

- Ethnography Field School
- SELT — Teaching English Service Learning
- Maya Language Immersion Program

2009-
2012

Pre-Departure Program Preparation Package

osea

Training Programs



Quetzil Castañeda
The Open School
of Ethnography
and Anthropology
2009-2012

Pre-Departure Program Preparation Materials

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Scheduling Arrival and Departure Times

All participants need to be on site in Pisté by 1pm of the official start date for the 2011 in question. You are expected to arrive in time to participate in the first orientation meeting and first day activities that begin by 1pm on the Sunday start day

The OSEA programs end at noon on Saturday July 9. Do not schedule a departure **from Pisté** earlier than noon on the Saturday end date of the program. You will therefore not be able to schedule a flight **from either airport earlier than 3pm** on that day.

In order to determine the ideal times of arrival and departure in addition to the day of arrival you will need to review the information about how to get to Pisté from Cancun and from Mérida. We encourage participants to join with other participants via Facebook, email and telephone in order to arrange for meeting up in an arrival city and traveling together to Pisté. Traveling to location is easy and traveler friendly. Our travel information will arrest any worries or fears. Feel free to contact osea staff for suggestions, questions, and help. OSEA requests that everyone submit their travel plans to us prior to departure as well as contact information, emergency contacts, so that we may keep track of your scheduled arrival and departure from México.

Travel Information about Cancun, Mérida, Pisté

The osea website has extensive and detailed information about Cancun and Mérida in terms of hotels, restaurants, things to do, traveling to and from these places, as well as suggestions on tour guide books and online travel information sources. Please review this information at http://www.osea-cite.org/resources/re_travelinfo.php

Program Break & Excursions

OSEA program includes a four day break in the middle of field season. We encourage everyone to take advantage of this and explore as a tourist the great attractions and things to do in the Yucatán. We encourage you to make arrangements with other participants to save on expenses as all costs are out of pocket. There is a lot of information on the osea website regarding possibilities. We encourage you to engage past participants via Facebook to get their recommendations.

During the weekends of the program, we will have one or two half day trips as a group to various sites within the greater Pisté – Chichén region. These can range from archaeological sites such as Chichén itself, Yaxuna, Balankanche, and Ek Balam to any number of cenotes for swimming such as Dzitnup, Ek Balam, and Yokdzonot. We will also visit nearby villages to gain experience of other types of village life than the cosmopolitan Pisté.

Airlines, Airports, Arrival Cities

Airlines that fly direct into Mérida MID:

- To get to Mérida from the USA you will use either Houston or Miami.
- Continental flies directly into Merida (MID) via Houston IAH. Previously, the NWA-Continental partnership gave you the option to book this as a NWA flight. Now that NWA is part of Delta, the only direct route to Mérida is the Continental via Houston Inter-Continental Bush -- IAH.
- US airlines from Miami into Merida often use Mexican Partners; so, try them directly first for prices for savings even if you want to use the US airlines for mileage.
- Mexicana, Aeromexico, and Aviacsa via Monterrey, México City, and/or other cities in México (as well as via Miami). These airlines are often very competitive with Continental for the Houston-MID market as well as for persons initiating their travel from the west coast and central states regions (California, Washington, Oregon, Arizona, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico travel).
- Generally: Mexicana is the most expensive of the three, Aviacsa least expensive & Aeromexico in between; to buy direct from Aviacsa go to their web sites to get US-based 800 ##

<http://www.mexicana.com>

http://www.aeromexico.com/en_us/

<http://www.aviacsa.com>

Although you may already have extensive experience searching for cheap airfares online, OSEA recommends the use of [Kayak.com](http://www.kayak.com) for ease and effective finding of best fares. On [Kayak](http://www.kayak.com) you can automatically do comparative searches on kayak against four other providers -- [hotwire](http://www.hotwire.com), [expedia](http://www.expedia.com), [priceline](http://www.priceline.com), [travelocity](http://www.travelocity.com).

First, when ever you use an online travel company and feel you have a good quote, it is imperative to check pricing against the fare listed directly from the airline on their website.

Second, check the fares to see if the taxes are or not included. Typically the really great fares, say \$300 roundtrip to Cancun do not include the various airport taxes, which total approximately \$90 to \$100 US.

Third, over the last 2-3 years the airlines have been criminal in adding hidden or concealed fees to their fares. Before you buy a ticket, double check the cost of changing any segment and the cost of baggage. Its not fun to have pay an extra \$25 or more dollars for a piece of luggage at the counter. True, the standard HAS been that at least two bags of luggage for international travel is free. Then this was reduced to one bag. It could very well be that free baggage is completely eliminated for international travel. Keep your eyes open!

