

- Ethnography Field School
- SELT – Teaching English Service Learning
- Maya Language Immersion Program
- Maya Health and Healing Program

**2016-
2018**

Planning & Preparation Guide

osea

Training Programs

osea
cite

**Quetzil Castañeda
The Open School
of Ethnography
and Anthropology
2016-2018**

Participant Planning & Preparation Guide

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OSEa—The Open School of Ethnography and Anthropology is an independent, non-degree school chartered to develop, sponsor, and conduct educational, exchange, research, and public outreach programs, especially:

- to provide field study abroad, study abroad, service learning, and internship programs that prioritize transcultural exchange and experiential learning;
- to organize and conduct research projects, conferences, and activities in cultural and interdisciplinary anthropology, broadly defined, including community action research, participatory research, and applied anthropology; and,
- to disseminate knowledge and understandings to diverse publics, communities, and specialist academic audiences through publications, museum exhibitions, installations, performances, public outreach, community education, and related exchange activities.

The Mission of OSEa is

To provide individuals with first-hand, experiential knowledge, cross-cultural understanding, and appreciation of Indigenous cultures, traditions, and histories; and, to enable greater positive interaction and exchange between peoples of different cultural communities and social worlds.

CITE — The Community Institute of Transcultural Exchange is chartered

- To bring anthropology, as well as related fields of cultural studies, into the hands of those that have been considered the primary subjects of study so that these persons and groups may own, control, and use these tools, methods, and knowledge in the pursuit of their pursuits of community well-being, cultural sustainability, and cultural innovation;
- To foment reciprocal educational processes and mutually productive interaction between diverse communities of researchers, students, social groups, and cultures that meet in transcultural encounters;
- To increase the prosperity, well-being, achievement, tranquility, self-determination, and positive valorization of cultural communities that have been forced into political, economic, and sociocultural margins of today’s globally interactive humanity.

osea-cite is particularly focused on questions and contemporary problems related to language revitalization, sustainability, cultural ownership, heritage rights, community health and well-being, the innovation of tradition, and the interconnections between local, national, and transnational communities and social forces

OSEa Policy of Nondiscrimination

As established within its Articles of Incorporation (Section 3(4)), OSEA has a policy of racial, sexual, religious, gender, national, linguistic, cultural, and class nondiscrimination.

OSEA Staff Personnel

Founding Director and Associate Professor

Quetzil E. Castañeda, Ph.D. Anthropology (1991, University of Albany)

2009 OSEA Administration and Research Staff:

Sarah Taylor, Field School Assistant Directory, sarah@osea-cite.org

2010 OSEA Administration and Research Staff:

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2011 OSEA Administration and Research Staff:

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Matt Breines, SELT Coordinator, matt@osea-cite.org

Meg Cychoz, SELT Coordinator, meg@osea-cite.org

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2015 OSEA Administration and Research Staff:

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Matt Breines, SELT Coordinator, matt@osea-cite.org

2016 OSEA Administration and Research Staff:

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Participants are invited to Login to OSEA Online Library:

Username—"heritage"

Password—"treehouse"

Planning Your Travel

- A. Scheduling your Arrival and Departure Dates and Times
- B. Travel Information about Mérida, Cancun, Pisté
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Scheduling Arrival and Departure Dates and Times

All OSEA programs have a 1pm with an initial on-site orientation meeting at the OSEA Research and Teaching Facility. Unless otherwise specified programs start on Sunday of the year in question. The 1pm start date requires international travel the day before program start date in order to ensure your ability to arrive in Pisté by 1pm.

Participants typically select Cancun as the arrival airport or in the case of participants traveling from the west coast, Mérida. We strongly urge you to travel by FIRST class ADO bus to Pisté from Cancun, Mérida, Tulum or Playa del Carmen. ADO 1st Class Buses from these locations only leave in the morning with variable hours between 8am and 9:30 am. Travel from Valladolid can be by First or Second Class Bus or from Pisté Taxi Shuttle (see bus information).

The OSEA programs end at noon on Saturday. 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 Mérida airport earlier than 3pm** on that day **or from Cancun airport earlier than 4pm**.

In order to schedule your international flight, you will need to determine the ideal times and dates of international arrival and departure via Cancun or Mérida based on your means of ground travel to Pisté (from Cancun and Mérida airports). We encourage participants to join with other participants via Facebook, email and telephone in order to arrange for meeting up in the airport arrival city and traveling together to Pisté. Traveling to Pisté is easy and traveler friendly. Feel free to contact OSEA staff for suggestions, questions, and help. OSEA requires all participants to 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. OSEA has specific recommendations for 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, Weekends & Excursions

The Seven Week Ethnography Field School includes a four day break in the middle of field summer field season; this varies each year but coincides with the end of the 3rd week and the first days of week four. Six week and shorter programs do not have a scheduled program break but are continuous.

Weekends are used by participants to do research for their projects, homework and participate in activities with homestay families. and develop friendship with community members. OSEA encourages participants to remain in Pisté during weekends. Typically, homestay families or community member friends can invite osea participants to travel to Mérida, Valladolid or other regional locations. On all occasions the osea staff must be informed. When such travel interferes with osea classroom activities, student research projects or are otherwise deemed inappropriate due to safety issues, then permission for such travel is not be provided. The expense associated with these trips are the responsibility of the participant.

Participants should restrict more extensive and overnight travel in the region to times either prior to or following the osea program dates. We encourage participants to make arrangements with other participants to save on expenses as all such costs are out of pocket. We encourage you to engage past participants via Facebook to discussion options, their experience and recommendations.

OSEA excursions occur during the weekends and weekdays. These may include half day trips to various sites within the greater Pisté – Chichén region or further afield such as Mérida or the coast. Excursions include archaeological sites of Chichén Itzá and cenotes – eco-tourism attractions-- such as Dzitnup, Ek Balam, and Yokdzonot. We also visit nearby villages to gain experience of other types of village life than the cosmopolitan Pisté.

Airlines, Airports, Arrival Cities

First, Check flights on airline consolidators, but buy your ticket direct from the airline. We recommend that you use Kayak.com to check for the flight schedule and prices you desire. However, when you use an online travel company and feel you have a good quote with the desired flight times, 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 often do not include taxes. If the flight does not include taxes you can estimate anywhere from \$80 to \$120 for airport taxes in/out of México.

Third, Check the airline baggage rules to make sure you understand the hidden fees. It could very well be that free baggage is completely eliminated for international travel. Keep your eyes open!

Fourth. Check flights on airline consolidators, but buy your ticket direct from the airline. If you need to make any changes to your flight it is vastly easy to do so directly with the airline rather than through Kayak, Expedia, Orbitz Or Travelocity. We strongly recommend that you do not buy airline tickets from these companies. In emergency situations where you are in the airport at the counter trying to re-schedule a ticket the airline company will not change your flight unless you do so through the online consolidator. You do not want to be calling CheapFlights from your cell phone sitting in the Cancun airport because your flight was cancelled, you missed your flight, or other reason.

Fifth. Arrival airport is either Cancun CUN or Mérida MID. Cancun is the preferred airport for most participants traveling from the Midwest or the East Coast. MID is a good option for participants traveling from the West Coast and Mountain Time zone.

