

The University of Kansas
Department of Spanish and Portuguese

Summer Institute in Puebla, Mexico

2008 Student Travel Handbook

Produced by the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and
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Travel Handbook
The University of Kansas
2008 Summer Language Institute in Puebla, Mexico

Dear Puebla SLI Participant:

Congratulations on being chosen to participate in the Puebla Summer Language and Culture Institute 2008. This summer promises to be fun, rewarding, and intellectually challenging. We hope that the information contained in the handbook will be of help to you in your advance planning for the trip.

You have chosen to study abroad in Mexico in order to improve your language skills. While six weeks in Mexico is not long enough for you to become fluent in Spanish, you will see a marked improvement in your speaking and listening comprehension skills. Moreover, you will have the chance to learn first-hand about the culture and about the wonderful Mexican people with whom you will come into contact. So take advantage of the situation: practice your Spanish as much as possible with your host family, classmates, and teaching staff. Don't be afraid to make mistakes. Mexicans appreciate any and all efforts by you to speak their language.

We are sure that you are eager to make a good impression on everyone with whom you come in contact in Mexico. Also, like it or not, you will be perceived as a representative of your country and the University of Kansas. Therefore, we expect that you will conduct yourself in a mature fashion, treating your instructors, classmates, host family, and the staff at UDLA, with the utmost respect. Please make a conscious decision right now to be as receptive and flexible as possible, and you will find that this summer will be a fun and personally enriching experience.

If you have any questions between now and May 16, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the KU faculty members accompanying the program. Their emails are:

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Classes/Texts:

Classes are fast-paced, intensive, and demanding, therefore attendance every day is extremely important. Classes will meet in the mornings and early afternoons at the Universidad de las Américas. There are no classes on Fridays, allowing you time to explore Puebla and the surrounding areas, as well as participate in one or two UDLA excursions.

For all classes taught by the Universidad de las Americas (UDLA) you will purchase your textbooks or photocopy packets in Mexico. Please budget approximately \$100 to cover the expenses of these texts. Information on the textbooks for KU courses will be provided at the orientation meetings.

You will have access to the computer labs at UDLA for writing papers and compositions, as well as for Internet access and e-mail. These computers are shared by all the students at UDLA, so please be courteous and keep in mind that academic use of the computers takes precedence over personal use.

We strongly recommend that you invest in a good guidebook, such as the Lonely Planet: Mexico, Rough Guides: Mexico, or Let's Go Mexico. Also, books like People's Guide to Mexico (Carl Franz) are fun and informative. We also suggest that you do some reading about Mexico's turbulent but fascinating history. A good place to start is A Concise History of Mexico by Brian Hamnett. You will make a lot of discoveries on your own, but the more you know about Mexico before you go, the more you will learn from the experience of living and studying there.

Clothes and Packing:

The best advice as you are preparing to pack is to lay out what you think you will need and then pack only half of that . . . leave the rest at home. Laundry facilities are available in Puebla, and weekly laundry service is also included in your host family accommodations.

The most important thing to pack is clothes that are comfortable and that travel well (i.e. wrinkle resistant). The weather will be warm (70s-80s) but, unless there is an unusually hot summer, the altitude generally keeps temperatures down. The rainy season usually begins in early to mid-June, meaning that it rains daily, often in the form of a thunderstorm in the afternoon or evening. Once the rains begin, evenings will also be pleasantly cool. You should bring a sweater or jacket for the cool nights. Also, a sturdy umbrella is essential (and maybe a raincoat): when the rains begin, they're there to stay and it pours frequently, often causing flash flooding. Bring good shoes for walking in the rain as well.