Note, great prices in 2011 were under \$350, in 2012 expect good prices at \$400 +/- \$50.

Note, flights into Merida are more expensive but much cheaper and easier to get in and out of the airport (20 minutes to bus station) and to travel elsewhere (such as Pisté) as compared to Cancun. A taxi from Chichén-Pisté to Mérida airport is roughly \$70 US and second class bus service is under \$6 in either direction. The time travel between Mérida and Pisté is no more than 2 hours by second class bus, which leaves every hour. You do not need to use a first class bus. They are not much more expensive and they do save 30 minutes, but the second class is not a burden. Second class Cancun to Pisté is NOT recommended as it will take 5-7 hours depending on time of travel; same trip by First Class bus or car is 3hours.

Airlines that Serve Cancun Airport (CUN)

Airlines	Main US Port of Entry	Website	Phone Number
AirTran	Atlanta & Baltimore only	www.airtran.com	1-800-825-8538
American Airlines	Has extensive service throughout Mexico; flights from Dallas, Miami, Chicago to Cancun	www.aa.com	1-800-433-7300
Continental	Cleveland, LaGuardia, Newark, Houston. Only airline direct to Mérida from USA	www.continental.com	1-800-523-3273
Delta	Atlanta to Cancun. GREAT flights!	www.delta.com	1-800-222-1212
Frontier	Salt Lake City, Kansas City, Denver	www.frontierairlines.com	1-800-432-1359
Northwest	Memphis, Indianapolis, Detroit, St. Paul/Minneapolis. IS NOW DELTA	www.nwa.com	1-800-225-2525
United	Chicago, DC, Denver, San Francisco, Los Angeles. Great flights to Cancun	www.united.com	1-800-864-8331
US Airways	Phoenix, Las Vegas, Philadelphia, Charlotte	www.usairways.com	1-800-428-4322
Spiritair	Ft. Lauderdale, SouthEastern USA	www.spiritair.com	
Alaska Air	Portland, Seattle, Los Angeles, pts WEST	www.alaskaair.com	

Flights into Cancun can be much cheaper with sufficient advanced purchase. However, calculate additional airport to bus station charge of \$5 one way, and \$20 bus to get from Cancun to Pisté. Thus, you must add another \$50 minimum to the Cancun ticket for local travel. A taxi from Pisté to Cancun airport is roughly \$150 US, which can be divided by the number of passengers. Airport Shuttles from Tulum and from Playa del Carmen range from \$25 to \$15 US. The time travel to Pisté from Cancun Airport is at least 2.5 hours in the first class bus (one a day) or 6 hours by the second class bus. Also calculate one hour to get from airport to bus station, 2 or more hours to figure out travel on arrival.

Getting To and From Pisté

The osea website has extensive information about ground travel to and from Pisté from other locations in Yucatán, such as Mérida, Cancun, Tulum, Playa del Carmen. Please visit the osea travel information on the website

http://www.osea-cite.org/resources/re_travelinfo_getting-to-piste.php

Passports, Visas, US Consulate in Mérida

You do not need a Student Visa to participate in OSEA or to enter México. Do not try to get one as this is only good for foreign students enrolled in a Mexican institution. OSEA is not a Mexican university. You only need a Mexican tourist visa that is available upon arrival at the Mexican border at which you enter the country.

US Government Passport Requirements

If you are a US Citizen you can leave the USA without a passport. However, if plan on returning to the USA, you must have a US passport. In other words, when traveling to México you are required to use a US passport -- not to get into Mexico but to get back into the USA from Mexico! Go to the State Dept. Passport Services to apply for a new passport or process a renewal.

To review the US State Dept official information on travel requirements for México please visit their website. You can access this page through the osea website at

http://www.osea-cite.org/resources/re_travelinfo_visas.php

Information on the time to process regular and expedited passports is available.

México Tourist Visa

México requires a visa. The Tourist Visa is issued at port of entry and can be issued for one month to three months. They are renewable for a total of 6 months. If you wish, you can get a Mexican visa prior to travel from a Mexican consulate office or embassy. you may go to the office and request a tourist visa of an extended 6 months at a minimal charge.

If you travel to Mexico without a visa... When you enter Mexico upon arrival in or when crossing the border into Mexico you will receive and fill out a Mexican Visa Form and Customs Declaration Form. When you hand this over to the Mexican Migration Officer, always request 90 days. If you are given fewer number of days than your trip, you will need to pay a service fee at the Migration Office to have your visa extended. Besides the fee (approx. \$25) this is a hassle: It is requires trips back and forth from the migration office to a bank that consumes all of one day; if not initiated early in the morning one could easily lose two days and an overnight in Mérida to complete the process.