Airlines that fly direct into Mérida MID:

- To get to Mérida from the USA you will use Houston or Miami from the east coast or México city from west.
- United flies directly into Merida (MID) via Houston IAH. This route is not daily; it is not available mid-week on Tuesdays and other days. This means check dates within 3 days on either side of preferred date when searching for flights on United.
- 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). Travel from the west coast and central states regions (California, Washington, Oregon, Arizona, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico travel) may have good prices on a US carrier with a Mexican partner that includes a connection in México City and a change of plane to Mérida.
- 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 ##
- Volaris <http://volaris.com/en/> is a Mexican "jetblue" type airline

<http://www.mexicana.com>

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

<http://www.aviacsa.com>

OSEA recommends the use of Kayak.com. [Kayak](#) allows you to set up automatic comparative searches and price changes. Alternative consolidators are: [hotwire](#), [expedia](#), [priceline](#), [travelocity](#), Orbitz, cheapfares. Typically highly discounted flights that are constantly promoted on these sites are not available for trips longer than one week. Trips 10 to 30 days in duration are one price range; 30 to 90 days are a different, higher price rate.

Note, flights into Merida are generally more expensive than flights through Cancun.

Ground travel from Mérida to Pisté is less expensive and shorter (2 hours) than travel from Cancun to Pisté (4 hours). The travel between Mérida and Pisté costs no more than \$12.

Second Class Bus from 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 3.5 hours.

Flights into Cancun are cheaper than Mérida. 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 round trip to the Cancun ticket for local travel.

RETURN. A taxi from Pisté to Cancun airport is roughly \$150 US, which can be divided by the number of passengers after program. Bus travel is again \$20.

Airport Shuttles from Tulum and from Playa del Carmen range from \$15 to \$25 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.

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
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
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
Spirit Air	Ft. Lauderdale, SouthEastern USA	www.spiritair.com	
Alaska Air	Portland, Seattle, Los Angeles, pts WEST	www.alaskaair.com	

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/travelinfo_getting-to-piste.php

How to Locate OSEA: Getting To OSEA

Before you get on the bus and head to Pisté you will want to make sure you know how to get to OSEA. Thus, it is imperative that you familiarize yourself with the google map of Pisté in order to locate OSEA on this map. When you leave the bus in the middle of town you will want to know where to walk to get to OSEA.

Under the Program nav bar you can find the link for “Locations” from the left nav bar:

http://www.osea-cite.org/program/osea_locations.php

It is each student’s responsibility to find their way to the OSEA facility. Thus we encourage you to study the map of OSEA location in Pisté.

http://www.osea-cite.org/resources/travelinfo_arriving_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

You must have a passport to enter and leave USA. 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.

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. Alcalá Martín, Mérida,
Yucatán, México 97050
Telephone (52)(999) 942-5700 or 202-250-3711 (U.S.).
<http://merida.usconsulate.gov/>

Program Preparation

- A. Payment Deadline
- B. OSEA Invoice
- C. Basic Supplies Checklist
- D. Supplies: Luggage, Packing, Traveling
- E. Supplies: Batteries
- F. Supplies: Sleeping Gear and Hammocks
- G. How to Carry your Equipment and Supplies
- H. Research Equipment and Software
- I. Clothing and Climate
- J. Health and Medical Insurance
- K. Medical Insurance Providers
- L. Money, Banks, ATMS, Traveler's Checks

Payment Deadline

OSEA has simplified the payment schedule. All programs now have the same deadline: May 4 for the payment of all amounts due as specified in your OSEA Invoice. The OSEA Invoice is the ultimate and correct statement of the amount due and the invoice supersedes any discrepant information provided on any pages of the website. Please review the schedule of fees.

Payment of Balance: OSEA accepts check payments, personal or bank cashier's check, for final payments. Extra fees must be added to any payment via PayPal. This can be as much as \$300 additional cost for the use of PayPal. We accept direct Bank Wire, which are required in case of Late Payments. Late payments require Bank to Bank Direct Wire Transfer and must include the additional Late Fee and the Wire Handling Fee.

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

Fees for PayPal: <http://www.osea-cite.org/apply/pay-options.php#paypalfees>

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

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

Online bank pay service can be arranged with a minimum of 2 weeks prior to the deadline.

OSEA Invoice

The OSEA Invoice is the billing of all amounts to be paid for participation in OSEA programs. This billing is sent within a week of the Acceptance Letter. In case of any discrepancy between the amount due between the Acceptance Letter and the OSEA Invoice, the OSEA Invoice is the accurate amount billed. Please confirm your understandings of the amount due after consulting the Invoice. If you have any questions about the amounts feel free to contact Dr. Quetzil Castañeda for clarification.

Basic Supplies Checklist

1. Required Mexican Cell phone: You may either bring a second hand, unlocked disposable lost cost old phone and get a Mexican Simm card **in Pisté** (do not buy in Cancun or anywhere else) or purchase a \$30-40 Mexican cell phone with simm in Pisté (only buy once in Pisté.)
2. Required: Laptop, **with CD/DVD Burner**, WIFI, and USB ports
3. Required: Portable Hard drive, min. 100 gigs FREE; at least double if you are using video extensively as part of your research project.
4. Required: Two or three Flash drives/memory sticks/ thumb drives, each minimum 4 gigs.
5. Required: Digital Camera, minimum 10 megapixel, 10 optical zoom, 3200 ISO
6. Required: Digital Audio Recorder, battery run with AC adapter **and** mode of uploading to computer; connection to computer can be through swappable memory card or cable.
7. Batteries for all equipment. If you use AAA rechargeable batteries then bring 2-3 backup sets of rechargeable batteries for digital camera and for digital recorder. Make sure the batteries are rated a minimum of 2400 mhz rating for batteries to use on digital equipment.
8. Battery Recharger, capable of recharging all your battery types that you use
9. Memory cards for digital still camera and audio recorder, minimal 3 cards of 8 to 32 gigs each
10. Optional: Digital Video Camera, for those doing video ethnography
11. Microphone-headset for listening to audio recordings in secure environment
12. Waterproof carrying cases and bags for everyday storing/carrying equipment in any context; for cell, audio-recorder, 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. MS Word 2010 document processing software. OSEA uses 2010.
15. **Required: Image management software is required for you to purchase. We recommend ACDSee photo manager 2009 as the minimal software purchase. This is a \$30-\$50 purchase**
16. Optional: Advanced image editing software is optional. We recommend Adobe Photoshop. Check your university for significantly reduced pricing.
17. A six outlet surge protector with minimum 5ft cord. Ideally get one that will allow for cumbersome, oversized plugs. Review your electronics to see what you need and what can be used.
18. Electrical adaptors are often needed, three prong to 2 prong. Available on site for less than \$2 in US or Mexico. **Mexican electricity is the same as the USA** but typically the outlets in rural homes are not calibrated for three prong or for plugs that have one fat prong-ground.
19. Firewire-USB cords for direct connection of digital equipment to laptop and uploading.
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 with whom you will be eating meals. See separate discussion of suggestions.

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 no more than one large piece, a medium sized (carry-on sized) for short trips to carry electronics and day packs or backpacks for daily use. In addition you should bring specific equipment bags to carry any equipment for daily fieldwork use (e.g., a camera bag).

One should be a large luggage; its your choice if you want a 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 irreplaceable items can be packed into the clothing for protection. This piece goes to checked luggage; the first piece should be free on most airlines but double check your airline baggage rules.

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 is a carry on size piece – no more than 22inch x 24. You will use this for your laptop, cameras, flashdrives, harddrives, glasses, passport, etc. This is a carry on that you never let go. Never, especially on buses.

In addition you can take a small “personal” bag – a purse, briefcase, or some other smallish bag. You can actually carry all sorts of fragile items 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 they turn the AC on colder and colder. Thus it is actually colder on the airplane than when you got on the airplane in Detroit, Atlanta, Denver, or Upstate NY! The buses in Yucatán will also have AC on high. This AC is, believe it or not, is BRUTAL. On arrival you may 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.

