

# **HISPANIC AMERICA**

## **A CULTURAL OVERVIEW**

**Presented by  
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### **Latin American Culture**



# WHAT I WILL COVER

- Hispanic culture
- What To Do
- What to Avoid
- Final Dos and Don'ts
- Useful Apps
- Learn Some Spanish
- Some Spanish Vocabulary
- Summary





# HISPANIC CULTURE

## Embracing cultural differences between the US and Latin America

- Visiting a new place and learning a language is all about getting to know a different culture.
- For Americans, the cultural differences between the US and Latin America may be surprising or challenging.



# HISPANIC CULTURE

## Embracing cultural differences between the US and Latin America

- Whether visiting or making plans to move, keeping a no pasa nada (no big deal) attitude and an open mind is important. There is no need to get offended when learning about a new place. Our cultural differences can — and often do — teach us a lot about our own values.



# HISPANIC CULTURE

**Latin America is not like the West!**

- Many of the things we as Westerners do daily are seen as RUDE or INAPPROPRIATE in Latin America .







# HISPANIC CULTURE

## Social norms

- When it comes to social norms, there are certainly differences between Hispanic and American cultures.



# HISPANIC CULTURE

## Family

- A big difference between US American and Hispanic culture is the role of family. This difference is particularly apparent in the lives of young adults





# HISPANIC CULTURE

## Family

- US culture generally emphasizes independence and “leaving the nest” at an early age.
- In past generations and even today, it’s common for young people in the US to move out of their parents’ homes at the age of 18.





# HISPANIC CULTURE

## Family

- This independence applies to finances as well as housing. Many 18-year-olds are expected to pay all their bills as soon as they reach adulthood.
- It's typically considered a good thing for a young adult to be self-sufficient.



# HISPANIC CULTURE

## Family

- In Latin America, on the other hand, it's common for young people to continue to live at home (and receive financial support from their parents and elder relatives) well into adulthood.
- Sometimes, young adults do not leave their family home until marriage.





# HISPANIC CULTURE

## Family

- Families in Latin America spend much time socializing with extended family, too. This often entails family obligations every weekend.
- A healthy social life within the family typically includes a standing family dinner every Sunday.



# HISPANIC CULTURE

## Family

- The influence of parents doesn't stop at the borders of the home.
- Hispanic parents often won't hesitate to call their adult children at work — and they expect them to answer the phone right away.
- In Latin America, it's seen as a good thing to have a close-knit and supportive family.



# HISPANIC CULTURE

## Restroom Doors Marked With an “M” Are For the Ladies

- The Spanish word for women is “*mujeres*.” So, gentlemen, if you see a door marked with an “M,” do **NOT** assume that it is the men’s room. Instead, look for a door marked with an “H” (for “*hombres*”) or a “C” (for “*caballeros*”).



# HISPANIC CULTURE

## Restroom Doors Marked With an “M” Are For the Ladies

- It seems like a simple enough thing but going into the restroom marked “M” is almost habitual for English-speaking men.
- More than once, I’ve found myself barging into the wrong restroom!