US Consulate in Mérida, Yucatán
Calle 60 no. 338-K x 29 y 31, Col. Alcala Martin, Mérida,
Yucatán, México 97050
Telephone (52)(999) 942-5700 or 202-250-3711 (U.S.).
<http://merida.usconsulate.gov/>

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Deadlines

There is only one deadlines that need to be scheduled. The next date to remember is the April 28th deadline to submit all release forms and the final payment of the balance of tuition and fees. Please review the online payment options, late fee structure and cancellation policies under the main “apply” top nav bar option.

Payment options: <http://www.osea-cite.org/apply/pay-options.php>

Fee Schedule: http://www.osea-cite.org/apply/schedule_of_fees.php

Cancellation Policy: http://www.osea-cite.org/apply/schedule_of_fees.php

The only major “deadline” after that is the one we are all looking forward to experiencing! Sunday at noon on the start date of the program with arrival in the Posada Olalde in Pisté, Yucatán, México. See you there!

Basic Supplies Checklist

1. Unlocked, chip-based cell phone, recommended purchase of a second hand \$20 cell off of ebay. Disposable if necessary.
2. Laptop, with CD/DVD Burner, WIFI, and usb ports
3. Portable Harddrive, min. 50-100 gigs; at least double if you are using video extensively as part of your research project
4. Two or three Flashdrives/memory sticks, each 2-4 gigs (can be easily lost)
5. SLR-Like Digital Camera, minimum 8 megapixel, 10 optical zoom, 1600 ISO, with video functionality
6. Digital Audio Recorder, battery run with AC adapter
7. 2-3 backup sets rechargeable batteries for digital camera and for digital recorder, min. 2400 mhz rating for batteries to use on digital equipment
8. Battery Recharger, capable of recharging all your battery types you use
9. Memory cards for digital still camera and digital audio recorder, minimally 3 cards of 2 gigs each
10. Digital Video Camera, for those doing video ethnography
11. Microphone-headset for using skype or other computer telephony
12. Waterproof carrying cases and bags for everyday storing/carrying equipment in any context; for cell, audiorecorder, cameras, back up batteries, memory sticks, memory cards -- ideally with straps for hooking onto belt or elsewhere for accessibility according to your personal preferences. More than one person has a lost a cell phone, digital camera, or other technological toy due to being caught in a massive rainstorm that leaves you utterly drenched.
13. Your favorite notebooks (not just pads of paper) to write fieldnotes on site during fieldwork; optionally these can be bought on location; remember your favorite pens & pencils.
14. Word document processing software.
15. Photo/Image management software is required for you to purchase and bring with you. We strongly recommend ACDSee photo manager 2009 as the minimal software purchase.
16. Advanced photo/Image editing software beyond the "light" programs bundled up with your digital camera; we recommend Adobe Photoshop
17. A six outlet surge protector with minimum 3ft cord. Ideally get one that will allow for cumbersome, oversized plugs. Review your electronics to see what can be used.
18. Electrical adaptors, three prong to 2 prong. Available on site for less than \$2. However, you may want to bring your own so that you are not caught be surprise your first night in México when the only outlets in your hotel or home-stay are the ungrounded, 2 prong type. Mexican electricity is the same as the USA.
19. Firewire-USB cords for direct connection of digital equipment to laptop
20. Optional: tripod for still and/or video camera, depending on research interests
21. Miscellaneous: duck tape is always good, as well as waxed string for sewing bags/backpacks, small sewing kit with a variety sized needles -- normal to large for repairing bags
22. Gifts for your host family, if you are scheduled to be in home-stay, or for family that you will be eating meals with (Maya Immersion and SELT participants).

If you have any questions about needing to bring something other than what's on this list, don't hesitate to contact myself or to connect with past participants via OSEA Facebook

Supplies: Luggage, Packing and Traveling

As you start thinking about traveling and preparing yourself, consider that you want to have THREE pieces of luggage, no more. I guess less is viable but only if you really travel very light. But your research equipment itself, argues again this as a likely possibility.

One should be a large piece of luggage; its your choice if you want a large suitcase with rollers, a duffle bag with rollers or a large back pack. This bag will carry the majority of your clothes, some heavy things, e.g., books, batteries, toiletries, gifts, and non-fragile belongings. A few fragile but not irreplaceables can be packed into the clothing for protection. This piece goes to checked luggage.

The second luggage should be an overnight-short travel bag; this would be something that you can use for your 4-day break and can also load light or heavy for different purposes. You want something that is comfy to use whether stuffed to the brim or packed light and loose. This should also go to checked luggage.

