



Mexico Makes Sense

Kate Sommers-Dawes explains why Mexico is a rational choice for Spanish immersion students

U.S. and international media outlets have been fixated on reports of Mexico, the H1N1 virus outbreak, and the country's rise in gang-related violence. In response, Language Magazine has endeavored to put these circumstances in perspective and encourages its readers to do the same; fighting this hysteria where possible. Despite the hubbub, Mexico remains an exceptional locale for study abroad with its hospitable inhabitants, diverse landscape, and its many universities.

Though the World Health Organization has used the term "pandemic" in reference to the virus, it is important to note that this label refers only to its spread, not the severity of the illness if contracted. It is also worth pointing out that in Mexico, a country of nearly 110 million people, there have been approximately 40 confirmed H1N1 deaths though there have been thousands of reported infections. By contrast, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that some 36,000 people die every year of common 'flu in the U.S., and recommends such ordinary precautions as frequent hand washing as the best protective measures against the virus.

While reports of gang violence in Mexico have also captured the attention of the media, it is important to remember that, according to Los Angeles Police Department statistics, some 6,877 acts of gang-related violence (including homicide, aggravated assaults, and kidnapping) were committed in the city in 2008. The inclusion of this data is not intended to minimize the tragedy of these crimes, but serves as a reminder that travelers exercise the same caution they would utilize in any large city in the U.S. or elsewhere.

Mexico's cultural wealth and the prestige of its educational institutions continue to make it an outstanding destination for language immersion. Whether visiting Puebla, one of the oldest colonial cities on the continent, or the quiet beach town of La Manzanilla, or Monterrey, Mexico's city of the mountains, or Guadalajara's historic charm, or Cuernavaca, the City of Eternal Spring, a little common sense goes a long way.

Schools in Mexico

High in the central valley of Mexico and off the main tourist path lies the country's fourth largest city, Puebla. The city offers friendly people, a rich culinary experience, history, culture, music, volcanoes, ancient ruins and of course, Spanish. The Spanish spoken in Puebla is soft and slow, making it the perfect place to learn the language. **The Spanish Institute of Puebla (SIP)** was founded in 1984 in the heart of the UNESCO World Heritage Center of Puebla, in a former 17th century convent with a view of the city's famed cathedral. It was remodeled in 2007 with the latest technology. The core program offered is a four week course with 120 hours of instruction. Programs tailored to doctors, teachers, lawyers, social workers, business people, law enforcement officers, and travelers are also available. Students receive a certificate of completion and an official transcript accepted by over 125 universities worldwide.

Also in the heart of the city, the **Livit Immersion Center** offers total cultural and language immersion courses year round. The center is run by a local couple who live within the school itself. Students learn the language in daily classes, conversation practice with a private tutor, lunch with the directors, excursions, conversations with a local host family, and many other cultural activities.

Universidad Madero (UMAD) in Puebla offers a wide range of Spanish courses to suit all abilities while students enjoy Puebla's unique climate, hospitality, historical sights, and culinary traditions.

ITESO, Guadalajara's Jesuit university and one of Mexico's most prestigious private universities, affords students the opportunity to combine their Spanish language learning and Mexican cultural immersion experience with accredited coursework in English.

The new Three plus One Program offers students Spanish language study at beginner or intermediate level and one to three courses taught in English. Undergraduate degree course offerings for 2010 cover the fields

Study Abroad

of business, humanities, and social sciences. Business courses include: Strategic Management, Information Systems and Business, International Commercial Negotiation, and Mediation and Negotiation. From the humanities, there are: Mexican Art in Public Spaces, Mexican Culture and Society through Cinema and Latin American Short Story in Translation. The social sciences offering includes: Politics in Mexico and Public Communication. ITESO was founded in 1957 and is renowned for its beautiful gardens and tree-lined walks. Students have access to all university support services, academic advising, state of the art IT, wireless internet access, and sports and cultural programs.

La Catalina Natural Language School is a small, progressive language school in the beautiful coastal village of La Manzanilla, Jalisco. Once a sleepy fishing village, it now quietly attracts visitor from the U.S., Canada, and Europe. The school offers an innovative approach to learning, along the lines of Krashen's "Natural Approach." It allows students to rely less on rote memorization and more on usage, meaningful practice and getting the self-critic out of the way, so the brain can do its job of assimilating the new language, efficiently and effectively. Programs are available for adults, teens, children, and groups.

