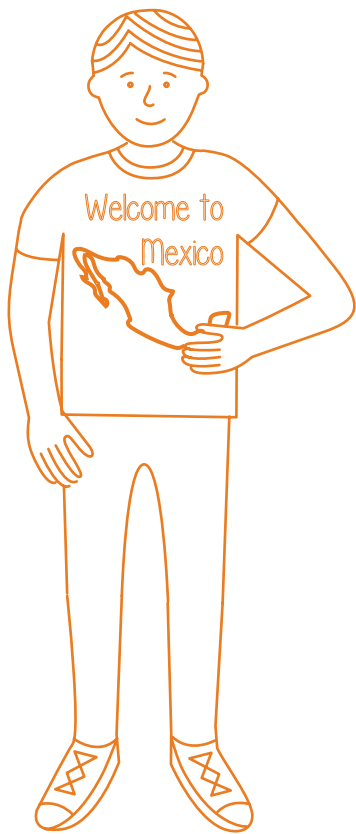


WELCOME TO
MEXICO



**Programas
Interculturales**
México



You are about to begin a journey that will probably be very different to what you have imagined. The key? Be flexible with your expectations. There will be many challenges along the road that are going to test you and help you discover abilities that you didn't know you had. We are here to provide you with support, guidance, tips and any kind of help you may need throughout your journey.



An aerial photograph of a coastal city in Mexico, featuring turquoise water, a sandy beach, and several high-rise buildings. A white dove is superimposed on the image, flying towards the right. The image is framed by a purple and blue abstract shape.

WELCOME TO YOUR NEW HOME!

The Republic of Mexico is vast, extending through nearly two million square miles of coastline, desert, rain forest, mountains, and fertile plains. From the American borderlands of the wide, agriculturally rich north, the country narrows gently as it sweeps south and east.



HISTORY AND CULTURE

Sometime around 1500 BC, the first of Mexico's ancient civilizations, the Olmecs, settled in what are now the states of Veracruz and Tabasco.



After the Olmecs came the Teotihuacans, the Zapotecs and Mixtecs, the Mayas, the Toltecs, Aztecs, and dozens of smaller groups, such as the Purépechas, the Totonacas, the Apaches and the Rarámuri.

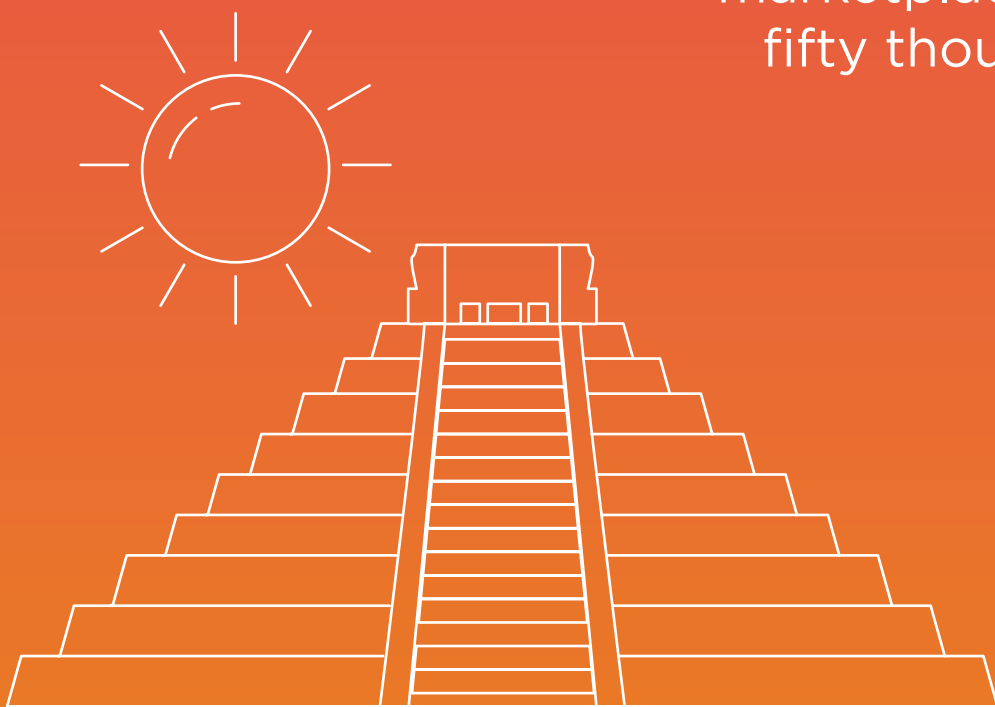
Many of these civilizations practiced human sacrifice, but only for religious and ritual purposes.



