



# Mexico RV Caravan Tours

**Copper Canyon, Yucatan, Colonial Cities & Beaches**

1-855-327-7555



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**CARAVANAS  
DE  
MEXICO**

*Yucatan 2020*

## Detailed Information for Participants.

(This section is mainly for those who have decided to go in order to provide in depth information)

If you would like to print this out, click [HERE](#)

The following section contains the information you need to prepare yourself for this trip. There is a lot of information here. We will inform everyone of any significant updates by email. Feel free to call Paul, our customer orientation representative (after the end of April) to discuss your own personal situation in detail. He will personally go over everything you need to know, specific to your individual circumstance. He may be reached at 604-852-1342 or 1-855-327-7555 (press 1) You may also email him at [\[email protected\]](#)

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### Caravanas de Mexico :

Caravanas de Mexico is the company operating this tour. We have been in business for a couple of decades and have run many caravans & bus tours in Mexico in both English & French. We only operate in Mexico and we are legally registered & licensed to operate in Mexico. (See [Certification Document](#)) We have been the tour contractor for other companies, including Adventure, Fantasy & Baja Amigos. We are a small company consisting mainly of the owner, Gabriel, Paul, the English customer orientation rep, France the French customer orientation rep, and our Wagon Masters. We keep our overhead low to be able to provide the best quality at the lowest possible price. Our principal websites are <https://www.mexicocaravans.com> and <http://www.caravanasdeMexico.com>

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## Attitude & Expectations:

This makes a huge difference. Some companies seem to give the impression that you will stay in full service RV parks all the time. We don't do that. We feel it is far better to let you know exactly what to expect. Expect some RV parks with 15 amp service or power that occasionally does work, some dry camping, low water pressure, tight spots, some crappy roads, etc, etc. This is more the case with trips going through the Yucatan and the southern part of the country, not so much with trips in the northern half. If you approach this as an adventure, not a cruise, you will have a fantastic time. If you are expecting to be coddled all the time, you will be disappointed. We do the best we can, but this is Mexico, not Canada or the US. It's tougher, but you will see stuff you won't see any other way. Especially on our tours, where we give the Wagon Masters free reign to take you to some pretty way out stuff, like primitive Mescal distilleries up in the hills, and remote Mayan ruins, restaurants that serve Scorpion tacos or museums full of mummified human remains that look like scenes out of Zombie Apocalypse. No other caravan company takes you to cool stuff like that. You will certainly have bragging rights with your friends. Think of it as RVing in the 1950's. Arizona & Florida will feel dull after. In the 50's & 60's Airstreams in the 100's caravanned in Mexico, the locals called them silver sausages. Now they are coming back. Lastly, remember a caravan is a social experience. We need to maintain cohesion in order for any caravan to be successful.

We supply high quality tours & meals to other companies and those are also included on our trips, but we add more adventure to our trips than other companies we supply are contracted from. We tend to avoid places that you would get to on a cruise or all inclusive vacation, and try to concentrate on places you won't see. After all, if you go to the trouble of driving your RV down, you want to see stuff that is unique.

You do have to be prepared to follow some rules and not try to undercut the Wagon Master. Remember he/they have a tough job and his prime concern is the smooth running of the caravan as a whole.

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## Preparation

It is possible to obtain permits on line ahead of time. However we had uneven experiences with this, so we will ask everyone to do them at the border instead.

Feel free to contact us regarding your specific situation. Call Paul after April 30th at 1-877-327-7555 or 604-852-1342.

### These are the documents you will require:

Passports

Vehicle titles or registration. **Originals please!**

If the vehicle is company owned, or the registration shows another owner, you need a letter, even if it's your own company. Just make it look official.

If the registration shows a lien, you need a letter from the lien holder. You may have to provide prior proof of Mexican insurance.

Drivers license

Credit card

Make 2 copies of everything. (front page of passport) No enlargements!

Have \$200 in US cash, \$600 if you intend to pay the vehicle deposit in cash (trucks only, you will get it back when you leave)

If you are towing a trailer, take a photo of the front of the truck looking backwards down the side and print it out. Also do the same for the door sticker showing weights. **Do not offer either of these unless asked.**

If you carry an ATV make sure you have either registration or bill of sale.

If you are towing, make sure the registered owners on truck & trailer match. If not, bring your marriage certificate.

Be ready to state your destination & hotel. Use the Hotel Nuntutun In Palenque, Chiapas.

Pet certificate of health signed by a vet on his letterhead showing his license number. As recent as possible.

Proof of rabies vaccine. (For your pet)

## Food & Alcohol you can take into Mexico

The general rule of thumb is don't take anything in you are not prepared to lose. However, most have never had anything taken away except fresh vegetables. There are restrictions on alcohol, they are unlikely to check, but it's up to you. You can take a small amount of pet food in, but most brands are available in supermarkets or from vets. You cannot take pet food back into the US, unless it came from there. The US is far more restrictive on what you can take back and will confiscate most meat & vegetables even if in sealed pre-packaged form. One exception is seafood, so bring back as much frozen shrimp as you want.

There are often Agricultural inspection stations at Mexican state lines. Avoid buying a lot of fruits & vegetables the day before crossing one.

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## Vehicle and Trip Cancellation Insurance:

### Trip Cancellation

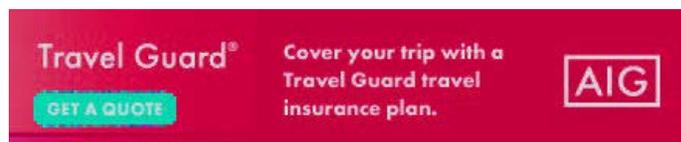
It is up to you to purchase this if you wish.