Sustained time in AC in Yucatán is detrimental to good health. It will make you sick to go in and out of AC set at 58 and 90+ degree heat. This is a change of 30 to 40 degrees. While you may initially find AC to be a relief from the Yucatec heat, it is infinitely better to never use AC while in Yucatán and to acclimatize to the weather.

You should be prepared with a thin but effective sports-type or fleece sweater for the airplane and buses. I actually also travel with a scarf for the AC. :-)

Supplies: Batteries

Among all the supplies you should bring make sure that you have two sets of rechargeable AAA 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. For cameras buy rechargeable AAA/AA batteries that have at LEAST 2400 if not 2600 mhz power capacity. Do not buy batteries for your camera that have less than this as they do not have the ability to sustain use throughout the day. 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 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. Visible brand differentiation of the battery helps you keep track of batteries, their use, and recharging status.

High quality DSLR digital photographic cameras all have proprietary batteries, i.e., Sony, Canon, Panasonic, Nikon, etc. Make sure you buy an additional one if not two batteries that are rated higher value for longer lasting use in the field.

Supplies: Sleeping Gear and Hammocks

Everyone in a homestay sleeps in a hammock. Hammocks are exceptionally comfortable and versatile for sleeping in any position that you like and keeping you cool. During the summer 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 cover all over your body, wrist, ankles, etc! 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 light sheet. Cotton is preferred so that is will sweat and breathe but not allow mosquitos to pass through. Wrap 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, big heavy towels are used 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.

You are required to purchase your own hammock, estimated \$40. We will make a group trip on the first or second day of the program to make this purchase. Do not plan on bringing your own hammock as these are likely to be tourist hammocks and unuseable.

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 unfashionable, nerdy, and old school, you may want to get a “belt buddy” or kangaroo pouch in order carry around some of your belongings. Who knows where these are sold any more except for the Village, NYC. Purses and briefcases are inappropriate for fieldwork. Your everyday school back pack may 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, or around your nose. You will need pockets and separators for your various kinds of extra batteries, cameras, memory chips/cards, flash/thumb drives, 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 flash/thumb drives and portable hard drive accessories, a digital camera, and a Simm-card using unlocked 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/travelinfo_equipment_guide.php

Please review this information soon 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>

ACDSee Image Management SOFTWARE is REQUIRED for you to purchase and familiarize yourself with it prior to program start date. Visit www.acdsee.com for information. OSEA will arrange for a group price such that participants can buy as individuals their own copy of the most current version of the software. The pricing for this discount is variable depending on the total number of OSEA participants, ranges \$30 to \$50.

Clothing and Climate

Yucatán in the summer is typically about 32 to 36 degrees Celsius. In Fahrenheit that's 90s to 110 degrees. It is also humid. We are 25-28 meters above sea level and always only 2 hours from the ocean. You will want to dress appropriately for summer: sandals/flip flops, shorts, t-shirts, loose wear.

Yucatán is a casual dress lifestyle. Women will always want to dress “appropriately” — which means according to your own personality and within local standards. Most local women will dress more bravely than you and that's ok as you do not want extra attention. Always bring one or more nice outfits or nice casual wear for a put together look for Sunday church or for Saturday night going out in the nearby cities during break or weekend (Mérida, Cancun, Playa del Carmen, Valladolid). All these places can be ultra-urban but you need not be. Dress rural cosmopolitan for the evening: long pants, summer dress, etc.

Typically during the summer, the sun is hot and humid and quick rain showers come and go, only slowing down the sun for only 30 minutes or an hour. When the rains come, it might be 2 or even 3 days of non-stop rain as this is the beginning of the hurricane season. Thus: You will always want to have a sports wear sweater and under gear to wear when the temperature drops 30-40° degrees on air-conditioned buses, airplanes, in rainy season, and for any early morning/late night activities, such as the rain ceremonies in the jungle.

Although a drop to 60° degrees seems great from here, when you are acclimatized to 100+ dropping to 60 can cause a deep chill, especially with humidity. **In fact, traditionally speaking when the rains come in strong in the end of the summer, this is known as the time of sickness, colds, and feeling bad — all this is caused in relation to the radical drop in temperature associated with the rains. Pay attention.**

Depending on your own personal preferences you may consider bringing a light rain jacket or poncho or, alternatively, a highly portable (and disposable) umbrella for the rains.

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 \$15000 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 (see below next section). 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 pains 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.

Another example, in 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. It was fast and effective. Yet, the conditions of the situation may not appeal to the US perspective of health safety.

In terms of health insurance, **we estimate a likely out of pocket medical costs as a minimum deduction of \$100-200.** Alternatively you can make it higher or lower as your budget requires. The real issue in terms of coverage is therefore medical emergency evacuation.

Key points: **First, there is an ambulance service for tourists 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, \$5000 for visitor to come to México when hospitalized is probably good enough. This is different than evacuation coverage, which should be a minimum of \$15,000. There are some study abroad insurance that can provide up to \$50,000 for evacuation.

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 lower but very comparable to what is charged in the USA. In recent years a cutting edge hospital was built in Mérida, called StarMedica: <http://www.starmedica.com/en/service-packages.aspx>

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 your costs at the time of service. You must be ready to pay for any services out of pocket and then seek reimbursement. You should anticipate needing to use and have available a minimum of \$40-\$80 for minor visits to health clinic and prescription drugs for routine health issues.

Medicines are much cheaper as a general rule in México, but not always. Many do not require a medical prescription. However, if you have special medicines that you routinely buy you may consider getting them there. But research the costs of your meds and the need for a prescription. México has changed its laws and may require a prescription from a doctor. Bring one or be ready to have a local doctor in Pisté to write a new prescription.

OSEA does not endorse or recommend any specific insurance option. The following is presented as a courtesy

Medical Insurance Providers (Not endorsed by OSEA; prices from 2009)

International Student Exchange membership includes a basic insurance built into the \$25 membership. This carries up to \$2000 costs, and evacuation. Review benefits at <http://www.isecard.com/gsa/plans/pdf/english.pdf> The home page is <http://www.isecard.com/index.html> . They also sell complete insurance for \$44 <http://www.isecard.com/featured/travelinsurance/index.html>. You will need to research all the details on your own.

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/>

1. [Good medical and travel insurance is available through STA \(Student Travel Association\)](#) 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 / Student Travel Discounts

Student oriented travel organizations offer extensive services to student travelers, study abroad students, and even faculty travelers. However the majority of discounts 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 gap year in Europe. It is the legacy of the Grand Tour and Thomas Cook! These student discount travel services cannot offer much savings or services for Latin America, Asia or Africa since these locations tend to accommodate budget travelers very easily. Family run hotels called *posadas* in Latin America are cheaper than many European or USA youth hostels. Even the student discount prices for flights are not typically a bargain for Latin America generally, but especially for travel to México due to the high volume of US tourists to México and Cancun. In fact every time the Director priced out group rates for OSEA with “student travel” agencies the prices were a \$100 to \$200 more than normal travel rates!

Nonetheless: There are two ways student travel organizations can 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* occasional and minor 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 minimal savings.

It seems that the major substantial benefit for paying for an international student card membership is for the travel insurance. The other benefits of hotel, food, and entrance fee discounts often simply do not exist. But this may vary for countries other than México.

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! Cash in US\$ dollars is not worth having anymore at all due to unfavorable rates.