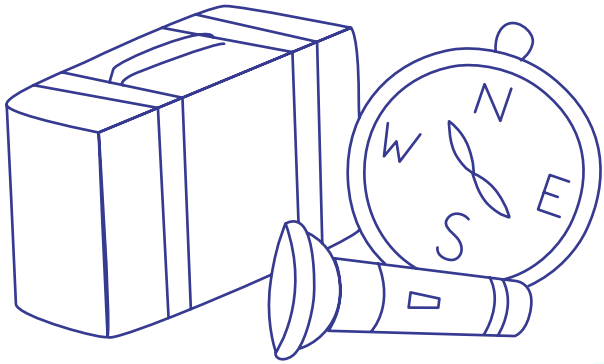
None of Mexico's pre-Columbian civilizations had more impact, than the Aztecs. Though it is arguable that other civilizations in Mexico achieved greater artistic and scientific discoveries, none advanced as quickly or ruled as much territory as the Aztecs.



Their capital, Tenochtitlan, set in a lake, was a picturesque city of pyramids, mile-long floating roads, aqueducts, animated marketplaces, and around fifty thousand residents.



When the Spanish conqueror Hernan Cortés and his army arrived in 1519, the rich city perfectly meshed their thirst for conquest and compared Tenochtilan with Venice or Constantinople.



The man who turned words into actions was a Catholic priest named Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, who led an armed rebellion in 1810 with the help of Captain Ignacio Allende and Catholic Priest José María Morelos.

Hidalgo's leadership began the war of independence that culminated on September 27, 1821, eleven years after the General Vicente Guerrero and the royalist General Agustín de Iturbide signed the Treaty of Córdoba.



Having fought for independence, and with Agustín de Iturbide and some other reactionaries' attempts to go back to an imperialism, Mexico began to increasingly support the slogan of "freedom and progress"; the country was divided between Conservatives and Liberals.



Conservatives brought emperor Archduke Maximilian of Habsburg to rule the country but Liberals with Benito Juárez as their leader eventually won.



Juaréz remained the president until his death in 1872. Several presidents changed office until, in 1876, one of the greatest generals, Porfirio Díaz, rose to power and established a dictatorship that lasted 30 years. His government though, gave peace and promoted industrial development in México.





But, as with every dictatorship, the people were unhappy, so Francisco I. Madero started The Mexican Revolution, which represents one of the world history's bloodiest internal conflicts in the world history. However, he wasn't the only one, After the murder of Madero men like Pancho Villa, Emiliano Zapata, Álvaro Obregón and Felipe Ángeles continued to fight for the same ideas and dreams.





Mexico's post-revolution history is marked by the tenacity of a single political party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI. The party's most beloved president was General Lazaro Cardenas. In 1934 Cardenas instituted widespread land reforms, strengthened unions, and nationalized the petroleum industry.





PRI ruled
the country for
almost 70 years and
during this period
Mexico experienced
the so-called
“Mexican miracle”, *which
is known for being the
period where Mexico was
established as a modern
and industrial state,
despite the fact that a
democratic regime
wasn't really present.





It wasn't until the year
2000 that another
political party won
the presidency. It was
Vicente Fox from
the PAN who led the
“change”, but in 2012 PRI
regained governmental
power.



CLIMATE

CENTER:

The climate is more moderate. During winter it can get very cold at night, sometimes reaching temperatures below 0°C.

The average temperature lies between 10°C and 25°C. The rainy season is from July to October.

