

January 4, 1977

Maria Laura Avinac
Apartado Postal 406
Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico

Dear Maria Laura,

We hope there are still some sessions open for summer 1978. We are interested in sending a group of eight (8) girls and two (2) adults to our Cabana in either July or August-whatever is available. Please let us know to which session we have been assigned. The form and registration fee will be sent within four weeks.

Sincerely yours,

Mrs. Dale Leipper
Chairman, Program Committee
Monterey Bay Girl Scout Council

VL/jb

OUR CABAÑA

Apartado Postal 406
Cuernavaca, Morelos, México

Cable Code "CABAÑAGUIAS"

Telephone 2-30-98

4th. February, 1976.

Mrs. Virginia Leipper,
11532 Midden Hills Road,
Salinas, California,
U. S. A. 93901.

Dear Mrs. Leipper,

The Adult Adventure Session is drawing near and I hope that your plans are coming along successfully.

Many people have asked for suggestions of useful articles to bring to the Cabaña, to help with our programme and, more especially, our service projects. This year, we have decided to send the following list of our immediate needs.

Small or medium-sized sharp scissors

'Benchmark' - legal ruled tablets - contains 50 sheets -
8 1/2" X 14"

Sheets - single bed size

Exacto knives - size I

Exacto knife blades - sizes 10, 11, 16, 22, 24.

Paint brushes - wooden-handled, sizes 3 to 6.

Elmers white glue

Clear contact paper

Any of the above items would be greatly appreciated. I look forward to welcoming you to the Cabaña soon.

Yours sincerely,

Robyn Young

Robyn Young
Programme Director.

April 28, 1976

Miss Maria Laura Avina
Our Cabana
Apartado Postal 406
Cuernavaca, Morelos
Mexico

Dear Maria Laura,

Please send me the available session dates for girls for summer of 1978. And, whatever other information our Council would need to have to send a patrol of girls to Our Cabana. Our Program committee is intersted in the possibility of sending a patrol of about eight girls and two adults to Our Cabana, now that we have come back with such a glowing account of the marvelous time that we had there.

Enclosed find two extra stamps that I didn't need, I'm sure you can find a use for them.

I had such a wonderful time at our Cabana. You and your staff and employees worked unstintingly to provide an outstanding experience for us. I also enjoyed the opportunity to become a bit more acquainted with Mexico, our next door neighbor, thank you.

Yours Sincerely,

Program committee Chairman
Monterey Bay Girl Scout Council
Monterey, California

Mrs. Dale F. Leipper
11532 Hidden Hills
Salinas, California 93901
USA

District II

Report: "Mexico and our Cabaña," Fiesta Luncheon

Given by: Jeanne Mills, neighborhood chairman, and Diane Kennedy,
program consultant

For: Leaders of Pacific Grove neighborhood

At: Kennedy home, 1051 Laurel Lane, Pebble Beach

When: Tuesday, March 29, 1977

Guests: Mary A. Mahon, district chairman
District Director
11 persons total

Program: *Singing
* Slides of Mexico: Ticalli Cuernavaca, Museum of anthropology,
Cabana truf, program doings.
* Much conversation about our Cabaña, nature of the trip,
program procedures at La Cabaña - crafts, service project,
grace at meals, flag ceremonies, etc.
* Many interested questions from guests about all phases
of trip.

signing paper

CABAÑA TRIP PLANNING GUIDE

*14 yrs old by time
H session
film strip "Our Cabaña"
see ahead*

INTRODUCTION

For many Senior Scouts and Rangers a Cabaña trip is a dream come true. But such a trip requires several years of work and planning, both by adults and girls.

There is no magic formula for planning your trip to Mexico or Our Cabaña. Every group, every trip is different. Much of the following information is only common sense. Much of it has been shared with us by experienced leaders who bring groups regularly, especially Mrs. Darby Pulliam of California, our long-time friend.

