

MEXICO

A CULTURAL OVERVIEW

Presented by
Fellow cruiser
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WHAT I WILL COVER

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



MEXICAN CULTURE

Embracing cultural differences
between the U.S. and Mexico

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



MEXICAN CULTURE

Embracing cultural differences between the U.S. and Mexico

- 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.



MEXICAN CULTURE

Mexico is not like the West!

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





MEXICAN CULTURE

Social norms

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



MEXICAN CULTURE

Family

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



MEXICAN CULTURE

Family

- U.S. 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 U.S. to move out of their parents’ homes at the age of 18.



MEXICAN CULTURE

Family

- This independence applies to finances as well as housing. Many 18-year-olds in the U.S. 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.



MEXICAN CULTURE

Family

- In Mexico, 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.



MEXICAN CULTURE

Family

- Families in Mexico 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.



MEXICAN CULTURE

Family

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

MEXICAN 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*").



MEXICAN CULTURE

Restroom Doors Marked With an "M" Are For the Ladies

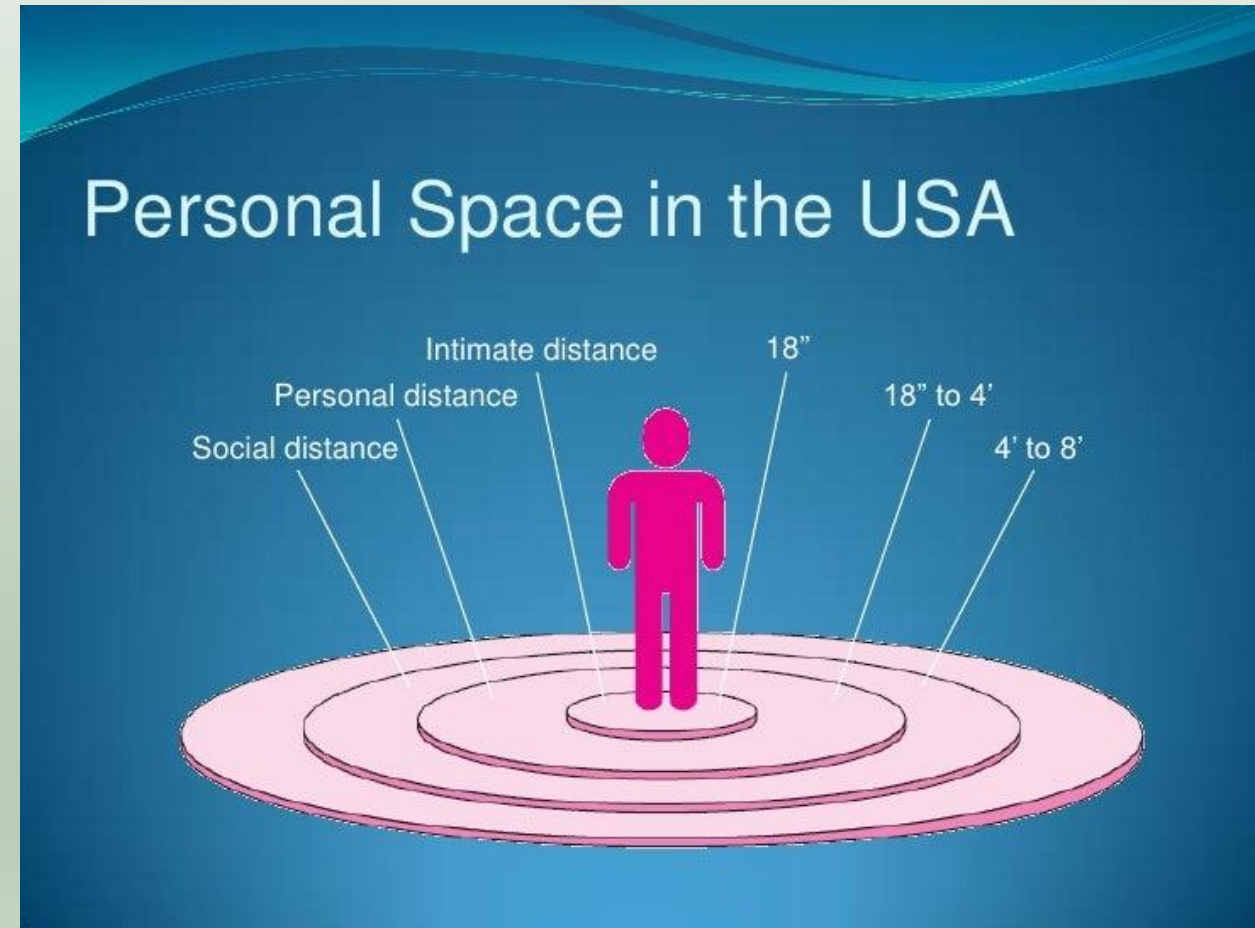
- It seems like a simple enough thing but going into the restroom marked "M" is almost habitual for English-speaking men.
- More than once, I've found myself barging into the wrong restroom!