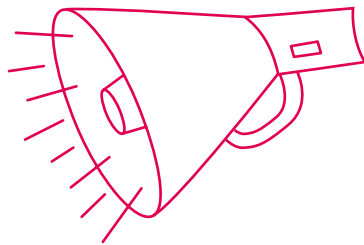


LANGUAGE

As you probably know the official language is Spanish. There are lots of indigenous dialects that are spoken throughout the country in different indigenous communities.

Sometimes these populations don't speak Spanish or at least that not all the people in the community do. Keep in mind that many Spanish words have different meanings, depending on the situation or the inflection they have.

The following words will help you to start a conversation:



¿De dónde eres? = Where are you from?

Soy de... = I'm from...

Perdón/ Lo siento = I'm sorry

Tengo sueño = I'm tired

Tengo hambre = I'm hungry





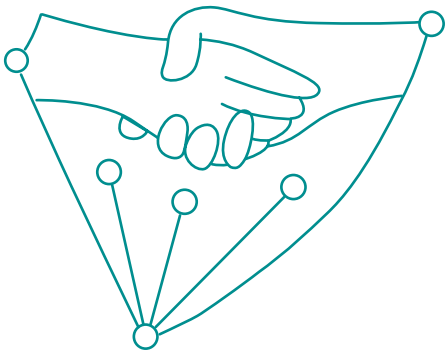
CULTURE

Customs vary tremendously from one community to the other, as well as from one family to the other. We recommend that you consult your family and school friends for advice when in doubt. This will keep you out of trouble and at the same time will allow the others to learn more about your background and lifestyle. Also, there are some specific social customs that are common throughout Mexico. They will become a part of your Mexican way of life.



HOW TO GREET

When we enter a home, it is necessary to greet each person individually and to say goodbye to each person individually, as well. Yes, this means 15 handshakes to say hello and another 15 to say goodbye! A simple group hello and goodbye is not always acceptable.



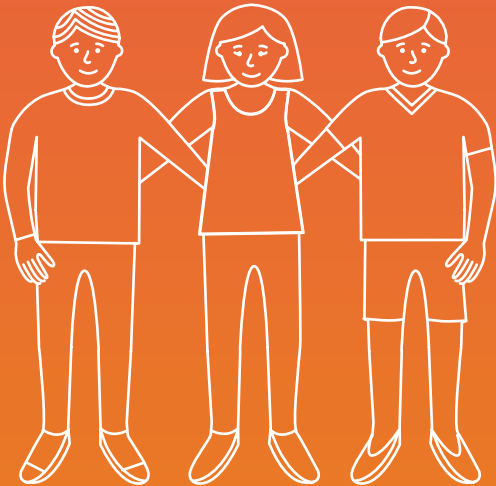
We shower on a daily basis, unless particular circumstances make this impossible, such as running out of water. Be sure to pick up your bath stuff before leaving the bathroom.

A quick, but effective shower will be enough; please, don't waste water.

FRIENDS AND GOING OUT

We are sure that you will make a lot of friends. Some will be there for the rest of your life and some only for this year. Make sure that you choose your friends wisely. Your host family will want to get to know each one of you friends; don't get mad, they only want to keep you safe. If you want to go out with your friends, do these three things:

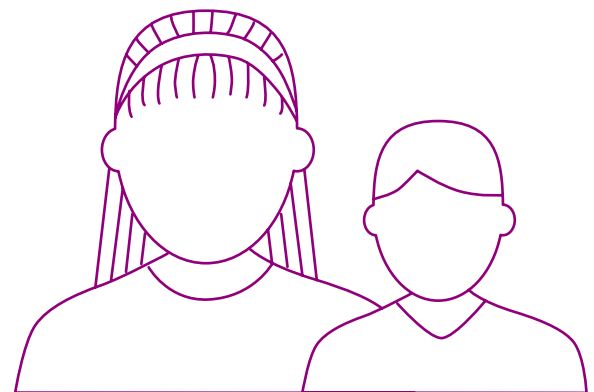
- Ask for host parents' permission (really important)
- Inform your host mom or dad where you are at and whom you are with.
- Respect the curfew.



