

- **Welcome!**
- **Practical Information**
 - **Staff in Mérida**
 - **Computers, Phones, and Internet**
 - **Medical Information and Insurance**
 - **Travel and Arrival Information**
 - **Weather**
 - **Packing and Appropriate Clothing**
 - **Laundry**
 - **Electricity**
 - **Food**
 - **Transportation**
 - **Exchange Currency**
- **Cultural Considerations**
 - **Holidays**
 - **Cultural Sensitivity**
 - **Diversity in Mexico**
 - **Pace of Life**
 - **Etiquette**
 - **Special Issues for Women**
 - **LGTBQ+ Students**
- **The city of Mérida**
 - **General Information**
 - **The city and surroundings**
 - **Gastronomy**
 - **Culture**
 - **Events and fun**
 - **Museums**
- **FAQ's**
- **Other links**



Hello!

On behalf of everyone working for this program back home and in Mérida, we want to congratulate and welcome you. We hope that the experience of studying abroad will contribute to your professional and personal future. Our purpose is to support you so that over the period of time you will be in Mérida you can expand your Spanish-language skills, refine your cross-community and cross-cultural skills, and deepen your knowledge of Mexico.

In this document there is some practical information that we hope will help clear some of the first questions you might have at this point. If you have any questions or other comments please do not hesitate in contacting us and we will be glad to assist you.

¡Bienvenidxs!

Tsikbal International Education Agency

Practical Information

Staff in Mérida

Tsikbal International Education Agency was founded in 1994 and has worked with different study abroad programs in different formats. We have a lot of experience and are here to support you and help you navigate the culture so please let us know if you have any questions regarding the program or anything else.



Your main contact in Merida is Claudia Chapa-Cortés, she is the Director of Tsikbal and will be able to assist if you need anything. Her email is cchapa@tsikbal.com.mx



Anabel Flota-Aguilar is our local coordinator and will be able to assist you as well, her email is informes@tsikbal.com.mx

Computers, Phones, and Internet

We recommend that if you have one, you bring a laptop to Mérida with you. You will need to continue turning in assignments electronically, and it is rare to have access to public computers. If you do not have access to a laptop or do not want to bring your computer to Mexico you may want to coordinate with other students in the program to share computers while in the program.

Cell phones are a good resource while in Mérida. If you have an international cell phone plan, make sure it is activated before you leave the U.S. If your cell phone plan does not work in Mexico, you can use wifi to communicate with friends and family. If you haven't done so, please download the app "WhatsApp": it will be the easiest way to communicate with homestays and others, as it's widely used in Mexico and other countries in Latin America.

You will have access to wireless internet in your homestays. There are also coffee places that have wifi. Merida has a number of public parks that have free wifi too.

Medical Information and Emergencies

Here is the link to the vaccines recommended for Mexico by the Center for Disease Control: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/mexico>. Please note that there is no malaria risk in the state of Yucatán. Other mosquito-borne illnesses (such as Zika and Chikunkunya) may, however, be of concern. We recommend that you come prepared with mosquito repellent and use it in the mornings and evenings to prevent mosquito bites.

If you have a medical condition that might put your health at risk and feel comfortable sharing this information, please let your institution and local staff in Merida know. **If you are currently taking medications, make sure to bring enough for your stay.** Medicines do change between countries, and you might not be able to find what you need. In addition, medicines in Mexico might not be covered by your insurance. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact your home institution before you come.

You should all have your health information forms and your insurance card with you at all times. If someone becomes ill or needs a doctor's appointment, your faculty Director will assist you by making an appointment and taking you to the doctor or the pharmacy. Most of the time, if a student needs medical attention, they will be taken into a private clinic, which means the student would have to pay a fee. Students are advised to take receipts of medication and/or invoices back home so they can be reimbursed by their insurance company.

There are 24 hour pharmacies in Merida and several hospitals in case of an emergency, once you arrive you will receive more information about this. If there is an emergency and you need the police or an ambulance, you should dial 911 from any local or cell phone.