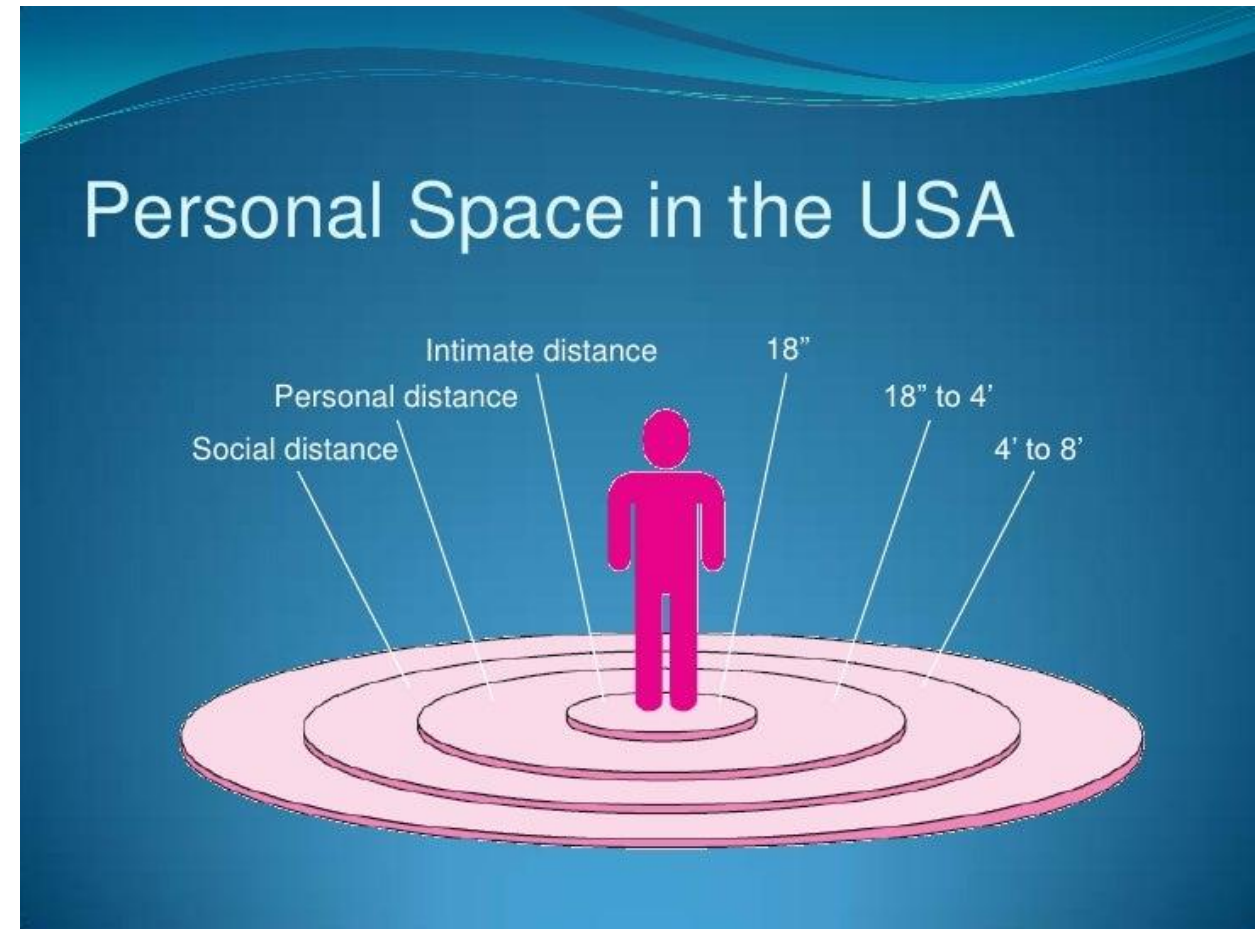


# HISPANIC CULTURE

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## Personal space

- Americans typically prefer to maintain a three-foot bubble of personal space. They may feel uncomfortable when strangers encroach on this space.
- In Latin America, particularly in Latin America City (population: 16 million), there is less personal space to go around. Whether you're waiting to cross the street, ordering at a bar or standing in line for the metro, it's not uncommon to come into physical contact with a stranger — and they may not immediately move away



# HISPANIC CULTURE



## Greetings and goodbyes

- Americans typically use a handshake or a hug to greet someone or say goodbye.
- In Latin America, it's common to greet with a single cheek-to-cheek kiss (or even a lips-to-cheek kiss on certain occasions). What's more, a wave in Latin America on the way out the door is a bit rude. You should greet and say goodbye to each person individually. At a party, it can take a while to arrive or leave, but you certainly won't miss seeing everyone!



# HISPANIC CULTURE

## Noise

- Americans tend to speak loudly, or at least that's our reputation globally. Many people in the US have taken a liking to live in suburbs where houses are less congested, and neighbors can generally avoid hearing each other.
- By contrast, Hispanics generally don't speak at loud volumes. There is, however, a lot more ambient noise in Latin America.
- Whether you find it comforting or intrusive depends on your tastes. Common noises you may hear in Latin America include the calls of vendors on the street and cumbia beats blasting from a neighbor's sound system at 7 a.m.