- 1) You can buy insurance from Travelguard on line. Please note for couples, **split the trip cost in half** and register both of you. You have 2 options, you may insure just the first deposit initially, then phone them and add on the next 2 payments as you make them (don't forget to do it). You will save money this way, just be aware that any pre-existing medical conditions are looked at each time you make another payment, whereas they are locked in if you cover the entire trip cost on enrollment. If they require a receipt other than that given by pay pal, let us know and we will issue one.
- 2) Since some payments are non-refundable, we really advise taking out cancellation insurance for your trip. Here are 2 options
- 3) Since 100%, less initial deposit, is refundable up until 120 days, when the final payment is due, you may want to just risk the first deposit and then protect the balance at the 120 day point. We can issue you a single receipt for that amount at the 120 day point if you wish to do it that way. There may not be a lot of financial advantage in that.
- 4) Note Airstream trips have different payment policies

For Americans: 1-800-826-5248



For Canadians: 1-866-878-0191



The company will provide receipts if you require them. Contact Gabriel at [email protected]

### Vehicle Insurance

**We are not in the insurance selling business**, but you do need Mexican vehicle insurance. If you have Progressive, they cover collision, but you still need liability. That will save you money, so if you have time, you may want to consider switching. Make sure you are covered for at least \$500,000 liability. We **suggest** (not recommend) 2 particular companies based on reports from other RVers over the years. **We do not make any commissions off either company.**

Lewis & Lewis give us 10% discount, if you mention our customer orientation Rep, Paul Beddows and that you are on a caravan. This is his commission that he has instructed them to **credit back to you**. He also is not in the insurance selling business. <https://www.mexicanautoinsurance.com/>. The form is at <http://www.mexicocaravan.com/Lewis2018.pdf>. There are 2 types of coverage depending on where you are going, make sure you get the right one and long enough to cover the trip, plus maybe a weeks delay, just in case. We also suggest Sanborns, pricier, but maybe better. They will give a 20% discount with 5 rigs. We recommend holding off until close to departure, You can purchase it on line. Check with your US or Canadian insurance to see if they will suspend or rebate you for the time you are in Mexico. You may require proof (toll road receipts work well). ICBC in BC will rebate. Make sure whatever you buy, they cover US labor rates in case you need to have repairs done in the US or Canada. Cover yourself for uninsured or underinsured 2nd party. Paul will try to make up a side by side comparison of Lewis & Lewis and Sanborns by year end. Lewis & Lewis, at least, have 2 different coverage areas, you need "all Mexico" for any trips going as far as Mexico City.

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### Communications:

We use GRMS base units exclusively. We have found they are much better in range than CB's, plus much easier to install. The one we are moving to is the Midland Micromobile MXT115 or MXT275 15 watt GRMS radio (about \$150 US including antenna) . You can easily install this on a temporary basis and the antenna cable is thin enough not to be damaged by your rubber door seal if you cannot fish it through the firewall. It plugs into a cigarette lighter. You can manage with the 5 watt version, but the wagon master may not be able to hear you if you are not near the front. This radio is available direct from Midland or from Amazon and some other sources, simply Google it. Some links are below. They are fully compatible with the handheld GMRS radios we also require you to have. They seem to be compatible with an existing CB antenna as well. They plug into a cigarette lighter, you may need a splitter. Ensure you mount it where there is air flow around the unit.



<https://midlandusa.com/product/mxt115-micromobile-2-way-radio/>

<https://www.amazon.com/Midland-Consumer-MXT115-Repeater-Channels/dp/B01MUGZ5XC>

or if you prefer the integrated mike version <https://midlandusa.com/product/mxt275-micromobile-two-way-radio/>

You are also required to have a pair of the handheld versions available at any Wal Mart or Cabellas or Canada Tire, etc. **They must be capable of channels 1-22 inclusive and are a very poor substitute on the road for the base units (they do not have sufficient range when inside a vehicle). Their purpose is for parking & tours.**

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## **Rendezvous:**

The Rendezvous spot at the time of writing is the Mission West RV park. We will cover the cost of the first 2 nights there. They are Passport America park and we request you take out membership there if you do not already have it. It is useful to have. We will confirm this rendezvous point in Fall, plus provide co-ordinates

Please be there by at least noon, the day before crossing. You will be required to sign a waiver and also provide your medical information in a sealed envelope. You may download these ahead of time:

[Waiver](#)

[Medical Form](#)

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## **The Border:**

**Please ensure you have at least 2000 pesos before crossing**

We will cross the border early. This is a long day and we can be at the permit station, for up to 2 hours.

Make sure you put all your documentation and copies in an envelope before leaving your vehicle, so you have them ready. The Wagon Master will remind you before you cross the border. If you have a pet, do not mention it unless asked.

It is quite likely you will have to have your vehicle X-rayed, in which case you will have to remove pets.

Those with just a self propelled RV will get a single permit good for 10 years. Those towing trailers will require 2 permits, a 10 year on the trailer and a 180 day on the truck. The permits cost about \$60 US, your tourist cards about \$25 US each. You will have to pay up to a \$400 deposit on the truck (credit card or cash). This will be returned when you cancel the permit on the way out. 10 year permits have no deposit.

Do not throw away the sheet of paper the sticker is on, you will need it on exit. It is not necessary to stick the sticker on your trailer if you have one, only your truck. Just carry it in the glove box.

You do not have to cancel a trailer permit or self propelled RV permit on exit (10 year permits), but unless you are 100% sure you are bringing that same RV back into Mexico, it is wise to do so.

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## **Liquor, drugs & guns**

First of all having a firearm or ammo is a serious crime in Mexico. If we find you brought them, you will be expelled with no refund, so please don't. Drugs are also illegal, including medical pot. Make sure prescription drugs are in the original containers or you have a doctors note. Alcohol is OK. We usually have a happy hour after we get parked or when staying for awhile. Do not drink before a drive or get really drunk the night before.

If the Wagon Master can speak Spanish or we have an interpreter along, we will try to do some Spanish lessons en route.

Feel free to organize potlucks, they work well. Or any other legal activities for that matter.