Travel and arrival information

Travel Documents

1. Passports: U.S. citizens must have a valid passport that expires at least 6 months after the date of your return ticket.
2. Visas & Immigration: U.S. citizens receive visas upon entry into Mexico. You do not need to apply ahead of time. When you receive the visa form on the plane, check **TOURIST** for your reason for being in the country/status. Do not choose student or anything else. **SAVE THE VISA PAPER THEY GIVE YOU BACK AND KEEP IT WITH YOUR PASSPORT.** Use your homestay address as your foreseen address:
3. Customs: You will receive a separate customs form on your arriving flight. This should be straightforward.
4. If you are not a U.S. citizen, please communicate with your Study Abroad office about visa requirements.

Where to go once in Merida: Depending on your program, you might be picked up by your Faculty Director or your homestay directly, please communicate with your local institutions to make sure you have the right information. Send flight itineraries as soon as you purchase them.

Weather

The weather in the Yucatan Peninsula is considered tropical. Please be prepared for very, very hot weather. Temperatures might vary a little but in general during the summer, temperatures can go up to 35-40°C. Being a tropical place, humidity is important. When we have warm temperatures the humidity makes it warmer and when temperature goes down, humidity makes it colder too. The percentage of humidity might vary but in general is 70-90%. You can check the weather at www.weather.com and have a better idea.

Packing and Appropriate clothing

Most students ask our advice on packing. From a lot of experience packing we would say, pack, and once you think you are done, take out half of whatever you packed and then you are ready to go. Remember you will buy souvenirs and some handcrafts, so you want to leave some space for that too.

Remember this is a tropical place, it is hot and mosquito repellent and sun block will be your best allies. Light, breathable clothing, bathing suit, sandals, flip flops, sun glasses, comfortable walking shoes and tennis shoes are highly recommended. We would also

suggest a light jacket and a rain coat since some days it could get rainy. Some students bring their own medicine in case they get a flu or a mosquito bite (we have a lot of bugs because of humidity) so if you want to bring some you can do so.

You should also know Mexico is more conservative regarding clothing – many locals wear long pants and sometimes also long sleeves (even in very hot weather). If you decide to visit a church, no student should wear shorts, and everyone must have their shoulders covered (i.e., no tank tops). Please be particularly mindful of your clothing when visiting a community outside the city. Modifying your dress accordingly is a sign of respect and cultural adaptation.

You need to be able to carry any and all bags that you bring by yourself. We recommend one checked bag and one carry on. You will need a manageable bag for any trips and a backpack for shorter excursions. You may want to consider splitting your items in your checked luggage 50/50 with a friend in case your baggage is misplaced by the airline. Suggested items to pack include:

- Shower shoes (flip flops, etc.)
- Comfortable walking shoes (tennis shoes, etc.)
- A lightweight jacket or sweater for cool nights
- Bathing suit
- Comfortable clothes for outdoor classes: jeans, T-shirts, appropriate shorts, polo shirts, etc.
- Bring prescription medicines in their original bottles
- Sunscreen
- Mosquito repellent
- Toiletries
- Sunglasses
- Journal
- Mesh laundry bag
- Refillable water bottle and portable coffee mug (if you like to drink coffee or tea)
- Small gifts for your homestays and for hosts on shorter excursions. These should be something that represents where you are from (local candies, craft items etc.)
At a minimum, you should bring one for your host family.

Laundry

Homestays do not include laundry but they will show you where to go. Most homestays have a laundry mat close by. Most laundry mats in Mexico do not necessarily let you do the laundry, you need to leave your clothes and they will wash it for you and you should come back the next day to pick it up. The cost varies but it ranges from \$8-\$10 pesos for one kilo.

Electricity

In Mexico voltage is the same as in the US. Sometimes you may find different plugs (two holes instead of three) so if you want to bring an electronic device with you (such as laptop, hair drier, etc) do bring one converter just in case.