The third should be a multi-functional carry on bag or small, roller carryon; on your flight you will want to load this with your valuables: laptop, cameras, flashdrives, harddrives, glasses, passport, etc. This is a carry on that you never let go. Never.

In addition you can take a small “personal” bag – a purse, briefcase, or some other smallish bag. You can actually carry all sorts of fragiles in this in addition to your personals.

Remember when you fly into Cancún the colder the airplane gets the closer you get to Cancún. WHY? because the turn the AC on colder and colder. Thus it is actually colder on the airplane than when you got on the airplane in Detroit or Upstate NY! The buses in Yucatán will also have AC. This AC is, believe it or not, BRUTAL. On arrival you will not notice it. However after two weeks of acclimatizing to the Yucatán heat and sun, and especially if you are spending a lot of time in the sun outside, then you will soon notice it. Initially as a relief, but not on long trips. It will make you sick and you should have ready on your flight and bus travel a decent light sweater or something that keeps you warm.

Supplies: Batteries

Among all the supplies you should bring make sure that you have two sets of rechargeable AA batteries. By this I mean your photographic camera usually takes 4 AA, your flashlight (yes, get a small handheld one is recommended) takes another 2-3 batteries, your alarm clock, your mouse, and what ever else. Calculate non-rechargeable batteries for those things that are not huge consumers of energy – i.e., cameras. Buy a second set to carry around and buy a light portable recharger. There are a dozen rechargers on the market, sometimes it really takes some studying of the boxes to figure out what is what. But, for cameras buy rechargeables that have at LEAST a 2600 mhz power capacity. Do not buy batteries for your camera that have less than this. You will regret. I suggest buying one set of four of one brand, Duracell, and then another brand of Energizer, and if you are really into camerawork then get a third that set as well. Why different brands? First, I don't really know which is superior but buy the high end brands. Second, it will be so much easier to have each SET of four batteries visibly distinguishable from each other so that you don't confuse which batteries have been recharged, which have are half empty, etc. Brand differentiation helps a lot on this point.

If you buy SONY brand still and video cameras you will have to buy special Sony brand batteries and buy extra replacement batteries as well. This is a problem if you have Sony and other brands, but if you are 100% Sony lover, then this is ok.

Supplies: Sleeping Gear and Hammocks

During the summer you will be in a hammock rather than a bed. This you will love because they are COOL! and comfortable. Now, the problem is that sometimes at 4-6am you can get COLD in a hammock in Yucatán. Yes, its true. Especially in June; but this varies with new global warming weather. When we go out at 5am for the rain ceremony you will want to have a sweater, a hoodie, polyester gym clothes, fleece or something that is very light and yet WARM (not wool, not heave cotton). This will also be good for AC in buses after acclimatizing and a day in the sun.

For sleeping you may want to have a “pajama” outfit of light, breathable material that covers any place a mosquito can bite you. However you don't want to FRY in bed either (and then freeze at 3-4am), so this outfit needs to be light and loose yet all covering! Alternatively, what you can do is go the more minimal route of pajama wear – ie. not all covering! – and use a light double or queen size sheet. Preference is cotton, that will sweat and breathe but not allow mosquitos to pass through. You through this around you with it flapping over your head and then get into the hammock. Once inside you situate the sheet all around you to cover yourself up. You can use an additional handkerchief or towel to cover the majority of your face as protection. In Yucatán, heavy big towels are used also as blankets. Suggestion: if you have the opportunity to get two airplane pillows and 1, maybe 2 airplane blankets these will serve you VERY well in terms of sleeping in your hammock and getting comfortable.

We will be required to purchase your own hammock. We will make a trip on the first or second day of the program to do so. Do not plan on bringing your own hammock.

How to Carry Your Research Equipment and Supplies

You should also bring a fourth bag in addition to your 3 pieces of luggage. But don't pack this fourth one for the flight. Instead throw this into the large suitcase and use it once you get into your routine. This bag should be an every day bag in which you can carry your field research equipment. On any given day you may need to carry with you:

- A fieldnote book, with pens/pencil
- a digital or film still camera, with additional batteries and memory chips (or rolls of film)
- digital audio recorder, with extra batteries with an optional external microphone
- a video camcorder, with extra batteries and extra memory card/chips, disks, tapes, or similar depending of course on the type of camcorder you have; an optional external microphone or a WIFI microphone system
- your Mexican cell phone, for maintaining in communication with OSEA staff
- A liter bottle of water, glasses/glass case, essential meds, packets of E-mergenC, small flashlight, matches/lighter, or other miscellaneous personal items you need to carry around with you during your normal daily routine.