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## Dry Camping

This trip involves quite a bit of dry camping. The Wagon Master will warn you, so you can fill with fresh water and dump holding tanks at the stop before. You may run generators when dry camping, but the Wagon Master may set times & rules around these. The Wagon Master will apprise you of services available at the next stop. In many cases it is advisable to dump your holding tanks, especially in the few segments where there is a lot of climbing. Some dry camping is at higher altitudes so prepare for some alternate heating options if your rig does not have a furnace. A heavy down comforter for example. In some cases there may be 2 or 3 days in a row of dry camping. Furnaces run batteries down quickly so if you do not have a lot of battery capacity, a small portable generator like Honda 1000 or 2000 is handy for recharging or running a ceramic heater.

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## Radio & TV:

Sirius & XM work, Sirius works better as its satellites are in a higher orbit. American satellite TV will work maybe as far south as Mazatlan. Canadian Shaw Satellite covers all of Mexico. This makes any rig with it, very popular on Super bowl Sunday or Gray Cup. We try to avoid tours on the days of major sporting events.

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## Metric System

Mexico uses the Metric system, please measure the max height of your rig (including the A/C) in Meters and put a sticker on your dash. Don't fall off doing it.

Canadians are familiar with metric as it is the standard in Canada. For others, here is the conversion.

**Speeds and distances** are in Metric. Approximate, but close:

100 kph = 60 mph  
90 kph = 55 mph  
80 kph = 50 mph  
60 kph = 40 mph  
50 kph = 30 mph

1 Kilometer = 1000 Meters, approx 0.6 miles

Memorize those and you won't have any issues

We **only use** Metric on the road to avoid confusion.

**Temperatures:** 15C = 60F; 20C =68F; 25C = 77F; 30C = 85F; 35C = 90F

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## Wagon Masters

The Wagon Masters are very important. They are responsible for setting departure times, assigning spots in RV parks, creating a social atmosphere and dealing with issues that arise. The Wagon Master is like the pilot of an airliner. While on the road he is in charge, and the **ONLY ONE** in charge. He/they will decide what to do in the event of breakdown, people getting lost, speed, and all other aspects of getting from one point to another. Opinions are welcome, breaking the rules is not. Even if you have good intentions and feel you know better, the Wagon Master is still in charge. We never leave anyone stranded alone on the roadside with their rig, including the Wagon Master. Remember, the next time it may be your rig, so show consideration. Taking off in defiance of the instructions of the Wagon Master, will not be tolerated. It is the job of the Wagon Master to make decisions he feels are in the best interests of the caravan as a whole. A caravan is not a Democracy in times of emergency. The Wagon Master has procedures to follow that have been developed over many caravans. They are tried & tested and designed for everyone's overall benefit & safety. We aim for **8 AM** departures even on short days. We do not yet know who will be the Wagon Master on this trip. Once we do we will put you all in touch with him via email.

We are always looking for new blood, and they usually come from former customers. If it appeals to you, let the Wagon Master know and he will involve you so you can see if it's for you. Sociability & leadership skills are more important than an ability to speak Spanish. We often have interpreters along. We currently pay Wagon Masters a \$100 US per day plus their RV park fees. You don't get rich, but it is a way to get your winter vacation paid for. That should not be your motivation, however. You have to enjoy people. Wagon Masters can make or break a trip. It is not an easy job.

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## Road Logs

These are provided via download a couple of months before departure (they are constantly being updated). You may print them out if you wish, but the best way is to save them on a tablet your passenger can look at, while on the road. You will be following the Wagon Master, but they are provided to give you some idea of what to expect on a days drive and allow you to find the caravan in the unlikely event you get lost or separated.

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## Road Etiquette

The Wagon Master will assign you a position in caravan. He may modify that after a day or 2 once the driving dynamics of the group become apparent. Singles are always placed close the front as they do have the luxury of a passenger/navigator. Being at the rear does not mean you get the lousiest camping spot. The Wagon master assigns these in a fair and equitable manner. Caravans tend to settle into their own speed after a day or 2, but we generally move at 50-55 MPH or 80-90 KPH. Never overtake another rig unless you have good reason. If you are stopped by the police, immediately radio or call the Wagon Master. If there is a Green Angel tail gunner, wait until he catches up with you. If you see somebody else pulled over, pull over yourself when safe up ahead. Do not pay any bribes, let the Wagon Master handle it. Keep in mind it may take him some time to get back to where you are, especially on a divided highway. Follow a similar procedure if you have a breakdown or flat. Individual Wagon Masters may have other methods of dealing with these situations. If so they will go over them. Do not use the radios for frivolous conversation, the Wagon Master may need the channel to warn you of hazards. Try to keep the rig in front of you in sight, he is a good warning of upcoming Topes (speed Bumps). Occasionally check to see the rig behind you is in sight. Do not tailgate in case the rig in front spots a tope at the last minute, and brakes hard.

Mexico has 2 types of roads, Cuota's (toll) & Libres (free). We usually use Cuota's when possible, many are up to US interstate standards, Libres can be rough and have lots of Topes. In some cases if the Wagon Master feels the free road is more scenic and OK, he will use it. The chance of having an accident on a Cuota is a fraction of on a Libre, and no Topes. Despite being pricey, they are worth it.

We will get separated at toll booths, If there is an area to pull over, we will, otherwise we will go slow until everyone catches up, or sometimes pull to the side with hazards on. Please be aware that some booths are for transponders only, and you cannot use them. Try to radio back what you paid so the people behind have some idea of how much cash to dig out. Toll booths **only** accept pesos.

It is illegal to turn right on a red in some areas. Using your left hand turn signal on a highway indicates to the person behind, it is OK to pass (think about that one). It is common to go to the right before turning left across a road. It works this way in Puerto Vallarta, for example. Often there will be a loop on the right side for a left hand turn. Watch speed limits especially in towns and **do not run a red**. Lights flash green before turning red in Mexico. We will not lose you.

Low trees on the right on 2 lane roads are common and you may have to go over into the oncoming lane to avoid them. Use your radio to help those behind you know it's safe. Also be wary of low wires in towns, we have snagged them before. We carry lifters. Airstream caravans have no issue as they are lower profile. On 2 lane highways in Mexico it is considered normal to drive 1/2 on the shoulder, so people can pass you. When you see a shoulder with a dotted line, this is what it means. You can watch [THIS VIDEO](#) of the procedure.

