

Information About Cozumel Project Logistics and Gear

This document is a supplement to the **Gear List** and is designed to help you make decisions about equipment and clothing that you probably will need/want in the field and lab. We will not be far from town, so you should be able to get things you forget or decide that you need, but it's easier and cheaper in the long run if you plan ahead. Items on the **Gear List** that are indicated with a “ ” are essential; unchecked items are at your discretion. Blank spaces are for you to add your own items. A discussion of gear and clothing considerations is given below.

Clothing

In case you didn't guess, it will be hot in Cozumel (average highs in the low to mid 90° range, and lows in the 70s) and humid (June marks the beginning of the rainy season). Temperature can drop temporarily if a storm comes through. Furthermore, you will get chilled after being under water for several hours a day. In particular, it can be very cold sitting in an open speeding boat in a rainsquall after surfacing from a long dive. Bring a raincoat and sweatshirt for warmth.

Dress in Cozumel is informal. Most of the time we will be in swimsuits, shorts, and t-shirts during the day. Dress shorts, skirts, or comfortable summer dresses, and sandals are appropriate wear for town. Lightweight, long pants and long-sleeved shirts will lessen the chance of sunburn (and eventual skin cancer) and mosquito bites. One type of pants that works particularly well is the kind that has zip-off legs so that they also double as shorts. These are commonly made from a synthetic material that dries quickly and is easy to wash. You should probably have one nice set of clothes for travel and special occasions in town. A hat with a brim is absolutely necessary; preferably one that will not blow off your head while traveling at 30 miles per hour in an open boat. If you are in the market for buying a watch, there are a number of relatively inexpensive sports watches that are water resistant to 100 meters and are suitable for diving. An umbrella is convenient for walking in town when it is too hot for a raincoat. June and July in Beloit also is typically hot and humid, but the buildings can be quite cool, so plan accordingly.

Documents & Money

Everyone needs to bring either 1) a passport, or 2) legal documents for entering Mexico and returning to the US. This is very important. Make sure that you are also carrying copies of these documents in other bags, and that you leave copies with family or friends who you could contact from Mexico. In addition to identity papers, you should also bring medical insurance information. You will not need a lot of money in Mexico, but you may want to purchase small items or gifts. There are several ATM's in town. These dispense Mexican Pesos and US Dollars. Credit cards are accepted at most larger businesses. You will likely be able to cash travelers checks at banks and many businesses. If you bring cash or travelers checks, you may want to avoid bringing large denominations because these are sometimes difficult to cash and you likely be given change in pesos. For security, you may want to carry your important papers and money on your person at all times while traveling and in town; a money belt or small hip pack is ideal for this.

Camp Gear

In Cozumel, housing will be luxurious by field standards, but a bit cozy. Hotels are very expensive and we would rather use our limited funds for diving. There will be 4 students in each of two apartment units. Each unit has efficiency-style cooking facilities. Therefore, we will buy food at local grocery stores and fix our own breakfasts and lunches. For dinner, we probably will eat out some of the time and cook other times. The women's unit has two double beds. The men's unit has a king-size bed and a single. If you do the math, you'll figure out that there are not enough beds for everyone to have their own bed. Depending on how many of you are comfortable sharing a bed, some of you will have to be on the floor and will need a sleeping pad and sheet (or light weight sleeping bag). We will figure out the details when we arrive, but if you all bring a pad and sheet it will give us the greatest flexibility. We do not know the exact location of the housing in Beloit, but it will be on the Beloit College campus and will either be in dorm rooms or a house, depending on what is available. You will all have your own bed for this portion of the project.

Photography

You may want to bring a camera and film. Film is widely available in Cozumel. If you bring a digital camera, make sure that you bring the necessary memory cards and batteries because these may not be available in Cozumel. We will have professional quality underwater photographic equipment for the project, which you all will have an opportunity to use. However some of you may want to bring your own underwater camera. There are a number of relatively inexpensive one-time-use underwater cameras available. Many of these are rated to a depth of only 15 feet and are not well suited for diving. However, there are now some relatively inexpensive (<\$30) underwater cameras that are good to a depth of about 45 feet. Check you local dive shop for cameras with the deeper ratings.

Field Gear

You will want a small daypack for travel, for carrying equipment on dive days, and for errands in town. In addition, you will need a variety of pencils, colored pencils, and pens. You will also likely want a pocketknife, calculator, and handlens.

Computer & Electronics Equipment

Computer equipment are included on the list for information purposes only; it is not necessary that you bring your own computer. In Beloit there will be desktop computers available. In Cozumel we will have several laptop computers. These will be used for managing and interpreting data. The project laptops will not have internet access in Cozumel, but there are many internet cafés in town for e-mail and for using the worldwide web. If you will be traveling with a digital camera, you may want to bring a laptop computer for downloading pictures.

Electricity in Cozumel is 110 volt/60 cycles. However, the actual output is quite variable, ranging from less than 115 to more than 135 volts. This can cause problems with some electronics, particularly rechargers. You may want to bring a voltage converter with you. Plugs are two-pronged like those in the US, but many outlets do not accept modern plugs that have one wide pin and one narrow one; you may need to bring an adapter for devices with these types of plugs.

