



Holiday 2018 to Mexico and Cuba

John Cable, 22nd August 2018.

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|--------------------|----|
| Introduction | 2 |
| Before We Go..... | 3 |
| The Trip | 10 |
| Coming Home..... | 16 |

1. Introduction

Exciting isn't it? In 2018, we are embarking on a whistle-stop two-week holiday to 2 countries bordering on the Caribbean: Mexico and Cuba. These are both countries on my personal bucket-list of places to go to so I am excited to be doing this!

I decided to produce this eBook to both practice what I already knew about creating these things and to make sure I recorded somewhere all of the stuff that I had found out and needed to pass on or remember. Who knows - maybe this can act as a template for future holiday stuff?

This eBook is divided into 3 main sections, namely:

- Stuff to read about and do before we go,
- The trip itself, and
- Coming home at the end

If I think of any other stuff I'll put it into appendices at the end. So, without further ado, let's crack on!

2. Before We Go

Well before we start our trip, there are a few things to think about and do. I have split these up as follows:

- Background: why we are going at this time of year, weather, distances etc.
- Health: what we need to do before we go (in terms of inoculations, tablets etc.)
- Travel: what our outbound long-haul flight details are, any considerations about time left on passports etc.
- Money: what the local currencies are, advice from journey planners re use of credit cards etc.

I have also included as an Appendix what I envisage packing for the trip (excluding clothing - I am sure everyone can make up their own minds about clothing!).

Background

Both Mexico and Cuba have coastline with the Caribbean. The Caribbean area is warm for most of the year (the Gulf Stream kick starts here) so temperatures

are generally pleasant, but it is humid at times. Additionally, this area suffers each year from a period of high hurricane probability, generally from August through to mid-November.

Takling this into account, and taking advice from the major tourist web sites, we are timing our holiday just after the hurricane season finishes and just before temperatures rise. This is also the best time to visit as it precedes the major tourist season from late December through April. We fly out of the UK on **Friday 23rd November** and return on **Sunday 9th December**.

Health

Do check with your GP about what innoculations they advise for your personal circumstances for this trip. They will normally check for whether you are up to date with vaccines for cholera, typhoid, Hepatitis A and Tetanus - I had to have a tetanus jab and a Hepatitis A one as well (because I only had a combined Hep A + B jab when we travelled to Vietnam and Cambodia which only lasts for a short time).

Make sure and get them to bring your vaccination record card up to date an store it soemwhere safe.

Our GP surgery also gave me two web sites to check:

- National Travel Health Network and Centre ,
and
- Fit For Travel

I did ask about rabies and malaria. Although both countries are tropical, malaria risk is classed as Low and Hampton GP's are not recommending a course of malaria tablets for our visit. The risk of rabies is roughly the same for Cuba/Mexico as it was for Vietnam/Cambodia. The rabies jab does not offer full protection anyway; it just delays the progress of rabies if you have been bitten until you can get to some proper medical facilities. That being the case, we may do the same as we did for Vietnam/Cambodia - not have the rabies jab - and remain careful while on holiday around animals.

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The tour company did mention about having an up-to-date Yellow Fever vaccination record or you might not get back into the UK but the Hampton Surgery dismissed that - see what your own GP's say where you are.

Travel

Mexico and Cuba are in different time zones:

- Mexico - GMT -6 hours
- Cuba - GMT -5 hours

We are travelling significant distance during this holiday, both by air and by road. The table below shows the main travelling and what the distances involved are for each major trip. *(if I have time before we go I'll put in a summary table showing comparative holiday travelling for other long-haul holidays as well)*

| Air Journey | Distance (miles) |
|--|---------------------|
| London to Oaxaca via Mexico City Flight AM0008 from London Heathrow to Mexico City Depart: 2230, Arrive: 0420 next day Flight AM2046 from Mexico City to Oaxaca Depart: 0605, Arrive: 0720 next day | 5819 |
| Oaxaca to Merida via Mexico City | 1101 |
| Chichen Itza to Havana via Cancun | 440 |
| Havana to Mexico City | 1108 |
| Mexico City to London | 5532 |
| TOTAL air miles | 14000 |

And also scheduled journeys by road - excluding airport transfers and any we do ourselves:

| Road Journey | Distance (miles) |
|---|------------------|
| Oaxaca to Monte Alban and Hierve el Agua | 98 (circular) |
| Merida to Chichen Itza | 74 |
| Chichen Itza Mayan tour with cenotes | 98 (circular) |
| Chichen Itza to Cancun Airport | 126 |
| Havana to Trinidad and return | 392 |
| Teotihuacan pyramids and Guadalupe shrine | 70 (circular) |
| Puebla, Tonantzintla and Cholula | 182 (circular) |
| TOTAL air miles | 1040 |

Money

Both Mexico and Cuba have the peso as their unit of currency but they are separate currencies with separate exchange rates, similar to US and Canadian dollars in that respect.

Mexico has a more developed ATM and credit-card capability. Not sure how useful the FairFX card will be - need to check with them. You are recommended to let your bank know that you will be using your card(s) in these countries before you leave

Current exchange rates (as at Friday 17 August) are:

- Mexican Peso: 24.28 pesos per UK £
- Cuban peso: 1.27 pesos per UK £

3. The Trip

Each day of the trip is listed in its own mini-section below. Where I know these details, I've tried to include times for any travelling we do on the day and the main sights we are seeing. The itinerary has been developed in conjunction with Journey Latin America and the contact details for them are included at the end of the book.