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## Site Assignment, RV Parks & Hotels

The Wagon Master will assign RV sites in a fair & equitable manner. You may be parked a fair ways back from the RV park while he brings people in small groups and gets them parked, then out of the way. If you wish to change sites, do it **after** everyone is parked. RV Parks range from dry camping, to partial to full hookups. The Wagon Master will advise you of what to expect at the next stop. There are a few hotel nights involved with this trip. Some spots are at high altitude and nights may be cold.

### Tips on backing up trailers

A retired semi driver opened my eyes on a few tricks

- 1) Nearly everybody does not pull far enough forward past the intended parking spot. Go to where you think you should be and add 10 feet. This allows for the delay factor in the reaction of the trailer to your initial moves.
- 2) Watch the bottom of your steering wheel. The direction you move that, is the direction the back end of the trailer will go.
- 3) Have a partner assist you with a portable radio. Do not use the terms "left" & "right". Have them tell you which direction the back end of the trailer needs to go and use the terms : "Drivers side" & "Passenger side" Their left may not be your left.

Unhitch your truck ASAP after parking in tight RV parks so others have more room to maneuver.

## Hotels

There are a few hotel nights in this trip, we will do our best to arrange pet care while you are away. Seeing eye dogs are the only recognized service dogs.

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## Fuel & vehicle prep

You may have concerns if you have been reading of the 2019 fuel shortages in Mexico. This has been caused by a series of conditions and is unlikely to be an issue in 2020. It is however, prudent to carry a 5 gallon gas can. There are one or 2 segments with little opportunity to fuel up and it is a good idea to carry extra if you have low range. The Wagon Master will advise, you do not want to carry fuel if you do not have to. There should be no issues with ULSD diesel, but if you require DEF, please carry plenty. It is hard to find and expensive.

Gas pumps in Mexico **are green for gas** and **black for diesel**, the reverse of the US & Canada. Fortunately they are usually on separate islands. If possible, we recommend a locking gas cap. Please tip Pemex attendants 40-50 Pesos. It's not much, but they appreciate it and hopefully will be less inclined to try to scam gringos in future. On most caravans we ask our customers to get a receipt. This allows us to get what is known as a "Factura" and use it as a tax deduction. In return we will add some extra goodies along the way, like Pizza & Margarita parties. You never pump your own fuel in Mexico. We advise paying in cash. They are not used to credit cards and mistakes are common. If you use a card, make sure you keep the receipt and check your charge card bill. Pay out cash carefully, there have been scams with them palming a 500 and claiming you gave them a 50. Make sure they zero the pump. The Spanish word for receipt is "recibo" (Ray see bo). For fill it up it is "llénalo" (Jen lo)

We sometimes try to stagger fill-ups on longer caravans. It sometimes is not much of a problem if we have a good mix of Gas & Diesel rigs. You should top up when possible. We have had people run out of fuel before, because they think their range is good and they would rather get a snack while others are filling up. It is a big hassle. We do usually combine fuel & body break stops. Please do not start cooking, or wander off to a nearby restaurant, unless the Wagon Master tells you it is a long stop.

### Note on older Vehicles/RV's

If you have an older vehicle and/or RV you need to be aware that road conditions in Mexico can cause you issues. A couple of spots on our route are at high altitude, and some participants may have vintage RV's that have no furnace. In one high altitude location, we will be dry camped. In some locations it can drop below freezing at night in January and February. A portable ceramic heater is a good idea, as is a portable generator. If you have only one battery and no solar, a portable generator can definitely be an asset. It is very important if you have an older vehicle that you get it checked out thoroughly to ensure it is top mechanical condition. If you have an older trailer, have its suspension checked before leaving. We do have Green Angel mechanics along for most segments, but breakdowns are no fun. The climb to one RV park (Cuitzeo) has 2 short steep sections. Ensure you dump your tanks before leaving Guanajuato, the stop before. There are full hookups in Cuitzeo to replenish. You would be surprised at how much difference empty holding tanks make.

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## Spare tires & Vehicle Parts

Trailer tires are not available in Mexico, if you have a pickup, consider carrying an extra one off rim.

Please bring an extra air, oil & possibly a fuel filter with you. Change your oil, before you leave or cross the border. If your serpentine belt is getting old, it's not a bad idea to change it and keep the old one as an emergency spare. They do not sell diesel pickups in Mexico, but they sell gas ones, so spare parts for diesels are harder to obtain. You can go to a tire store and buy a **used** spare tire, off rim, and carry it in the bed of your truck. Have your brakes checked before crossing, both truck & trailer. A spare RV water pump is not a bad idea.

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## Pets

We welcome pets, but you have to realize you can't take them everywhere and on most tours. They are not allowed in museums, restaurants, churches etc. We do arrange pet care in some cases, like tours using hotels overnight. We can hire a local, but we have found many are unwilling to leave dogs in their care. We will try to pre-describe tour conditions (heat, etc) for each tour and you can decide if you wish to forgo that tour. If you have a **small** dog, bring a carrier. in many cases you will be able to leave him on the tour bus and tip the driver. The **only** service dog recognized in Mexico is a seeing eye dog. It is hard to find dog waste bags in Mexico, bring plenty with you. Dog food is easily available. RV parks are a lot more lenient about dogs than at home, but watch for stray dog packs at gas stations; keep your dog on a leash there. Put your dog on a program good for both fleas & ticks. Always give your pet bottled water. Only dogs & cats are allowed. Please do not let your dog swim in RV park pools. (it has happened) . If your dog is likely to bite someone who approaches your camper, keep them restrained (it has happened). If you wish to adopt a dog in Mexico (Mexican dogs are the best, natural selection ensures they are intelligent), there are agencies to facilitate that. Dog owners in Mexico let them run on the streets often with no collars, so the stray you pick up may in fact belong to some kid. We can put you in touch with Pro-Animal Melaque, an organization that spays stray dogs & cats for adoption if you want to take one home.