Mexicans tend to dress more formally than Americans. Although you will always look like an American, if you dress appropriately you will blend in better and will look like a smart, savvy American rather than an "inocente." You will get better service and are less likely to be the target of scams. Shorts are okay for wearing to class, but only the loose, baggy, somewhat long kind. You will see Mexican women wearing tight, short clothes, but American women wearing such attire tend to be the target of a great deal of (usually undesired) male attention (see below for more on women traveling in Mexico). Mexicans do not wear intentionally shabby clothes, so avoid ripped jeans, cut-off shorts, and torn or stained clothing. Athletic wear (sweats and sport shorts) in many places is inappropriate unless you are going to the gym or to the park to jog. Be aware that to go into many restaurants and nightclubs shorts of any kind will keep you from getting through the door, so you should have some dressy attire as well (tailored pants, skirts, dresses, dress shirts, etc.) When visiting churches, hats, tank tops, miniskirts, and swimsuits are not appropriate.

Mexicans do not walk around their houses barefoot and you will offend the señora of your house if you do so. Please respect their customs and wear sandals or flip-flops in your house. Also, men should not walk around the house without a shirt on.

American brands of toiletries (toothpaste, shampoo, nail polish, shaving cream, etc.) are all readily available in Mexico so you do not need to pack massive quantities of these items. However, you should bring sufficient supplies for contact lens care, as you may not be able to find the specific brand you use.

You should plan on leaving expensive and/or sentimental jewelry and other valuables at home. The families you will be living with are extremely trustworthy but you will also be spending time in hotels, and pickpockets (on the streets, in the subways, on the busses) in large cities are quite adept at relieving unsuspecting tourists of their belongings. This information is not meant to scare you, but rather to make you aware. The same goes for expensive cameras. If you choose to take a valuable camera with you, you will need to be very careful when carrying it.

Before you leave the U.S., make photocopies of the following: Passport, plane tickets, traveler's checks, and credit cards. Leave one copy at home with your parents and pack one copy in a separate location. When in Mexico, leave your passport with your family or in the hotel safe while traveling and carry the photocopy as I.D. Be sure to check your wallet and leave all unnecessary items at home in the United States. This will make your life much easier in case of loss or theft.

You are allowed one piece of carry-on luggage and two checked bags. If you have more luggage than this you will have to pay extra - - a lot more! Pack lightly so that you leave space for souvenirs and gifts to bring back with you.

Suggested Packing List:

In your carry-on luggage (NOT in your checked luggage!):

- Plane tickets
- Passport (strongly recommended)
- Photo ID (such as a driver's license)
- Traveler's checks, ATM cards, credit cards, etc.
- Books for school and this Student Handbook
- Glasses and/or contact lenses
- Prescription medications in original, labeled bottle
- Basic toiletries and a change of clothes

Also remember to pack the following:

- Travel alarm
- Prescriptions and cleaning solutions for glasses or contact lenses
- Antibacterial "wipes" or hand gel for use in public restrooms
- Small first aid kit
- Spanish/English dictionary
- Swimsuit, sun block, sunglasses, hat/cap
- Travel umbrella
- Raincoat and/or windbreaker
- Good walking/sightseeing shoes that do not cause blisters (you'll walk a lot!)
- School clothes: jeans, khaki pants, shirts, nice shorts

Nice shoes and dress attire for dinners and evenings out with host family
Slippers, sandals or thongs (for wearing at the beach and in the house)
Small suitcase or backpack for weekend trips
Camera and extra batteries
Money belt or neck safe
Gift for your host family
Photographs of your family, friends, home, state

Most importantly, PACK LIGHTLY. If you leave something “essential” behind, Puebla has plenty of stores where you can buy a replacement.

Travel to Puebla:

Remember when going to the airport that international flights require you to check in a minimum of 2 hours before departure. With the new security regulations in place, you may wish to allow a little extra time above and beyond the required two hours.

A member of the KU Department of Spanish and Portuguese will be traveling with the group flight from Kansas City to Puebla on Friday, May 16. Upon arrival at the airport in Puebla you will pass through “Aduanas,” or Customs. Be sure to request permission from the Customs official to stay in Mexico for two months. If asked the purpose of your stay, say that you are taking a course, not that you are going to study or be a student in Mexico. Otherwise, Customs officials may ask to see a student visa which you are not required to have. It can be quite a headache if you are not explicit about the length of your stay!