# HISPANIC CULTURE

## IF LUNCH IS DINNER, WHEN IS DINNER?

- In a traditional sense for Hispanics, lunch is the main meal of the day, and it's usually between 2-4 pm, which happens to coincide with the hottest part of the day. That's because office workers tend to work from 9 am-7 pm Monday through Saturday. So, the middle of the day for them is usually 2 pm.







# HISPANIC CULTURE

## Food

- Food is a big part of Hispanic cultural tradition. In fact, UNESCO considers Hispanic cuisine a part of Latin America's (and the world's) intangible cultural heritage.
- But the timing of meals is another difference between the Hispanic and US cultures. Lunch and dinner are typically eaten much later in Latin America than in the US. Here are approximate mealtimes in Latin America:
  - **Breakfast:** 7 a.m. to 12 p.m.
  - **Lunch:** 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.
  - **Dinner:** 8 p.m. -to 11 p.m.
- If you are looking for some lunchtime tacos, be aware in Latin America, tacos are often late-night food.



# HISPANIC CULTURE

Here are a few other cultural differences between the US and Latin America to keep in mind.

- **Religion**

- About 29% of the US population is religiously unaffiliated, versus just 8% of the Hispanic population.
- As those numbers suggest, religion is a daily practice for many in Latin America.
- The massive pilgrimage for the *Virgin de Guadalupe* draws eight million Catholic tourists to Latin America City each December. Aside from Catholicism, Indigenous traditions continue to be practiced alongside newer beliefs, such as the following of *Santa Muerte* (Saint Death).



# HISPANIC CULTURE

## Work

- Hispanics have a worldwide reputation for being hard workers, and this may be true no matter where in the world they live. It certainly seems to be true in Latin America, where employees work some of the highest work hours per week in Latin America.
- Mexico, despite having the second-highest GDP in Latin America, Latin America has a much lower minimum wage than other countries. People in the US are also known for putting in a long workweek, but the wages tend to be much higher.





# HISPANIC CULTURE

## Politics

- The politics of Latin America are very different from those of the US. As a result of colonial influence as well as modern-day tensions, Hispanics tend to have little love for American foreign policy and its effect on the Hispanic economy.
- The political spectrum in Latin America is a bit shifted to the left relative to the US. In other words, what might be considered a “leftist” position in the US is fairly centrist in Latin America.
- Latin America has a long history of active and popular socialist movements stretching from the time of each country’s founding until now.
- The mainstream US political conversation tends to avoid socialism and communism as extremist ideologies.





# WHAT TO DO

## Do's

- Be respectful and courteous, especially when in the company of parents or elders.
- Try and be open to the friends and family of your Hispanic counterpart. Hispanics are often very welcoming to friends of friends based on small social connections. They will appreciate it if you are similarly open-hearted to their loved ones.
- Refer to Hispanic migrants living in the US without paperwork as “undocumented migrants”. Avoid using the term “illegal”.
- Understand Latin America's cultural achievements and mention them when you see fit.
- Try and offer your service to help with domestic duties or basic tasks whenever possible. Even if a Hispanic declines your offer, it is polite to extend the gesture.
- Be sure to thank Hispanics for their hospitality. It is the only gesture expected in return for their generosity.
- Share stories from your country, home, and family life. Hispanics love tales from other parts of the world.

# WHAT TO DO

## Great Food


The Best time to enjoy local eats in El Centro (downtown) is around 8 pm.

By that time, the local restaurants and Taquerias (taco restaurants) were in full swing. From the street-carts are on every corner and in the public parks, to the ice cream man, to the mariachis serenading the many patrons at the restaurants. It is an absolute food fest without a doubt. You can eat everything from tacos to tlyudas, churros, marquesitas, fresh fruit, elote, tortas. And for about \$100 Pesos, or \$5 USD or less, you can enjoy many of the local's favorite foods!