MEXICAN CULTURE

Personal space

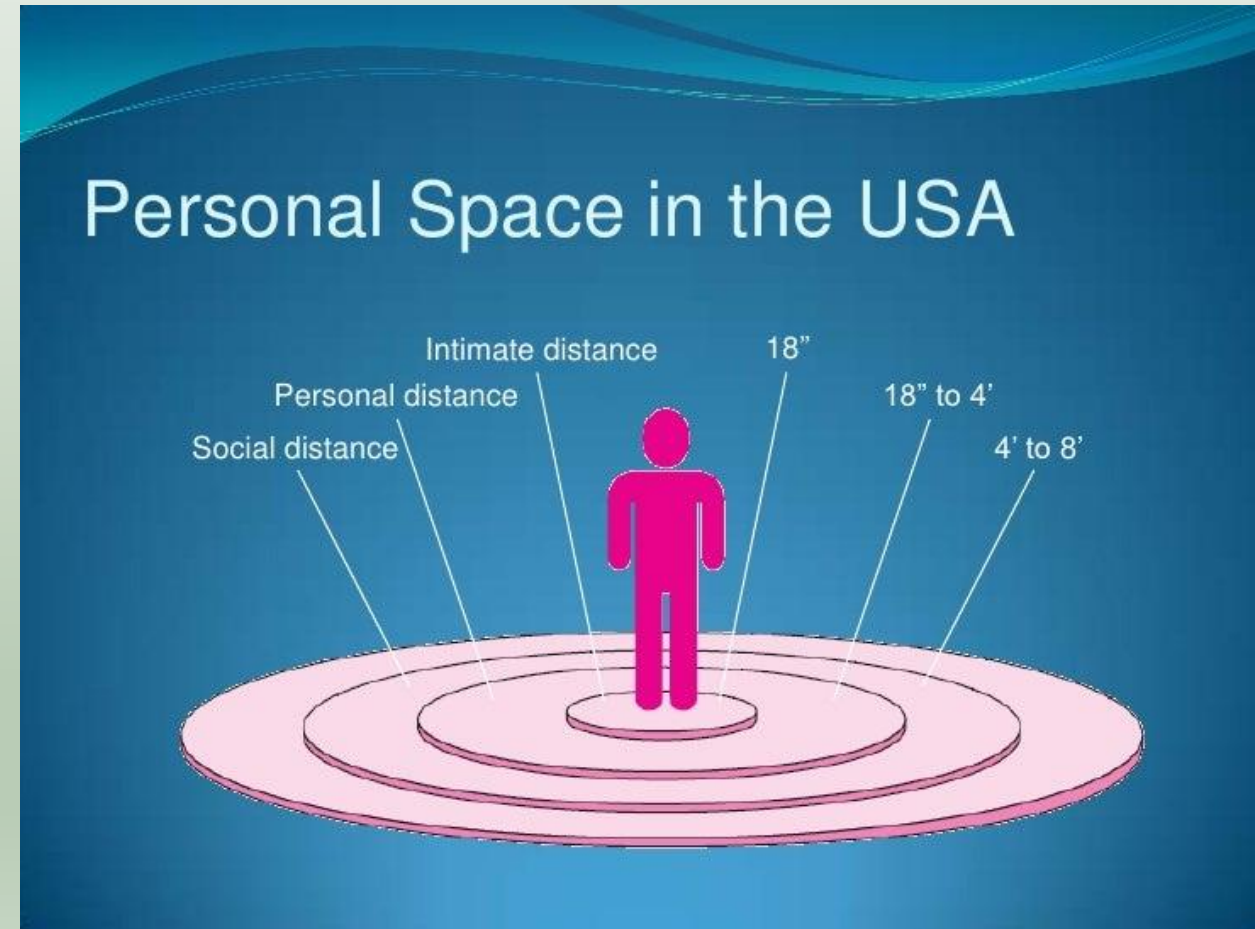
- Americans typically prefer to maintain a three-foot bubble of personal space. They may feel uncomfortable when strangers encroach on this space.