There will be students from UDLA at the Puebla airport to greet you and direct you to the bus you will take to the UDLA campus where your families will be waiting for you.

Please let the directors know your travel plans as soon as they are solidified so that we can inform the UDLA coordinators. If you are not traveling with the group flight, you can still be met in Mexico City by UDLA student helpers, but you need to inform the program directors or the Office of Study Abroad as soon as possible of your travel dates, airline, flight number, and arrival times. Students traveling independently to Mexico are required to make their own arrangements for transportation from the airport in Mexico City to UDLA on Friday, May 16.

We cannot arrange housing with your host family outside of the program dates (May 16-June 27). If you arrive in Puebla prior to May 16, or if you choose to remain in Mexico following the end of the program, you will need to arrange your own accommodations.

At Home in Puebla:

You will be living with a Mexican family in Puebla. Typically, there is only one student per household, although on occasion KU students have shared families with another American student. The homes are nice and comfortable, and the señoras know American tastes, likes and

dislikes. Please remember that these are private homes that are being opened up to you, not hotels. You should behave as a guest in a home would. Don't leave the lights or fans on, try not to use all the hot water (take short showers), don't run your hairdryer for twenty minutes, keep the noise level down (especially if you come in late at night) and be polite.

Your rights while staying with a host family include:

- a room that is quiet and comfortable;
- a warm and friendly atmosphere in which you feel encouraged to participate in conversations and activities;
- a home that is within walking or convenient bus distance from the university;
- dinner daily and breakfast and lunch on the weekends. If you must miss a meal or expect to arrive late, please notify the doña ahead of time so that she does not prepare food that then goes to waste. The homestay experience does not include *derecho a la cocina*, or unlimited access to the kitchen. There are plenty of local cafes around the UDLA campus should you feel the need for a snack between meals
- hot water for bathing.

Your responsibilities while staying with a host family include:

- being flexible and open to new experiences and trying new foods. Families will attempt to accommodate your eating preferences as much as possible; however, be aware that local culinary customs are different and it may require a little time for you to adjust to and appreciate the local diet.
- being aware of how your actions might affect your host family. In all circumstances, it is best to observe and follow the behavior of your family.
- being respectful of your host family's home and personal belongings.
- Spending time with your host family. Your host family has taken you in because they want to know and share experiences with you. In the excitement of being abroad, with the myriad of things to see and do, students often forget this and fail to make time to converse and participate in activities with their families.

It is a good idea to bring a gift (nothing extravagant) from the U.S. to your Mexican family. We recommend something representative of your hometown or state, such as scenic photography book, perhaps food items that are a specialty of your home (jams/jellies/baked goods etc). It is also a good idea to bring snapshots of your home, family, and friends to share with your host family as well as postcards from your hometown or state. They will be just as interested in learning about you as you are about them.

It is important to know that it takes a great deal more effort and expense to maintain a middle class lifestyle in Mexico than it does in the United States. Many things we take for granted (clean drinking water, for example) are the product of a lot of hard work in Mexico. Please be aware that your families are going to a lot of trouble to house you in the way to which you are accustomed.

The host families in which you will be staying have housed students before. They are extremely trustworthy and will treat you well. You should have many opportunities for improving your Spanish while you are there and for seeing how Mexicans live on a daily basis. Please keep in

mind, however, that while the families greatly enjoy hosting students these are primarily business arrangements. Experiences vary from year to year and will be different for each student.

Telephones:

You will **not** be able to make long-distance telephone calls from your host family's house. It is far too expensive, and in the past some students have left the country without paying their bills. It is extremely easy to use the phones on or around the UDLA campus or in Cholula or Puebla. You can purchase a Ladatel calling card in Mexico which will allow you to call the U.S., or you can use a Sprint, AT&T, MCI or other U.S. calling card to call home. It is much more expensive to call the U.S. from Mexico than vice versa, so you might want to arrange for your family or friends calling from the U.S. to call you at a pre-designated time at your houses (for example, 4 pm on Sunday afternoon). Remember to consult with your host family when making this plan in order not to monopolize phone time. Puebla is in the Central Time Zone.