México today has clamped down on foreign cash exchange due to pressure from the USA as a means to curtail drug laundering via the Casas de Cambio. Thus, Banks and Casas de Cambio have a \$500 limit on the amount of cash currency exchange. This means that you use your ATM card to get cash in pesos and only bring \$100-\$200 to keep for emergency use; plan on having this money in your pocket when you return home. Cash exchange rates are typically 1%+ less than the official market exchange and .5% less than ATM rates. Exchanging cash on the street is safe, but you lose money.

The best exchange rate is via your ATM. This rate is reduced after you calculate the ATM machine and your bank ATM use charge. It is always more economical to withdraw larger amounts once, such as \$300-\$600, than to make two or more smaller withdrawals.

The rate at ATMs remain constant and only varies according to your bank and the ATM fees. Check your debit card for the ATM foreign exchange rate and see if your bank has any partner banks in México that allows you to use the ATM without a charge.

Major credit card companies charge an automatic 3% foreign transaction fee at a store and there is an additional ATM charge. Credit union bank debit cards charge significantly less than brand name credit card companies; approximately a .8% foreign transaction surcharge.

Always use Mexican pesos for all purchases!

If your bank is a large bank, such as Bank of America or AIG or Chase, HSBC then its 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. As of 2013 Bank of America changed its partnership with Santander and no longer offers the waiver of ATM machine fees.

Emergency Funding:

In case of emergency in which you need more than \$500 in Mexican pesos, the best alternative is to use www.xoom.com. Xoom charges are only \$4.99 for any transaction up to US \$3000. The Xoom exchange rate for México is also significantly better than ATM and cash exchange rates.

Investigate www.xoom.com online. Options are moneygram. but we do not recommend Western Union. You can send money to yourself and receive this money at any Elektra store in Yucatán, including Pisté.

Calculation of Out of Pocket Expenses

Calculate about \$50-150 for daily expenses during the entire program. This amount varies according to each person in terms of wanting to buy food on the street (off meal-plan/homestay) and other items for personal consumption. Estimate an additional \$40-150 to buy presents for yourself, friends or family. Add another \$50-80 for possible medical costs. Estimate that you should be able to access \$200 to \$400 during the program, but may end up only needing to use \$150 to \$200.

If your program includes a 4 day program break: Calculate a minimum of \$150 up to \$300-500 for costs. \$50 for travel total there and back wherever you may plan to visit; \$100 for lodging 3-4 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 (plus a little splurging); and then any extra for recreational activities: renting boats, skis, scuba gear, etc.; or ferries to Cozumel or Isla Mujeres; and night life activities.

Orientation, Getting Connected & Homestays

- A. Pre-Departure Video Orientation Meeting
- B. Facebook & Twitter
- C. Communication Technologies
- D. On Participant Use of Internet, Cell Phones, Social Media
- E. Gifts for Homestay Families
- F. Home-Stays

Pre-Departure Video Orientation Meeting

There will be a video conference orientation meeting scheduled for the second Tuesday of March. In either case you will be provided instructions via email on how to download the software program and set up your participation.

Facebook and Twitter

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. Feel free to post your images from the summer on the OSEA FB pages. 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.

Communication Technologies

OSEA has a landline where your family and staff can communicate with each other in case of emergency. Most homestays families have neither telephones nor internet. There are internet cafes in Pisté, which charge approximately a one dollar an hour. The OSEA Teaching & Research Center has internet available for student use on a limited access.

On-Site Use of Internet, Cell Phones, Social Media

OSEA offers you the opportunity to do sustained cultural and linguistic immersion. We encourage you to actually engage in this opportunity for a transformative experience of personal and professional growth. Immersion means immersion. It is thoroughly challenging and exhilarating as well as times lonely or difficult.

We encourage all participants to plan on completely disconnecting from your world of TV, internet, social media, sports, daily texting, chatting, video conference, telephone calls and other such activities with your friends and family back in the USA. You have paid for an immersion experience of four or six weeks for 24 hours a day. If you spend your time texting, video conferencing and chatting you are throwing away the opportunity and the money you spent on this opportunity.

It is clearly your choice of how much you actually want to engage in this new experience. But for every hour of texting, talking and checking on social media with friends and family, you have wasted 2-3 even four hours of your time and money. Each minute speaking and thinking in English and talking about things that are not related to the immediate issues of you doing cultural and linguistic immersion and field research creates a gap and a vacuum. It impinges and impedes your ability to speak Spanish, to do research, to learn, to gain fluency in culture, to create friendships with your host family. Please make a point to disconnect and be where you are in your body and social presence with the persons, families, friends that live in the community where you are staying. Make them your friends and your family.

Immersion and fieldwork are difficult and challenging. If you do not make the effort to rise to the challenges then you will get very little out of this experience. If you do choose reach deep inside yourself to become a new person in this new context and respond to being where you are with the people in your physical presence, then you can grow. The transformation that you will experience is infinitely greater and more important for you than being able to chit chat with a friend every day.

Plan on disconnecting from the internet, from social media, from texting, from cell phone, from chatting, and from video conferencing with your friends and family.

Just tell everyone you are going off-grid and that's that! Restrict your communications with your parents to once a week or once every two weeks. Learn to share your experiences with the peoples that you can speak with by seeing them face to face – your homestay family and your OSEA cohort. Be with us. Reap the rewards.

The technology for communicating with your parents, siblings, friends and others is available to you in Pisté. We ask you to limit and restrict the amount of time you use this to the absolute bare minimum. You are the one that benefits from going off-grid. And on the contrary, it is only and very detrimental to you and your experience if you choose instead to frequently use these technologies to maintain frequent communication with others.

Similarly, if you choose to frequently socialize with other OSEA participants for the purpose of speaking English, you are essentially throwing away the opportunity to learn, experience, grow, and transform. The point of being in this program is to be IN it and experience it!

- Don't throw away this opportunity out of habits of talking with friends or your fear or insecurities about how to interact with culturally and linguistically different people.
- Throw yourself into the experience and you will find it infinitely rewarding and pleasurable. Be ready to live outside of your-self, your old self to become a new you.

Gifts for Homestay Families

The first thing to remember about bringing gifts for your homestay family is that you are giving them a gift, not something that they “need.” A gift is something personal from your cultural world and life that you give to share yourself with them. Under no circumstances should you conceptualize the gift as an act of generosity from a position of wealth, status, and privilege to those that are “have-nots.” The homestay families do not need your or anyone’s welfare of this type.

In other words bring something that is from your personal or family history, culture, community or values. **Give something that has meaning and is meaningful, not something based on economic value.** The point is to create a relationship with your homestay family of exchange and sharing that is premised on your shared humanity.

The most appropriate gifts are items that have to do with your own personal history, hometown, university, family, cultural identity or other kind of social group to which you belong. Thus, university or college paraphernalia such as baseball caps, t-shirts, cups or similar kind of emblem. Any kind of special candy, food good or other product from your hometown, region, or community is a great gift. If you know that you have kids in your homestay family then toys might be appropriate. It is part of you that you are giving.

Remember, you cannot give a gift of something that anyone “needs” — they don’t *need* anything from you, from the US, or from us. Thus do not think of the gift as a functional gifts, think of it as symbolic and personal.