Although it is excessively unfashionable, nerdy, and definitively old school, you may want to get a "belt buddy" in order carry around some of your belongings. Who knows where these are sold any more!!!! A purse is unfortunately, even a man-purse is just not appropriate. A brief case is similarly inappropriate for fieldwork. For some you, your everyday school back pack me do the job, maybe not. Personally, in 100 degree Fahrenheit I cannot tolerate wearing a backpack all day. Consider purchasing one or more camera, cellphone, or tote bag thingies that can go on your back, on your belt, around your neck, around your nose. You will need pockets and separators for your various kinds of extra batteries, cameras, memory chips/cards, flashdrives, etc. Ultimately it is your choice on what makes you feel dashing and debonair as well as exceptional light, practical, and efficient.

Research Equipment and Software

In order to conduct ethnographic fieldwork in today's world, you need specific minimum technological devices. Thus, you are required to bring a digital audio recorder, a laptop with specific flashdrive and portable harddrive accessories, a digital camera, and a simm-card using cell phone. The relevant technology for all these devices changes rapidly and cannot in any brief discussion be adequately detailed. Thus, we ask you to read closely the detailed information about equipment that we have posted on the osea website:

http://www.osea-cite.org/resources/re_travelinfo_equipment_guide.php

Please review this information soon — say by the end of March — so that you can formulate your questions about the technology that we may be able to address. As well, your own searches for equipment creates information that is well worth sharing with other participants. Let us know about what you discover.

In previous seasons we required the purchase of ACDSee Photomanager 2008 and 2009 however the rise of prices from \$30 something to \$69 for the current version of Photomanager 12 has prompted our change in policy. If you are serious about visual ethnography and photodocumentation then you can only help yourself by buying this software. We also recommend you searching for the older versions to download. One such site is <http://adobe-discount.com/software/ACDSee-Photo-Manager-2009.html>

Previously we also required the use of SIL Fieldworks. However, this software has become too cumbersome and limiting due to various factors, including the lack of a MAC version. We are currently searching for an adequate replacement software for writing, archiving and accessing fieldnotes. We will keep you posted.

Health and Medical Insurance

Your participation in the OSEA Field School is dependent upon proof of adequate health, medical and emergency insurance that is during the period of participation and in México.

You have many options by which to satisfy this requirement and your health-emergency needs. First, you must review your existing medical insurance to see if you are covered during the period and while out of your home country. If it does cover you, you must, in addition, verify if it includes medical evacuation and repatriation. At a minimum this coverage should be \$5000 and full cost, respectively. If your existing insurance does not cover this, your provider may be able to give you a rider that would include these possibilities. If not, there are a few good options. First, however, it is important to review your on-site needs for medical services.

During your participation in the OSEA Field School it is likely that you will at some point require going to a doctor. Minimally, most participants at some point have some difficulties adjusting to the combination of intense sun and heat and diet. This can cause minor stomach that comes and never returns or that is prolonged. It might include more serious episodes of different types. Most of the time these issues can be avoided with careful and disciplined intake of water (always always always drink water!) and consumption of vitamin C, potassium, magnesium, iron via fruits (bananas, oranges, grapefruit, papaya), chile and juices (lemonade, orange, jamaica, horchata).

Nevertheless, the acute intensity of some physical ailments (i.e., vomiting or diarrhea) may require going to a doctor. Of course other issues, involving bites, allergies, etc. would absolutely require medical attention. One has the choice of very good free clinics or a pay per visit doctor. A very rough guide to costs is less than \$10 for the visit plus maybe up to \$20-40 for the meds. If you set aside \$100 for on-site medical attention, you will most likely be rewarded with having most of that left over at the end of the program to splurge on some other expense – gifts, expensive dinner, travel to the beach, etc. If one were to develop a more serious or sustained illness that does not require hospital, only outpatient work, nor evacuation, one might spend \$200-300. Such an occurrence is rare. Consider also that the summer 2008 I had a snake bite that went undetected and untreated for a week that escalated to a dangerous infection, all of which was resolved with an \$80 emergency surgery at a nearby clinic in Valladolid. It was all outpatient and the meds totaled about \$50.

In terms of health insurance, this estimation of likely medical costs translates into a minimum deduction of \$100-200 for out of pocket expenses. Alternatively you can make it higher as your budget requires. The real issue in terms of coverage is therefore medical emergency evacuation.

On this point it is important to remember a few facts. First, there is free ambulance service from Pisté and Chichén to Mérida where the best hospitals and international airport are available. A huge new, high tech hospital was just completed a few years ago. Valladolid is a city with less high technology medical services but certainly your typical urban medicine.