# WHAT TO DO

## ALWAYS Pay with Pesos

- A lot people seem to get it in their head that simply because many touristy places in Latin America *will* accept the U.S. Dollar, there is no need to acquire pesos.
  - **While it's true that you *can* pay with dollars at many places in Latin America, it's almost ALWAYS a bad idea.**
  - Because the exchange rate you'll get from the merchant is going to be deserving of a place in those waste bins along with your TP.
  - A better option is to change dollars at the best rate you can find, but the best option is to acquire an ATM card that gives the interbank loan rate for foreign currency withdrawals.
  - You can also pay with a credit card that gives that same rate without foreign transaction fees for travel).
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- But, whatever you do, pay with pesos. Unless you love giving money away, that is, in which case keep shelling out those dollars.



# WHAT TO DO

## IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?

- One of the things that amazes many Americans is the availability of very affordable healthcare.
- How often have you not felt well, called your doctor only to find you can't get an appointment for two weeks?
- In Latin America, the problem is solved. If you need a doctor for a minor ailment, just about every pharmacy has a consultation, and you don't need an appointment. Other ex-pats often refer to these doctors as "Doc in a Box." For about 50 pesos (approximately \$2.50), you can see a local licensed doctor for diagnosis and treatment. And the beauty of this is they can write you a prescription that you can get filled next door! In addition, most prescription drugs are available over the counter at a fraction of the prices in the States.



# WHAT TO DO

## GROCERY BAGGERS

- Another big difference you will find Latin America is at the supermarket checkout. You'll see senior citizens volunteering to bag your groceries. These are known as "cerillos."
- I have had the pleasure of personally meeting and talking to a few seniors who graciously explained the system. They aren't the stores' employees and do not receive a wage. Instead, they are members of a government-sponsored program called INAPAM, which is catered toward seniors over the age of 60.





# WHAT TO DO

## GROCERY BAGGERS

- They work 6-hour shifts 6 days a week and have flexible schedules so that as many seniors as possible can participate. But unfortunately, many only receive a small government pension, which is a golden opportunity for them to earn pesos from your tips.
- Please support them. It is customary to tip 10-20 pesos. However, if they have bagged your entire “despensa” (pantry) for the month, then tip a little more!





# WHAT TO DO

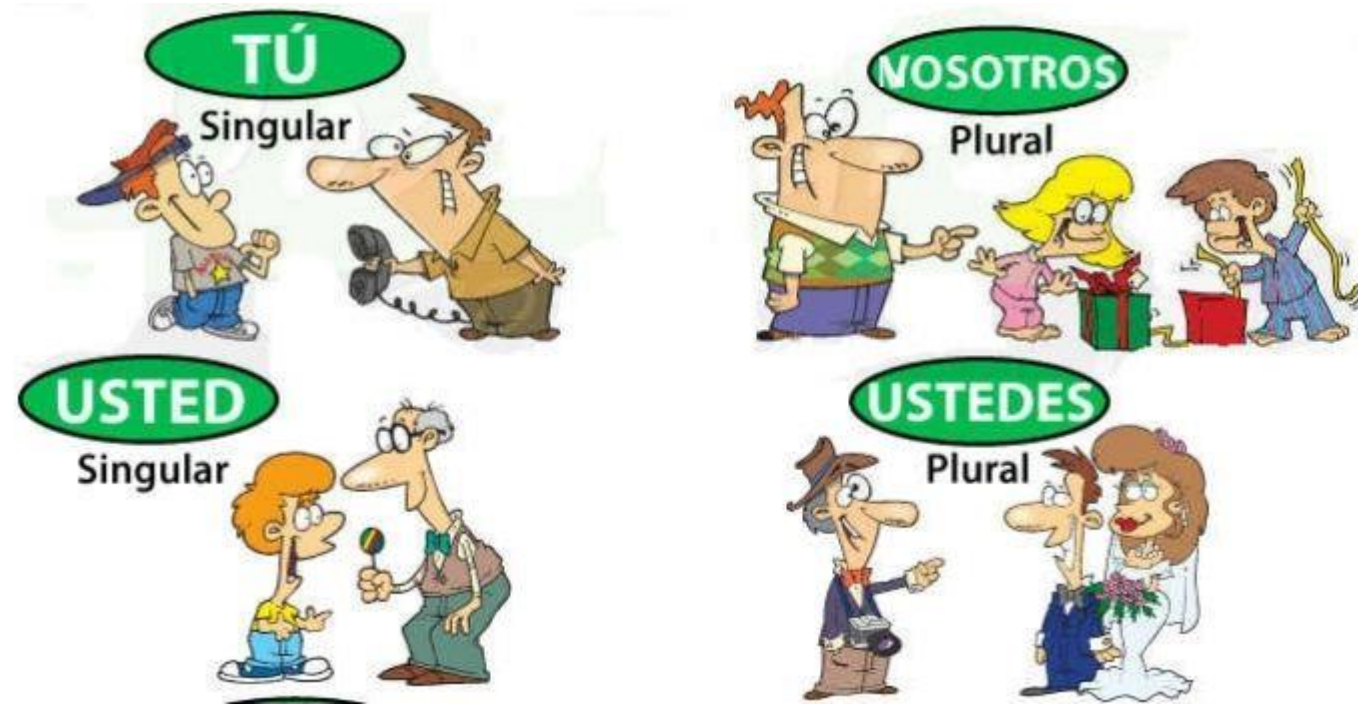
- Although most of Mexico has a casual vibe, it is important to dress modestly when visiting churches or religious sites.
- It is also recommended to wear comfortable shoes and clothing for outdoor activities.



