

## TRIP INFORMATION SHEET

Monarchs in Mexico

Led by David Schalliol, Professor of Sociology, and Molly Hanse, Curatorial Assistant in Performing Arts at the Walker Art Center

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### Welcome

Hello Study Travelers! We are grateful you have chosen to participate in Travel with St. Olaf College and are working to prepare a program worthy of your high expectations.

The mission of this Study Travel program is to:

- experience one of the most amazing phenomena in nature
- hike or ride horseback to three different monarch reserves in Michoacán, where millions of individual monarch butterflies gather
- see up close the dramatic colors of the butterflies as they hang in clusters from the trees, drink from streams, feed on wildflowers, and soar in the air above
- explore history at the pyramids at Teotihuacán
- encounter local life in colonial Angangueo
- encounter other perspectives while deepening your understanding of your own viewpoints
- engage in stimulating conversations with like-minded travelers

To achieve these goals, we will visit many sites and enjoy conversations throughout the program. Some days may be quite full, while others have more free time so that you may explore your own interests, reflect on what you are seeing and learning, enjoy the ambience of the ship, and to decompress. Time to process new ideas is integral to grasping the accuracy and implications of those ideas. Simply savoring the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of another culture can deepen your learning experience.

Equally important to reaching the program's goals is getting to know the others in your group. A rapport with those sharing your encounters can strongly enhance your learning experience. Connecting to and discussing issues raised by this Travel program with your fellow travelers can augment your encounters and strengthen your new feelings, perspectives and knowledge. Your program leaders will strive to create a relaxed, safe environment in which discussion flows easily and all perspectives are welcome.

I wish you an enriching and enlightening program.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heidi Quiram". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Heidi Quiram

Director of Alumni & Family Travel

### General Resources

As a reminder, please familiarize yourself with the many resources we have online at [stolaf.edu/travel](http://stolaf.edu/travel) > Menu > Prepare for your Adventure, including the overseas travel insurance coverage, how to be an independent group traveler, safety overview, and much more.

## Recommended Readings

The Resource List has been posted on the program web page under Resources: [stolaf.edu/travel](http://stolaf.edu/travel) > Menu > Browse by Destination+ > North & Central America+ > 2022 Mexico.

## A Thoughtful Journey

In the spirit of study travel, here are some questions to contemplate while you travel:

- what kinds of connections can I make with locals?
- how can we overcome preconceptions about the destination, culture, and people?
- in what ways can we build bridges to what we're seeing, hearing, doing, and learning?

Your faculty leader will also pose discussion questions throughout the program.

## Connecting to the Group

Everyone's flight information will be provided to the tour operator. You will be met at the Mexico City airport and transferred to the group hotel.

## A Typical Day

A typical day will normally start with a good breakfast and a departure time on our bus between approximately 8 and 9 a.m. On most days, we will set out to see one or more cultural sites or museums; we will coordinate our departure time in order to maximize our time at these sites. Factors will include opening and closing times as well as anticipated tourist traffic. We will typically return to the hotel in time to relax and freshen up for dinner, if not well before.

The days on this program are quite full. Your local guide or hotel front desk staff can provide many suggestions for free time on-site. Don't forget to use free time to process what you are learning, seeing and feeling, to shop, or simply to rest.

## Activity Level

This journey is for fit and active nature enthusiasts. Daily activities last for 5 or more hours. There are challenging excursions to butterfly colonies at altitudes of up to 10,400 feet. These involve steep uphill hikes of 30 minutes or more (hiking at your own pace), and require horseback riding for part of the way. Restrooms are only available at the base of the mountain. Also included are walking tours in provincial towns and in Mexico City. Here, at the Teotihuacán archaeological site, you can choose to climb two pyramids: the largest is over 200 feet high with 248 steep steps. Make sure to have an already-broken in pair of walking shoes along; on certain days, these will be your best friends.