Homestays

The Homestay experience is one of the most crucial and significant parts of the overall OSEA Field Study Abroad program. The Director has been working in this community for over 30 years and has developed an extensive network of friends, colleagues, and community associates. 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. Further, the Pisté families that are willing to be hosts to OSEA Homestays and that satisfy our basic criteria are at a premium. There are only a few families that are willing to open their homes and risk the kind of transcultural exchange and experience that we seek and that can actually come through with the meaning of this exchange. These families have developed a very close and personal relationship with the director and with OSEA. It is essential that each participant understand the ethical significance of this personal relationships that are the basis of the OSEA experience.

Thus, although you may like to know asap with what family you will stay, it is not necessarily something that we can determine until the last minute. 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.

We need to know what kinds of preferences and 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 about and discuss. There is nothing to hide here. The information you provide us is what we use to create the best possible homestay experience for you and the family.

The homestay experiences are not simply a type of rent a room with a family or dorm room situations where you share rent but very little interaction. Homestays are your entry into the cultural world of the Maya community. OSEA participants create lasting friendships of deep meaning. Every year OSEA alumni can be found returning to Pisté for holidays and summers and other types. The homestay relationship is an ethical and meaningful relationship, not primarily an economic one.

OSEA Staff Personnel

2011 OSEA Administration and Research Staff:

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2012 OSEA Administration and Research Staff:

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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 and Request Form
- I. Scan Your Student ID and Submit to OSEA by Email Attachment

Follow the links or Download these forms at http://www.osea-cite.org/class/class_pre-departure.php
These forms must be filled out completely and returned to OSEA by April 30th. No one is allowed to participate in OSEA Programs without having submitted signed and completed forms.

[RV215F1 Agreement to Norms of Conduct](#) — requires Notary Public witness signature

[RV215F2 Agreement to Conditions of Participation](#) — requires Notary Public witness

[RV215F3 Release of Liability](#) — requires Notary Public witness

[RV215F4 Medical Evaluation & Release](#) — requires medical physician to complete

[RV215F5 Safety 3509Rev and Medical Insurance Information Release](#)

[RV214F6 Travel Information Arrival & Departure](#)

[RV214F7 Emergency Contact Information](#)

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.

Complete and submit by April 30th

Do not send these forms to Dr. Castañeda to the designated Staff

Do not send these forms by email.

You are must send the original hard copies of these forms by physical mail to the osea staff designated to receive these. You will be informed of the precise date and the physical address at the orientation meeting.

You must fill out and sign the first three forms in front of a Notary Public. You may go to any Bank in the USA and request the FREE services of the Notary Public at that bank.

Scan Your Student ID and Submit by Email

All OSEA participants and staff must scan their student or faculty ID card from their university and submit these to the designated staff person by email. Ideally, we need to receive these by the first week of May at the same time as the submission of release forms.

It is necessary for OSEA to collect scan versions of current IDs (preference) in order to make special requests to grant permission to visit Chichén Itzá during the summer.

Please follow these instructions for the scanning:

1. Default settings for Input of scan.
 - a. 300 dpi, 100% size
 - b. color photo/ color document
 - c. deskewing and descreen on, but low/minimum
2. Output is jpg. Set file size to 80% compression.
3. Scan front and then scan back; make sure all settings are exactly the same to create same dimensions for both images.
4. Create a composite jpg using photoshop or your favorite image manipulation program — see below.
5. The composite image should be horizontally aligned with front side on the left and back side on the right. Both sides should be readable at same time .
6. Output jpg size of composite should be approx. 500 bytes & not more than 1 megs.
 - a. Dimensions in inches: approx. 7.3 inches wide x 2.4 inches high
 - b. Dimensions in pixels: approx. 2200 px wide x 700 px high
 - c. Save composite to Highest quality compression (#10 or #11 on scale in Photoshop)
7. Mail this to the designated staff person indicated during orientation meeting.

How to make composite jpg of front and back of scanned ID card

1. Open the jpg image of the front side of the student ID
2. Go to Image menu and select image size/dimensions. Note the dimensions on piece of paper. It should be 3.5 wide and 2.3 high, 300 dpi, approx. 1000 px wide, 350 px high. Hit cancel.
3. Go to Image menu, select Canvas Size. Click on the left arrow in the “Anchor” options; change the width size to double current existing; hit ok
4. Open other image of back side. Select All from top menu and then click copy.
5. Cut and paste on to first image. Using the move tool, appropriate locate the back side into the blank canvas space that you created in #3 above.
6. From top Layer menu, click on Merge Visible or Flatten.
7. Save image AS (jpeg) and name the file 20yy Student ID Myfirstname mylastname.
8. Save and select highest level of quality keeping an eye on what the project size will be. Adjust compression to make sure that it does not exceed 1 megabyte.

FAQ: Electricity, Outlets, Surge Protectors

I have another kind of odd question. I know Mexico has the same electrical current as the U.S., but every time I took my laptop to Mexico, the battery would get zapped and several times I had to buy a new charger. I was wondering if you have had a problem with this or if that was just a fluke for me? Or possibly an issue because my laptop was going on 7 years old! I am asking because I just got a new laptop and the battery is built in so it would be expensive to replace.

The problem has to do with the uneven electrical current in the places where you were staying. Most often than not, the electrical wiring is NOT grounded in the average home in México, nor in most businesses in Mérida. This will be different in places of central México where you have huge cities such as Puebla, DF, Guadalajara, Monterrey that are just as "modern" and technologically sophisticated as any USA or European city. Thus also you would not have this problem in Cancun or any of the resort hotels along the Maya Riviera, but you would in Tulum and maybe parts of Cozumel. Playa del Carmen would have an uneven distribution of high/poor quality electrical wiring and grounding.

This low quality electrical wiring in poorer, less urban areas of México causes surges related to normal activity to be exaggerated and burn out things on a frequent basis. For a while, every year I would replace the modem in my house in Pisté - the osea headquarters -- because surges from storms would just blow them out!

In fact, one year that i was living in Merida, I had a metal framed laptop, and i was actually electrical shocking myself on a daily basis. Electric shock therapy every day for several hours a day. I did not realize this myself until someone touched me while I had my hands on the computer keyboard and she felt the electrical shock! The electricity was not grounded despite having a three hole electrical outlets.

The solution is to buy a surge protector, 6 outlet with 3 prong holes, that has a high quality breaker to stop the effects of electrical surges.

In Pisté OSEA electricity is grounded and has high quality electrical wiring. But most homes do not have grounded electricity nor do they have outlets with 3 prongs (positive, negative and neutral/ground).

FAQ: Am I required to buy a photo image management program?

Yes. ACDSee Image Management Ver. 17 is current as of 2014. As part of OSEA you have an institutional-student discount to receive this at \$39.95.

FAQ: Which photo/image editing program do I need to buy?

OSEA requires participants in the Ethnography program working any of the Health & Healing, Emergent Cultures, Community Tourism to purchase and use the ACDSee photo management program. As of 2014 the current version is version 17 normal priced at \$80 but on sale for \$45. If you have access to websites that sell earlier (and thus cheaper) versions such as ACDSee Photo Manager 2009 or versions 14, 15, or 16 then please go for it! These will do the job that we need you to do. Mac users must buy the Mac version of the program; unfortunately this is a little more pricey. Note also that the earlier MAC versions have a bit of awkward clunkiness.

FAQ: Must I buy a photo/image editing program, e.g., Photoshop?

No. It is helpful, but if your university does not allow you to buy this at huge savings then it is ok. You can do with out it for the OSEA program.

FAQ: ACDSee Bundles: Image Manager and Video Converter

I am looking into the bundle options for the ACDSee software that you sent. I am definitely going to get the photo managing software. Is there a version you recommend? I was leaning toward the ACDSee 15 if not 16. Is the video converter software also helpful for what we'll be doing? I am going to look into buying a good but economical (video)camera once the semester is winding down a bit.

