

SEEK THE SUN 2018
Winter Yoga Retreat with Linda Meacci
The Villas on Troncones Beach (“Las Villas”) • Troncones, Mexico
January 20 – 27, 2018

Information/Prep Sheet

SUGGESTED CLOTHING and ACCESSORIES

Pack what you would normally pack for a warm weather beach vacation, plus comfortable clothes to practice yoga in. Here are a few items to consider:

1. **Cool-weather clothes** (sweater, fleece top, fleece pants, socks, etc.) – Even though highs are mostly in the 80s and lows around 70, it can sometimes feel a bit chilly in the early morning or late evening.
2. **Swimwear**
3. **Water shoes or sandals**
4. **Good walking shoes or sneakers**, or decent trail shoes, for optional hiking activities
5. **Lightweight long pants** for walking in the woods (although shorts may be okay for this, too)
6. **Quick-dry shirt and shorts**, especially if you want to go kayaking
7. **Hat or sun visor**
8. **Sunglasses**
9. **Small daypack** for optional activities such as hiking, kayaking, birdwatching, etc.
10. **Sunscreen**: Please consider bringing *waterproof/sweatproof* sunscreen with eco-friendly ingredients to minimize harm to fish, plants and water. Also, keep in mind the TSA restrictions for liquids in your luggage: Tubes/bottles bigger than 3.4 fluid ounces (100mL) must be put in your *checked* luggage. I’m told Neutrogena has a *solid sunscreen*, like a deodorant stick, which can be carried on the plane.
11. **Water Bottle**: There is a water cooler in each villa with safe drinking water. You can fill your own water bottle throughout the day as needed.
12. **Mosquito repellent** (although we really haven’t experienced any bug problems in past years). This is also available at the local pharmacy (la farmacia) in Troncones.
13. **Flashlight or headlamp** (helpful when walking to/from town or on the beach after dark)
14. **Warding off intestinal distress** – Although it’s been fairly rare on our past Mexico retreats, we have on occasion had individuals react to something they ate or drank and wind up with nausea and/or diarrhea. To address this potential concern, we offer two recommendations:
 - (a) **Take probiotics preemptively** – Begin taking a daily probiotic supplement a week (or more) *before the trip*, and continue taking it during the trip, to boost the good flora in the digestive tract. Look for one with *Saccharomyces boulardii* (e.g., Primal Defense Ultra by Garden of Life).
 - (b) **Bring your own proven remedies** – Bring supplements and over-the-counter remedies that normally work for you to fight diarrhea or nausea (Tums, Pepto-Bismol, cold/anti-viral, etc.).

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS and IDENTIFICATION

1. **Passport:** A passport is required to enter Mexico.
2. **Copy of Passport:** Bring a copy of the picture/ID page of your passport in case you lose your passport. Keep the copy in a safe place separate from your passport.
3. **Additional ID:** It is recommended that you bring additional photo ID, such as a driver's license.
4. **Immigration Slip:** Save the slip you receive upon arrival in Mexico. You will need it when you leave.

MONEY and CREDIT CARDS

1. Should I plan on using Credit Cards or Cash?

Answer: *Cash*. For the most part, plan on using *cash* in Troncones, as only a few places accept credit cards. (Even in the larger cities of Zihuatanejo and Ixtapa, cash is preferred.)

If you do plan to use a credit card, please keep the following in mind:

- **Notify your credit card company:** Be sure to let your credit card company know that you will be travelling to Mexico, so your card doesn't get blocked when you use it for the first time. (Contact your card company *before* you leave the U.S.) **This also applies to your ATM card.**
- **Preferred cards:** VISA and MasterCard are more widely accepted than American Express.

2. Should I use U.S. Dollars or Mexican Pesos?

- a. U.S. dollars are accepted everywhere, although paying in pesos is usually a better deal. You will generally get a better exchange rate by withdrawing pesos from an ATM than you would by paying U.S. dollars to a merchant.
- b. If you plan on using U.S. dollars, use small bills (20s or smaller) for smaller purchases, as vendors often don't have much U.S. currency on hand to make change. You may sometimes receive your change in pesos.