SPECIAL FRIENDS

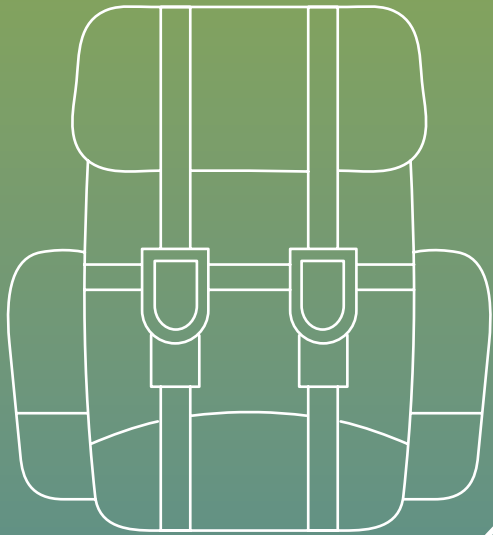
If you meet a special person in your year abroad, follow these tips and you won't have problems:

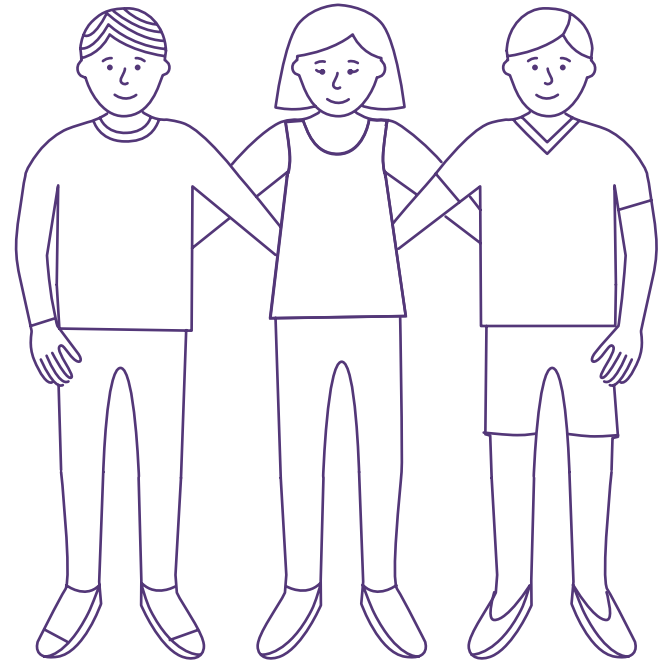
- Relationships between persons with a big age difference are not good. If you are a minor and your boyfriend or girlfriend is an adult they could be in legal problems.
- Introduce your boyfriend or girlfriend to your host family; they will be very interested to know them.
- Don't spend all your time with your special friend. Your host family wants to learn about you and spend time with you.



Don't be rude...

- Always inform your host family about your whereabouts and please respect the curfews.





SEXUALITY

Sexual manners are probably very different in your country than in Mexico. Most Mexican families are very conservative and will not always accept sexuality issues as you do.

Some are more open-minded and will accept this without a problem. In some communities, teenagers' active sexual life is not well liked or even accepted, so you have to be very careful with this.

Use your sexuality wisely.

INDEPENDENCE

Young people in México might be less independence than you in your country. If one of your expectations in this year abroad is to become more independent, be careful! Independence is a process that you will learn step by step, throughout your life. Independence is very different from freedom. Independence and responsibility are the same. Talk with your host family about this and make an agreement about your independence.



SCHOOL MANNERS

Mexican schools have particular manners that might be strange for you. The education system is a traditional one and discipline is very important. In most cases you won't be able to choose your assignments.



Your first days at school won't be comfortable for you, but don't worry – this will pass quickly. When you arrive to your school, you will be in the spotlight and everyone will ask you many questions; be patient and gentle.

FAMILY GATHERINGS

You have to be prepared for Mexican family reunions. A lot of people at the same place that laugh, sing and talk very loud. Parents, siblings, cousins, aunts, nephews, grandparents, close friends, godfathers, neighbors, grandchildren are an example of all the people you will meet.



Remember to say hello to everyone and also to say goodbye. You will be in the spotlight (again) but all the questions they will ask are a way to let you know that you're welcome into the family.



AFS Mexico hopes you will make
the best out of your stay in Mexico.



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