The long-haul travel days are also mentioned in the Before We Go and Coming Home sections of this book.

Day 1 Friday 23rd November UK to Oaxaca

Our flight from London Heathrow is AeroMexico flight number XXXXXX which departs at 2340 from London HeathRow. Check-in must be done by 2140. Each person can have one suitcase (for placing in the hold - maximum 23kg) and one carry-on bag / backpack - normal for long-haul flights.

Day 2 Saturday 24th November Oaxaca

We arrive in Mexico City airport at about 0420 in the morning and have to catch an internal flight to Oaxaca

at 0605 (our bags transfer automatically, I think). We then arrive in Oaxaca airport at about 0720 and will be able to check-in to our hotel on arrival.

Half-day excursion to Monte Alban and Hierve el Agua

Day 3 Sunday 25th November Oaxaca

Half-day Oaxacan street food and Mezcal tasting
Morning excursion - pick-up from the hotel at 0900.
Food included.

Day 4 Monday 26th November Oaxaca to Merida

Hotel Boutique Casa Lucia in Merida.

Arrive at Merida airport at approx. 1328. Afternoon at leisure after hotel check-in.

Day 5 Tuesday 27th November Merida

Merida city tour

Two to three hour excursion (*No start time specified*)

Day 6 Wednesday 28th November Merida to Chichen Itza

Two and a half hour drive to Chichen Itza, arriving around 11am (so leave hotel at about 0830). Private air-conditioned vehicle - lunch included during or before the half-day excursion to Chichen Itza ruins.

Day 7 Thursday 29th November Chichen Itza

Ek-Balam & Valladolid with Ik Kil & Samula cenotes. Full day private excursion.

Day 8 Friday 30th November Chichen Itza to Havana

Private transfer to Cancun airport leaving at about 0800. Flight from Cancun at 1354 to Havana, arriving at 1512. Transfer to Hotel Inglaterra for 3 nights.

Day 9 Saturday 1st December Havana

Half-day walking tour of Old Havana - prepare to start early! Most cafes and coffeehouses are in the Old Town so smile!

Afternoon shared excursion to the Rum Museum - this is a one hour tour we will share with other holidaymakers. Various start times in the day.

Day 10 Sunday 2nd December Havana

Day at leisure so maybe do the Cuban SArt Gallery and Christopher Columbus (Colon) cemetery and the taxi to the Hemingway Museum?

Day 11 Monday 3rd December Oaxaca

Day 12 Tuesday 4th December Oaxaca

**Day 13 Wednesday 5th December Mexico
City**

**Day 14 Thursday 6th December Mexico
City**

Day 15 Friday 7th December Puebla

**Day 16 Saturday 8th December Mexico
City**

Our flight today from Mexico City is AeroMexico flight number XXXXXX which departs at 2340. Check-in must be done by 2140. As for the outbound long-haul flight, each person can have one suitcase (for placing in the hold - maximum 23kg) and one carry-on bag / backpack - normal for long-haul flights.

We have a late checkout from our hotel today so we retain the use of the room up until tea time - good news for freshening up for the long journey home! We

will be picked up from the hotel by our airport transfer at any time between 7.30 and 8.00 pm

Day 17 Sunday 9th December UK

We arrive back in the UK at London HeathRow at approx. 3.50pm.

4. Coming Home

5. Appendix 1 Personal Packing Checklist

For what it's worth, my personal holiday essentials list is included below. Adapt for your own needs, of course!

Holiday Essentials

Passport Details

| Name on Passport | Passport No. | Expiry Date |
|----------------------|--------------|------------------|
| John Brinley Cable | 534663386 | 1 May 2026 |
| Lesley Anne Cable | 464103862 | 19 June 2019 |
| Sophie Vinetta Cable | 465469170 | 22 August 2020 |
| Emily Beatrice Cable | 527280869 | 6 September 2025 |

Preparation

- Clear out
- Charge up camera batteries
- Charge up juice-block
- Unload current camera memory cards
- Download any programmes to watch to iPad
- Sort out device charging leads - iPhone, iPad, FitBit, juice block
- USB charging plug
- Multi-way charging block
 - Sunglasses and spare pair of ordinary glasses
 - Cap (optional)
- Sort out documents: passport, travel documents, immunisation certificates
- Travel adapter
- Check and buy if necessary:
 - travel sickness tablets
 - insect repellent
 - travel-size toiletries

Packing

- Put USB and charging leads in protective Tupperware
- Put charging block in base of case
- Tablets for the trip - hip etc.

- Backpack:
 - throw-away fiction book
 - iPad + headphones
 - Travel sickness tablets
 - Small pack tissues / cleansing wipes
- Pack into carrier bags:
- Underwear
- Socks - incl. sports socks
- Swim stuff*
- Shirts + trousers / shorts
- Shoes + sandals (+ flip-flops*)
- Pyjamas - in outside case pocket.
- Pack toiletry bag:
 - Razor + blades
 - Shaving foam
 - Toothbrush head?
 - Spray**
 - After bite + Savlon
 - Headache tablets
 - Hairbrush

Don't forget to weigh case - safe maximum is 20KG.

Camera (in backpack) is hand luggage

Note for neighbours

N.B.

* optional - depends on the holiday

*** may purchase in Duty Free at airport

*? may be packed with family toiletry bag

6. Appendix 2 Contact Details for Journey Latin America