Please ask your host mom how she feels about your making local calls from the house before assuming that you can use the phone. There are public phones on every block, and you can purchase a "Ladatel" phone card to use in them so that you don't have to walk around with a pocketful of coins. These phone cards are available at most drugstores, post offices, or on the UDLA campus.

Postal Services:

Mailing your correspondence from a Post Office is more reliable than using the buzones of various colors you will see at different locations around Puebla. These tend to be emptied very infrequently.

E-mail:

You will have access to the computer labs at UDLA for Internet use and e-mail. You will need to present your UDLA i.d. card to have access to the computer labs, as well as to print materials from the computer.

Money Matters:

The Mexican currency is known as the peso. At this writing (March 2008), the peso is worth approximately 10.7 to the dollar. The 50% devaluation of the peso in 1995 was devastating for many people in Mexico. While it is favorable to Americans traveling with dollars, Mexico continues to suffer from inflation and from instability in its currency.

Many ATM cards can be used abroad to make withdrawals in pesos. Check with your bank to make sure your ATM card is accepted in Mexico, which banks in Mexico will accept it, whether there is a limit to how much money you can withdraw per day, and how much the fee will be for each transaction. ATM machines in Mexico require PIN numbers, not letters, and usually limit the PIN to four numbers. So, if you have a word as your PIN, you will need to know the numerical translation. The UDLA campus houses four ATM machines, and there are several in Cholula as well that are easily accessible to U.S. students.

You can also get cash via a cash advance on your VISA or MasterCard at major banks and at ATMs throughout Mexico (at least in the major cities) if you have a PIN number for that credit card. Credit card companies typically charge high fees for this privilege and it is a slow process. Check with your particular credit card company for more information.

Even if you use an ATM card or credit card for getting cash, you might consider bringing \$100-\$200 in traveler's checks in case your card is lost or stolen, or it fails to work for some reason. Also, make arrangements before you leave about how you will replace your card if this happens.

Traveler's checks are also an easy and safe option for getting cash in Mexico. You can usually change traveler's checks at a "casa de cambio." You will be required to show identification when changing checks, and there may be a limit to the amount of dollars you can change at one time. Be aware that there is a fee. Comparing rates at several different places can often be very productive and save you money. It is best to change traveler's checks and use the cash to pay in restaurants, stores, etc. Also remember how travelers' checks work: you sign them at the bank where you purchase them, before you leave the premises. When you want to exchange them, show the cashier the check before you counter-sign. This is the only way they can tell that the two signatures match. Keep the receipts with the check numbers in a separate place so that, if you should lose them or if they are stolen, you can get them replaced easily. Also, remember to photocopy the receipts and leave that copy at home in the U.S. It is easiest and most economical to buy travelers' checks in dollars, not pesos.

"Casas de cambio" are generally closed from 1:00 to 4:00 pm daily, and sometimes do not reopen in the afternoon. Often they are not open on Saturdays and they rarely open on Sundays. Check the hours of the location you plan to use in Puebla and plan ahead if you will be traveling out of town. You may not always be able to cash travelers' checks in the more remote places that you will be visiting.

In case of an emergency, money can be sent via American Express and Western Union. Western Union charges a fee of approximately 10% of the amount being wired, and American Express is also expensive. These should be used only as last resorts.

Meals:

Breakfast in Mexico is usually light. Lunch (la comida) is the main meal of the day and is generally eaten between 2:00 and 4:00 in the afternoon. Dinner (la cena) is usually much lighter than in the U.S. and frequently consists of sandwiches, quesadillas, or leftovers from lunch.

