



The Open School of Ethnography and Anthropology
Community Institute of Transcultural Exchange

Safety and Medical Assistance Info

FAQ: Is it safe to live and work among the Maya and Mayans?

There are more than six million Mayan peoples living throughout the countries of Honduras, Guatemala, Belize, México, the United States and Canada. It is important to remember that the Maya and Mayans in each of these nations have their own very different social, cultural, historical, political, and economic particularities and situations. For example, not all Mayans are Maya! The Maya of Yucatan are the one group of Mayans whose proper name is Maya. Other Mayans use their specific social and linguistic name as their first identity, e.g., Quiche.

FAQ: Is it safe to work in Yucatán?

Yucatán is a part the region known as "Southern" or "Southeastern México". However Yucatán is quite unlike the areas of Oaxaca and Chiapas where there have been travel warnings in 1990s and early 2000s respectively. The culture, society, history, and politics of the Maya of Yucatán is quite unlike both the country of Guatemala and the Mexican state of Chiapas where there are also Mayan peoples living under conditions of greater economic impoverishment. The Maya of Yucatán live in political and economic contexts that differ dramatically from Mayans in other parts of the world due in part to the well-developed tourism industry of Merida, Cancun, Playa del Carmen, Tulum region. Not only are the Maya better off economically (thus no political unrest here), but tourism combined with Maya and Yucatecan hospitality to create an inviting, open culture of security, safety, and warmth for visitors and tourists of all types. The Yucatecos and Maya are renown in Mexico for being peaceful, non-violent/non-aggressive, chivalrous, warm, and friendly.

FAQ: Is it safe to be a student in Pisté and Mérida?

The Yucatán peninsula is among the safest places to be for any person of any age, sex/gender, nationality or religion: It is a major international tourist attraction that receives more than a million tourists a year from all over the world. Pisté and Mérida are two of the most important tourist destinations in the state of Yucatán. People live and work with foreigners of all nationalities and have the greatest respect for visitors of all types, including students. There have never been any international or even USA political warnings or restrictions to tourists visiting Yucatán. It is safe for women to walk around at night, even late in the tourist areas of Merida and even alone anywhere in Pisté, a rural community of 5,000. There is a high volume of expats and foreign students who feel safe and help to foster safety.

FAQ: What health precautions should I take or what health issues should I be concerned with?

There are no extra-ordinary health issues in addition to your own preexisting health that should concern you as a participant in OSEA Programs. Unlike other parts of Latin and Central America, travelers do not need to worry about taking precautionary medicines to prevent any number of illnesses such as malaria. The health conditions of Yucatán are good enough to attract more than a million tourists a year. Health and stomach problems are typically caused by sun intoxication, dehydration, and improper diet. This includes NOT eating the local foods such as meat, fruit (especially bananas, lemons, oranges), corn, beans, and chile peppers.

FAQ: Do students get sick?

Students, like other local persons, do get sick. Most sickness is caused by a combination of dehydration and over exposure to the sun. OSEA staff strives to ensure that students take care of themselves in the manner appropriate for the climate. As in any study abroad program, students will need to adapt to the local diet. Often medical doctors prescribe Imodium for stomach problems—unfortunately this medicine is detrimental to adaptation to diet and to the maintenance of normal digestion and elimination of waste.

FAQ: How do students get medical attention while at OSEA?

There are three clinics in the community of Pisté and Xocenpich where OSEA is based. Two are private and one is federal clinic. There are major hospitals and private medical practices an hour and thirty minutes away in Mérida. Ambulance service is available in Pisté. Further, in cases of extreme medical emergencies, there is an airport for emergency landing in Pisté and there are three international airports nearby. The Chichén Itzá airport is 30 minutes away from Pisté, the Mérida airport (MID) is less than two hours away from Pisté, and the Cancun airport is within three hours drive.

FAQ: Who pays for the medicines and medical attention that students may need in case of illness.

Students and any other participant in OSEA are in all cases financially responsible for securing their own health insurance and health care. This includes any medicine, treatment, and emergency transportation. On site all payments are by students who would collect receipts for insurance reimbursement or tax purposes. Please review the website for additional information about maintaining your health while in the field. This can be found at http://www.osea-cite.org/resources/re_travelinfo_health.php.

Name of Participant (Print)

Signature

Date