# WHAT TO AVOID

## CHOOSE YOUR SPANISH WORDS WISELY OUT OF RESPECT

- Probably the largest social difference between Latin America and the U.S. is language.
- You will find that many locals do not speak a single word of English outside of the tourist areas. Learning Spanish will make life here easier and more productive. Even learning just a few basics will go a long way. Every national I have ever met is extremely proud of their country, traditions, customs, and roots.

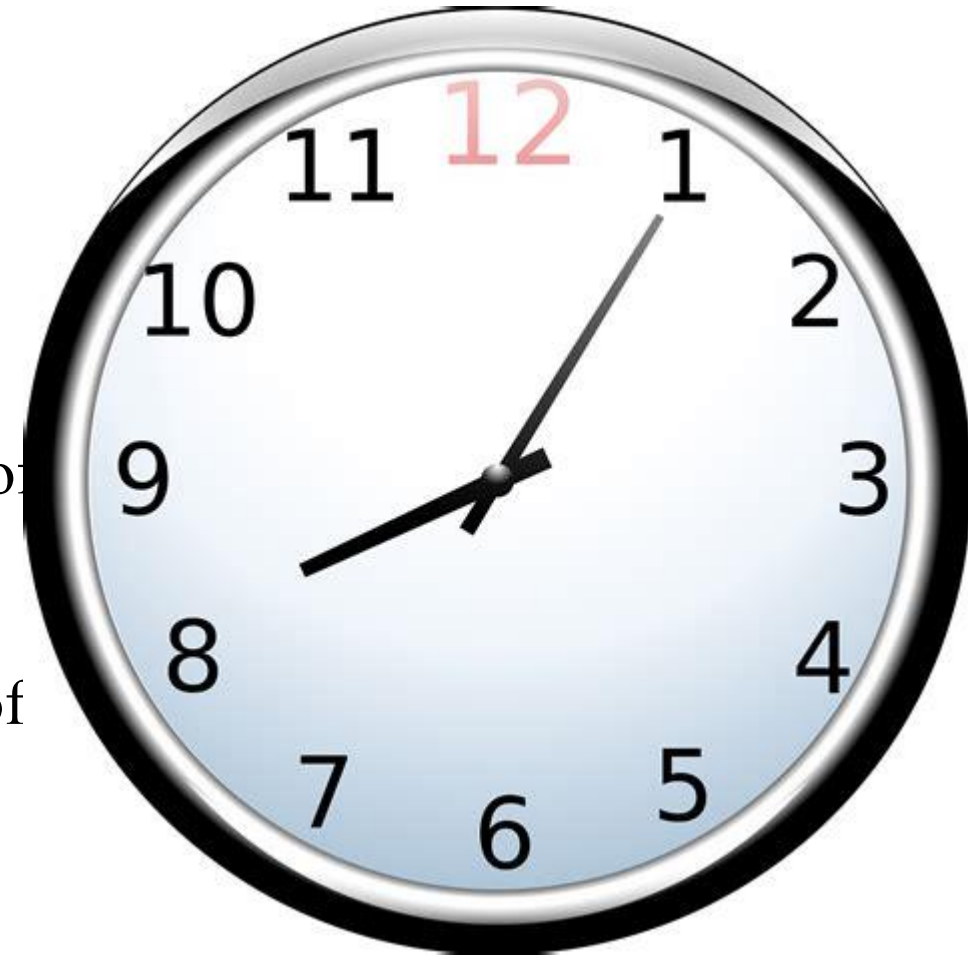


For example- *usted* and *tu* both mean you. However, *usted* is used to talk to someone you don't know or someone older than you. Whereas *tu* is used to talk to a friend, someone you know well, or people younger than you.

# WHAT TO AVOID

## Hispanic Vs AMERICAN TIME?

- I am not talking about time zones!
- Americans typically make schedules and appointments for everything; punctuality is engraved in our society.
- But, with very few exceptions, your entire perspective of American Time (being on time) disappears in Latin America.
- The Spanish word “*ahorita*” (now) is a great example of Hispanic Time is an integral way of Hispanic life.
- When someone tells you “*ahorita*” when you inquire about receiving a service, set a time. From the Hispanic perspective, “*ahorita*” can mean now, right now, five minutes, tomorrow, next week, and in some cases never!
- The sooner you realize you are now on Latin time, the sooner you will start to relax.





# WHAT TO AVOID

## Never Drink Latin America's Tap Water

- The tap water in Latin America is 100% not okay to drink pretty much anywhere, so never drink straight from the tap.
- That raises a problem:
- Latin America is super hot. So, **you NEED to drink a lot on your vacation**. Many tourists end up spending a lot of time chasing down something to drink and often get price gouged by enterprising vendors hawking bottled water. Buying bottled water quickly adds up, and the plastic kills the local environment.



## What to do?

- Take a large bottle of water with you when you leave the ship.
- You can also find cold soda for sale fairly cheaply at local mercados (markets).

# WHAT TO AVOID

## CASH SOCIETY

- Back home, plastic is king.
- Most payments for goods and services we make are either by credit or debit. And for the most part, that will be the case here.
- However, in Hispanic society, the Peso is king. For the average Hispanic, credit is expensive and rarely used.