MEXICAN CULTURE

Personal space

- In Mexico, particularly in large Mexico Cities, 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.





MEXICAN CULTURE

Greetings and goodbyes

- Americans typically use a handshake or a hug to greet someone or say goodbye.
- In Mexico, 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 Mexico 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!

MEXICAN CULTURE

Noise

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



MEXICAN CULTURE

IF LUNCH IS DINNER, WHEN IS DINNER?

- In a traditional sense for Mexicans, 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.



MEXICAN CULTURE

Food

- Food is a big part of Mexican cultural tradition. In fact, UNESCO considers Mexican cuisine a part of Mexico's (and the world's) intangible cultural heritage.
- But the timing of meals is another difference between the Mexican and U.S. cultures. Lunch and dinner are typically eaten much later in Mexico than in the U.S.. Here are approximate mealtimes in Mexico:
 - 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 Mexico, tacos are often late-night food.



MEXICAN CULTURE

Here are a few other cultural differences between the U.S. and Mexico to keep in mind.

Religion

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



MEXICAN CULTURE

Work

- Mexicans 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 Mexico, where employees work some of the highest work hours per week in Mexico.
- Mexico, despite having the second-highest GDP in Mexico, Mexico has a much lower minimum wage than other countries. People in the U.S. are also known for putting in a long workweek, but the wages tend to be much higher.



MEXICAN CULTURE

Politics

- The politics of Mexico are very different from those of the U.S.. As a result of colonial influence as well as modern-day tensions, Mexicans tend to have little love for American foreign policy and its effect on the Mexican economy.
- The political spectrum in Mexico is a bit shifted to the left relative to the U.S.. In other words, what might be considered a "leftist" position in the U.S. is fairly centrist in Mexico.
- Mexico has a long history of active and popular socialist movements stretching from the time of each country's founding until now.
- The mainstream U.S. 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 Mexican counterpart. Mexicans 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.
- Try and offer your service to help with domestic duties or basic tasks whenever possible. Even if a Mexican declines your offer, it is polite to extend the gesture.
- Be sure to thank Mexicans for their hospitality. It is the only gesture expected in return for their generosity.
- Share stories from your country, home, and family life. Mexicans love tales from other parts of the world.
- Understand Mexico's cultural achievements and mention them when you see fit.
- Refer to Mexican migrants living in the U.S. without paperwork as “undocumented migrants”. Avoid using the term “illegal”.

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 U.S.D 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 Mexico *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 Mexico, it's almost ALWAYS a bad idea.
- Because the exchange rate you'll get from the merchant is probably not going to be reasonable.
- A better option is to change dollars at the best rate you can find, but the best option is to use 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).



- 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 HOU.S.E?

- 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 in two weeks or more?
- In Mexico, the problem is solved.
If you need a doctor for a minor ailment, just about every pharmacy offers a consultation, and you don't consider these doctors as "Doc in a Box."
- For about 50 pesos (approximately \$2.50), 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 United States.



WHAT TO DO

GROCERY BAGGERS

- Another big difference you will find Mexico 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.
- 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