3. The Best Way to Get Pesos? Use an ATM (at the airport).

- a. *ATM vs. Currency Exchange:* ATMs are generally the best way to get pesos, as they almost always have a better exchange rate than the currency exchanges.
- b. *Currency Exchange:* If you don't have an ATM card, there is a currency exchange kiosk in the Zihuatanejo airport where you can buy pesos upon your arrival.
- c. *Use an ATM at the airport:* There is just a single ATM in Troncones and, as of last year (January 2017), it charged a higher transaction fee than the airport ATMs and it sometimes ran out cash. Therefore, we suggest you get pesos at one of the airport ATMs upon your arrival in Zihuatanejo. You can then use the Troncones ATM as a backup later in the week.
- d. *PIN number:* You will need to know your PIN number to use a credit card or debit card at an ATM (just a reminder for those of you who don't use the ATM very often).
- e. *Notify your bank:* Before you leave home, tell your bank you are traveling internationally and verify that your ATM card will work (so the card doesn't get blocked when you use it).

YOGA-RELATED ITEMS

1. **Yoga Props:** Blocks, straps, blankets, and bolsters **will be** provided by Las Villas.
2. **Yoga Mats:** Mats **will be** provided, but you may bring your own if you'd like. Some people like to travel with a lightweight travel mat that can be placed on top of a provided mat.
3. **Journal:** Linda will be suggesting some writing exercises throughout the week, and she will provide small journals for this purpose. Please bring one or two good pens (or pencils, if you like to draw). Also, if you have your own personal journal, please feel free to bring it along.
4. **Yoga Space:** We will practice on an open-air platform with ocean view, and also on the beach.

LAS VILLAS: AMENITIES, SERVICE and TIPPING

Gratuities for Las Villas staff: Tips for Las Villas staff (housekeeping, kitchen/dining, and facilities) are **not** included in the retreat fee, and are at your discretion. A tip basket will be put out at the end of the week (during our Friday night dinner), if you wish to contribute. Suggested tip is \$50-65 (1,000-1,300 pesos) per guest.

Las Villas Amenities:

1. **Equipped Kitchens:** Each villa has an equipped, shared kitchen.
2. **Coffee and Tea:** There is a coffee maker in each villa. Coffee and teas will be provided, but you are welcome to bring your own if you have a particular type you like. Also, Café Pacifico (across the street from Las Villas) has excellent coffee.
3. **Drinking Water:** Each villa has a water cooler with safe drinking water. Bring a refillable bottle.
4. **Shampoo and Soap** are provided in each bathroom.
5. **Beach/Pool Towels** are provided.
6. **Wifi/Internet:** There is wifi Internet access at Las Villas, but the signal can be spotty at times.
7. **Toilets:** Due to sensitive septic systems in Troncones, please do not put any toilet paper, tampons, wipes, etc. in the toilet. Please use the trash can for all used toilet paper, etc.
8. **Laundry:** There are no laundry facilities at Las Villas. There is a laundromat in town.
9. **Housekeeping Service:** Las Villas strives to be eco-conscious. In the interest of water and energy conservation, sheets and towels will be changed out only if requested. Light housekeeping (making the beds, emptying the trash, and light sweeping) will be done daily except for Sunday.
10. **Please use coasters and cutting boards:** Salt, lime and water can stain the polished concrete countertops and wooden furniture surfaces. **Note:** *Please do not use the wooden stovetop cover as a cutting board.*

MEALS

The meals listed below are included in your retreat fee, and most will be served on site at Las Villas.

Note: You are free to make other arrangements for your meals or to dine privately whenever you wish.

The following meals will be provided:

- Saturday, Jan 20 (first day of retreat)
 - **Welcome Dinner** at 6:30 PM (after the 5 PM Welcome Yoga Practice).
- Daily Sunday, Jan 21, through Friday, Jan 26:
 - **Brunch** at about 11 AM, after mid-morning yoga
 - **Dinner** at about 6:30 PM
 - **Dinners at Local Restaurants** – We will enjoy one or two group dinners at local restaurants. The cost of these meals (and the gratuity on the meal) is included in your retreat fee. ***Note:** For restaurant meals, your beverage tab (both alcoholic and non-alcoholic) will be your responsibility.*
- Saturday, Jan 27 (departure day)
 - **Breakfast** (time TBD).

