Travel Basics: Latin America

Peter Blank & Roxana Gamble
Overview

- Visas
- Health and Safety
- Packing
- Transportation
- Lodging
- Phones and Banking
- Tips/Advice
- Personal Experiences
Obtaining a Visa

U.S. citizens traveling **less** than 90 days do not need a visa for many Central and South American countries. Exceptions include Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay and Venezuela.

For **more** than 90 days or if traveling for other reasons (study or work-related), you’ll want to check with individual countries’ visa requirements.

- **Apply at least 6 weeks in advance**
- **Make copies of your passport and visa**
- **U.S. Students:** [click here](#) for country specific visa information
- **Non-U.S. Students:** [travisa.com](http://travisa.com)
Health and Safety

- Register your travel with the university
- GeoBlue International Health Insurance
- Various vaccines and medicines may be necessary to protect against
  - Yellow Fever  Typhoid  Malaria  Hepatitis A & B
- CDC Travel Website or Travwell App for specific areas
- Make sure you bring enough prescription medication to last the duration of the trip
- U-M Travel Warnings and Restrictions
- Travel.state.gov for additional safety information
Packing

● Luggage
  ○ Depends on length and purpose of trip
  ○ Be aware of airline dimensions
  ○ Pack less than you think you need
  ○ Consider packing in a backpacking pack

● Don’t forget
  ○ Adapter/converter
  ○ Quick-dry towel
  ○ Food/snacks from your home country
  ○ Products that aren’t sold in the country you’re visiting
  ○ Umbrella/rain jacket
  ○ Day pack
  ○ Paper copy of your passport
Packing

● Clothing
  ○ Comfortable shoes are a must
  ○ A scarf, sweater, jacket, etc. for visiting churches
  ○ Pack for layering –
    ■ Multiple climates
    ■ Rainy season vs dry season
    ■ Winter/Summer in SA

● General Tips
  ○ If you want to be treated like a local, it helps to dress like one
  ○ Dress more conservatively to avoid catcalling
Transportation

- Flights (from the U.S. to Latin America)
  - Search Engines
    - Skyscanner
    - Google Flights
    - Kayak
  - Discounted Student Tickets
    - StudentUniverse
    - STA Travel
  - Flying from Canada or Chicago is often cheaper than Detroit
TRANSPORTATION

- Taxi
  - Uber & Lyft in big cities
  - Know where you’re going!
- Subway
  - Rechargeable daily, weekly, or monthly passes
  - Only in big cities
- Buses
  - Most destination options
  - Longest time but cheapest
- Planes
  - Limited options, but fast!
- Trains
  - Extremely limited
- Boats
  - For island/upriver destinations
Buses
TRANSPORTATION: THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Know where you are going!!!
  - The “hustle” in terminals
  - Plan for traffic
- End destination
  - Will you need to catch a taxi?
  - Where is your accommodation in relation to drop-off spot?
- Travel warnings
  - Weather, protests, check in advance
- Luggage
  - Know restrictions, large suitcases = inconvenient
- Time of departure and arrival
  - Is the area safe?
- Safety
  - Taxis alone, night buses, lifejackets, mountain roads, etc.
Lodging

- Hostels
  - Hostelworld
    - Inexpensive
    - Central locations
    - Full of young travelers
    - Community kitchens
    - Some offer tours/excursions
    - Privacy and security issues
    - Room options: Single or dorm-style, women-only
  - All hostels are unique and offer a variety of amenities
    - Decide what is important to you (Location? Quiet vs. social? Locally owned?)
    - Read reviews & book early
**Lodging**

- **Hotels**
  - [Skyscanner Hotels](#)
    - From budget hotels (and hostels) to luxurious ones
    - Safer and more private
    - Breakfast sometimes included

- **Staying with Locals**
  - [Airbnb](#): Rent shared rooms, your own room, or an entire apartment
    - Prices vary greatly
    - Safer and more private
    - Great for large groups
    - Tips/recommendations from locals
  - [Couchsurfing](#): Stay on locals’ couches
    - Free
    - Great for meeting locals/other travelers
Phones and Banking

● Cell phone:
  ○ Purchase a cheap cell phone and add minutes to it
  ○ Unlock U.S. smartphone and get local SIM card
  ○ Change your U.S. phone to an international plan
  ○ You can find wifi in most accommodations and some cafés
    ■ WhatsApp, Viber, Skype

● Banking:
  ○ Always have some cash on you!
  ○ Notify your bank and credit card companies about your travels
  ○ Exchange money before you go if short trip
  ○ ATMs= cheapest option
    ■ Visa & MasterCard
    ■ Foreign transaction fees
    ■ Be careful!
  ○ Credit card international fees
Tips and Advice
Cultural Expectations

- Be aware of cultural norms
  - Cultures across Central and South America vary!
  - Strong Catholic influence in parties and festivals (Semana Santa, Fiestas Patronales)
- Machismo is prevalent
- Vibrant indigenous communities
- Support locally owned businesses
- Prepare for “the hustle”
- Relaxed Time (la hora panameña, peruana)
AVOIDING PICKPOCKETS

- Keep your belongings close and closed
- Don’t put anything in your back pockets
- Avoid large crowds
  - Or wear your backpack in the front
  - Fanny pack!
- Only carry bags that zip or at least have a clasp
- Don’t carry around your passport or a lot of money
- Be wary of scams
Budget Traveling

- Think about getting a guide book or following a blog
  - Rick Steves
  - Lonely Planet
  - Young Adventuress
  - Nomadic Matt

- Research places to eat cheap and authentic food
  - TripAdvisor
  - Ask locals

- Save money by grocery shopping and cooking at home
- Funding Opportunities
WORKING ABROAD: PETE’S EXPERIENCE
Working Abroad: Roxana’s Experience
Questions?

Education Abroad Advising
Monday–Friday: 1pm – 4pm
Thursdays and Fridays: 10am – 12 pm

- jkoelzer@umich.edu
- ic-abroad@umich.edu
- peace.corps@umich.edu
- roxanag@umich.edu

Upcoming events

- **Identities Abroad Series**
  - First-Gen, Queer, and Students of Color Panels
- **60 Minutes Around the Globe: Nicaragua**
- **Travel Basics Series**
  - Africa, Southeast/East Asia, and Europe