Food

The first days you should be careful with what you eat. Mexican food tends to be spicy and it is normal if you get stomach aches the first days while your body gets used to different types of food. As for food in Yucatan, we eat a lot of pork and corn, you will be able to try different dishes from the state and from the country. We have the spiciest pepper in the country that is called “Habanero” and you should be careful because some of the sauces in restaurants have this pepper without knowing. It would be better to ask if the sauce is spicy or not.

Remember you have to drink bottled water only. You will find purified water at your homestay and any convenience store or OXXO (24-hrs stores located everywhere in the country).

Transportation

Mérida is a large city and has a wide transportation system. People normally move throughout the city by urban bus, that we call a “camion.” We have many lines that connect the city and you’ll be riding buses to go to school and other places. The bus costs \$7.5 pesos. There are no monthly passes nor transfer tickets.

We also use taxis, they are reliable and not expensive. Most of them have what we call “taxímetro” which gives you the rate and how much you’ll be paying when you get off. If the taxi does not have a meter, you should arrange with the taxi driver for a price before getting into it. There are also free apps you can download in your cell phone to use like Uber, Cabify, Lyft and others.

Mérida has an international airport that connects the city with different cities in the country and in the US. Cancun’s airport is close and there are many more international flights arriving to Cancun than to Mérida.

Exchange currency

You can exchange money in any bank, though most of the times they will ask you to have an account with them or charge you a fee. You can also exchange money in any exchange place throughout town. Exchange rate varies from one day to another. You can check the exchange rates at <https://www.oanda.com/lang/es/currency/convert/>

If you do not have cash to exchange, there are ATM's everywhere throughout the city and you can use them without a problem. Normally there's a fee charged so it's not advised to withdraw money so often. You can also use your credit/debit card almost everywhere but they will ask you for an ID when you want to purchase something. Do not forget to let your bank know you will be coming to México, otherwise your card could be blocked.

Cultural considerations

Holidays

Mexico has a lot of holidays, both religious and secular. A few of the most significant are Independence Day (Sept. 16), Revolution Day (Nov. 20), Day of the Dead (Nov. 1-2), Holy Week (full week before Easter), Juarez Day (March 21), and Labor Day (May 1). Do not be surprised to hear fireworks late at night or to have to change your route because of an impromptu parade on other days as well. Also, if you hear fireworks and loud singing at 5 a.m., it is probably your neighbor's birthday.

Cultural Sensitivity

You are an ambassador of both your institution and US culture while travelling abroad. Keep in mind your actions and attitudes will influence how you are perceived and treated and how we as a group are perceived and treated. Use your better judgment, remember that you are a guest in the Yucatán, receive hospitality graciously, and remember that the cultural frameworks (values, assumptions, and customs) of people that you encounter may be radically different than your own.

In Mérida, you will see hundreds of other Americans over the course of your stay, sometimes literally by the busload. Pay attention to what makes them stand out, and modify your behavior accordingly. When you travel to small towns and villages, be particularly aware of local customs and be willing to try new things.

Diversity in Mexico

Mexico is a diverse country. The Yucatán in particular has a diverse mix of indigenous and mestizo culture. Because Mérida is a large city, taking photographs in public places is fine. However, beyond Mérida or tourist zones such as Maya ruins, you should always ask before taking someone's photograph. If you expect to take a lot of photographs during this trip, it is polite to bring some printed photographs of you with your own family and friends as a form of cultural exchange with people you meet who you choose to photograph.

Pace of Life

Pace of life in Mexico is often slower than in the US. Be prepared for times to be approximate, for services to be less efficient by US standards, and for conversations to matter more than programs. Be patient and be flexible, but please be on time for class.

Etiquette

Much of Mexican culture is guided by etiquette and formality in social situations. A few simple rules will serve you well in participating properly in this etiquette. Always say good morning, hello and goodbye when interacting with someone, even if it is just someone you are passing on your way into a store (“Buenos Dias “in the morning, “Buenas Tardes” in the afternoon, and “Adios” for goodbye). If you know someone well (like your homestay family), then you should take time to exchange pleasantries and ask about his or her well-being whenever you meet. When you start a meal or if you are leaving a meal while others are still eating, tell them “Buen Provecho,” which is like saying Bon Appetit. Finally, it is common to offer a kiss on the cheek when offering a greeting (but you do not have to do this if it makes you uncomfortable).

