

STUDY ABROAD REPORT – MEXICO, MEXICO

“What information do I wish I had known prior to leaving on exchange?”

Name: **Laurie Bennett**

Exchange University: **Universidad de las Americas Puebla (UDAP)**

UX : **U3**

Year : **2012**

McGill semester : **Winter**

Courses

- 1) IC 401 - Sistemas de agua potable y alcantarillado (**Benito Corona Vasquez**, excellent prof)
- 2) IC 414- Diseno hidrológico (Design of dams) (WORST TEACHER I HAVE EVER ENCOUNTERED. THE CLASS IS A FRUSTRATING JOKE. EASY GRADE BUT TOTAL WASTE OF TIME. It is difficult to put this politely. **Jose Angel Raynal Villasenor**)
- 3) IQ 403 - Contaminacion del aire (**Rene Alejandro Lara Diaz** Excellent prof)
- 4) BL 313 - Biología celular (**Silvia Reyna Tellez**Excellent prof)

** A grade of 7.5/10 is a passing grade. Do not panic, it is pretty easy to get. They just squish most the class in above 7.5. And class sizes are small so teachers are more than willing to help if you struggle.

Visa and health insurance

VISA: No problem. At the time, no visa was required for tourists staying less than 6 months (or something like that). This may have changed since. Health insurance I had for the first 90 days, then purchased some from CAA/Blue Cross for the remaining time.

Cost of living

Approximate budget – your cost of living per month, suggestions for cost saving (scholarship?) , any particularities or peculiarities of your destination, e.g. Short daylight hours in November – Sweden



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COST OF LIVING: if you apply for the Mobility Award bursary (and others... see McGill study abroad bursaries) and are careful, it can almost completely pay for your living costs. Living in Mexico is cheap!! **BUT WATCH OUT!** They pay the first part in January and I only got the last 750\$ or so in about November, almost a year after I went away: (lots of calls were made to the Service Point office. So make sure that 1) you have the money in the meantime and 2) make sure you get all that you were promised.

I lived in an apartment with rent of about \$250/mo. Can't recall the food budget. Different if you eat out a lot too. But you could definitely survive and be healthy paying even 50\$ in groceries. Public transit is very cheap (like less than 50 cents per passage I think?)

Location of Institution

Climate: it is surprisingly cold when the sun goes down in Jan/Feb. No heating indoors. Bring lots of layers. Then blazing hot when the sun is out in May.

LOCATION:

Puebla is one of the safest cities in Mexico and a beautiful historical center. San Andres Cholula is a small town in Puebla, where the University is located. Right next to a historic site (pyramid!) with a view of a smoking volcano in the distance, this is a pretty place to live. For maps, see google maps and school website.

Puebla is nice because it is somewhat central (just South of Mexico city) so you can easily travel a few hours to get to the Pacific or Atlantic, see mountains, deserts, jungle, etc.

**** BE SAFE: when arriving at airport and bus stations, go to the certified taxi stands to get a cab.** These are located inside the terminal. Tourists flagging cabs just outside the terminal often get robbed by corrupt taxi drivers. True story, not rumour.

To find an apartment, easiest ways are to walk around neighborhood (lots of signs up on buildings with phone number) and online classifieds.

Suggestions of items to bring with you

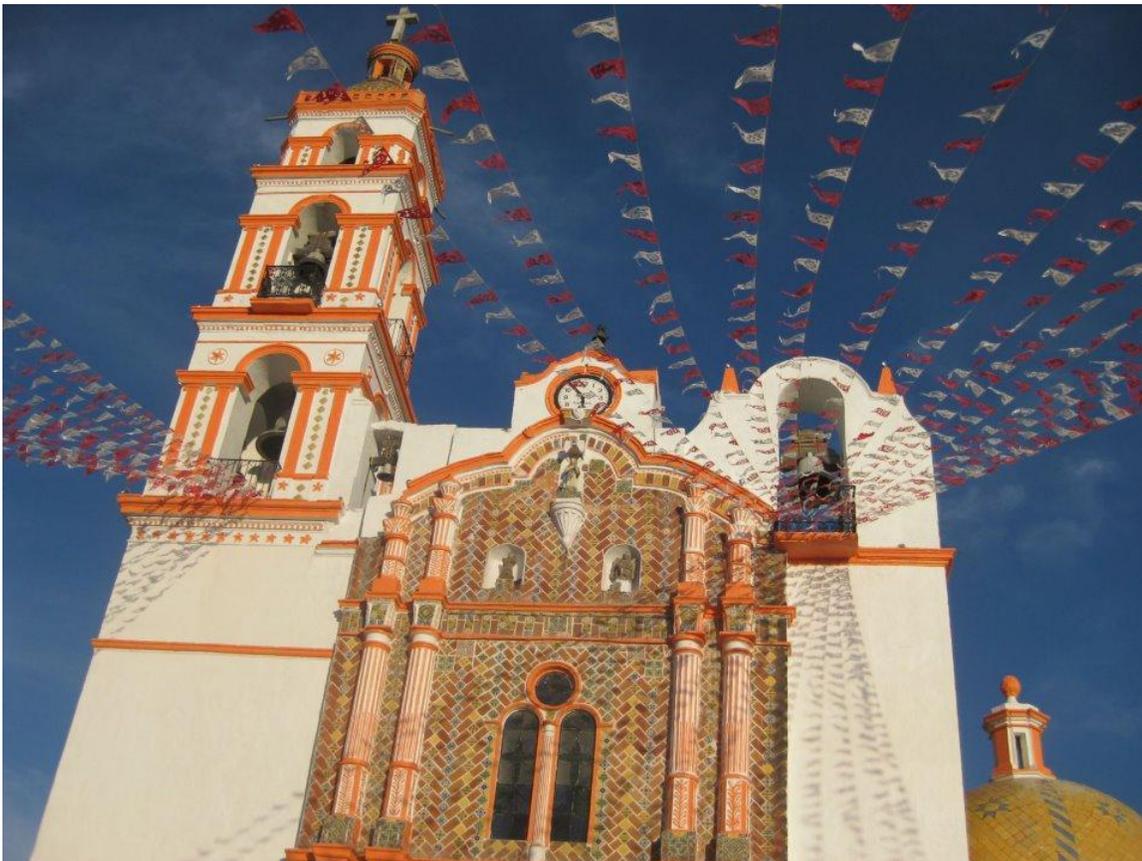
As mentioned, it is surprisingly cold when the sun goes down in Jan/Feb. No heating indoors. Bring lots of layers. Then blazing hot when the sun is out in May. Short shorts feel great, but result in lots of catcalls on the street. I would recommend shorts that go down to the knee. I missed some spices to make thai/indian type foods!

Overall Experience

Great! No regrets. People were so, so kind. The university is good because it is small and welcomes/accommodates foreign students. However, it has no agricultural focus and is not super research-focused. The UNAM, for instance, would be much better if that's what you are looking for.

Contact

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Picture of the church down my street