Second, Mérida is very close to the USA and travel can be arranged quickly with short travel time. Further, the air travel can be very cheap, especially in comparison to say travel from South America, Asia, Africa, or the Pacific. If you were to try to book a one-way ticket from Mérida to Detroit for tomorrow, Expedia would sell it to you for \$800. This is less than a round trip ticket to Europe and any virtually anywhere else in the world. Thus, a minimum of \$5000 is frugal and would likely cover most of your costs in cases where minimal medical assistance and equipment is required for travel. However, to avoid financial problems in such a rare likelihood, you may consider getting evacuation coverage of \$10,000 or more. Fortunately, there are some study abroad insurance programs that can provide up to \$50,000 for evacuation if you feel this would be necessary.

Hospitalization coverage required

In all cases of insurance benefits, you must make sure that hospitalization is covered. The costs for this in México generally and in Mérida specifically are much lower than what is charged in the USA.

Out of Pocket Expenses

Regardless of insurance you select, you must ensure that your provider allows for you to be reimbursed for your costs. It will not be possible to have the insurance pay for you. You must pay for any services out of pocket and then seek reimbursement.

One option

The insurance that is built into the \$25 membership with International Student Exchange carries your basic insurance needs of low minimum, up to \$2000 costs, and evacuation. You can review the benefits at <http://www.isecard.com/gsa/plans/pdf/english.pdf> The home page is <http://www.isecard.com/index.html>

Second option

There are a few insurance providers for students on study abroad outside the USA. At this site you can research five different insurance providers and their benefits; you can also get an easy online quote from a few of them: <http://www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/> Of these, two specialize in study abroad insurance, Atlas and Student Secure, but review the others as well. See <http://www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/studyabroad/>

Medical Insurance Providers (Not endorsed by OSEA)

1. [Good medical and travel insurance is available through STA \(Student Travel Association\)](http://www.statravel.com/cps/rde/xchg/us_division_web_live/hs.xsl/travel-insurance.htm) when you purchase a plane ticket. You can get a quick [quote](#) from their website: http://www.statravel.com/cps/rde/xchg/us_division_web_live/hs.xsl/travel-insurance.htm
2. [Membership in ISE \(International Student Exchange Cards\) for \\$25 includes various travel discounts plus basic medical while outside of the USA, it has a med-evacuation of \\$5,000 and medical expenses of \\$2000; these are your very basic minimums.](#)
3. [International Student Insurance website has five different insurance programs for students on study abroad, short or long term; Atlas International is short term and Student Secure 1year+.](#)
4. [HTH Worldwide is yet another insurance provider that has a great plan at an excellent \\$34 per month rate for under 30 years old \(compare to STA\).](#)
5. [Medex is another well established insurance provider offers several different travel related packages. For student age bracket you can get 2 months for under \\$100 a month with extensive coverage & low deductible.](#)

Student Travel Organizations

There are a few student based travel organizations that offer extensive services to student travelers, study abroad students, and even faculty travelers. However the majority of these are geared toward Europe and to a lesser degree Asia. These services grow out of the long historical tendency to travel as a student during one's gap year in Europe to taste the refinements of High Culture of European Civilization on a low budget. It's the legacy of the Grand Tour! Needless to say the already low to dirt cheap budget travel available for Africa and Latin America makes these student services redundant or unnecessary for the most part. Train travel in Latin America is not a smart move and there are family run hotels called posadas that are cheaper than any European or USA youth hostel. Even the student discount prices for flights is not typically a bargain for Latin America, especially to México which has highly competitive tourism prices on a routine basis. But, do not hesitate to investigate for your self. Especially make sure that you check out pricing for flights.

There are two ways student travel organizations can definitely help. One, if you do buy a ticket via a student travel organization then you often have included decent travel insurance for medical emergencies. Even if you do not buy a ticket through these agencies you can get decent medical insurance at a separate price (see above). Two, your student travel identification can provide *some* discounts in terms of entrance fees, lodging, international phone rates or services, internet, and the like. Again, México's special relationship with the USA is such that these are going to be a minimal savings.

Money, Banks, ATMs, Traveler's Checks

The easiest way to access foreign currency as well as your own USA money is via ATMS. Long gone are the days of traveler's checks — most of you probably don't even know what those are! — and cash in US\$\$ is not worth having anymore at all due to unfavorable rates.

México today has essentially clamped down on foreign exchange due to pressure from the USA as a means to curtail drug laundering. This is ok. This means that you use your ATM card to get cash in pesos and only bring \$100 to keep as a safety for emergency use.