## Weather

Be sure to check your favorite app or web site for forecasts in each city shortly before departure, keeping in mind that the forecast could change. Temperatures could fluctuate by 5 or 10 degrees warmer or cooler. We recommend bringing multiple light layers to that you can add or remove as necessary to stay comfortable.

## Clothing Suggestions

Be sure to dress comfortably; we will be out and about for several hours each day. Shorts and short-sleeves are perfectly acceptable attire. You might bring nice slacks to replace your shorts or jeans for the performance or two that we're working to line up during the program. However, men do *not* need a sport coat, nor do women need a dress. As mentioned above, we recommend bringing multiple light layers to that you can add or remove as necessary to stay comfortable.

## Meals

All meals are included from dinner on arrival day to breakfast on departure day. Breakfast will be at the hotel and may vary from continental to a more robust buffet. The midday meal is often a boxed lunch, and dinner is typically at the hotel. ***It's imperative that you have informed us of your dietary restrictions so that we can take these into account when ordering group meals.*** Non-alcoholic beverages and tips are included with group meals.

## Medical Facilities

If you are taking regular medicines or even home remedies, it is highly recommended that you bring along a sufficient supply.

Be aware that U.S. Medicare does not apply overseas, and that some travel medical insurance is included with your program fee, including emergency medical expenses, emergency medical evacuation, medical repatriation, accidental death and dismemberment, security evacuation, natural disaster evacuation, and some trip cancellation and trip interruption coverage.

Please visit the US State Department's web site for the latest Health information for each country. Get started at [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) and click on Country Information. Then type the country name into the box under "Learn about your destination."

## Hotel Notes

Not all homes or hotels in Mexico have central heating and it can get cold at night and in the early morning, so it is recommended that you bring warm sleeping clothes.

Some hotels will not provide shampoo or soap, this is often in support of green initiatives. Consider packing a travel sized version of hygiene products. Washcloths are not always supplied at hotels around the world, but may be available at the reception desk. Many showers outside the U.S. share a floor with the rest of the bathroom or will not have a shower curtain.

## Money

How much money you budget for this program depends on what you plan on how many souvenirs you wish to bring home. (Remember that all meals are included with your program fee.)

We strongly recommend carrying a variety of forms of money, so you will not be without funds if one form should fail or be stolen. ATMs should be available in Mexico City.

Pickpocketing is prevalent around the world; we recommend you carry your money and credit cards in a buttoned pocket or money belt — i.e., someplace secure. Pick-pocketing is most common at bus and train stations, at ATMs, and around tourist hotels. Be especially careful in those situations! Cash, if stolen, cannot be replaced. Credit cards can be replaced if stolen, but you will be charged a fee by your bank to use them overseas.

It's typically helpful, too, to inform your bank/credit card company before departure that you'll be traveling and to which countries.

In Mexico the currency is the peso, designated as \$ or MX\$ or MXN. The exchange rate as of December 9 was approximately USD1.00 to MXN21.00. Thus something that is MX\$210 =US\$10, MX\$2100 = US\$100, etc.

## Time Difference

The time zone in Mexico City is the same as Minneapolis.

## Metric Conversion

The rest of the world uses the metric system of measurement. You will find temperatures given in degrees Celsius, gas and oil sold by liters (1 U.S. gallon = 3.78 liters), and road speeds posted in kilometers per hour (1 mile = 1.6 kilometers).

To convert Celsius to Fahrenheit:

- multiply the Celsius temperature by 9
- divide the answer by 5
- add 32

Thus, if the temperature is 20 degrees Celsius:  $20 \times 9 = 180 \div 5 = 36 + 32 = 68$  degrees Fahrenheit.

Others say you can simply take the Celsius temperature, double it, and then add 32. For example, if the temperature is 20 degrees Celsius:  $20 \times 2 = 40 + 32 =$  about 72 degrees Fahrenheit.

## Electricity

Most gadgets and chargers these days – for laptops, tablets, and phones, whether Apple or Android – are Dual Voltage: Dual voltage appliances are designed to work on either 110V or 220V without a converter. Be sure to check this before you leave. In any case, you will still need the proper adapter to plug into the foreign outlet. The countries in this region are of the two round pin variety (like most of Europe).