Each student will take breakfast and lunch, Monday – Thursday, at the UDLA cafeteria. The UDLA cafeteria has won many international awards for the quality of the food and service, and eating at the cafeteria allows you to interact with UDLA students. Dinner daily, and all meals Friday – Sunday will be provided by your host family. Of course you may want to eat out at times, or meet friends for coffee, snacks, etc. Just be aware that you will not receive a refund for meals you do not eat at the cafeteria or with your host family. Take advantage of your meal plan and eat at home as much as possible.

Students have recommended the following restaurants in Cholula and Puebla;

Cholula: Rosendo’s Restaurant, El Portón, La Casita Amarilla, Ta Carbon, a Concha, La Suprema Salsa, Karma Bagels, La Burbuja, and restaurants around the Plaza Mayor.

Puebla: Tacos la Oriental, La Suprema Salsa, Fonda de Santa Clara, Sanborns, Vip’s, La Zanahoria.

When eating out in Mexico, it is customary, as it is in the United States, to tip a minimum of 15% of the total bill.

Exercise:

You will have access to the exercise facilities at UDLA, including swimming pools, tennis courts, and gymnasiums. UDLA also has a jogging path through campus that is frequently used by UDLA and KU students. It is also acceptable to jog outdoors in your neighborhood or in a park. However, please be careful as you get accustomed to the altitude and the heat, and don’t overdo it in the beginning. Also, modesty concerns apply to workout clothing as well as your daily dress; wear loose, longer shorts and a shirt or tank top. Men should not run around shirtless, and women should not exercise wearing only a sports bra and shorts.

Words to the Wise:

While participating in this program you will be expected to behave in accordance with the laws of the Mexican government, the rules of academic conduct of the University of Kansas, and the standards set by the Director of the University of Kansas Summer Institute in Puebla. In the interest of maintaining safety and promoting an intellectual climate that will reflect the high academic standards of the University of Kansas Department of Spanish and Portuguese, the following activities are unacceptable and are grounds for immediate dismissal from the program:

- Unruly, boisterous or abusive behavior
- Excessive and/or abusive use of alcohol
- Possession and/or use of illegal substances. Possession of drugs is illegal in Mexico. Any encounter with legal authorities on drug charges is extremely serious, and you cannot expect protection or legal assistance from the KU program or from American authorities.
- Illegal conduct of any kind

If, at any time, your behavior is deemed by the Director or any other staff member to be inappropriate and/or counterproductive to the academic endeavors of the program, your enrollment will be immediately terminated and you will be promptly dismissed. Your program fee will not be refunded.

Weekend travel is part of your study abroad experience; we encourage you to participate in the trips sponsored by UDLA and/or to travel on your own. When you travel, you must let the program directors and your host family know where you are going, how long you'll be there, and a phone number where you can be reached (the hotel where you'll be staying, for example) in case of an emergency. We will have weekly meetings at which you are expected to apprise the directors of where you plan to spend the following weekend.

Words of Warning:

Violent, random crimes of a physical nature are not nearly as common in Mexico as they are in the United States. But, BEWARE: in Mexico, where unemployment is quite high, petty crime such as pickpocketing and bag-snatching is an ancient art. The petty theft rate is especially high in the larger cities such as Mexico City. "Fanny" packs are not a good idea . . . you might as well tell everyone "here is where I keep my money." The same thing goes for backpacks; keep your books there, but not your money or your camera. Do not carry wallets in your back pocket if you want to keep them. A good alternative, if you're carrying quite a bit of money, is to carry a pouch made to wear inside the clothing (with a cord that hangs around the neck or which could be tied around the belt and then tucked inside the clothes), especially when you travel out of town or are in tourist areas, and therefore become targets for thieves. You can get these at the majority of luggage retailers, Target, Walmart, or any other place that sells travel items. Another good idea is to carry an inexpensive "fake" wallet with a few pesos in it that you can use as a "decoy" in case of pickpockets. Your real wallet, with money and credit cards, will be safely hidden away. If you are wearing an expensive watch or jewelry you are more likely to be the target of thieves. If you are traveling, leave valuables in the hotel safe and take only the cash that you will need for the day. And remember, limit the valuables you bring to Mexico in the first place.