PLANNING INFORMATION

Read carefully, then re-read and study with your group, all information sent by Our Cabaña. Three mailings are sent by Our Cabaña to groups planning trips and contain the most up-to-date information. Save these mailings for reference as items are not mentioned in future correspondence. Groups having previously visited Our Cabaña are excellent resources to help you plan, but remember, that things do change so it is best to rely on your printed information. If there are questions do not hesitate to write to Our Cabaña.

Read all the tour guide books you can get your hands on -- American Automobile Association, Mexico on \$5 and \$10 Dollars a Day, Fodor's Guide to Mexico, Sunset Travel Guide-Mexico. Use your library also and involve your girls in every step of the planning.

Excellent brochures to help plan your trip are available from the Mexican Tourism Council and/or your local travel agent. Rates and accommodations change frequently and travel agents are most likely to have the most current information.

Avoid copying trip plans of previous groups. You will want to adapt your trip to your own group, their needs, changes in travel schedules etc.

TRAVEL TO MEXICO

Cabaña just trip after

Before planning your itinerary read, read, read. And although your Cabaña stay will likely be the highlight of your trip do plan to visit some other parts of Mexico. They too provide a wonderful learning experience for the girls. Mexico is a land of many contrasts -- and you'll find rural villages, beach resorts and modern skyscrapers. Most Girl Guide/Girl Scout visitors arrive in Mexico eager to understand its culture and appreciate the difference. Others hardly cross the border before beginning to compare everything to its counterpart back home. Mexico is definitely a foreign country in its customs, language, people and way of life. Whatever you and your group does can affect the way Mexicans feel about your country. Watch your comments and try to adapt to each new situation. Be good-will ambassadors.

For a successful trip work together as a group beforehand to create the team feeling. Set travel rules (re: boys, lights out, check out, room assignments etc.) before you go. A "dry run" trip and followup evaluation is good training in handling hotel check-in, baggage, group travel. These are vital steps' Talk about your goals for the trip--fun, learning about a new culture and its differences, meeting new people, shopping and sight-seeing.

TENTATIVE BUDGET

Budgeting goes hand in hand with planning. If you are planning for several years in advance allow for rising costs. A troop emergency fund is a wise precaution.

Cabaña trip planning guide

Financial planning varies with every group but do work out a detailed financial plan with your girls. A sound budget is the key to a successful trip. Your budget and plan should cover disposition of finances before, during and after the trip. Work closely with your local association on fund raising plans. Foreign exchange student savings or payment plan is a good idea to help girls and parents plan ahead and to avoid last minute financial difficulties.

EQUIPMENT LIST

In addition to the items listed in the Cabaña folder various groups have found it helpful to include:

Two uniforms	Cheap watch
Lightweight trench coat	Wash n' Dries
Thin plastic raincoat	Small notebook
Spanish pocket dictionary	Student ID card (for museum entrance discounts)
Washcloth	Laundry soap
Dark glasses	Blow-up pillow (for bus or train)
Any medication with copy of prescription	Sun tan lotion
Extra pair of prescription glasses	Travel-size cosmetics in plastic containers

Most inexperienced travelers pack too much. Work with your group on getting things down to the bare essentials. Save a lot of room for souvenirs.

Many groups limit luggage to what girls can carry themselves. Troop supplies can be divided equally. Make sure all luggage is clearly identified. Often groups find it helpful to attach matching pieces of yarn or strips of tape so luggage of the group can be identified easily. Count your luggage and have girls responsible for their own luggage. Never leave it unattended. An efficient baggage system makes transfers easier and faster and lessens the risk of lost luggage.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS - *Troop leader keep - probably*

Tourist cards are needed to enter Mexico. These can be applied for through the Mexican consulate nearest you or Mexican tourist offices in major cities. Most airlines also issue tourist cards. To secure tourist cards you must present a birth certificate or proof of citizenship. Naturalized citizens will be required to present their naturalization papers. Minors under 18 traveling without parents must also present a notarized letter signed by both parents or guardians authorizing them to make the trip.

For further details contact the nearest Mexican consulate or your travel agent well in advance of your trip.

The tourist card is a most important little paper. We recommend adults be responsible for tourist cards and travel documents. Without the tourist card you cannot leave the country.