Special Issues for Women

Machista culture in Mexico may affect you in one of two ways. First, young female travellers from the US, especially in the tourist zones, have a reputation for being frivolous and careless. Whether you are acting like them or not, this may make you the target of unwanted sexual advances in social settings (clubs, bars, coffee shops, etc.). Be very wary of social conversations and be careful about being misinterpreted. The second issue is that it is relatively common for some men to wolf whistle and make comments about women on the street. If this happens, do what Mexican women do and ignore them. Walking away is your best option. If you feel threatened, go into a public place with lots of people like a restaurant and ask for help.

LGTBQ+ Students

It is very important to know that some people from Merida can be conservative about people who identify as LGTBTTiQ+. However, it is not common to experience explicit negative reactions from the Yucatecans. The city has gotten bigger and more diverse, that’s why we now have a lot of different LGTBTTiQ+ organizations and also inclusive and friendly LGTBTTiQ+ spaces. If at any point you need to discuss anything about your experience, we are here to listen.

The City of Mérida

General Information

Mérida is the capital of the state of Yucatan. The city itself has around 1 million habitants but if we count the suburbs it goes up to 1.2 million. Yucatan has boundaries with two states, on the east with Quintana Roo and on the west with Campeche. The three states together form what we call the “Península de Yucatán.”

The official languages are Spanish and more than 50 indigenous languages throughout the country. Maya language is widely spoken throughout the state. According to the last census, approximately 40% of the population of the state of Yucatan speaks Maya language, some of these people are bilingual and also speak Spanish. Mérida is known as “The White City” because of history back when the Spaniards arrived in this region. Mérida is considered a medium size city compared to larger cities in the country like Mexico City, Guadalajara, or Monterrey.

Even though Mérida is a large city with a lot of movement and activities going on, we can still find the relaxed, laid-back way of life with nice people on the streets willing to help and with a lot of local traditions that represents the Yucatecan people.

Mérida and surroundings

Mérida invites you to experience the charm and magic of the ancient corners of its Historical Center, linked by wide, tree-lined streets. From the parish of St. Christopher in the east to Santiago in the west; from La Ermita de San Sebastian (the Hermitage of St. Sebastian) in the north to Santa Ana in the south, tour her suburbs with the austere facades of ancient homes, view the variety of traditional occupations, small neighborhood stores, and flower and fruit markets where vendors cry their wares of candied fruits and homemade ices.

Mérida will please you with her serenade (concert) in Santa Lucia, with public dances to the sound of a “big band” orchestra, and with its history displayed in the Mejorada, where a magnificent convent dating to the colonial era and a former military fort, which is now open to the public. The Plaza Grande or Main Square, is the central point for all walking tours. Here a wide variety of Mérida’s characters meet, demonstrating the intense activity of the cultural capital of the Yucatán Península.

The Yucatán Península has 360 kilometers of coastline. Just twenty minutes north of Mérida the Port of **Progreso** welcomes visitors with a warmth that characterizes the people of the Yucatan. Although the main economic activities are fishing, and a commercial port with Customs facilities, as of November of 2001, Progreso also receives cruises.

In the eastern section of the state and close to Chichen Itza is the city of **Valladolid**. Its position exactly halfway between Mérida and Cancun has helped in its economic development as an area constantly open to the flow of tourists. The main architectonic elements which characterize Valladolid are from the Colonial Era, and are easily identified thanks to the careful rescue work and refurbishment of a large number of facades and streets, as well as many public buildings such as convents, the City Hall and the Cathedral. The dynamism of the people of Valladolid has a great influence on the communities which surround the city. To visit here is to meet the most rooted traditions of the Maya people.

