



Viva Mexico! Mexico is a land of almost 100 million people of whom two thirds are under the age of 30. The beautiful beaches of the Pacific, Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean border spectacular mountain ranges. Diversity and colour are everywhere - with world famous Mayan Pyramids and stunning colonial architecture, from centuries of Spanish rule, to the modern buildings of 21st century Mexico. Aztec art mixes with the contemporary whilst poor, traditional, rural communities exist alongside the super rich. Volunteering in Mexico with AV you can experience it for yourself. Our volunteering opportunities and gap year projects in Mexico give you the chance to live and volunteer amongst the Mazuan Mexican communities, in traditional villages, some 100 kilometres west of Mexico City. Villages are centred round a small square and church and have a few local shops. Volunteer in Mexico with AV and teach colloquial English in both primary and secondary schools. A truly cultural experience and the opportunity to improve your Spanish too!

Project Summary

Departs: February

How long? 22 weeks

Accommodation: Self catered AV Houses

Project Work: Teaching, Sports Coaching, Art, Music, Drama, Community Work, Spanish

Explore Further: Beaches, Surfing, Diving, Ancient Ruins



Project Overview

Orientation + Briefing (10-12 days)	Orientation and Spanish course at the Hacienda Pipiol. A chance to get to know your AV group whilst improving your Spanish and attending briefings on teaching, keeping safe, staying healthy and Mexican culture.
Project Work (Approx 16 weeks)	Living and working in a rural school in the Valle de Bravo region. AV volunteers teach in the classroom, coach sports, get involved in extra curricular clubs or work in the wider community. Together with fellow AVs you will live in local houses, with a high level of independence. Spending significant time in one place lets you become fully involved and gain a sense of achievement.
Independent Travel (4 weeks)	Explore Mexico and Central America, further using the confidence and local knowledge gained on your project to make the most of your travels. Take advantage of adventure activities on offer, relax on the white sandy beaches or visit the historical pyramids and temples. You choose what you do, but we are still on hand to help.

Detailed Itinerary

ARRIVING IN MEXICO

The group flight departs from London Heathrow and will be seen off by one of the AV team. You will fly into Mexico City, where our Mexico AV representative will meet you on arrival. After your first tacos, you spend the night at a backpackers' hostel near the centre of the city. The next day you may visit the main square (the Zócalo) and market to get a feel for Mexico's capital city and its vibrant culture. Then a 2½-hour coach journey through the suburbs of the city to the pine-clad hills around Valle de Bravo...an altogether more restful scene.

BRIEFING AND ORIENTATION

A chance to settle in, unwind after the hectic few days leading to your departure and get to know your AV group. The orientation course is important for making sure you're fully prepared when you arrive in your school. The hacienda, where you will spend the next 12 days, is a magnificent family manor farm, steeped in tradition and set in stunning countryside. Laura is our amazing Spanish language teacher and, besides improving your Spanish, you will cover:

- Teaching techniques and tips
- History, culture and customs of the Mexican people
- Safety, health, security and risk assessment

During the week, you will visit Valle de Bravo and your villages. At the end of the orientation course you will be taken to your AV houses, ready to start your project for real. The AV representative will leave you to settle into your new home, but remember they're never more than a phone call away if needed.

THE PROJECT

Most of the villages have their own primary and secondary schools. In your primary school, you will generally teach English from 8.30am until break and follow this with another couple of hours in the secondary school. These are generally well run, with fairly good facilities, but in desperate need of help with teaching English so you will be in great demand. Classes are of between 20-40 pupils.

Schools work from a syllabus but, as the English part is formal and outdated, many head teachers are keen to encourage spoken English. Ages range from 6-16 and the standard of English is generally poor. Games need some encouragement and you will find lots of Mexicans who are football mad. Every class seems to have a dance team so you won't be short of salsa moments!

There may well be opportunities to teach English to teachers and parents and, in return, learn extra Spanish or pick up some Mexican cooking tips. The teachers will be on hand to show you round and advise on where to shop, the nearest internet café etc. They will also be a good link into other work within the community, with the potential for helping at local medical clinics or community centers depending on where you are and how much you want to do outside of your responsibilities in the school.

Weekends can be spent relaxing, visiting other AV volunteers or sightseeing - there's a mass of things to do! The stunning lake in Valle de Bravo is particularly popular and old colonial towns, such as Puebla, are well worth a visit.