### An opinion on dogs & caravans from a Wagon Master:

This is a personal opinion, and I have had several dogs myself. I have some strong opinions on them so take it as my opinion only. The key with dogs is to remember that there are other participants on the trip and you have to be considerate of them. Not everyone likes dogs. I have had several dogs on caravans I have led, including my own. They have ranged from very well behaved to very badly behaved. My eyes were opened by one set of customers who have taken 2 Caravans with us. They have 2 large German Shepard's. They train dogs for both the police and service dogs. They taught me that dogs are not furry humans, they are canines and the key to a well behaved dog is to make sure it knows its place in the pack, IE the bottom of your household. A dog who knows its place is a happy non-aggressive dog. They are big believers in crating dogs. When we went on tours, the dogs went into crates either inside or outside the RV, depending on the circumstances. No problems, the dogs were well behaved and content with no separation anxiety. By contrast, one other customer had small dogs that kept people in the next rig awake all night with barking. I would be more than happy to put you in touch with them if you want information on how to crate a dog. Having said all that I realize most people consider dogs as children. I understand that. We just expect that you

control them.

*Paul Beddows (Wagon Master on 6 caravans)*

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## **Water & Sewer**

Mexican RV parks tend to place pedestals at the rear instead of the side. This means you may need a longer water & sewer hose. A sewer hose joiner is useful as you can always borrow somebody else's to dump if you can't reach the drain. This may sound a bit gross but, a spare sewer cap is useful to drill hole in and let gray water dribble out in transit if needed. We will only do this in a pinch & on remote highway stretches.

With limited space in an RV, and a long trip without access to sanitizer, we are recommending a product called 5 Star Happy Camper sanitizer. It is in powder form, easy to store, and much more economical. It also works in high heat. (Enzyme products can fail in high temperature conditions). It is made in Medford, Oregon. There are Canadian & US distributors.

**Canada:** <http://www.happy-campers.ca/>

**USA:** <http://happycampersworld.com/>

Do not drink the water in Mexico, even if the park claims it has safe water. Bottled water is cheap, get a 5 gallon container with a screw top cap. It may be wise to wait and buy one in Mexico, the most common brand is Ciel, and if you buy one of those, you may be able to do a straight exchange most of the time, otherwise you transfer water between whatever brand is available and your container (bring a funnel). Easy to carry in the bed of a pickup, if you drive one. The water is so cheap you can even dump it if you have nowhere safe to carry a full one. Water pressure is usually low so it is best to fill your water tank rather than use the city water hook-up. Buy one of those blue inline filters (left picture) and maybe put a cap of chlorine in the tank. Buy a washer/strainer to put in your hose where it hooks to the tap. Use this for showers & dish washing. Put a little chlorine in the dish water. When you get back to the states, put a good dose of chlorine in the tank, fill it half full, drive around for a few hours to slosh it, drain & refill. If you have a Suburban water heater, it is not a bad idea to carry an extra sacrificial rod (center picture). Possibly change it before you leave. If you have an Atwood, we suggest you carry an extra water temperature sensor kit (right picture) as they are failure prone. They are cheap and easy to change on the road. We have had failures in the past. You can get all 3 parts on Amazon. Search under RV water filter, Suburban rod and Atwood ECO assembly.



## **Propane:**

Propane is about 1/2 the price it is in the US. Regardless, cross the border with full tanks as it can be hard or awkward to find. It is not sold in gas stations, but in separate propane vendor locations. Sometimes we have to hit 2 or 3 for the correct fittings. Further south it may be Butane, so you want to use it all up before encountering winter conditions.

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## **Power: BEWARE THE PEDESTAL**

Do not get too tied up over this. Most people find it hard to get a handle on, unless you are an electrician. Feel free to discuss it with me by phone

Some points:

- 1) Electricity in Mexico is not reliable
- 2) Voltages often range outside the acceptable values
- 3) Low voltage is worse than high voltage
- 4) Appliances are rated at a certain wattage.

The formula is Watts = Voltage x Current (amps)

If the voltage is too low, the appliance draws more current to compensate. Current, in a roundabout way, translates into heat, and the appliance can burn out

5) A 15 watt outlet in Mexico may be coming off a 30 Amp breaker or no breaker. Hence if you try running stuff like A/C's, water heaters at the same time, your cord can overheat and burn, so can the outlet it is plugged into. A fused extension cord is not a bad idea if you can find one. Other than that just be careful not to run more than one high current appliance at a time. Do not stuff adapters (15 to 30, for eg) into a compartment in your rig, hang it outside. If it overheats, any fire is outside the rig.

6) A surge protector is useless, **unless it blocks too high, or too low, continuous voltage**, which most do not.

So this is all a lead up as to why you need one, or more, of the devices below, and make sure it is the right device. The power protectors are available in Canada and the US, the regulators are only available, once in Mexico. (The Huges autoformer available in the US **only raises low voltage, it does not lower high voltage**) Having both is not a bad idea, but if you have the regulator you really do not need the power protector, but on the other hand the power protector is also a good idea in the US and Canada.

**Below (purple sub headers) are descriptions of the 3 categories of protection. You can use all 3 if you wish, hooked up in this order:**

**Power Pedestal - Surge protector - Regulator - Power Protector - RV.** I have the regulator & power protector in my own RV.

If you only have one of the 3, the Regulator is the most useful.

### Surge Protectors

This only protects against a momentary surge, **it does not protect against consistent high or low voltage**. Useless if only used alone.

