

Email from Ron October 5th

Travel Information

Please note the following:

- We will be flying into Leon (Airport Code BJX, also referred to as either 'Aeropuerto del Bajio' or 'Aeropuerto Internacional de Guanajuato')! (*Leon is the nearest big City to the Airport; 'El Bajio' is the name of the Region of Mexico; Guanajuato is the name of the State. Unfortunately, monitors in Airports may use any of these designations to refer to the same Airport, so be alert for all possibilities.*)

- A reminder: if you have any checked bags, it will be your responsibility to pay for any additional luggage charges.

- We will all be passing through Mexican Immigration & Customs in Leon. If all documents are filled out properly, Immigration & Customs there is a relatively brief process - it's a relatively small Airport, so there aren't usually multiple International flights arriving simultaneously. Mexican Immigration & Customs documents should be distributed during the flight into Leon. To save time & hassle, it is important to fill them out during the flight. For those of you flying in from the Bay Area, Susana & I can provide any assistance necessary. After the Retreat, US Immigration & Customs will be at your arrival Airport.

- We will be spending Friday night (November 3) at the Home of our Friends, Monserrat & Jose Antonio. They live within a half hour of the Airport, toward Leon. Monserrat & Jose Antonio will provide the transportation from the Airport to their Home. Because we are all now arriving mid-afternoon, Monserrat & Jose Antonio are excited to take us to Dinner that evening at a Restaurant in Leon.

- The rest of our Ground Transportation in Mexico will be by pre-arranged Van. The same Van will take us from Monserrat & Jose Antonio's Home to Purisima de Chamacuero (Purisima) on Saturday morning, from Purisima to San Miguel de Allende for our Tuesday day trip, & from Purisima to our B&B in the City of Guanajuato on Thursday afternoon. On the last morning of the Trip, a Driver (Israel) who we always use in Guanajuato will take us from our B&B in Guanajuato back to the Airport.

Expected Weather Conditions, Clothing, Gear, Other

- Normal weather consists of daytime temperatures in the mid-to-high 70's, & nighttime lows in the high 40's. Rain is unusual at that time of year, & humidity should be low. All of the locations that we will be visiting are at elevations between 5,500' & 6,500'. Given the expected weather conditions, pack fairly lightly. Light clothing should be sufficient during the day (I am usually OK wearing shorts during the entire week), but light sweatshirts or sweaters will probably be necessary, when the Sun is down. For walking & hiking, tennis shoes or light hiking boots are sufficient. Otherwise, sandals or other light footwear will be all that you should need. Given the intensity of the Sun, bring a cap or hat of some sort & some sunscreen. Normally at this time of year, insects aren't much of a problem in this area. However, bring some insect repellent, if you'd like. If you are a light sleeper, you may want to bring a pair of ear plugs - there can be barking Dogs nearby at Purisima & party

sounds at night in downtown Guanajuato. The B&B in Guanajuato has a lovely small outdoor swimming pool, solar heated to around 75 degrees - the deck around it has a tremendous view. So, bring a swimsuit, if you'd like to do some swimming there!

- We will not have access to Laundry facilities at Purisima. However, when we arrive at the B&B in Guanajuato, they let us use their washer/dryer (other than on Friday morning, when they need it for their own purposes). So, if needed, you should be able to do some Laundry on either Thursday or Friday afternoon.

- At both Purisima & Casa Zuniga, Hair Dryers will be provided. We will have plenty of mugs, glasses, & water bottles at our disposal. But, if you have a favorite insulated bottle, you may want to bring it. Definitely bring a pair of lightweight binoculars - there will be many opportunities to birdwatch during the trip, including at Purisima & during our guided birdwatching outing near San Miguel de Allende.

- **Good news:** There is no need to transport any Yoga mats or props to the Retreat! We have an ample supply of Mats, Towels, Blankets, Chairs, & Blocks already on-hand at Purisima.

- Line voltage is 120V in Mexico, so no voltage converters are necessary. Receptacles are like US receptacles, but are often 2-slot. So, if you have 3-prong devices, please bring a 3-prong to 2-prong adapter.

- **IMPORTANT:** *Other than at Casa Zuniga B&B in Guanajuato, tap water at all locations should be considered non-potable.* However, you will be provided with as much potable water as you need in your Rooms at Purisima.

Money

- The exchange rate is now **MX\$18.00 (Pesos)** to the **US\$**. You will be able to use typical credit cards at businesses & make ATM withdrawals at a good exchange rate at Mexican banks. When we arrive on the first Friday, we can stop by an ATM in Leon, so that you can get some cash. We can also do so on our Tuesday day trip to San Miguel de Allende. If you have a Bank of America debit card, your fees will be less, if you use Scotiabank ATM's in Mexico - there is a Scotiabank on the main road into San Miguel & another one in Guanajuato. Purchase of Travelers' Checks is not advised, because they are not used much anymore. In this region of Mexico, **US Dollars are generally not accepted for cash transactions.** On the other hand, we do not recommend purchasing Pesos here in the US or at Foreign Exchange outlets in Mexico, because the exchange rates are not good.

- **To avoid the possibility of 'holds' being placed on your cards for 'unusual activity', please be sure to get on-line & set up Travel Notices with your Banks & Credit Card Companies.**

- At Purisima, they will start a tab for any purchases that you make there (alcoholic beverages, souvenir hats, etc.). We'll square up our individual tabs prior to leaving there on Thursday afternoon.

- What we have done in the past is to pool tip money for the Staff at Purisima. We normally each contribute a total of approx. MX\$600 (approx. US\$33 or US\$6.50 per day) to the tip pool. Susana's Cousin, Carmen, who runs the facilities at Purisima, then distributes the pooled tip money to the entire Staff. At Casa Zuniga B&B, we recommend that you leave a tip of approx. MX\$250 in your Room on the last morning of our 2-night stay there. For Restaurant meals, we recommend tipping at 20%. People who work in Restaurants are not well-paid, so they will really appreciate your tips.

