

ITAM (Mexico City)

Degree: BCom

Semester: S1 2016

Visas

Visas are super easy for New Zealanders to Mexico – because you do not need one. New Zealanders can visit and study in Mexico for up to 6 months with no visa. If you are planning on being there longer you just need to cross the border and re-enter and you get 6 more months. However if your flight to Mexico goes through USA, you will need a visa to pass through here. Flight Agents can give you the details – or search online ESTA visa. If you want to check for yourself on visa requirements then I recommend calling the Mexican embassy and being persistent. Took me multiple times and I think weeks to get the above answer out of them.

Language

No matter your Spanish level you will be fine at ITAM. All of the students speak English and all the exchange students are coming from different levels of Spanish. Some arrived with fluent, some with none at all and some with low/intermediate like myself. ITAM offers language classes which count for credits – but are not displayed on the classes list that ITAM sends to you.

Classes

There are a lot more options of classes available than what is on the class list that is sent from ITAM. When I arrived I ended up changing the majority of mine and it was easy enough to do. The exchange office in ITAM is extremely helpful and they understand the uncertainty about the exchange process for the students. Whether your classes are in English or Spanish is not determined until you arrive. The teachers are all very understanding of exchange students and language barriers. They will normally let you answer and sit exams in English and offer extra help where needed. One of my teachers even changed the class to English for us.

Accommodation

I stayed in one of the accommodations supplied from ITAM. It was Hidalgo 92. Only 5 min walk to uni. I loved it here, we lived with 5 exchange students and about 7 Mexicans. The house was really nice with nice rooms. There was a cleaning lady who came by multiple times a week. The landlord was a nice guy, but kinda intense. One of the other options was Hidalgo 26 which is just 3 min walk away and this house is mainly full of exchange students. I spent lots of time there but still preferred my place, felt more authentic.

Money matters

I worked before I went over and had about \$5000 dollars I think. This along with study link got me through the semester pretty easily – and also for a little bit after. Mexico is very cheap and you can get by on the cheap if you want to.

Academics/course load

I took 5 classes at ITAM – this was because I needed the equivalent of four classes at Otago. Exchange students tend to take 4 or 5 classes. The classes can range from 1.5 hours to 3 hours. The 3 hours classes took some getting used to, but tended to go by quite fast. Most of my classes I did well in with no problem, but one of them was very difficult. It was an economic class with a lot of calculus that I wasn't used to. In the end it was fine, I talked with the professor and he was very understanding and helped me out a lot.

Transportation

Download Uber. It's super easy and convenient and lots of people use it. It is relatively cheap for transport when you come from New Zealand, but if you want super cheap then the buses and metros will only cost you about 5-10 pesos – which is like 50c-\$1. There are free shuttles from ITAM to the metro station. However these can be super busy and slow and not ideal when the weather is warm. Either way, it's very easy to get around and you can do it cheap or cheaper.

Eating

Mexican food is the best thing ever and there are food stands everywhere! The food can take a little while to adjust to – you may have an upset stomach every now and then, but after a while I was fine and could eat anything. Close to Hidalgo 92 there are Taco's just around the corner – they are super cheap and delicious. People can get sick of them and want some variety. In the beginning I would cook some food at home and eat out sometimes as well. But near the end – especially with exams I tended to just eat out most nights.

Things to do

There are plenty of cool things to do around the city. The best thing I recommend is just making friends with the students from ITAM. They love to show people around the city and take you to places outside of the city. The Mexicans are such hospitable people.

My exchange experience was really quite incredible. My Spanish improved – super slow, but it improved. It was really cool to experience so many different cultures and see just how international big cities like Mexico City are. Puts things into perspective when coming from NZ. I met a lot of really cool people from all over the world and now I am moving around Mexico surfing, chilling and meeting more locals. It is really one of the best experiences of my life and would recommend an exchange to Mexico to anyone!