- Outside of the tourist areas, there are many shops, local taquerías, and markets that only accept





# WHAT TO AVOID

## CASH SOCIETY

- In Latin America without Pesos in your pocket. You will need pesos to pay for various things, especially at local shops and restaurants and tipping. With that comes another issue of dealing with large bills and coins.
- It is safe to say that one of the biggest social challenges is having to deal with many merchants unable to break the \$500 or \$200 Peso note for a small purchase.
- A quick tip to help you with that problem is to go to any bank teller during their normal business hours and ask them to break a \$500 peso or \$200 peso bill into smaller change. Trust me, you'll need it.





# WHAT TO AVOID

- Never criticize the Virgin of Guadalupe or say anything about her that could be perceived as a slight (see [\*Catholicism in Latin America\*](#) under [\*\*Religion\*\*](#)).
- Do not stereotype Hispanics as ‘*narcotraficantes*’ (drug traffickers) or heavy drug consumers. Only a very small percentage of the population is engaged in such activity. Furthermore, consider that the current violence of cartels is driven by the Western consumption of drugs. Meanwhile, the Hispanic consumption of illicit drugs is lower than US levels.<sup>1</sup>
- Do not emphasize Latin America’s problems or seek to make people feel ashamed of them. Most Hispanics are disgusted by violence and want to redeem the reputation of Latin America in foreigners’ eyes. Furthermore, while they are very critical of their own nation’s issues, they do not need further judgement from outsiders – especially when this criticism is informed by stereotypes.







# WHAT TO AVOID

- Do not criticize another person in public, or in earshot of others. Deliver all sensitive news privately to avoid embarrassing others.
- Avoid referring to the United States as “America”. Latin America is also a North American country, and some people can find it frustrating when the term is used solely to refer to those from the USA. Therefore, Hispanics may call Americans ‘*estadounidenses*’ instead of ‘*americano*’ in Spanish.
- Do not imply that Hispanics are overcrowding the US or flooding the US border with undocumented immigration. In reality, the numbers of Hispanic migration has been steadily declining.<sup>2</sup>
- Do not imply that Hispanics are lazy. The population works more hours on average than any other nation.