### Power Protectors



These will prevent voltage that is dangerously high or dangerously low from entering your rig. They usually also protect against surges. These will protect your rig but you may find you are blocked from having any power at all, in many locations. These are made by 3 companies, SurgeGuard, Progressive Industries & Camco. Camping World sells some. Here are 3 Amazon links so you know what to get:

[https://www.amazon.com/Technology-Research-34830-Portable-Surge/dp/B00T36Q7R2/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1499963169&sr=8-2&keywords=surge+guard+rv+power+protection](https://www.amazon.com/Technology-Research-34830-Portable-Surge/dp/B00T36Q7R2/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1499963169&sr=8-2&keywords=surge+guard+rv+power+protection)

[https://www.amazon.com/Progressive-Industries-EMS-PT30C-Portable-Protector/dp/B003AL23TC/ref=sr\\_1\\_sc\\_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1499963247&sr=8-2-spell&keywords=progressive+industries+rv+power+protection](https://www.amazon.com/Progressive-Industries-EMS-PT30C-Portable-Protector/dp/B003AL23TC/ref=sr_1_sc_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1499963247&sr=8-2-spell&keywords=progressive+industries+rv+power+protection)

[https://www.amazon.com/Camco-Defender-Voltage-Protector-PowerGrip/dp/B01LRJ6YAW/ref=sr\\_1\\_6?ie=UTF8&qid=1499963298&sr=8-6&keywords=camco+rv+power+protection](https://www.amazon.com/Camco-Defender-Voltage-Protector-PowerGrip/dp/B01LRJ6YAW/ref=sr_1_6?ie=UTF8&qid=1499963298&sr=8-6&keywords=camco+rv+power+protection)

Those are all 30 amp, you can also find them in 50 Amp versions.

### Power Regulators

These will actually correct voltage. please note that the huges autoformer sold in the US will only bring up low voltage a maximum of 10%, it does not correct high voltage, also a problem in Mexico. Therefore we do not recommend it. The Mexican made ISB described below corrects to 20%. RV safe voltage is between 103 & 132 volts. The ISB will correct 85 to 147 Volts. Above 147 it will still correct, but to a bit higher than the safe range.

|            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| ENTRADA V~ | 85  | 90  | 95  | 100 | 110 | 120 | 135 | 140 | 145 | 150 | 155 |
| SALIDA V~  | 103 | 109 | 115 | 121 | 121 | 120 | 121 | 125 | 130 | 134 | 139 |

Home Depot in Mexico sells a small power regulator/conditioner for about \$80 US. You cannot run an air conditioner through one of these. It is 15 amp. It will, however, run a small 6000-9000 BTU AC as found in some Class B's. They come in a Red & White box.



Your best bet is a 30 Amp unit that has to be hardwired. (\$250 US) It will run A/C. You will need to butcher a 30 amp extension cord. You can carry the unit in a Milk crate, (you need 12 inch by 12 inch internal dimension). You can simply shove it under your rig to protect from dew & rain. There are 3 wires minimum to connect, the feed - male plug end (black) and the power out (also black) from the female socket end. You tie the 2 whites to the common (You will need a murette - see red one in photo below - to tie them together then take a 3rd short piece to the connector. The green, which is ground, you don't have to cut. You can just let it flow through, although it is not a bad idea to wire it to the case when you get home.

These come in 4 or 8 KV versions, 4 KV is sufficient for most RV's. The 8 KV is larger. <http://www.isbmex.com>. **You will have to bring your own 30 amp extension, you can not find them in Mexico.** You can lock this unit using 2 locks and a cable. We will try to source these out at a spot close to the start of the caravan. Detailed instructions on wiring these may be found at <https://www.mexicorvbuddies.com/Regulator.pdf> . **Note that the Hughes autoformer sold in the US only corrects low voltages.**



### Adaptors

You need to bring adaptors to change 30 amp to 15 amp and vice versa. These are cheap and found in RV stores. We suggest you buy 2 of each. There are times when you may not be able to reach the pedestal. You may have to reduce a 30 amp pedestal plug to 15 amp, so you can use an extension cord then convert it back to 30 amp. Not all pedestals have 30 amp sockets, many are 15. If your plug is 50 amp, you will need an adapter. Bring a 25 ft extension cord, either a 30 amp or heavy duty outdoor 15 amp.



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### Politics & Tolerances:

Unless everybody is obviously on the same page, avoid politics or religion. Especially American politics, which seem to be especially volatile these days. If you cannot separate politics & friendship, avoid the subject. Remove, or cover up any political bumper stickers and avoid wearing MAGA hats.

Flying foreign flags in Mexico can be sensitive. Hoisting a US flag in Canada is no big deal, after all Canadians are simply "unarmed Americans on Medicare", but avoid doing it in Mexico **unless** you also fly a Mexican flag of equal or greater size. Flag stickers are OK.

We are a very open minded & inclusive company. We do not care if you are Black, White, or Purple or what your politics & sexual orientation are, and we do not tolerate any open prejudices. As long as you are nice. We have, for example, had Wagon Masters (& customers) who are Straight, Gay, Republicans & Democrats or the Canadian equivalents. The commonality is that all are willing to take their RV into Mexico and have fun.

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## Company Contacts:

**Gabriel Romero** (Company owner) Mexico Cell: 967-147-3333 - Fluent in English **Email [email protected]**

**Paul Beddows** (Customer service rep) Mexico Cell: 967-102-4085 or Canada May-Oct 604-852-1342 **Email [email protected]**

**France Chouinard** (French Language Rep)

**Wagon Master Michel & Louise Bacque [email protected]**

**E-Mail [email protected]**

1-855-327-7555 press 1 (May-Oct)

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## Cell Phones:

Everyone must have a cell phone that works in Mexico. We can assist you to get a "pay as you go" Telcel phone if you need one, but you should let us know in advance. These are in case we get separated outside of radio range. Note that data packages on Mexican cells are cheap. We can assist once you are in Mexico. Many US Cells roam in Mexico. The most extensive network is Telcel.