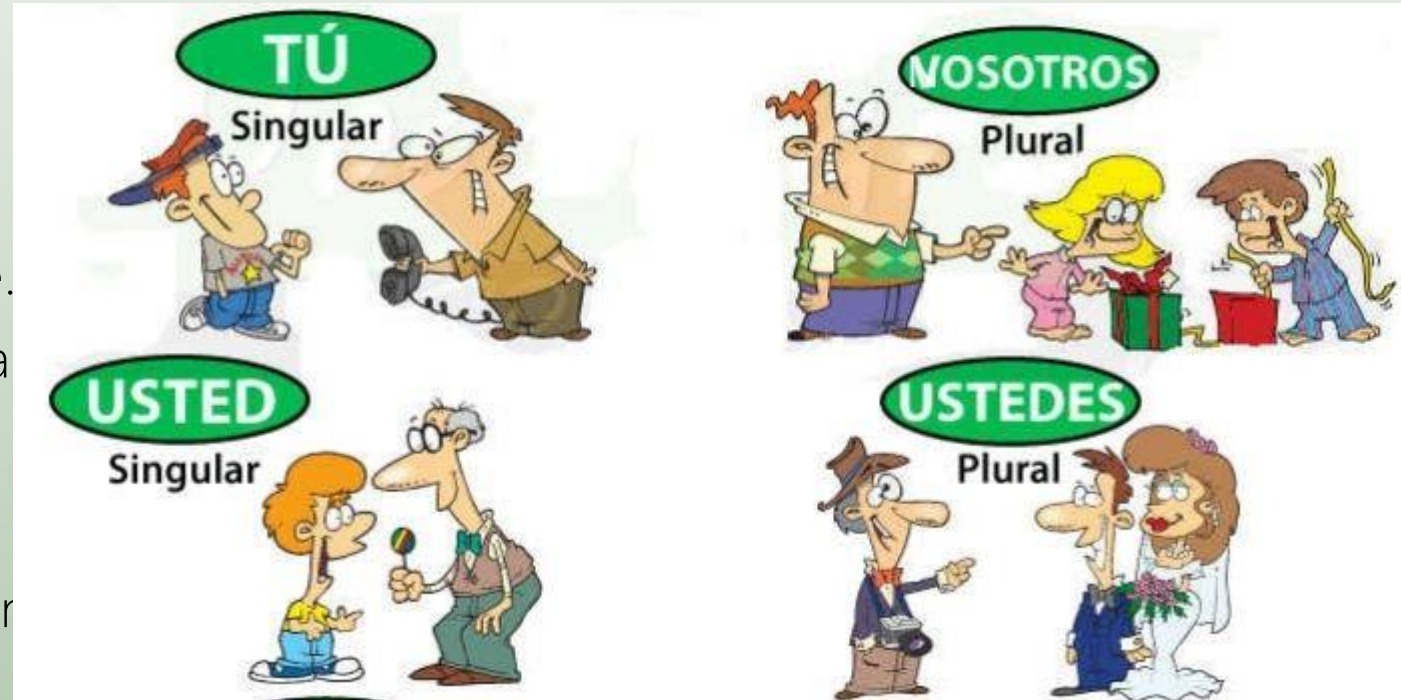
- Although most of Mexico has a casual vibe, it is important to dress modestly when visiting churches or religious sites.
- It is also recommended to wear comfortable shoes and clothing for outdoor activities.



WHAT TO AVOID

CHOOSE YOUR SPANISH WORDS WISELY OUT OF RESPECT

- Probably the largest social difference between Mexico 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.