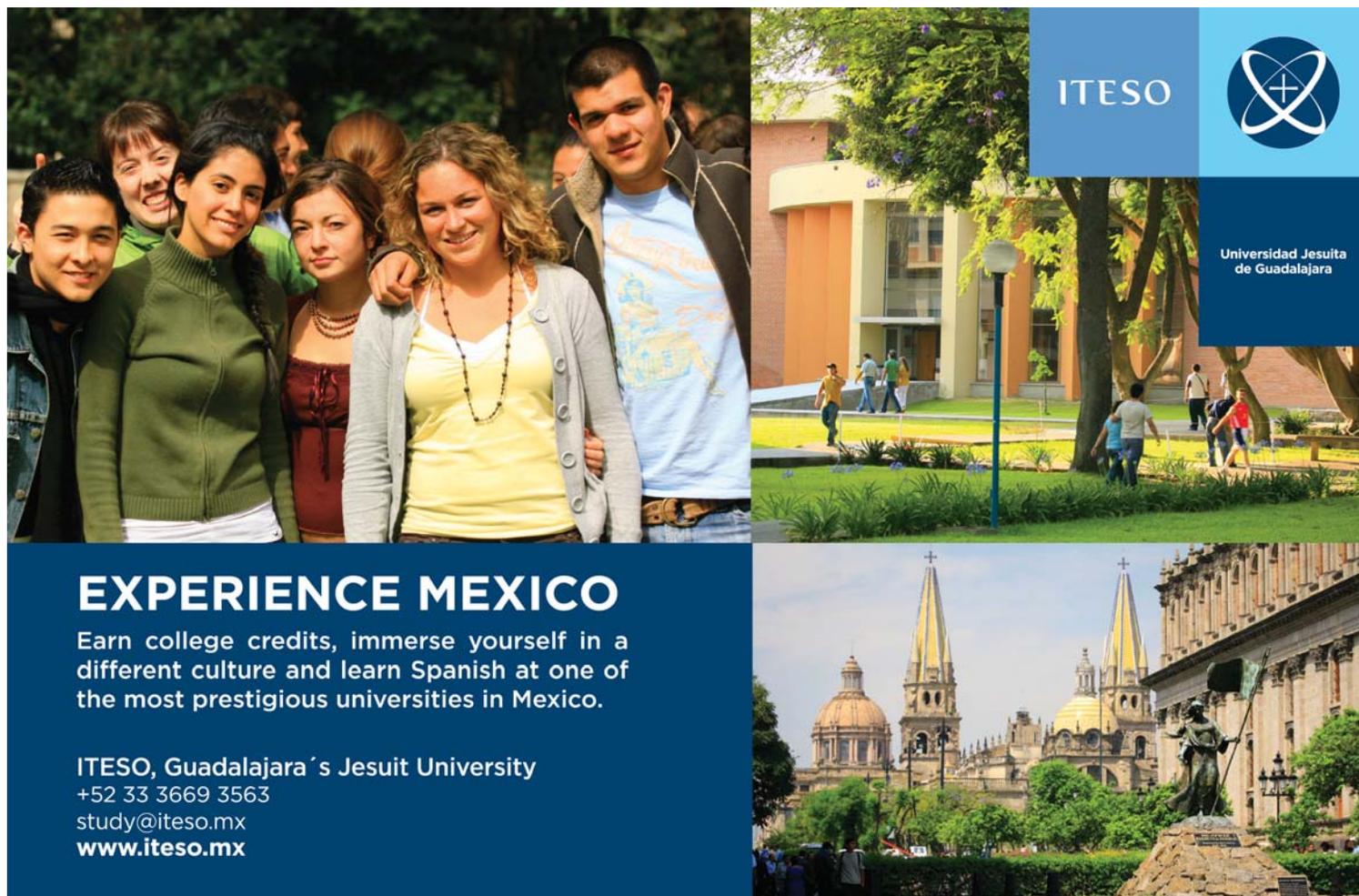
The **Universidad Iberoamericana**, is a private Jesuit institution on a new campus in the Santa Fe area in the western part of Mexico City. Since 1958, the university has offered a Spanish Language and Latin American Culture Program. There are no dormitories on campus, but the housing office provides homestay options with Mexican families.

The **Cuernavaca Language School** has a successful tradition of

teaching Spanish to foreign students in Cuernavaca, one of Mexico's most popular destinations for Spanish learners. "Attention to the Student" characterizes the school's method. Staff members flexibly adapt their teaching methods to fit the student's needs. They assure good housing with thoughtful hosts in lovely neighborhoods, celebrate frequent fiestas, and attend to the student's life in and around the charming atmosphere of their city. The school's medical program provides doctors and young interns in-hospital experience. The other special programs, for pastors, businessmen, social workers, and lawyers similarly attend to the language learner's particular need for a special vocabulary and experience. Classes, of never more than five students, promote the individual's acquisition of the Spanish language.

The Spanish Language and Mexican Culture program at **Universidad de Monterrey** is a four-week summer program. Students can complement their studies with either community service or travel around the country. Students who choose to enroll in community service get to know the social and economic realities of a rural community in Nuevo Leon, and work to improve the quality of life of its inhabitants. Students who choose to travel around Mexico improve their language skills through interaction with native speakers. The program presents students with the opportunity not only to learn or improve their Spanish but also to become conscious of the cultural and social realities of Mexico. **IX**

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