# WHAT TO AVOID

- When visiting Mexico, if You Get a Paper Slip (FMM) at Customs, **Don't Lose It.**
- When the Latin American immigration officer hands back your stamped passport, pay attention because something else may be hidden.



# WHAT TO AVOID



- When visiting Mexico, if You Get a Paper Slip (FMM) at Customs, **Don't Lose It.**
- For years, visitors to Mexico had to fill out a little section at the end of the immigration form on break-away paper.
- The immigration officer would tear it off and stick it in your passport. This is called a Multiple Immigration Form (FMM).





# WHAT TO AVOID

- When visiting Mexico, if You Get a Paper Slip (FMM) at Customs, Don't Lose It.
- In 2022 Mexico started phasing out the FMM — so these days you *may* or *may not* get it, depending on your port of entry.



# WHAT TO AVOID

## Sports

- In North America, we love football. So many of us eagerly wait every year for football season to come around.





# WHAT TO AVOID

## Sports

- In *Latin America*, that's how it is with soccer or "fútbol." Their world-class teams are loved worldwide.



# WHAT TO AVOID

## Sports

- Latin America has a handful of traditional sports, as well. These include bullfighting, lucha libre (wrestling), and charrería (Rodeo).
- These sports are deeply ingrained in Hispanic culture.



# WHAT TO AVOID

## Beware of Car Rental Scams in Latin America

- If you search for rental cars in Latin America online, you'll likely be tempted by some crazy cheap rental car prices online (it's not uncommon to see rental cars listed online for as low as \$1/day).



# WHAT TO AVOID

## Beware of Car Rental Scams in Latin America

- If you rent a car in Latin America,
- As soon as you show up to the counter, the agents will insist you have to purchase their MASSIVELY overpriced insurance.
- Don't believe this Latin America travel scam for a second!





# WHAT TO AVOID

## Beware of Car Rental Scams in Latin America

- The best way to avoid this scam?
- Book through a well-known national chain.
- Expect to Pay Local Car Insurance in Latin America
- Latin America is one of the few places that *insists* on forcing foreign renters to purchase local liability insurance before allowing them to rent a car.



# Final Things to Do

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**When on shore  
remember to carry:**

**YOUR**

1. Passport
2. Driver's License
3. Cruise Card
4. Proof of vaccination







# Useful Apps

**Google Translate is a convenient language translators.**

- You can download an offline version, so you won't need internet access.

# LEARN SOME SPANISH

- Don't expect locals can speak English.
- When in Latin America if you need help ask a teenager. They probably can speak some English.
- The locals appreciate your effort when you speak some Hispanic when visiting their country.
- Hispanic are very friendly toward foreigners.
- It is fun to learn a new language.
- Travelling to Latin America is one of the things that makes learning Hispanic the most exciting.
- English speakers aren't so common in Latin America, especially outside the larger cities. So, if you want to discover Latin America and its secrets off the beaten path, knowledge of the language will get you much further than if you only stick to your own language.





# SPANISH VOCABULARY

Yes

No

Hello

Excuse me

Thank You

Please

Nice to meet you

No, I'm Good

You're Welcome

Good morning,

Good afternoon /

Good evening

Goodbye

Where is \_\_\_\_

Where is the toilet?

Help! I am lost?

I need Doctor

Do you speak English?

How much does this cost?

Can I use the internet?

Is there an English menu?

Sí

No

Hola

Disculpe

Gracias

por favor

Encantado de conocerlo

No, estoy bien

De nada

Buenos días

Buenas tardes

Buenas noches

Adiós

¿Dónde está \_\_\_\_

¿Dónde está el baño?

¡Ayuda! ¿Estoy perdido?

Necesito doctor

¿Hablas inglés?

¿Cuánto cuesta este?

¿Puedo usar Internet?

¿Hay un menú inglés?

# Summary

I hope I've educated  
and entertained you today.

I can be contacted by e-mail at [marc@soundscapeav.com](mailto:marc@soundscapeav.com)