If you bring your own hair dryer or electric razors, you will likely need both a converter and an adapter. Converters and adapters can be found at regular stores such as Best Buy, Target, and Walmart.

## Airport Security

Visit [tsa.gov/travel](https://www.tsa.gov/travel) for up-to-date guidelines on getting through the security lines faster, what you can bring, the liquids rule, proper identification, and more. ***More information on COVID-19 protocols will be provided closer to departure.***

## Customs (Going Home)

You may import \$800.00 worth of goods duty-free and must pay a 10% tax on the next \$1,000.00. You must declare all purchases, so keep sales receipts, especially for larger purchases. When your purchases exceed \$800 you can avoid paying customs fees by mailing to yourself items costing up to \$200 and marked “personal purchases.” Of course, you would want to check that the postage paid isn’t greater than the customs fee. Mail only one package per day, because multiple packages mailed the same day and exceeding \$200 when added together will be charged the appropriate customs fee. Limitations exist for tobacco, alcohol and perfume. For more information visit the U.S. Customs and Border Protection web site at [www.cbp.gov](https://www.cbp.gov). Click on the Travel section, then choose “Pleasure and Vacation Travel (Know Before You Go).”

## Packing Tips

- Mix and match several items of clothing. Pick a scheme like black, brown or navy.
- Take an all-purpose jacket, one that is warm, can double as rain gear, and has pockets.
- Do not take anything that would upset you if you lost it, such as valuables and jewelry.
- Take only comfortable shoes. Match all or most of your wardrobe with one or two pairs.
- Roll clothing in your suitcase to maximize space and cut down on wrinkling.

- A dressier outfit is appropriate for any performances that may be scheduled on your program (i.e., not jeans).
- Small backpacks are very useful as a day pack. Many days we will be out and about for several hours and you will want to carry water, a small umbrella, and layers.

### **Don't forget to pack**

- Credit card account numbers and toll-free phone numbers for card replacement
- Insurance contact information
- A copy of the itinerary — if your name and flight tags go missing, the airline will still know how to contact you or where to send your luggage
- Contact solution or an extra pair of glasses in case you break or lose yours, and your prescription
- Perhaps a small, battery powered alarm clock if you're not bringing your cell phone
- A wash cloth, if you regularly use this item at home. Many overseas hotels do not provide them
- Electrical plug adapters. You may also need voltage converters to go from the usual 110 volts in the U.S., to the 220 volts elsewhere in the world, though most electronics now have these converters built in to the cord.

### **Items to carry with you**

- Neck safe or money belt
- Passport and another picture ID
- Overseas or non-toll free numbers for credit card replacement
- Medical insurance card
- Travel insurance provider information and contact numbers
- Prescription medications in their original containers
- Small amount of over-the-counter medications for headaches or allergy relief (these items are readily available for purchase at reasonable prices throughout our journey)

### **Items to leave with someone at home**

- Copy of the identification page of your passport
- Credit card account numbers and toll-free phone numbers for card replacement
- Photocopy of your medical insurance card
- Travel insurance provider information and contact numbers
- Photocopy of your itinerary, which will include hotel contact information closer to departure
- Prescription medication information

Visit [www.onebag.com](http://www.onebag.com) for more packing tips, including what to pack, what to pack it in, how to pack and packing lists.

### **Miscellaneous Tips**

- Investigate – prior to departure – how to replace lost traveler's checks and credit cards.
- Bring with you only those credit cards and documents you will need.
- Do not take or wear expensive jewelry. It can be stolen, even when you are wearing it.
- Put your name and address on the outside and the inside of each piece of luggage.
- Make sure you receive a claim check for each piece of checked luggage.
- Read the fire safety instructions in hotels and know where the exits are located.

**If you have any questions at any time, do not hesitate to contact the Travel Director:**

**Heidi Quiram**

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