The video converter is not required. It is good to own if you do a lot of burning or bootlegging of video from DVDs in order to create your own hard drive collection of film for personal use or teaching resource. The converter is good for ripping a movie dvd into a file format -- such as mpg, avi, or other formats that are used on smartphones, ipads, and the like. AVI is the highest quality, largest size, based on least compression; mpg2 is usually the best compressed quality depending on original source. Formats for portable devices (smart phones, etc) are all low quality; e.g., mpg4. MOV is a true HD 1080 file format with 16:9 screen ratio and very heavy, big file size.

I use this video converter software for bootlegging maya educational film to have as a personal teaching resource. A less likely reason to have /buy converter software is if you have a true HD video camera that shoots a proprietary film format, such as MT and you want to convert that to a useable film format for your video/film design software. It turns out that virtually all the video/dvd film converter programs are essentially the same user interface. The difference is mostly aesthetic and the price. The higher price gives you stronger ripping capability against DVDs that have strong security systems to somewhat prevent ripping. DVD converter software ranges from \$24 to \$50 depending on ripping power.

FAQ: What is the difference between Image Management & Image Editing?

Image Management Software. The minimum software we require for the Ethnography Field School (not Maya and Teach English programs) is the image management -- image manager -- so this would be ACDSee 15 or 17 (you can find earlier versions on software sites such as www.download.com). This image manager can be bought separately or you can buy it as part of your purchase of the ACDSee Pro 5 or 6. The pro version includes a very powerful image editing software which aims to high quality photographic printing. This image editing program is significantly different than Photoshop, which is also a very powerful software. Photoshop is more geared toward editing images for computer use, whereas ACDSee Pro is for printing high quality photographs.

ACDSee Pro 5 or 6 is combo of the image/file manager system and a photo editing/development program. The editing program is really extraordinary, very useful beyond and in a different way than say Photoshop. I use both the ACDSee and Photoshop for different kinds of photo editing processes. The image/file manager is also vastly superior to any other programs that are available online or that come with your camera, such as Adobe Lightroom, Picasso, and similar.

FAQ: What does the Image File Manager Do?

The image manager allows you to do BATCH rename files, add/edit embedded information about the file (tags, dates, captions, descriptions, etc), copy, create backup copies of complete series in different file sizes (changed dpi, or print size, etc). This function is hugely important in order to maintain accurate archives of research materials that a researcher produces.

In the long run of an academic consider that I probably have 300 gigs of photos from the last 5-7 years of research. How is all that kept manageable? ACDSee is really a blessing with its very easy and fast batch functions of renaming, resizing, editing file info or metadata, change lighting, etc. I have compared it to other programs and find that it is the best program in terms of a number of different criteria. For this reason it is required purchase.

As part of the OSEA programs you will be required to take visual documentation of ethnographic processes. You will be required to do archiving processes on all images. Change names, add tags, write narrative descriptions, identify persons in photos, provide descriptive context of photos, etc. Try changing the names of 100 files on your computer and adding tags and descriptors. If you test this out you will quickly appreciate the fact that is a required software for you to purchase before arrival and to have tested it out on your own.

FAQ: Can I Receive Credits for the Spanish Courses?

The OSEA Intensive Spanish courses are offered to osea participants at highly competitive rates. The course includes a minimum of 32 contact hours in one week, which would be equivalent to one course credit. The special rate for osea participants is significantly below the pricing of other Spanish language schools in México and Latin America; compared to the many options available in Yucatán and México, the difference is a 30% to 60% savings per week of study. This savings can be offered to osea students for a number of reasons. One important reason is that osea does not offer an accredited university transcript for each one week course based on its partner relationship with the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán (UADY). Thus, the osea Spanish course requires a different kind of processing to transfer the learning into course credits that are sanctioned and accepted by your university.

The osea Intensive Spanish courses are designed especially for participants other osea programs, whether this is the Maya Health and Healing, the Heritage Ethnography Field School, or the SELT Teaching English Program. We offer the Intensive Spanish course to help each osea participant start off their program with increased Spanish immersion and abilities to succeed in their program.

The enrollment in the osea Spanish courses have exceptionally low teacher to student ratio. These courses typically have one, two or three students with one language instructor. Or, we also rarely have had four and five students but with two instructors, one of whom is full time and the other part time, and, in addition to local language assistants who spend a dedicated hour working with students on specific structured tasks to develop communicative proficiency. Your tuition fee for the Spanish course essentially covers the cost for a one on one intensive mentoring in Spanish. From this perspective, OSEA is offering a very cost effective and learning effective course.

Further, this low teacher-student ratio and the very fact that students are going to subsequently be participating in an osea program allows us to develop a highly individualized learning

agenda. Each student in Spanish has different strengths and weaknesses, different areas that require focused learning and dedication.

FAQ: How do I Transfer Course Credits

OSEA courses are backed by a partnership with Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán or UADY. This university is a fully accredited institution and enjoys approximately 30 exchange programs and partnerships with universities throughout the USA. It is well known and well established. Your osea transcripts are acceptable course credits. OSEA has never had a case where its credits were rejected for transfer.

In September you will receive two envelopes, each of which has an OSEA and an UADY transcript. These will be signed and sealed. Do not open them. If you open them then you in that instance have created a big and expensive problem. Once opened your university registrar will not accept the transcripts and will not give you credit for the summer.

The validity of the transcripts are destroyed if opened by anyone other than the person in that needs to process the transcripts (e.g., the registrar or grad admissions officer).

FAQ: How do I Get a New Transcript if Needed?

If you lose or destroy the validity of the transcripts (by opening them), you will need to pay \$80 for an original copy to be International Overnight Mail to you. International overnight mail usually takes 3 days minimum, often a full week. I will direct you to an online website of the UADY where you can pay with your credit card to have this service.

If you choose to have this service, it might be advisable that have the duplicate directly to the person or office that is supposed to receive the transcript.

FAQ: My University Does not Want to Pre-Approve the Credits

There is a US Travel Advisory against travel to México. This is a very nuanced advisory that clearly differentiates areas of México that are safe and those that are not safe. Yucatán is safe. It has a lower violent death rate than the states of Hawaii, Wyoming, Idaho. Bloomington Indiana has a death rate of 4 per 100,000. Yucatán has a violent death rate of 2 per 100,000. Living as a student in Indiana University is more dangerous than living in the state of Yucatán, México.

Nonetheless, Indiana University and perhaps your university believes that everywhere in México is unsafe unless proven safe. The fact the Travel Advisory states that it is safe is not proof enough by the sheer fact that there is a Travel Advisory for México.

This means that IU, or perhaps your university as well, will not PRE-ACCEPT the credits. However, your university will accept the credits for transfer AFTER the fact without a word.