Do not carry all your cash with you. Don't carry cash in your pockets which are easy to pick, and if you're carrying a purse or other bag make sure it is zipped closed and slung over the opposite shoulder, holding on to it tightly. Be very careful on the Metro in Mexico City; it's a wonderful way to get around the city (clean, fast, cheap and easy) but you must be on your guard. If you ride a subway when it's very crowded (which is a good reason to avoid it during the morning and afternoon rush hours) try to stand up against the wall if you can't sit down. This way you don't have to worry about people behind you and you can see in front of you. Don't be paranoid; just don't let your guard down.

Health Concerns:

No special immunizations are required for entry into Mexico. You may wish to check with Watkins Health Center (or your home university health center or local health department) to see if they recommend a particular series of shots.

The food and water in your Puebla home are safe. Most homes in Puebla will either have a filter system connected to the faucets (although it is possible that not all the faucets will have filters), or the water will be delivered by trucks in huge garrafones (a Culligan-type service). Outside the home be careful. Instead of tap water try the agua mineral/con gas (fizzy) or agua embotellada/sin gas (not fizzy). Drink directly from the bottle or use a straw. Do not pour the drink over ice because the ice itself may be contaminated. Always use purified water, not tap water, to brush your teeth.

It's a bad idea to eat food from street vendors, even though it looks and smells very good. The places which are out in the open are very likely to be unhygienic, and you could run the risk of diseases much worse than diarrhea. The same goes for indoor restaurants; little holes-in-the-wall can be good, just so long as they seem relatively clean. Do not eat raw vegetables or fruit unless you can peel it (oranges, bananas, and mangoes are okay but stay away from grapes, strawberries, etc.).

You may have to deal with "turista" (digestive disorders) at some point. If you get sick, you should avoid spicy food, grease, and alcohol for a while. Most importantly, rest. Especially at the beginning, you need to become acclimated to the altitude, the food and the water, so don't push your body too hard. There are over-the-counter products that will help to control diarrhea. Often, however, the best cure is to rest and drink plenty of clean water. If you feel really ill, we can arrange medical treatment for you (at your expense). You can also check with your doctor in the U.S. before you go and request prescription-strength anti-diarrhea medicine to take with you.

Beer (and all alcohol in general) is stronger than we are normally used to in the U.S., and the high altitude in Puebla makes it go to your head even faster. Don't put yourself at risk by assuming you can comfortably drink as much as you can in the United States.

The sun is strong in Mexico. Because of the country's location, the rays are more direct and penetrating. Use a strong sunscreen (25 SPF or higher) when you're going outside for half an hour or more, and certainly if you go to the beach or a swimming pool. Also, the hot sand on the beach can raise huge blisters on the soles of your feet, so wear sandals, thongs, or tennis shoes.

Cultural Concerns:

Mexico is wonderful but poorer than the U.S., and you may feel unprepared for what you see, especially beggars. While there is certainly nothing wrong with giving them money, keep in mind that you did not create Mexico's poverty problem and you cannot solve it either. At the same time, try not to become indifferent; it is a very sad fact of life in Mexico and you should find your own way of dealing with it.

Leave judgmental attitudes at home. Many things are different in Mexico; this is a large part of the charm. When you see something different, keep in mind that different does not mean either good or bad, it's just different. Don't make comparisons with the U.S. Mexico and the U.S. are very different countries but equally wonderful in their own ways. A good motto to remember is: "If you want everything to be the way it is at home, stay at home." Rather than making judgments, try to figure out why something might be the way that it is. You can always ask people (in a way that will not be rude) to explain something to you, or bring your observations to class and we can all discuss them. At the end of the trip, you will have found many things about Mexico that you actually prefer.

Tú versus Ud.:

Brush up on the informal and formal ways of address, including commands (the difference between *dame* and *déme*, for example). You may have heard otherwise but this is still very important in Mexico, especially among people who are older than you. You should use Ud. with the *señora* and the *señor* of the house where you live, unless they tell you otherwise. Generally, if you address waiters, clerks, and other service people with Ud. you will get better, faster service. Everyone deserves respect, and it is better to err on the side on being too polite rather than not polite enough. You can always change if someone tells you, "Puedes tutearme."