Banks and Casas de Cambio have a \$500 limit on the amount of currency exchange. The bank has a worse exchange rate than the casas de cambio. Mérida has a worse exchange rate than Cancun and México City has a better exchange rate than Cancun. Cancun rates are always better than anywhere on the Maya Riviera — e.g., Playa del Carmen, Tulum, Puerto Morelos, Isla Holbox, Isla Mujeres.

ATMS have the same rate from bank to bank, and they are always better rates than what you can get in a bank or in the street or at a Casa de Cambio for cash.

The exchange rates are the worst for credit cards, which are assessed exorbitant foreign transaction fees. USE pesos! If your bank is a large bank, such as Bank of America or AIG or Chase, HSBC then it's very likely that your bank will have a "sister" or collaborator bank in México or other countries. You need to ask your bank and credit card directly: what are the fees assessed to use their cards in stores and ATMS in México. If your bank has a partner institution, then it is likely that you can get the ATM machine fee waived. For example my Bank of America has a partnership with Santander. Thus, I do not get charged ATM machine fees when I withdraw from an Santander ATM. This is very good for OSEA because it is transacting large amounts of money and maybe significant for participants. Check it out it saves your money!

Using the ATM also resolves the question about how much to bring. Bring only \$100 and keep another reserve of \$400 or \$500 available for use. ATMS are everywhere.

Calculate a minimum of \$220 up to \$300-500 for costs on your program break. \$50 for travel total there and back; \$100 for lodging 4 nights if you split costs with other participants and stay low budget (it could be even less and a lot more!); \$70 on food based on \$15-20 a day (splurge a little!!); and then any extra for recreational activities: renting boats, water skis, scuba gear, etc.; or ferries to Cozumel or Isla Mujeres; and night life activities.

Calculate about \$50-100 for daily extracurricular expenses during the program. This varies according to each person in terms of wanting to buy snack food on the street/out of homestay house. Calculate another \$40-150 for buying presents, whether for yourself (!) or for friends and family. These of course can be reduced to nothing depending on your economy or increased as you are comfortable in spending.

Getting Connected & Homestays

- A. Pre-Departure Video Conference
- B. Facebook & Twitter
- C. Gifts for Homestay Families
- D. Home-Stays

Pre-Departure Video Conference

Today's technology allows us to have a group video conference once our enrollment is consolidated. You will receive an email to determine the exact date of this group meeting. Note that we will collect information about the best times and days for a meeting and then quickly determine when it can happen with the greatest attendance. We will use skype and thus you can prepare yourself by going to www.skype.com and downloading 5.0 version or later. This is required for GROUP video. If you do not have this version then you will not be able to participate by video only audio and chat.

Skype is a great internet based telephony system. You can use it for free to connect to anyone in the world who has a skype account and is also using it at that time. Skype only charges for calls made to actual phones or non-skype computer telephone numbers. Video conferencing and chat is for free. It is an excellent choice for your international communications while in the osea program as well.

Facebook and Twitter

OSEA is on Facebook as a Group and is currently shifting over to an individual personality profile. We ask that you be-friend OSEA on Facebook and join the Group as well. This will be important now before we go to México as it gives you the opportunity to connect with previous osea participants and to ask them about their experiences, travel recommendations and so on. We will ask you at the end of the program as well to use our FB profile as a means to communicate your thoughts and feelings about your osea experiences.

Gifts for Homestay Families

In addition to getting information from past participants about travel, break activities, coursework, and fieldwork, we ask that you specifically reach out to previous OSEA'rs to ask them about appropriate gifts for their homestay families. Although there are recommendations on the osea resource pages, some participants commented that they felt that section of the osea website needed updating. The osea staff is in the process of doing that updating, but in the meantime we ask you to do exactly what we will do: ask previous participants to make recommendations about what kinds of gifts are appropriate to bring, and how much!

Homestays

The Homestay experience is one of the most crucial and significant part of the overall OSEA Field Study Abroad program. The Director has been working in this community for over 20 years and has developed extensive network of friends and colleagues. We rely on this network to situate osea participants in the most appropriate family and social situations. We do not like to make quick and hasty decisions about which student goes with which family. Instead, we need time to get to know each of you individually in terms of your personality, interests, language skills and proficiencies, temperament, attitudes, and preferences. Thus, although you may like to know asap with what family you will stay, it is not something that we can determine until the very last minute. Think of it like a Christmas present! A surprise!

We do have lots to discuss in terms of what to expect, how to behave, and so. However most of this discussion really needs to wait until we are on-site in Pisté and ready to start up.