How To Scan Your Documents or Student ID

- A. **Setting Defaults before Scanning**
- B. **How to Scan Correctly**
- C. **Post-Scan Cropping and File Reduction and File Optimization**

Before you Start to Scan: Setting Defaults

1. When you sit down to the computer to scan for an hour, make sure you have set the scanner in a place where you will be able to comfortably sit and move the book.
2. Rule of thumb use Acrobat 9 Pro or higher. Create the scans through the create document function of Acrobat. Select your scanner and then set the defaults for both color document and black and white document. You will use color document for the covers, front and back, as well as any text pages with images. You will use black and white document for normal pages without images. Thus, these each need to be set defaults differently.
3. Color Document Defaults. Set a 300 dpi, no higher, and a medium quality resolution. make sure that the scan for OCR text recognition is checked. Also adjust the document size to fit as close as possible the actual size of the covers. You may need to make several test scans to have this fit appropriately. Make sure that you know which length is the WIDTH and which is HEIGHT! Make sure the OCR text recognition is checked.
4. Black and White Document Defaults. Also set for Set a 300 dpi, no higher, and a medium quality resolution. make sure that the scan for OCR text recognition is checked. Also adjust the document size to fit as close as possible the actual size of the white part of the text page. In other words, if you are scanning two pages at a time, make sure that the both pages fit and that the scan size is adjusted for the book opened up. Select AGGRESSIVE elimination of borders and black lines (that will be created by the central crease of the open book).
5. If you follow the adjust size then the final scanned document will be much more reduced in size than if you scan full glass plate of BLACK space. This is an essential step to reduce the document size as well as save time. It takes more computer brain crunching to scan BLACK image than white.
6. Set default to ASK For NEXT PAGE of scan.

How to Scan Correctly to save time and effort!

7. You will need to do a test scan of one page on the cover of the book from which you are scanning as well as test scan of the open book for black and white pages. Once you do such test pages you can figure out quite accurately the size of the scan image.
8. Positioning Text on the GLASS PLATE is CRUCIAL!!!! It is best if you scan in sets of pages that are all the same in terms of color/black white and in terms of how you locate the page on the glass plate. If you change the position of the item on the glass plate save these pages to a separate file that will be collated with the other files after you complete all cropping and size reduction.
9. Scan the front and back covers as color documents each in separate files. These can be labeled 00 and 00z

10. Scan the title page, scan the publisher page (back side of the title page), scan the COMPLETE table of contents and list of illustrations. Scan the preface if short and clearly front matter with content – do not scan the acknowledgements. All of this goes into one file. label it 01
11. Scan the text pages of the book opened to get both pages if possible. Or scan one page at a time if necessary. Scan all pages in sequence until done. if there are images, stop the scan and scan these as separate files as color documents. You may then have the text divided into separate files that are numbered in sequence starting with 10, 20, 30, etc or 11, 12, 13, 14, etc.
12. Make sure you Scan all relevant ENDNOTES for the chapter or pages you scanned and that you have scan the Bibliography if not attached to the chapter per se. The bibliography can be a separate file. label it 100 or some number that is higher than the other file ##ing.

After Scanning: Cropping and Size Reduction

13. For each scan file you must crop, rotate pages, and size reduce prior to collating the files.
14. For each file make sure that you have indeed scanned ALL the pages that are required.
15. For each file make sure that all pages in each file are rotated to be read – top of page at the top!!! Go through each document file page at a time to correct for rotation. Select the left viewing tab so that you can see thumbnails of the file such as three per row.
16. Once you have gone through the document you can see roughly where the pages need to be cropped, whether a global crop will work for all or if you need to do global even/global odd cropping, etc.
17. Once you do all global cropping, then go through the file one page at a time to make sure that each and every page is correctly cropped.
18. Collate all files that belong to one text. Save this master file with a new name and do a size reduction on it.
19. Save the file and then go to file menu and “save as other.” Select Save as Optimize. When this is complete, return to this menu and then select “Reduce File”. A pdf file with lots of pages and images should not be more than 2-3 megs.
20. If your file is then change the settings so that the compression is greater. Then re-do file reduction and file optimization.

Crop to eliminate all black and crappy black lines/snow. Please make sure that the files are all scanned so that only the actual text with a modest margin is visible up on the page. It is imperative that you try to judge the size of the original and change the default setting of the scan to this size. this will eliminate from the beginning extra scan of empty/black space which increases the byte size of the file exponentially. this is imperative to reduce file size.

Spanish Workout Routine

Preparation for OSEA Summer Programs

It is essential that you get ready for the intensive total language immersion in Spanish that you will undergo this summer as part of your OSEA experience. This routine is primarily designed for participants in SELT Teach English, Ethnography Field School and Intensive Spanish. We assume a minimum of high novice to low intermediate level. Participants in Intensive Spanish Immersion course that are Beginners and Low Novice level should speak with OSEA Spanish Staff to discuss ways to modify and pace the routine so that it is more suitable to your level of learning at the moment.

Given that everyone already has a robust schedule for the spring semester, we are recommending a graduated acceleration of activities that increase your exposure and use of Spanish as we get closer to the summer start date of your program. This routine is all the MORE important for persons who have lower level of Spanish. It is essential that you maximize your learning experience during the summer. Imagine yourself unable to engage people with your thoughts, feelings, ideas. Or, imagine that when you are with other people you do not understand what they say, why they laugh, what they are doing because you do not understand Spanish. The whole point of you doing this summer experience is to learn, grow, and to tear down your usual ways of thinking, your own limits on what you can accomplish. In order to really make the very most of your time, you need be comfortable in increasing your Spanish fluency. Remember **communicative competency is THE priority**; that is, being able to listen, understand, and communicate your ideas effectively.

Speaking another language, a second language, requires a lot of energy, patience, discipline, and endurance — even muscles! Muscles in the mind, mouth and ears! This Spanish Workout Routine is designed to help you develop your endurance and your “muscles” for speaking Spanish in total immersion. The more you can stick to this routine and even expand or go beyond it, **the more you will reap the rewards**. You are the only one who benefits from developing this or a similar routine. **And, it is only you who lose an opportunity of a lifetime by NOT developing your Spanish before the summer!**

Workout Activities

Spanish Coffee Table. Regularly held times when a group of native Spanish speakers and learners get together and talk about anything. These conversation hours are relaxed, safe, and encouraging! You can talk or listen as you get accustomed to the activity or the persons. Call the Spanish Department or the Latin American Studies Program at your university and ask for them about opportunities for open hour Spanish conversation hours. You do not have to be in a Spanish class to join one of these informal groups. In most cities and even college towns you can probably also find Spanish conversation groups through the local area newspaper. These might be more elaborate in that they could entail social events where there is a theme and you must Speak Spanish (or try!) during the event.

- If you have Native Spanish-speaking friend, ask if they would be interested holding conversation blocks with you. For instance, maybe you could get coffee once a week for an hour or more and talk in Spanish about different topics-(content-based learning) let's say one week you have a conversation about exercising or books you have read lately. Ask them to speak at a pace that is comfortable for you and slowly work yourself up to a faster-speaking pace.

Spanish Language Encounters. These are opportunities that you create for speaking Spanish with speakers in any social situation or context that you might have available in your community. It may be speaking Spanish to Native Speakers at restaurants, on the soccer field, at the bar where you watch international soccer games, hanging out in the Spanish department, Spanish grocers, markets and other stores...

Spanish Listening Exposure. These are activities that you pursue on your own or sometimes with friends that allow you to increase your exposure to hearing Spanish spoken.

- Spanish music and radio (can also be found online)- listen to in the car or while studying, etc. If you find some favorite musicians you can listen to them on YouTube or simply just cruise YouTube for Spanish lang music!
- Spanish TV. If you have cable you may have access to some of the Spanish language TV stations in the USA, such as Univision out of Florida.
- Spanish Soaps or Telenovelas. Your university or community library is certainly stocked with Spanish language audio-visual materials, and especially the Telenovela series that was created especially as a tool for Spanish learners. the over-dramatization makes the content very easy to understand!
- Spanish language movies. Preference is to pick movies from México!!! But also opt for Spanish filmmakers, such as Almodovar. Or, get the set of films based on 100 Years of Solitude (e.g., Erendira).