Gastronomy

The traditional food of Yucatan reflects the mixture of Hispanic and Mayan cultures. The exquisite flavor of Yucatecan cuisine emanates from traditional recipes and fresh ingredients. Maiz, or corn is an essential component of Yucatecan dishes, and is consumed in abundance. Some typical dishes such as lime soup, papadzul and Motul-style eggs all use fried tortillas in their preparation; other dishes such as the panucho or salbute are prepared with masa, or the tortilla dough. Turkey and pork are also used widely in Yucatecan cuisine, and is the basic ingredient of a wide variety of succulent traditional dishes.

Mérida has an infinite number of restaurants where one can enjoy all kinds of food, from the most elemental and economic to the most sophisticated and elegant, as well as gourmet restaurants offering international cuisine. One restaurant not to be missed is “La Chaya Maya” where they serve typical regional food and it is located downtown.

Culture

Mérida celebrates an intense cultural life 365 days of the year, and those who come to visit become participants in local daily life. Merida has been appointed as the Interamerican Capital of Culture for two years already. There are many free events happening through town that you should not miss! The city, captivating and enchanting, is committed to constantly improving that image to the world. As such, every night the historical downtown district hosts an unforgettable cultural evening such as the traditional Yucatecan "jarana" (dance) presented in front of the City Hall every Monday evening; on Sunday music fills the air with the salsa and cumbia rhythms of two orchestras. In cultural and performing arts centers near the Main Square, you can enjoy drama plays, folk dances, movies and scenic arts at the Mérida Theater located just a few steps away from the City Hall.

Events and Fun

Every week

MONDAY

“Vaquería” A traditional Yucatecan dance

Place: Mérida City Hall (Ayuntamiento)

Calle 62 between 61 and 63 Centro

9:00 PM

You cannot miss this activity! The Vaquería is an old activity that has its origins in the 18th century when livestock farming was the main source wealth in the State of Yucatan. This party was held to celebrate the branding and counting of cattle and was famous by its original dances performed by Mayas and Mestizos. Because of the presence of both cultures, the people would dance to old mayan songs mixed with Spanish music. From that time on, this dancing was called “Jarana”. Every Monday for the past 22 years, Mérida celebrates this party at the city hall in order to preserve and demonstrate the tradition as a way to welcome the visitors.

TUESDAY

“Bailes del Recuerdo”

Parque Santiago

Calle 72 and 59

8:30 hrs

Every Tuesday night, you can experience the romanticism of Yucatecan Big Band music of the 40’s and 50’s. Parque de Santiago was originally visited by the old people who lived in a nearby nursing home and who were there to be cheered up by listening to the music of their time. Nowadays, the park has become a place where locals (of all ages) meet to listen and dance to the contagious music of the Big Band Era.

If you are feeling hungry after dancing, try our traditional local food such as panuchos, salbutes, tamales or an exquisite sopa de lima at the adjoining market.

WEDNESDAY

“Free shows at Olimpo”

Calle 62 and 61 Plaza Grande

9:00 PM

This is a great event to relax after a busy day, Olimpo Cultural Centre offers a variety of activities such as plays, movies, concerts, exhibitions and performances to locals and visitors. This Cultural Center has the only planetarium in town. After the event, most people wonder around the plaza and as a tradition have a great ice cream in the legendary “Sorbetería Colón” which is a locally famous ice cream shop known for their handmade ice cream and their flavors of fruits of the region.

Also on a Wednesday all the movie theaters have a 2 for 1 special, they are located in malls such as Gran Plaza, Plaza Altabrisa and Galerías.

THURSDAY

“Recordar es Vivir”

Parque Zoológico del Centenario

Calle 59 and Avenida Itzaes

4:00 PM

This is the opportunity to do two different things in one place; visit Mérida’s Zoo and participate on a dancing event. The zoo was opened in 1910 and was a representative symbol of the City built to commemorate Mexico’s Independence. It is a small zoo compared to others in the world but you can enjoy a tranquil afternoon surrounded by tropical vegetation, looking at the different species of animals and of course a ride on the famous train, which will take you around the zoo and into a famous tunnel, the best of all, it only costs 2 pesos to ride it. After the experience with the nature, the Trova music starts. Musicians from Mérida play in the park for visitors; this will be just a warming of what is next the same day.