To dial the US or Canada from a US or Mexican cell, dial +1 (or 001) plus the 10 digits (same to dial a US cell)

To dial a US/Canada 1-800 number dial +1-880 instead. For 1-888, it's +1-881. For 1-877, it's +1-882. For 1-866, it's +1-883. For 1-855, it's +1-884

To dial a Mexican cell within Mexico from either a uS or Mexican cell, just dial the 10 digits

To call a Mexican cell from the US or Canada, dial +521 plus the 10 digits

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## Money:

We ask you to cross with at least 2000 pesos. You can get these in border towns in the US easily. You generally cannot use US dollars in Mexico. ATM's are common, try to use either Scotiabank or HSBC when possible. These are Canadian and will be easier to deal with in case of problems. Also, always cover your hand when entering a pin and try to check your accounts after, to ensure the amount went through correctly. Avoid using Credit Union cards, we have had machines process them without dispensing cash on 2 occasions. (Banco Azteca in both instances). If you use a credit union card in a Banco Azteca, we suggest you take out \$20 first to make sure it works. Try to have 2 different cards on different banks. Find a place in your RV to hide cash in a small lockbox, but leave a couple hundred pesos easily findable in a kitchen drawer. If somebody does break in, they will likely find it and search no further. Carry enough cash up front to cover tolls. We have never had a break-in down there, by the way. **If you use a credit card be sure to keep the receipt.**

Do not access on line banking in public places on public WiFi. We advise using a VPN service or an encryption routine like Bit Defender Safepay. If you leave your home computer on, you can install the free Teamviewer software and do it remotely through your home computer.

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## Internet:

Most RV parks in Mexico have Wi-Fi, you can also get a data package for your cell. Please avoid streaming on RV Park Wi-Fi, it slows it down for everyone else. Most Wi-Fi in Mexico is copper DSL, not fibre or cable. 15 meg speed. Some is satellite with slow upload so not suitable for Skype. If you have to download large files, do it late at night.

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## What if I break down:

We actually hope you don't, which is why we want you have your vehicle checked over thoroughly before departure. Please also make sure you check your trailer brakes. If it is something that can be fixed on the road we will stop the caravan and try to repair it on the roadside, or if it is movable, at the first wide area. The Wagon Master will place his rig at the rear and we will use somebody as a flag person. **We do not leave anyone alone unless we have a Green angel or police officer or someone else to assist you on site, and we may leave one of the Wagon Master couple or an interpreter with you. THE WAGON MASTER DECIDES WHEN ANYONE MOVES. It may mean a night in a Pemex if the caravan is delayed.** If it's major, we will assist you in getting it fixed and hire either one of our tour guides or the Green Angels to catch you up with the group. **This will be at your expense.** If you have a trailer or 5th wheel, it is possible we may be able to use another customers truck to get your rig into an RV park. A similar situation may occur with an accident. This can be a hassle, especially if another insurance company is involved. They may want you to have your vehicle repaired locally. We try to talk them into allowing us to get it repaired further along where we may be stationary for a week, if the vehicle is drivable. I am going to be straight with you and tell you having an accident in Mexico can be a real hassle. We will do what we can and not leave you stranded. We have an extensive stable of tour guides across the country we can hire to assist you, and on some caravans, the owners son, Bernie, is along, and we can leave him with you to assist, and arrange someone to go along with you to catch up. Otherwise we will arrange to have someone else, like a tour guide, remain with you. In some cases if you have minor damage, it may not be worth getting insurance involved. Most have \$500 deductible and that goes a long ways to repairs in Mexico. We use toll highways, when possible, to minimize the chance of accidents. Keep that in mind before complaining about toll costs.

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## Dental Work:

Possible in Melaque where we are for a week on some loops, if we book it ahead. Good dentist, (Dr. Pimienta Woo) but he has to be booked. A cleaning is about 300 Peso's. Paul can likely assist in this as he is usually there in Spring.

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## Pharmacy drugs:

Antibiotics are no longer available across the counter, but many prescription drugs are. We do recommend you bring Ciproflaxen which is very effective against Montezuma's Revenge or bladder infections, which women seem to be susceptible to. Most US/Canada doctors will be more than happy to prescribe those.

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## Medical Care:

There are good hospitals in Mexico and not so good ones. If we have to take you to hospital we will find the most decent ones available that will not break the bank. You should let us know what sort of travel medical coverage you have. Maybe add it into the medical form you provide us with. Doctor visits are generally very reasonable. English speaking doctors may be easily found. Doctors are in all Farmacia Familiar's and a consultation (usually only in Spanish, but we can send a tour guide along) is only about 40 pesos. They are good if you need a quick prescription. It is up to you to arrange any medical travel insurance before you leave. Medical costs in Mexico are similar or a bit cheaper than Canada, much cheaper than the US. If you are Canadian check your coverage with your own Medicare, It varies from province to province. You may want to consider evacuation insurance, but Lewis & Lewis includes a form of that in their auto policy. They will fly you to some US Cities and Vancouver, BC. Some others will fly only to US cities.

Vets are widespread in Mexico, very reasonable, and usually very good.

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## Food & Restaurants

Our trips provide many meals. The procedure we use is to offer 2 or 3 menu items and give you a colored ticket for your choice along with an alcoholic drink ticket. This speeds up the lunch or dinner considerably and avoids errors as we give the kitchen the other half. **There is one exception**, and that is if you inform us before the trip that you have a severe allergy that would be a problem, or if you are a vegetarian. In those 2 instances we will allow you to order separately off the menu. We hope everyone understands that we have to give some folks a break.

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## Tour Rules

We **MAY** allow you to opt out of certain tours (eg Copper Canyon). This is totally at our discretion and you must request it well in advance of the caravan departure date. We will look at each request on its merits.

On many tours we want you to take along a portable FRS/GRMS radio. We have lost people who do things like head off for an ATM or bathroom. The Wagon Master will advise Please note you are not usually allowed to take pets on tours. A small dog in a carrier may be OK if the tour bus driver is willing to watch them (Tip him). Most tours come with hot sit down meals, except a few in remote areas. On those you will be advised to pack some sandwiches. We do try to take a cooler of drinks. It is a good idea to bring snacks along on all tours as sometimes lunch may not be until 1 or 2 PM. Some tours may also require warm clothing. The Wagon Master will advise. Some tours include overnight hotel stays. Your rig will be safe and we try to arrange pet care. You

cannot take a dog to a hotel, unless it is a certified seeing eye dog, with paperwork. Tours are in buses or vans and sometimes taxi's, depending on group size.