Personal/First Aid

The list of personal supplies is lengthy, but by no means comprehensive. It is designed to help you plan. In addition to the obvious personal hygiene items, there are several other items that are absolutely essential.

Although it is possible to buy most brand name toiletry items in Cozumel, it is likely that you will not be able to find prescription medications or specialty items. If you wear glasses or contacts, make sure that you have back-ups; you might also bring a copy of your prescription just in case. Plan ahead and divide essential medications into several different bags in case of loss or theft. We will be in the sun and on the water a lot, so it is very important that you bring sunscreen. Do not bother with lotions with low SPF ratings; get one with a SPF rating of at least 30. For the same reasons, you will also need a good lip balm with SPF and good sunglasses. Insects are not a serious problem in Cozumel, however it is not uncommon to experience a few mosquito bites at dusk so you should bring a small bottle of insect repellent. Many of these items can be purchased in Cozumel, but they are more expensive. Cuts can become easily infected, so you should have a selection of band-aids, anti-biotic ointment, and some hydrocortisone. If you are prone to motion sickness, you should bring some motion sickness meds. Other items on the list are optional and at your own preference.

Cook Gear

Although there will be minimal cooking and eating utensils in Cozumel, it would be helpful if everyone brings a small Tupperware-type container (with lid), a fork, knife, and spoon (get a container just large enough to accommodate your utensils for easy transport and storage). You will also need a water bottle. Tap water in Mexico is generally not safe for drinking, so we will need to purchase or filter all of our water. If you have a water filter, bring it to save money and trips to the store.

Miscellaneous

The most ideal way to transport all your gear and clothing will be in a large duffle bag, or two smaller duffles. Suitcases take up a lot of room, whereas duffle bags and soft backpacks can be stuffed under beds in small out-of-way spaces. Keep in mind that space will be at a premium in our rooms in Cozumel, so don't bring more than you really need.

There are public laundry facilities in town, but it is more efficient (who wants to spend two hours in a hot laundromat anyway!) to hand wash clothes every day or so. Most of the time we will be in a bathing suit, so our clothing needs will be minimal. If you plan to do some hand washing, you might consider bringing some cord, clothespins, and detergent. You will also likely need some Ziploc bags for organizing and transporting your gear (e.g., use Ziplocs to waterproof your camera on the boat!).

Dive Gear

DO NOT FORGET TO BRING YOUR OPEN WATER CERTIFICATION CARD. Make copies of the card, leave a copy with friends or family, and bring copies with you. Most of you probably had to purchase a mask, fins, and snorkel for your Open Water Dive Course. By now you should have a pretty good idea how well this equipment works (e.g., does the mask fit properly, or does it leak). If any of the gear were giving you problems, replace it now. There are lots of dive shops in Cozumel, but they tend to be more expensive and we may not have time for a lot of shopping in the first few days of the project. The dive operator will provide BCD's, regulators, weight belts, and wetsuits. If your fins are open-heel and require booties, you need to bring your own booties; these are not available from the dive operator. Actually, having a pair of booties is a good idea for going to and from the boat, and in and out of the water, because there is a lot of coral around the beaches and it is easy to get cut. You should also bring a dive log. Each of your open water certification dives should have been logged and signed by the instructor; this is a record of your diving experience and is required by some dive operators before they will give you tanks. We will log all dives while in Cozumel. You do not need a dive

computer, but if you have one or can easily borrow one, bring it along. Similarly, you will not need a dive light, but if you have one, bring it. It is convenient to have a mesh gear bag for carrying dive gear to and from the boat, but this is not essential; the dive shop is right on the water and a small daypack will suffice for mask fins, and snorkel. You might want to consider bringing a small dry bag for keeping valuables dry on the boat. Dive gloves are not necessary and are not permitted within the marine park; you shouldn't be touching the reef anyway. If you think that you might need gloves, a pair of inexpensive garden gloves will do. If you experienced sinus problems on your open water dives, you might consider bringing some decongestants (e.g., Sudafed, Walfed, or Actifed). For general info about Cozumel and dive sites in Cozumel, you might consider getting the paperback book "Diving Cozumel" by Steve Rosenberg (Aqua Quest Publications).

Dive Insurance

In the unlikely case of accident and the need for recompression treatment, there are two hyperbaric chambers in Cozumel. See the project web page for links. You should consider joining DAN (Divers Alert Network). The membership is relatively inexpensive (about \$29 per year). As a member you will have access to DAN's 24-hour emergency number to provide divers and physicians with medical advice on treating diving related injuries. DAN also provides emergency evacuation from any destination for most medical problems. It is also possible to purchase additional insurance coverage from DAN to cover diving related injuries, equipment loss, and travel expenses. You should check with your family insurance provider to make sure that diving related accidents are covered under your current plan. In any case, you may want to purchase additional coverage from DAN. See the project web page for a link to the DAN website.