Communications

- Susana & I have AT&T calling plans covering text messaging, calling, & data while in Mexico at a flat daily rate. Other carriers have similar plans - they do require that you enroll in them - please do so, or you may end up w/ some hefty charges on your bills. Cell phone coverage during the entire journey is pretty good - the only exception is during a portion of the Van trip from Purisima to Guanajuato on Thursday afternoon. While there is no WiFi at Purisima, there is WiFi at the B&B in Guanajuato.

- While not mandatory, communicating via WhatsApp has been a reliable means for all of us to stay in contact both pre-Trip & at various points during the Trip. Many of you have already downloaded WhatsApp, & I can create a **WhatsApp Group** called '**Mexico Viniyoga Retreat #5**'. It would be great, if everyone can download WhatsApp - I'll then add you to that Group.

Other

- For those of you who have traveled to resort areas in Mexico, you may be accustomed to bartering for any purchases. Please note that, in all of the places that we will be visiting, this is not a typical practice in shops. For purchases made from street vendors, you may be able to negotiate pricing. For purchases made in stores, bartering is neither customary nor expected.

- Purisima is located about halfway in-between Celaya (a city of 500,000) & San Miguel (a city of nearly 200,000). So, while Purisima is in a beautiful rural setting (the nearby towns of Comonfort & Neutla are much smaller than Celaya & San Miguel), in the event of any emergency, amenities are always within 30-35 minutes. Carmen lives in Celaya - if she is not on-premises, we can reach her at any time. If anyone forgets to bring anything, or needs something from 'the big city', Carmen can usually pick something up in Celaya, & bring it the next day.

- Please let everyone know that, during the entire trip, we will be on Mexican Standard Time. *[Mexico no longer observes Daylight Savings Time, &, therefore, does not change their clocks. To complicate things, the US changes clocks **during** our Trip - US clocks change on Sunday, November 5. So, when we land in Leon, the time difference to US West Coast Time will only be 1 hour. But, in the middle of the second night, the US will change to Standard Time, restoring the typical 2-hour time difference between Mexico & the US West Coast.]*

Contact Information

Here are some important numbers to add to your Contacts & to give to Family and/or Friends. :

Susana's cell phone number (503) 706-5733

Ron's cell phone number (503) 880-5863

Purisima de Chamacuero landline 011 52 (461) 169-8631

Purisima de Chamacuero cell #1 011 52 (461) 180-8340 (this is Susana's Uncle Pepe's phone)

Purisima de Chamacuero cell #2 011 52 (461) 180-8341 (this is Susana's Cousin Carmen's phone)

Casa Zuniga B&B (Guanajuato) 011 52 (461) 612-0846 (Owners are Rick & Carmen Zuniga)

Please let us know, if you think of any other questions. We are very excited that you are all coming to the Viniyoga Retreat!

Ron & Susana

Email from Ron October 20th

Now, just 2 weeks until our departure! Here is my traditional 'I forgot to mention a couple of other items' second pre-trip information bulletin:

Other Item to Bring

It is a good idea to have a **small flashlight** to use at Purisima de Chamacuero. Either early in the morning, if you want to join us for Sunrise Coffee on the Roof of Casa de Adobe (always a popular activity!), or after Dinner, if we end up hanging out & talking, until after dark, whether you're staying in the Suites or up at Casa de Adobe, you might find walking a bit easier, if you have a small flashlight. Nothing big - just one of those mini-ones.

Clarification Regarding Friday, November 3 / Saturday, November 4

This is the first time that Flight Schedules have resulted in departure from the US on Friday in lieu of Saturday. As you know, we will all be staying at our Friends' (Montserrat & Jose Antonio) Home near the Airport on Friday night. This has resulted in the following:

- An extra night of Lodging (no charge).
- An extra Dinner in Leon. Monserrat & Jose Antonio will take us to a Restaurant in Leon that they think that we'll all enjoy. Like the handful of other Restaurant Meals on the Trip, this cost of this Meal will be paid by each Participant. By US standards, the Restaurant is moderately priced.
- An extra Breakfast at Monserrat & Jose Antonio's Home - Monserrat is very excited to feed us all that Saturday morning, & there will be no charge for this Meal.

A Note About COVID

- This is our 6th Yoga Retreat Group, but our first one since the Pandemic.
- To the best of our knowledge, there has not been a significant spike in COVID in Central Mexico (or anywhere in Mexico that we know of).
- However, Susana & I have been pretty cautious throughout the Pandemic & in the aftermath. No matter where we are, Susana & I are still using masks in Airports, on Airplanes, in closed-in Shops, in Restrooms, & in other tightly-confined, poorly-ventilated spaces. Obviously, use your own judgment, but bring some masks. With the expected weather conditions, & the abundance of our activities taking place either outdoors or in bigger open spaces, we expect to exposure to be minimal. That said, we know of so many people who have returned recently from both Domestic & International Travel who have contracted something. We intend to remain cautious.
- Susana will be getting the new COVID Vaccine about a week before our Trip. We'd have done it sooner, but its availability around here has been spotty.

Communications - A Reminder

- Please confirm when you have downloaded WhatsApp. I will then create the WhatsApp Group called 'Mexico Viniyoga Retreat #5', & add you to the Group. If you need help adding WhatsApp to your phone & setting it up, please let us know.

Once again, here are some important numbers to add to your Contacts & to give to Family and/or Friends. :

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Please let us know, if you think of any other questions. Looking forward to seeing everyone on Friday, November 3!

Ron & Susana