Beverages: Juices and other non-alcoholic beverages will be provided with meals served at Las Villas. Alcoholic beverages are BYOB (there is a liquor store in town).

Breakfast (on your own): In lieu of breakfast and lunch, a hardy brunch is provided at about 11 AM, upon completion of the morning yoga sessions. If you would like something earlier in the morning, we will be happy to point you in the direction of the local grocery stores so you can stock up on yogurt, avocados, bread, fruit, eggs, etc. to prepare on your own. Also, Café Pacifico (across the street from Las Villas) opens at 7 AM and serves great coffee and light breakfast items.

Snacks on your own: Keep in mind that each villa has a fully equipped kitchen, so you are free to prepare your own snacks or light meals as you wish. In addition, there are a number of very good local restaurants in town, as well as a market or two, just a short walk from Las Villas.

Local Fruit Truck: The fruit truck comes through town several times during the week with fresh produce. We'll try to let you know when it comes through, so you can go out to the street and purchase some great fresh fruit and vegetables. Listen for the truck's bell and loudspeaker announcement!

OTHER TRAVEL CONSIDERATIONS

1. **Transport from Ixtapa/Zihuatanejo Airport:** We have arranged drivers to pick you up at the airport upon arrival. Cost will be approx. 2,200 pesos (about \$120 USD) plus tip for an 8-passenger van and 1,100 pesos (about \$60 USD) plus tip for a 4-passenger car. These amounts are *per vehicle*, to be split among all passengers. You can pay the driver directly upon arrival at your destination in Troncones. An email with more details will be sent out the week of January 15.

Note: *Please consider tipping well, as this trip takes the driver out of circulation longer than average.*

2. **Travel Delays and/or Updates:** If you are delayed in transit, please contact:

- *Primary:* Bob Bishop at +1 (412) 855-6375 (mobile phone – call or text)
- *Back-up:* Linda Meacci at +1 (412) 427-4781 (mobile phone – call or text)

Note: *Bob and Linda will also try to check your flight status online throughout the day.*

3. **Address/Directions for The Villas on Troncones Beach (Las Villas):**

- *Address:* There is no numbered street address for Las Villas. It is located on Avenue de Playa, two doors down from Present Moment Retreat. The locals, especially drivers, should know “Las Villas” and should know how to get there. If not, use the directions below.
- *Directions:* Starting at the “T” intersection at the center of town in Troncones, Las Villas is about 3/4 km north of the “T,” about 100 meters north of Present Moment Retreat, and just past and across the street from Café Pacifico.

4. **Cell Phone Service:** If you are going to bring a cell phone, let your service provider know you are going to Mexico, and find out the details for calling back home and also for making calls within Mexico. There is good reception for AT&T and Verizon at Las Villas (not sure about other carriers).

5. **“WhatsApp” – Texting without an International Phone Plan:** If you don’t have an international texting plan on your phone, or you choose not to activate your phone for Mexico, you can still text with someone back home in the U.S. by using your phone as a wifi device. You can do this by downloading and installing the free app called “WhatsApp.”

WhatsApp allows you to send and receive text messages over a wifi Internet connection, without being connected to a mobile phone network. So you can use your phone to send and receive texts—both within Mexico and with folks back home in the states—without an international text or data plan. All you need is a wifi connection, which is available at Las Villas. *Just be sure the person on the other end is using WhatsApp, too.* WhatsApp works on both wifi and wireless phone networks.

6. **Electrical Outlets and Voltage:** Same as in the U.S. No need for plug adapters or voltage converters.

7. **Travel Insurance:** Travel insurance can cover medical costs, trip interruption, lost luggage, and more. *Trip Advisor* (<http://blog.tripadvisor.com/2015/11/09/everything-you-need-to-know-about-travel-insurance/>) and *Rick Steves* (<https://www.ricksteves.com/travel-tips/trip-planning/travel-insurance>) are good sources that explain how travel insurance works, to help you decide whether/how to buy it.