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## Handicaps

Please let us know if you have any handicaps and we can advise if you need to opt out of any tours. Knowing the nature of your handicap, including your weight if you are in a wheelchair assists us in ascertaining what you may or may not be able to do. This includes those who need oxygen or have to use a cane or walker. Please phone Paul between April 30 & Sept 30 at 1-855-327-7555 or email him in the interim at [\[email protected\]](#) to discuss your individual situation.

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## Leaving the Caravan

Should you decide to leave the caravan either temporarily or permanently, you will **not** receive any monies back. No tours, RV parks, etc. We are also not responsible for your safety or anything else. You will be required to sign a waiver stating such. If you wish to leave temporarily, you may re-join the group, but we require notice ahead of you doing so. There may be extenuating circumstances. For example, on one trip we had someone hospitalized and we covered her husbands stay at a nearby RV Park. This is at the discretion of the Wagon Master.

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## Tipping:

You are under no obligation to tip. We do suggest you tip tour guides and drivers. Not a lot, maybe 50 pesos for a days tour to the guide and 20 for the driver. Restaurants about 10%, but we usually do cover the tip for meals we provide. You can tip the wagon master at the end of the trip but we suggest sending an envelope around rather than tipping individually.

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## Items to take

### Motor home/Truck Items

- Spare Air Filter
- Spare Oil Filter
- Spare Fuel Filter
- Spare Serpentine belt
- Spare tire off rim if possible
- Spare sewer hose & fittings or means to repair hose. You will need at least a 25 ft sewer hose.
- special fuel or oil additives
- Heavy extension cord, plus a 30 amp to 15 amp converter or plus & a 15 amp to 30 amp converter plug
- Make sure your fresh water hose is extra long
- Distilled water for batteries
- Spare cheap RV water pump can be useful (about \$55 at Camping World). Hard to live without one.
- 2 blue inline water filters available at Camping World or Canadian Tire
- Any other spare RV parts you cannot live without-Power
- Surge protector ( Surge Guard or Progressive) or a regulator
- 5 Gallon water jug with screw cap (can also find in Mexico)
- Bleach or Hydrogen peroxide for water sterilization (Bleach easily obtainable in Mexico)
- Ant traps & Ant powder
- Holding tank sanitizer, we recommend 5 star happy camper, it works well in heat and is in powder form. US supplier or Canada Supplier
- A pair of FRS/GMRS walkie talkies (cheap ones OK). Used on tours and for parking assistance in RV parks on arrival)
- GRMS base unit.
- A cheap dash cam is advised or a GPS with one built in.
- Any vehicle additives especially DEF (You may need twice the normal amount).
- Notarized letter showing permission to take any leased vehicle or vehicle not in your name into Mexico, especially if it shows on registration.
- Hair-band ties to tie cupboard knobs together so they don't open on road.

### Pet Items

- Pet vaccination certificate (rabies) & recent certificate of health showing vets license number & address.
- Revolution for dogs or cats (good for fleas & ticks)

-Dog waste bags, leash & maybe a chain, carrier for small dogs and maybe an outside pen.

### Personal items

- Passports / Nexus card if you have one
- Original registration or titles for vehicles
- Charge card or 2
- At least 2 debit cards, preferably on different banks
- 2 Xerox copies of all paperwork
- Take any sort of paperwork you can think of plus copies. Even your marriage cert if you have one
- Driver's license. An additional convincing phony copy could be useful
- At least 2000 pesos
- Warm clothing for Copper Canyon
- Pack or small suitcase for Copper Canyon trip

### Medical

- All drugs in original bottles especially prescriptions. No medical marijuana. commercial vitamins and things like that in original bottles are OK.
- Insect repellent (expensive in Mexico)
- After bite and/or Calamine lotion
- Suntan lotion (expensive in Mexico)
- Imodium, ask your doctor for a prescription for Ciproflaxin 500 mg (Good for diarrhea or bladder infections)
- If you wish to protect against Malaria, Chloroquine is effective. Not a big risk.
- Sealed envelope with all your medical info, contact names, doctor names etc. (Downloadable form in this document)

### Food

- Any diet soda you like besides Coke or Squirt
- You cannot take beef, pork or chicken in, you will likely get away with it, but they may take it away
- Wine (Mexican is lousy and expensive)
- Up to three liters of liquor and six liters of wine (if bringing more than allowed, you must declare it and pay duties).
- Liquor allowances are similar to the US & Canada but not strictly enforced.
- Viva brand paper towel (US version). These stick to themselves and will not unravel when you hit topos.
- If you need unscented toilet paper, get it in the US. Unscented anything, for that matter.
- Hypoallergenic laundry detergent if you need it

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### GPS Coordinates:

Please note that you should not rely on your GPS in Mexico.

### List of GPS Coordinates for the RV parks we use, coming soon

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### Mexican Road Signs & Common Expressions :

You may download a list of common Mexican Road Signs [HERE](#)

**Some common Mexican Expressions or questions you will likely encounter. We will add more as we think of them.**

Que Tal (kay tal) How are you?

Que es su nombre? (kay es su nom-bray) What is your name?

Que mal onda (kay mala onda) That sucks. The opposite is Que buena onda (Kay bwaynah onda)

Que le vaya bien - You will hear this all the time when you pay in stores, it means have a nice trip.

Quisiero (key-sea-err-o) Use this when asking for menu items. It is much more polite than I want. You can also use "me gustaria" (may-goose-ta-ria)

Excelente (ex-cel-en-tay) good way to respond to how was the food. Or that sucks above, LOL. or OK if mediocre.

De donde esta or eres? (where are you from) "estan" instead of "es" if 2 of you are being addressed

No me Gusto (no may goose-toe) I don't like or "me gusto" (I like)

No me molesta (no may moe-less-ta) Dont bother me (time share salesmen)

Ya lo tengo (Ja low ten-go) I already have one (to get rid of someone trying to sell you a hammock or something)

Por supuesto - Of course

Porfa - instead of por favor for please

Muy amable - (mwee ah- mah-bley) Very kind of you

De nada - (day nah-dah) Your welcome

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**Updates:**

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