LANGUAGE

English and Spanish are spoken at Our Cabaña. A knowledge of Spanish is not essential but it does make your visit to Mexico more enjoyable. You can get along amazingly well with sign language and it is almost always possible to find someone who speaks a little English. Basic courtesy phrases and numbers are most helpful and easiest to learn.

There are any number of inexpensive, pocket-sized phrase books on the market. Start practicing...you'll be glad you didn't with your leaders. If you get lost at least

BOOKS

A book list attached is sent from Our Cabaña. Any trip is more enriching with a little background of the history and culture of Mexico. Libraries, foreign exchange students, recent travelers, Spanish teachers, etc. are also wonderful resources to help in preparing your group.

IMMUNIZATION AND HEALTH EXAMS

Health exams are required for your Cabaña visit. A health form which can be mimeographed is sent from the Cabaña but you may wish to use your camp or national form. Be sure to include immunization record.

Immunizations are no longer required from most countries to visit Mexico but because Our Cabaña is an international center, typhoid and tetanus shots are required and are a wise precaution. Typhoid shots are usually given in a two-shot series a month apart. Tetanus is usually given as a booster for those previously immunized.

Smallpox and polio immunizations are not required but recommended by Our Cabaña.

Exemption from health exam and immunizations for religious reasons may be given but parents are required to sign a release of responsibility.

HEALTH AND SAFETY RULES

Certain precautions are advisable for travel in Mexico as tourists sometimes experience mild stomach upset commonly called "turista". Your first aid kit should contain medicines for diarrhea, upset stomach and constipation. Consult your physician for advice. Girls often carry their own medicines which works out better especially if the group is split in hotel rooms etc.

High altitude, a change in eating habits and a change in climate will affect you so your body needs extra rest and care. Go easy the first day or so. If you travel long distances by bus or train allow yourself one day to recuperate.

The following health and safety rules make traveling in Mexico a lot easier:

- Eat three balanced meals a day. Food may be different so start trying new foods now. It is part of the experience!
- Do NOT drink the water unless you make sure it is purified. In hotels it is usually put in the rooms in bottles. In fancy restaurants there is no problem but best drink cokes, hot tea or coffee in smaller places.
- Do not brush your teeth from tap water. Use the purified water in the hotel room. Cabaña water is safe to drink from the tap.
- Get at least 8 hours of sleep each night. The most common cause of sickness is fatigue. You'll be going at a fast pace, following a different schedule and living in high elevations so be kind to your health or you'll be sorry!
- Never buy food from a street vendor unless it is packaged commercially (ie. potato chips, candy bars). Peeled fruit, ice cream is a no-no.
- At the first sign of diarrhea (usually accompanied by slight stomach cramps) start taking medicine. If you wait even an hour or two it may take days to cure.
- Stay regular. Some people have the opposite problem and need a laxative.
- When crossing streets be extra careful and assume it is "open season" on all tourists.
- Keep your hotel doors locked at all times.
- Stay together in small groups at all times. Strays are fair game for wandering Romeos.
- Watch where you are walking. Holes in sidewalks, broken steps are common.
- Never go anywhere without checking out with your leaders. If you get lost at least someone knows where to start looking!

ALL ABOUT BOYS

Boy-girl relationships in Mexico differ greatly from USA and Canadian customs. Prepare your girls well and discuss the problem before leaving home. Establish ground rules. Unfortunately many traveling troops have been severely criticized for not complying with recognized customs of Mexico.

The following letter is sent by the USA International Commissioner to Girl Scout troops requesting international introduction cards for their Cabaña visit. It clearly explains the situation: checks are a safe and handy way to carry your money. Carry small denominations (\$10, \$20) as stores may not be able to cash checks for large amounts. Dear Friends,

The International Commissioner of Guías de México has suggested that I write to you concerning certain "do's and don'ts" for young ladies traveling in Mexico.

As you are undoubtedly aware, dating, courtship, and marriage customs differ in every society around the world. Part of the fun of traveling is learning these differences, but not necessarily from first-hand experience.