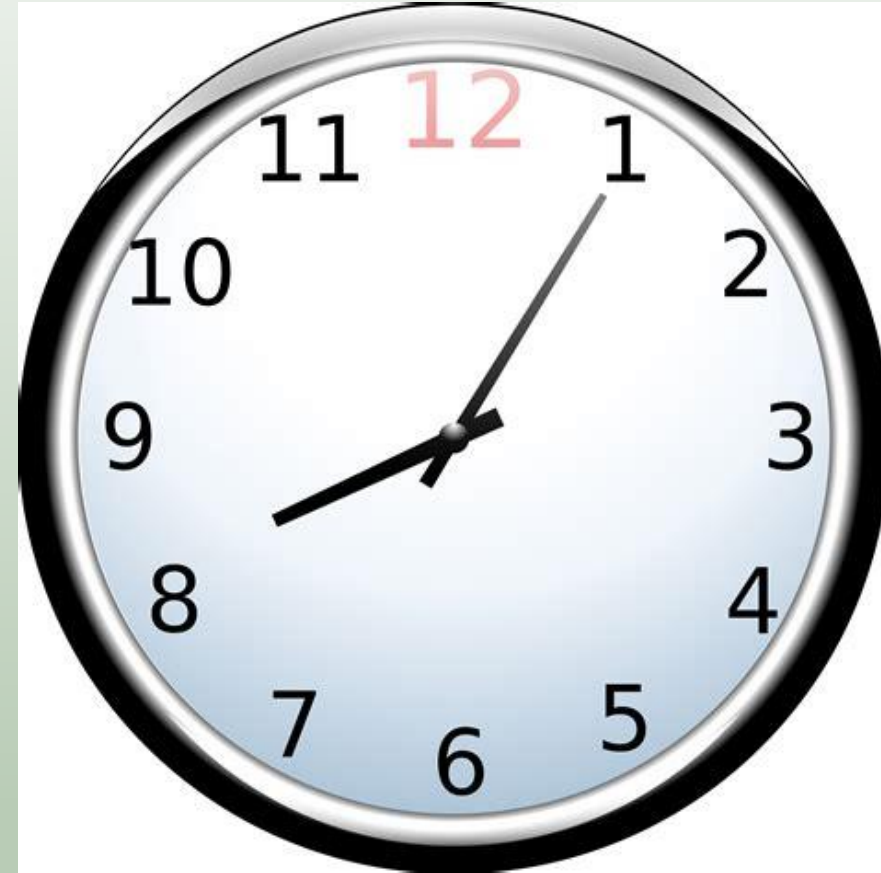


For example- *usted* and *tu* both mean you. However, *usted* is used to talk to someone you don't know or someone older than you. Whereas *tu* is used to talk to a friend, someone you know well, or people younger than you.

WHAT TO AVOID

Mexican 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 Mexican Time is an integral way of Mexican life. When someone tells you "*ahorita*" when you inquire about receiving a service, set a time. From the Mexican 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 Mexico's Tap Water

- The tap water in Mexico is 100% not okay to drink pretty much anywhere, so never drink straight from the tap.

That raises a problem:

- Mexic 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 Mexican society, the Peso is king. For the average Mexican, 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 Mexico don't go anywhere 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.
- Do not stereotype Mexicans as '*narco traficantes*' (drug traffickers) or heavy drug consumers. Only a very small percentage of the population is engaged in such activity. The Mexican consumption of illicit drugs is lower than U.S. levels.
- Do not emphasize Mexico's problems or seek to make people feel ashamed of them. Most Mexicans are disgusted by violence and want to redeem the reputation of Mexico 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". Mexico 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 U.S.A. Therefore, Mexicans may call Americans '*estadounidenses*' instead of '*americano*' in Spanish.
- Do not imply that Mexicans are overcrowding the U.S. or flooding the U.S. border with undocumented immigration. In reality, the numbers of Mexican migration has been steadily declining.
- Do not imply that Mexicans are lazy. Mexicans work more hours on average than any other nation.





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



WHAT TO AVOID

Sports

- Mexico has a handful of traditional sports, as well. These include bullfighting, lucha libre (wrestling), and charrería (Rodeo). These sports are deeply ingrained in Mexican culture.
- Do not underestimate their enthusiasm for the sport.

WHAT TO AVOID

Beware of Car Rental Scams in Mexico

- If you search for rental cars in Mexico 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 Mexic

- Don't believe this Mexico travel scam for a second! As soon as you show up to the counter, the agents will insist you have to have their MASSIVELY overpriced insurance.
- FYI, Insurance is necessary in Mexico! If you are in and collision and don't have insurance, you can expect jail time!



WHAT TO AVOID

Beware of Car Rental Scams in Mexic

- The best way to avoid this scam?
Book through a well-known national chain.
- Expect to Pay Local Car Insurance in Mexic
- Mexic 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 Dos and Don't

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 Mexico if you need help ask a teenager. They probably can speak some English.
- The locals appreciate your effort when you speak some Mexican when visiting their country.
- Mexican are very friendly toward foreigners.
- It is fun to learn a new language.
- Travelling to Mexico is one of the things that makes learning Mexican the most exciting.



LEARN SOME SPANISH

- English speakers aren't so common in Mexico, especially outside the larger cities. So, if you want to discover Mexico 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

Today I hope I've educated
and entertained you today.

I can be contacted by e-mail at marcs@sonic.net

Acknowledgement

My seminars are the result of many years of travel experience combined with many hours of research over the internet.

I would like to acknowledge the many source I have accessed.

These include: Wikipedia.com, Britannica.com, and the various Museum, Park and Government websites.