“Serenata Yucateca”

Parque de Santa Lucía

Calle 60 and 55

9:00 PM

Mérida is also known as the romantic city, because of its Trova music. On every Thursday Santa Lucía Park becomes an excellent place to have an unforgettable night of dining and romantic yucatecan music at the light of the candles and enjoy the Serenade, this event has been performed throughout the years and never fails to captivate the audience.

FRIDAY

“NOCHE ROMÁNTICA”

La Ermita

Calle 66 and 77

9:00 PM

Though its façade is very simple, this yellow catholic church is a meeting place of a romantic night of Trova music brought by the City of Mérida. This church has an antique charnel house built in 1762 and a baptismal font that has been turned into a beautiful garden open to the public. On Friday night the plaza becomes a dance floor for neighbors and visitors of the surroundings.

SATURDAY

“Noche Mexicana”

Paseo de Montejo and calle 47

8:00 PM

Saturday’s Mexican fiesta begins at the Paseo de Montejo. Every week, the city offers a big celebration with mariachi, live bands, singers and stilt walkers. Saturday nights are an exciting and fun evening where locals, national and international visitors interact. Dancing at the streets is expected. Around that area, there are also artisans with

handcrafts and vendors. During the night, many restaurants put their tables out in the streets for visitors to enjoy a nice outdoor dinner while watching a show or listening to music. The whole area of down town becomes a pedestrian and party place to walk around and enjoy. Also on Saturday nights, theatre Peon Contreras has local, national or even international plays and concerts.

SUNDAY

“Mérida en Domingo”

Plaza Grande Calle 60 and 61

9:00 AM

The Plaza Grande becomes a festival on Sundays, the streets are closed to the traffic and magic begins. The people from all around Mérida come out to visit downtown and enjoy the music which does not stop for 12 hours. Food, drinks, ice cream, candy and souvenirs are on sale from vendor stalls set up all around the Plaza Grande and side streets. Some people rent bicycles to ride around the plaza and experience the feeling of being in a tranquil neighborhood while being in the center of a big city.

Mérida, has a great number of places to have fun and there is always an option to go out, relax or exercise. There is a big variety of places where you can go and enjoy the morning, afternoon or night. During the morning people use the parks to exercise and play different sports such as soccer, basketball or baseball. One of the most visited places in the morning is the Estadio Salvador Alvarado, which is a big training place that belongs to the state and is open for free to the public. Most times is used for practices, but sometimes local, national and international competitions take place there. During the afternoon some people spend their time in the downtown area or go to the movie theatre, frequently they are in English and subtitled in Spanish.

At night, there are a great variety of places to have dinner. Dinning in Mérida can be really pleasant since there are a number of restaurants which serve food from all over the world, from tacos to sushi or from nachos to pasta; although there are restaurants that serve a variety of international food, there are also restaurants specialized on certain food such as Italian, Spanish, Brazilian, Japanese, Chinese, Lebanese, American, etc. After dinner, there are always places to hang out and/or go dancing.

Museums

Museum of Modern Art of Yucatán (MACAY) Ateneo Peninsular



Located next to the Cathedral, the MACAY has various rooms for temporary exhibitions of the work of national and foreign artists as well as permanent exhibits of Yucatecan artists such as Gabriel Ramirez, Fernando Castro Pacheco and Fernando Garcia Ponce.

Street 60 xs 61, Center. Tels. 928 32 58 / 928 32 36 Opened of Wednesday to Monday from 10:00 to 18:00 hrs

Museo Palacio Cantón



The Canton Palace, located on the well-known Paseo de Montejo in the corner of 43rd Sts. was built during the last years of the regime of Porfirio Diaz. This small palace is one of the most beautiful buildings of the city, and was the home of General Francisco Canton Rosado until he died. The building is known for its sumptuous decoration including the floors, walls, and a staircase made of different color marbles, as well as fine moldings.