American girls have gained a reputation in Mexico for being "easy". Partly this is because our dating customs are so different and partly it is due to the unfortunate behavior of some American tourists. At any rate, it is not uncommon for Mexican men and boys to approach and try to date American girls. The manner in which this is done may be rude or very smooth and gracious but either way it is not a compliment.

You and your girls would be exposing yourselves to ridicule and possibly something more unfortunate if you fail to discourage this sort of thing. It is not necessary to be rude; a polite but firm "no" is generally sufficient to get the point across.

I would strongly suggest that you discuss this matter with your girls, and possibly their parents, before starting on your trip. Set ground rules ahead of time. The girls need to understand that no matter what it looks like in the movies, dating is just not the thing to do in Mexico, at least under any circumstances in which they are apt to find themselves.

If your group is staying at Ticalli, the Guide House in Mexico City you are asked to comply fully with these suggestions as well as the specific house rules. Ticalli is located in one of the finest business, shopping and entertainment sections of Mexico City. However some USA Girl Scouts who have stayed there have unknowingly been giving Ticalli something of a "reputation". They have come out on the balconies in shorts or less, and waved and shouted to men in nearby office buildings; they have run out to the street in their bare feet--things which are nothing more than innocent teenage exuberances in the United States but which look very different south of the border.

Our friends in Guías de México genuinely enjoy having you visit their country and will do much to make your stay a happy one. But because they love Girl Guiding and what it stands for, and because they like and respect the United States, they want you to look like the best representatives of both so that others in Mexico will be proud of you too.

Very sincerely,

International Commissioner

Have a good trip!

MONEY

The exchange rate is \$12.50 pesos for one US dollar but the rate may vary slightly, Mexican money is also based on the decimal system with 100 centavos to the peso. A peso is equal to 8 cents U.S. To determine the cost of any item multiply the amount in pesos by 8 to determine US currency. (For example 20 pesos $\times 8 = \$1.60$ U.S.).

Conversion charts are given in many tour guides. Learn basic numbers in Spanish and have your group practice with the exchange before you leave.

Travelers checks are a safe and handy way to carry your money. Purchase checks in small denominations (\$10, \$20) as stores may not be able to cash checks for large amounts. Personal checks are difficult to cash. "Rich tourist".

Your Cabafia bill may be paid with travelers checks, US bills or pesos. The Cabafia offers to exchange money ONCE early in the session. Banks, hotels and many stores also provide this service.

MAKE YOURSELF A WELCOME TRAVELER

IN TOWN

Girls just don't whistle. It means something you don't want to imply. Raise your hand to hail a cab.

Gum chewing is considered cheap so best save it for long rides to avoid getting car sick or in your own rooms.

Pant suits are proper feminine attire but save your shorts for resort areas.

To get rid of a persistent vendor firmly say no, gracias but be polite. The guy is just trying to earn a living.

The Mexican government requests that we do not give money to beggars as it keeps them from participating in government programs to relieve poverty.

Be quiet in churches. Ask permission before taking pictures.

IN HOTELS

A big group in a hotel can create a hassle for the staff. Don't use telephones except for business. No need calling room to room to check what the other is wearing.

Don't leave doors open and yell down the hall or call from door to door.

Don't block passageways while waiting for the whole group in the lobby.

Don't wander around in your pajamas.

Don't take hotel property as souvenirs. It's still stealing. Conserve hot water as fuel and water are expensive and sometimes scarce.

Never leave money, cameras, watches or other valuables in your hotel room when you are gone.

IN SOCIAL SITUATIONS

Shake hands with everyone but lightly.

If the language barrier makes communication difficult, use sign language, smile a lot but do keep trying.

Completely ignore all attempts by boys to get your attention. A hiss is equivalent to a whistle. Don't even giggle or you'll never get rid of them.

Stay in a group and at night stay with adults.

If you pretend the boy isn't there he will soon go away but if you encounter a really persistent one, attach yourself to an adult (the older and meaner the better).

IN RESTAURANTS

Relax and enjoy the leisurely pace of Mexican meals.