What we do need from all you at this point are the following kinds of information. What kinds of preferences or attitudes you may have towards certain kinds of family situations. Whether you want a family with lots of children, few children, lots of teenagers, few teenagers, whether you can share a room with another adult or teenager of the same sex or not. We need to know about any other predilections and attitudes: Can you survive with very little domestic amenities or not? Do you know Spanish perfectly and want to live with a family that allows you to have Maya language immersion? Do you know Spanish not so well and maybe need a family that has some proficiency in English? These are issues that we need to find out. We need to ask you about this and you need to be honest and straight forward. Nothing to hide! Thus, in a follow up email, OSEA staff will get in touch with you to discuss these aspects and to get written information from you that helps us make our decisions about where to locate you.

It is imperative that you are punctual with returning this information to us.

2011 OSEA Administration and Research Staff consists of:

Sarah Taylor, sarah@osea-cite.org

Christine Preble, Christine@osea-cite.org

Matt Breines, matt@osea-cite.org

Course Materials

Course Materials are sent separately in a DVD. This will contain:

1. all the assigned readings in pdf with exception of books to purchase
2. an extensive library of additional readings relevant to fieldwork and Yucatán
3. course syllabi
4. Maya language audio course and textbook (\$150 value)
5. Maya-Spanish language dictionaries in pdf
6. OSEA Handouts and Assignments
7. instructions on how to use the materials

You are asked to purchase for the program, in addition to your supplies and any required equipment that you do not already own and a few items under the concept of course readings and preparation. Full details on course materials are provided soon. Meanwhile,

Recommended Books to Purchase:

- **Maya-English/English-Maya Dictionary And Phrasebook**, by John Montgomery. (no other dictionary or language materials are recommended!)
- **Maya or Mestizo? Nationalism, Mestizaje, and Anthropology**. Ronald Loewe. A new book on Maya culture and identity issues, uses a folklore-discourse approach.
- **Heritage or Heresy**. by Cameron Walker. Recent book dealing with archaeological tourism on the Maya Riviera. Inexpensive, used copies are available at Amazon.

For start up reading on Pisté, the Maya and Yucatán, we require the following readings before the program starts. So as to not burn yourself out, you may consider doing these the week before coming down.

Castañeda, encyclopedia entry on Chichén Itzá http://osea-cite.academia.edu/Quetzil_Casta%C3%B1eda/Papers/594201/Chichen_Itza_Entry_in_Encyclopedia_of_Latin_American_History_and_Culture. Charles Scribners Sons 2008

Castañeda, a brief 800 word commentary on politics of heritage at Chichén Itzá http://www.aaanet.org/press/an/infocus/Heritage_In_Focus/Castaneda.htm

Castañeda, Heritage and Indigeneity. A history of politics of Chichén as a site of heritage http://www.osea-cite.org/class/quetzil/QC2009_Heritage_&_Indigeneity.pdf

Castañeda, New and Old Social Movements. A social history of the community of Pisté. http://www.osea-cite.org/class/quetzil/QC2003_Piste_History.pdf

Castañeda, We Are Not Indigenous! An Introduction to Maya Identity, 1550-1930 http://www.osea-cite.org/class/quetzil/QC2004_Intro_Maya-Identity.pdf

We can also recommend specific articles for participants with specific other research interests who would like to get a head start on readings. Please ask Dr. Castañeda for suggestions.

Release and Agreement Forms

- A. Agreement to Conditions of Participation
- B. Agreement of Good Conduct
- C. Release of Liability Form
- D. Medical Evaluation and Release
- E. Contact Information and Proof of Medical Insurance
- F. Travel Itinerary Form
- G. Understanding Health & Safety Agreement: Travel Health FAQ
- H. Homestay Preference Form

Download forms at http://www.osea-cite.org/class/class_pre-departure.php

These forms must be filled out completely and returned with final Payment. No one is allowed to participate in OSEA Programs without having submitted signed and completed forms.

[RV09F1 Agreement to Norms of Conduct](#)

[RV09F2 Agreement to Conditions of Participation](#)

[RV09F3 Release of Liability](#)

[RV09F4 Medical Evaluation & Release](#)

[RV09F5 Contact Information & Medical Insurance](#)

[RV09TR1 Travel Plans for Arrival & Departure](#)

[RV09TF2 Travel Health FAQ](#)

[RV09TF3 Request of Preferences for Homestays](#)

It is imperative that you immediately check these forms out, download and verify that you can fill them out, save them, and print them. Troubleshoot the forms now so that you will not be stuck at the last minute needing assistance.

Only hard copies will be accepted. These must be sent to the OSEA Field Program Assistant at the physical address specified in email communications.

Do not send forms to Dr. Castañeda in Indiana.