The building now houses the Cantón Museum where they host temporary exhibitions.

Tel. 923 05 57 Opens from Tuesday to Saturday from 9:00 to 20:00 hrs and Sundays from 8:00 to 14:00 hrs.

Gran Museo del Mundo Maya



The newest museum in town, the Gran Museo del Mundo Maya is focused on History and contemporary Mayan Culture.

Calle 60 Norte, Unidad Revolución Ex Cordemex

www.granmuseodelmundomaya.com

Mérida Olimpo Cultural Center



The Mérida Olimpo Cultural Center was inaugurated in January of 1999 as part of the celebration marking the 470th anniversary of the founding of Mérida. Located next to the City Hall on the Main Square, its façade provides a contrast with the colonial

architectonic style of the neighboring buildings. The Olimpo includes four galleries, a video room, an auditorium, and a virtual library built around a large circular courtyard; and hosts numerous cultural activities representing all artistic genres. In the Olimpo the visitor can feel the cultural heartbeat of Mérida.

FAQ's

1. *Can I brush my teeth with tap water?*

A lot of foreigners brush their teeth with bottled water to prevent any complications. However, if you do not swallow the tap water, you can certainly brush your teeth with it. Please DO NOT drink tap water, you must only drink bottled water.

2. *Is it safe to drink something on the street with ice in it?*

If you are in a formal establishment it will be fine. However, if it is a street vendor you should avoid it. Street ice cream, fruits or any other food sold on the street with no access to hands washing must be avoided.

3. *Can I wear shorts and/or a summer dress when I go to school?*

Yucatan and Merida have more traditional/conservative societies than other cities in Mexico and you won't see a lot of people wearing shorts throughout town. People will not be offended if you wear shorts, but do keep in mind that they might make you stick out as someone from another country. Please be particularly mindful of your clothing when working with your community-based learning sites.

4. *Can I spend the night somewhere else besides my homestay?*

If your family is in town or you have visitors (friends, siblings, etc) and wish to spend the night with them at their hotel or airbnb, you must inform your faculty and your homestay about this. Sleeping over somewhere else besides your homestay (i.e. with a friend from the group or from outside) is not allowed.

5. *Can I have a friend over in my homestay?*

You should always ask for permission from your homestay to have a visitor during the day. Spending the night with you is not allowed. If it is a family member you should first discuss it with your faculty.

6. *How will I go to school?*

You can take public transportation anywhere in the city. Your homestay will show you the basic routes. Buses typically run from 6:00am – 10:00pm.

7. *Should I call “mama” my homestay “mom”?*

Once you arrive, you can ask her what her preference is. A lot of students do call them mama. Some others call them “Señora” or “Doña XXX”. It is a good opportunity for you to also tell her how you like to be called.

8. *Is it safe to take a taxi on the street? How much are they?*

You can take taxis on the street with no problem. We will give you a directory once you are in Merida. There is also UBER, Lyft, and Cabify as well as other online companies. A regular fee from your homestay to the downtown area could range between \$60-\$80 pesos (approx. \$3-\$5 USD)

9. *What if I am vegetarian? Can I request a special diet?*

When you fill out your housing form, you can specify your needs. The homestay will then try to fulfil them. You will have the opportunity to talk more about food and preferences with your homestay mom during the first days of your arrival. In previous years, being a vegetarian has never been a problem.

Other links

If you want to know more about Mérida and Yucatan, please click on the links below.

<http://www.merida.gob.mx/>

<http://www.mayayucatan.com.mx>

<http://yucatanoday.com/destinations/eng-merida.htm>

<https://mx.usembassy.gov/>

Map links

<http://www.advantagemexico.com/merida/map.html>

<http://www.welt-atlas.de/datenbank/karten/karte-8-600.gif>