.
- Long-sleeved clothing** as in all tropical countries, insects can be a nuisance in Costa Rica, especially in the evening. Long sleeved shirts and trousers offer the best form of protection. Be aware that the colour blue may attract mosquitoes.
- Waterproof jacket / Poncho** it's the rainforest, it does rain! However, we do have dry spells too and it's always nice to go for a swim in the sea, so don't forget your swimming costume!
- Towel** A quick-dry travel towel or an old and worn towel that will dry quickly.
- Bed sheets** please bring a flat sheet and/or a sleeping bag liner. Silk liners are cooler, but you may prefer to sleep in cotton.
- Contact lenses / glasses** if you use lenses you will need to bring all supplies for the duration of the expedition, as you may not be able to source solutions etc. locally. If using spectacles / glasses bring a spare pair and a neck strap.
- Sarong** is useful as an extra towel. It is also good as sun protection.
- Mosquito net** a box-shaped is the ideal type of net (to be attached from 4 corners above single mattress in bunk beds). Wedge-shaped or round nets are not so easy to tuck under the mattress and do not give much room to manoeuvre (especially for tall people). May be impregnated with permethrin, but it is not necessary as the dorm building has screening.
- Insect repellent** we recommend using a natural based products such as citronella or Eucalyptus, as DEET-containing repellent is harmful and believed to be carcinogenic.
- Water bottles** for use all the time – its a good idea to carry your own water as you don't always know if water is suitable for drinking in the village. A good, eco-friendly, reusable water bottle is important to keep well hydrated.
- Toiletries PREFERABLY BIODEGRADABLE** most major brands can be bought locally, (including biodegradable shampoo). Tampons are not easily found in shops nearby, so bring enough for your entire stay.
- Detergent/soap** for washing clothes is also provided, but it is not available as biodegradable in Costa Rica.
- Notebook & Stationery** you will need a notebook and pens/pencils for lesson planning, keeping a record of new Spanish words and phrases you learn and other activities.
- Any prescribed medication** you need during your trip. Make sure it bears your name and description of reason and dosage.
- Sun protection** a high SPF factor, we recommend at least SPF25+. Sun cream can be very expensive to buy locally so bring adequate supplies for your trip.
- Spanish Dictionary/ Phrase book** essential for interacting with the community members and in class
- Head torch / flashlight / Maglite** for every day (and night) use around camp. Most head torches have a LED-light function, which saves on batteries. Maglites are useful for spotting night creatures in the forest. One torch/flashlight is ESSENTIAL (every day use), as there is little street lighting around the village.
- Batteries** please only bring rechargeable batteries, with a charger. If you do bring non-rechargeable batteries, we will ask you to take them back with you to dispose of them properly.
- Alarm clock** for those early mornings!
- Watch** good time-keeping is essential - a waterproof watch is recommended.
- Money belt / bum bag / fanny pack** for transportation of money and passport.
- Paracord / strong cord / string** approx. 10m (30ft) for hanging up mosquito nets, making clothes lines, and suspending bags. Bungees handy for hanging up rucksacks off the floor to reduce mould.

Highly Recommended Equipment

- Pen knife / Leatherman**
- Swimming trunks / costume / bikini**
- Camera** a good dry box or bag filled with lots of silica gel will help to prevent humidity in it.
- Binoculars** to get a better look at the wildlife you will be surrounded by in the park.

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Optional Equipment

- Batteries and spare bulbs** can be purchased in Cancun/Playa.
- Smarter outfit** still fairly casual, but to be kept nice and clean for a night out.
- Hat, wide-brimmed / headscarf / shamrag / bandana** some kind of headwear will be useful for keeping the sun off and to dry off sweat!
- Sunglasses** make sure they offer 100% UV protection. Cheap glasses can cause more damage than good.
- Sleeping bag / blanket** 1/2 season sleeping bag or a light blanket - most people sleep under just a bed sheet but if you easily feel the cold you may want some extra insulation. It does get cooler during the very wet season: temperatures rarely drop below 20-24°C (68-75°F) at night, although this can feel cold after the heat of the day. Do not bring a heavy-weight sleeping bag as you will not need it and it will become mouldy.
- Travel pillow** pillows are not provided, but if you must have one for sleeping, bring your own travel pillow or carry a pillow case that you can stuff with clothes etc. to sleep on.
- Electrical adaptor** necessary for any electrical appliance or charger – you may need to convert voltage as well as socket type.
- Duct tape** the universal repair kit
- Blank CDs/ memory stick** to store photos downloaded from your camera
- First Aid Kit** to include topical and oral antihistamines, anti-fungal powder and cream, cold & flu medication, etc.
- Sewing Kit** for repairs to clothes, bags, etc.
- 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.
- Pen knife / Leatherman**
- Travel games / Cards**
- CD players / MP3 player / World Service Radio** remember headphones so you don't blast away the local wildlife – a couple of sets may come in handy as they can easily become affected by sand and moisture.
- Snacks / sweets** very good idea as town trips are limited, usually once per week. Anything you think you might crave, but be aware that you will sweat and hence loose salts and use up sugar, so even people without a sweet tooth will crave sweets/snacks! Granola bars, good chocolate, dried fruit or beef jerky serve as good snacks in between the 3 daily meals. Hot-sauce has been recommended as the local varieties aren't to everyone's tastes.

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 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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