To find out what a typical day on project might be like take a look at our ['Day in the life of an AV'](#) feature, written by AVs who have been there and done it themselves!

Food + Accommodation

In Mexico you will live in designated AV houses with fellow volunteers, either within the school grounds or not far away. An important part of the AV experience is living in local accommodation, shopping at the markets, being invited to fellow teachers' houses as well as entertaining the staff or fellow AVs in the evenings. Depending on the school and size of the house you may be paired with between four – six AVs in one house. Other AVs from your group will be in schools nearby; there will often be a chance to meet up in evenings or at weekends. The villages, which will be your home, are in attractive farming country and not far from the hacienda (1-10 kilometres). Santa Maria, San Francisco, Polvillos and Amanalco each have a character of their own and the villagers will make you very welcome. You will quickly get to know the shopkeepers and children, who will be delighted to see new AV faces!

Your house will be brick built and, though basic, will have running water, shower, kitchen, inside loo and decent beds. We encourage independence and so you won't have someone cooking and looking after you – it's a chance to step up and take responsibility. You will be given a daily food allowance and will be expected to shop at the markets and cook for yourself. Cooking is made easy with colourful markets nearby with an abundance of vegetables, fruit and burritos to buy. Mexicans are always eating, especially anything that blows your head off e.g. chilli, so be warned! Religious festivals abound and you will experience at first hand how the Catholic Church and Mexican Indian culture entwine. You will make local friends and may well be invited to a wedding! Mexicans love to party; dancing and fireworks will enliven many a night. Fully immersing yourself in the community is the best way of getting to know people, developing your Spanish and gaining the best possible understanding of living there – you are not a bystander watching from afar.

Whilst not living with you full time the AV representative is never far away and there whenever you need them. They can be contacted by phone 24/7 and will visit you during your project.

Independent Travel

As your project comes to an end it is not quite time to say goodbye... AV includes approximately 4 weeks of independent travel time at the end of the venture, to ensure a good balance of volunteer work and travel. Mexico and Central America have lots of exciting and beautiful places to explore which you won't get a chance to do in your weekends alone. Many people want to stay on and travel but don't know if others on the project will too. Therefore we include this extra travel time to ensure that you experience as much as possible and know that you will have people to travel with. From our experience travelling is often when problems occur, from lost passports to getting ill – that's why we have the motto, 'Once an AV, always an AV' - we'll still be there to help you, even though your project has finished.

Different travel options Kenya AVs have done in the past include: Visiting the world heritage sites and pyramids of Chichen-Itza and Campeche; taking in the historic colonial towns such as Oaxaca and visiting the beautiful Chaipas region; heading to the Caribbean coastline to sunbathe on the beautiful beaches; snorkelling and diving off the Yucatan peninsula or experiencing the deserts of the north! It's up to you, the only rule is that you don't travel by yourself.

Dates + Costs

For current AV departure dates + costs please visit the website – www.aventure.co.uk

AV PROJECT COSTS INCLUDE:

Before departure:

- Pre-departure information, support and advice
- A nominated member of the UK volunteer support team
- One-to-one face to face briefing for UK applicants
- Telephone briefing for non-UK applicants
- References taken up
- Comprehensive online health check
- Advice on group flight booking or individual flight arrangements
- Briefing for group departure from London airport

In-country:

- In-country representative
- 24/7 in-country backup
- Meet and greet at airport (if arriving with the group)
- Airport transfer (if arriving with group)
- In-country induction course
- Transfer from induction course to school/project
- Accommodation (except during independent travel)
- Food allowance (except during independent travel)
- Management of emergencies, including lost passport, illness, etc. whilst in-country

Upon returning home:

- Returning home advice
- Full telephone debriefing

AV PROJECT COSTS DO NOT INCLUDE

- Flights
- Travel Insurance

- Country visas
- Meeting of non-group arrivals
- Accommodation for early/late arrivals
- Medical expenses, e.g. inoculations, malaria prophylactics
- In-country medical expenses
- Drinks
- Tips/gratuities - No tips/gratuities for AV staff are necessary or expected
- Spending money
- Extra activities that you choose to do
- Food, transport and accommodation on independent travel

Still got questions? We're here to answer them and remember if you want to talk to an AV volunteer who has been there and done it just let us know and we'd be happy to put you in touch! Contact the AV office on +44(0)1380 729009 or info@aventure.co.uk