Start with AT LEAST 15-30 minutes a day of any form of exposure. Slowly increase this time as you become more comfortable with the target language (Spanish). Here are some ideas of ways you can start becoming accustomed to listening and speaking Spanish. In the context of living in Mexico, speaking and listening/understanding are going to be more important or more stressed versus reading/writing.

Spanish Reading Practice and Exposure. Becoming accustomed to reading Spanish in print will help you while in Pisté. This gives you a safe and controlled environment to read at your pace with a dictionary. Once on the ground this ability will help you navigate road signs, menus, maps, the daily news, brochures, and other materials.

- Reading Spanish newspapers online is good option as well as a means to increase vocabulary. This is especially good if your research interests involve contemporary events. Try reading the Diario de Yucatán or other Spanish language online newspapers on a regular basis. <http://www.yucatan.com.mx>

Spanish Workout Routine: Schedule

March. 10-20 mins a day, or 30 mins every other day of exposure to Spanish.

You need to find your pace and rhythm. Do not be overly ambitious and get burned out. Shorter periods on a consistent basis is far superior than binge and bust style. Consistency and regularity helps far more than trying to go too fast and too far at first.

Spanish Coffee Table once or twice during the month of March. If your schedule allows it, do it once a week during the whole month until your departure for Yucatán. If your level is low, then passive participation (listening) is even all the MORE important!

April. Increase your routine to a minimum of 15 to 30 mins. daily of exposure and one hour plus of Spanish Conversation/Coffee Table a week.

Watch at least one Spanish language film with subtitles every two weeks. By preference look for Mexican films, or second choice would be films by Spanish filmmakers. The Spanish Department and/or the Latin American Studies Program typically organize a Spanish language film series during the week. Or, create your own Mexican Film Weekend event with a group of your friends —bring Tecate & palomitas every other weekend!

MAY-JUNE. 4-6 weeks prior to Your OSEA Program

- Daily Spanish listening exposure of 30-60 mins on radio, YouTube, audio-books, etc.
- 2-3 hrs. of structured Spanish Coffee Hour Conversation a week.
- Watch Spanish language films, TV, or Telenovelas, try to get 6-12 hours.
- Read the Diario de Yucatán newspaper online — Check out National, International and the Regional Sections – regional includes news about Chichén Itzá, Mérida, Cancun, Playa del Carmen.

Recommendations

maya lang	http://youtu.be/jBR3wLusUeM . -- learn body parts in Maya!!!
maya lang	http://youtu.be/aTxBe-DeMc . http://youtu.be/pxDXIIE7cDE
film	Un día sin mexicanos.
film	La ley de Herodes
film	Como Agua Para Chocolate / Like Water for Chocolate
film	El laberinto del fauno.
film	Amores Perros http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amores_perros
film	by Spanish film director, Pedro Almodovar.
TV	Dame Chocolate. Telemundo TV Series 2007

SEARCH YOUTUBE	Jarana Dance, Yucatec Trova music, Yucatec Trios, Mérida en Domingo
youtube	Openschoolethnograph and Yaxkukul are two YouTube channels that OSEA runs. View field school activities, cultural activities, maya lang.
YouTube	http://youtu.be/FiTU_oFZU9Y Yaxkukul Horchata
YouTube	Gruta del Alux. A series of cartoons stereotypically YUCATEC Humor!! Difficult to understand references as well the Spanish is half maya! http://youtu.be/AQwYlaeLgiU There are a lot of bad bootlegged vids of this yucatec TV show, so cruise through to find ones that have good sound
Duendes del Mayab and Orquesta Tipica de Yukalpeten, are CLASSIC Yucatec orchestras. Try TRIO LOS TRES YUCATECOS for romantic guitar trios	http://youtu.be/nU5CsbpX2P8 http://youtu.be/Mjuidqjtxgc http://youtu.be/AvcsC2RKKbM http://youtu.be/uacH3KFA6I http://youtu.be/rAmPFybuO78 http://youtu.be/d5uUd2X8Xx0 http://youtu.be/DE1QK5X2m5Q http://youtu.be/KMW7FXuchJ0

On Facebook you can start making social connections with persons in the Pisté Community. As well those who are interested in Politics should be tracking the first four FB pages listed below. These are from different political parties involved in this year's election. See how people use FB to do politics in México!!!

Facebook	Juventud Tinum
Facebook	Tinum Yucatán
Facebook	Comunidad Pisté
Facebook	Okoot Bonee Pisté
Facebook	Pisté and Chichén Itzá
Facebook	Escuela Abierta de Etnografía y Antropología

More Music Suggestions

1. Manu Chao- great music, trans-latinoamericano, with lyrics less sung then often spoken, with a mix of english, French and other thrown in on a basic Spanish language lyrics. A GREAT intro to Spanish in music if you have troubles like me (Quetzil) understanding lyrics even English :-)

2. Shakira- Any of her Spanish Albums or songs are recommended!

3. Maná-, singer. Try these Songs

Se me Olvido Otra Vez

Amor Clandestino,

Lluvia Al Corazon

Corazón Espinado

Como Quisiera

Sábanas Frías

El Verdadero Amor Perdona

Te lloré todo un río

Rayando el sol

Bendita Tu Luz

4. Vicente Fernandez- **ranchera's** are always great to listen to when trying to understand Spanish through music! Rancheros are northern Mexican traditional music. It has also come to symbolize México in general.

Hermoso Cariño

La Mentira

Ya Lo Se Que Tu Te Vas

Al Final

Tu Camino Y El Mio

Sublime Mujer

Pica Que Pica

Cuentas Claras

Serenata Cin Luna

Escuche Las Golondrinasa

5. Juanes-, singer. Try these Songs

La Camisa Negra

A Dios Le Pido

Hoy me Voy

Volcán

Raza

Fotografia (con Nelly Furtado)

Te Busqué (Spanish Version)

Un Día Normal

Ámame

6. Rocio Durcal, singer. Try these Songs

Amor Eterno

De Que Manera Te Olvido

Contigo Aprendi

Un Mundo Raro

Luz de Luna

Gato Baja La Lluvia

Learning Strategies: How to Prioritize Communication

Focus on Meaning not Grammar. Don't get bogged down on understanding every word or grammatical structure you hear, what's most important is understanding the MEANING. What did that person say to me? You may not be able to translate it word-for-word at first, but if you understood overall what they MEANT, then the message was received. Also, when speaking, don't strive for the most accurate grammar, strive to be understood. And if you are interested on how to make your message more grammatically accurate, ask the person you are speaking with to help you.

Ask, always ask. It's Smarter to Ask than to pretend to be smart. Pretending that you understood what someone says to you or what is being said in a conversation is pretending to be smart but being dumb. And the only thing you get out of pretending that you understood, is that you remain ignorant of what's actually being communicated and ignorant of the language. NEVER pretend like you understood what someone said. You will not learn this way, but you must ask them to repeat what they said slowly or to translate the meaning for you. Asking these questions will surprisingly help the unknown vocab or phrase stick better in your memory.

Take Notes, Write it Down. Keep a small notebook handy for taking notes to help you learn. Write new words down, write words that you hear but don't get a chance at THAT moment to ask so that you can ask someone else. Write whole sentences and phrases that are new or that seem to be constantly used as idiomatic expressions. Write expressions that seem to be oddly different than what you previously learned about how to say that idea. Ask someone about the differences between what you thought and what you heard recently. Collect vocabulary to make your own working dictionary. Later look these words up and find out how they are conjugated and used by speakers.