Place your order by pointing to the item as you ask for it. If the waiter doesn't understand your fine Spanish at least he'll see what you want on the menu.

If you get something you didn't order look around to see if you got crossed with someone else's order. Don't make a big fuss over mistakes. You may be right but in the interest of international relations don't push it.

IN SHOPPING

Remember you are here to see Mexico not to buy it.

Don't flash your wad and play the "rich tourist".

Don't bargain in fixed price stores like Sanborn's or Woolworth's.

Try a shoulder bag with an inside pocket and sturdy clasp to keep your money.

Watch your purse and keep track of your money.

Don't insult the product to get the price lower when bargaining.

B/D: 25 pesos for that crummy purse

OK: It's a nice purse but I can't spend more than 15.

In bargaining you may cut the price and make a counter offer but a preposterously low price is insulting.

Don't start bargaining unless you are seriously interested in buying. It's not fair to play games with the vendor's time.

Always say gracias.

SPENDING MONEY

It's virtually impossible to give advice on spending money. For sure the wide array of Mexican handicrafts are tempting bargains. U.S. residents may bring back \$100 worth of merchandise duty-free. It is wise to keep a list of major purchases for customs purposes.

CABAÑA PROGRAM

At Our Cabaña a tentative program is presented to the Court of Honor for approval or changes. Each program varies slightly according to the needs and interests of each session but a sample program follows:

Wednesday

Aft. Arrivals and Swim

Night Evening Program and Leader's meeting

Thursday

Morn. Patrol meetings

Aft. Service Project Orientation

Introduction to Arts and Crafts program

Eve. Evening Program

Friday

Morn. Trip to Cuernavaca

Aft. Wide Game

Eve. International Night

Saturday

All day trip to Taxco

Free evening

Sunday

Morn. Mariachi mass or other religious services (optional)

Aft. Service project-Home for Girls

Eve. Evening Program

Cabaña trip planning guide

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Monday

- Morn. Prepare service project
- Aft. Walk to pyramids
- Eve. Mexican Fiesta

16 girls - 2 leaders - arrange any more

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Tuesday

- Morn. Free morning to plan
- Aft. Service Project-Gualupita
- Eve. Closing Ceremony

Wednesday

- Morn. Breakfast
- Departures

Swimming and arts and crafts are ongoing program activities.

SWAPS

Swaps are not a formal part of the Cabaña program but you may wish to make or collect small items that represent your part of the country. A few pins or patches to trade with special friends are nice to bring.

CABAÑA RULES

Rules at Our Cabaña reflect the Mexican culture in which the Cabaña operates. Some cultures may find them somewhat restrictive but basic courtesies, good manners and consideration for others are the same in any culture.

Many things such as kapers etc. at Our Cabaña follow the same pattern as established camps, and make living as a large group much easier. The attached GENERAL INFORMATION sheet will no doubt answer many questions.

MAIL AND TELEPHONE CALL

Have all correspondence sent AIR MAIL. Send nothing but letters as duty on packages is prohibitive. Mail is slow.

Save phone calls for emergencies only. International connections are difficult to obtain and can tie up your group's movement for hours.

CHECKLIST FOR CABAÑA PLANNING

- Council approval and application form returned
- Registration fee sent for each person
- Tourist cards obtained
- Notarized Parent Permissions
- Health cards and immunizations
- First aid kit
- Log Book Plans
- Service Project Plans
- International Night plans
- Christmas Project Plans
- Learn Cabaña and World song ✓
- Learn basic Spanish phrases
- Practice with money exchange
- Hotel/tour reservations confirmed
- Attendance list sent to Our Cabaña *beforehand*
- Transportation arrangements sent to Our Cabaña for arrival

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PARTING WORDS

Like most tourists we predict you too will fall in love with Mexico and its Cabaña charm. And be assured a warm welcome awaits you at Our Cabaña. But do take time to prepare yourselves well for your Mexico adventure. You'll get a lot more out of the trip that way. *adhere to arrival time*

Don't be apprehensive, but do be prepared! Be prepared also to discover the many charming assets of Mexico and her people.

Hasta luego, amigas!