Women vs. el hombre de la calle (guys should read this, too!):

You will probably be the recipient of various unsolicited comments from men in the street. The best way of dealing with this is to ignore the comment and to continue on your way. It is best to avoid making eye contact with men issuing "piropos." In many Hispanic cultures, if a woman looks directly at a man she does not know, or responds to the piropos, it is often interpreted as indicating interest. To avoid getting unwanted comments, invitations, etc. from men, do not make eye contact. Generally, if you ignore these men they will lose interest in you and move on to another target.

However, if a man sits down next to you, uninvited, or continues to bug you or even follow you when you try to walk away, there is nothing wrong with a strong, forceful "DEJA DE MOLESTARME!" And if a man should happen to touch you, do not leave any doubt in his mind that you mean business; give a mean look and say "¡NO ME TOQUES!" or "¡NO

VELVAS A TOCARME!” (There is no need to use Ud. here!) You might want to practice some of these phrases ahead of time.

Do not let unsolicited piropos frustrate you or lessen your experiences in Mexico. The nice experiences you are going to have will far outweigh these minor annoyances. Keep them in perspective, and remember that plenty of men in the U.S. engage in such behavior as well.

Diary:

You will be forever grateful to yourself if you keep a travel journal. You don't have to write every day, but every so often make an entry. Keep track of things you buy and where, how much things cost (which is useful for planning your next trip to Mexico), how your Spanish is progressing, interesting cultural things you run across, people you meet, interesting food, reflections on Mexican life, funny things that happened to you or someone you know, funny things you said in Spanish, etc. You can't remember every detail of your trip after it's over, but if it's in writing you can go back and look at it time and again. You will never regret having taken the time.

A Little Bit of Info on Puebla, Mexico

Puebla is situated in a broad, high valley about 80 miles southeast of Mexico City. It has had many nicknames over the years, such as City of Angels, City of Tiles, and Heroic City of Zaragoza.

Puebla is the capital of the state of Puebla and one of Mexico's oldest Spanish cities, founded in 1531 on the main route between the port of Veracruz (the most important port in Mexico) and Mexico City. Legend has it that a band of angels appeared to Bishop Julian Garcés, one of the founders, pointing out where to situate the new city. Hence the nickname *Angelopolis* (City of Angels). Puebla's appearance is the most European of all the colonial cities, because it was planned from the ground up by a Spanish city designer rather than being built within an existing Indian community.

By 1539, Puebla had a university and was on its way to becoming well-known throughout Mexico for milling, textiles, exquisitely decorated pottery and tiles, and for the architectural beauty of its buildings.

Puebla today is renowned for its distinctive colonial architecture, savory cuisine, Talavera ceramics, onyx crafts, and textile industry. The indigenous language of the region, Náhuatl, is still spoken in some rural areas of the Puebla Valley. Mexican troops defeated French invaders here on May 5, 1862, at the Forts of Loreto and Guadalupe. The Mexican Revolution began in Puebla as well, on November 18, 1910, when federal soldiers and police attacked the home of the Serdán family. In 1987, UNESCO designated Puebla a World Heritage City. A serious earthquake on June 15, 1999, damaged many notable buildings, but restoration efforts began almost immediately. Virtually all the principal historic sites reopened by the summer of 2001.

Adapted from: <http://www.ixeh.net/travel/puebla/puebla.html>

Useful Websites:

PUEBLA.NET

<http://www.puebla.net.mx/>

STATE OF PUEBLA TOURISM OFFICE

Secretaría de Turismo del Estado de Puebla

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

STATE OF PUEBLA

Official portal of the state government offers information on government agencies and services, business in the region, and cultural institutions.

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

UNIVERSIDAD DE LAS AMÉRICAS - PUEBLA

<http://info.pue.udlap.mx/>