

Guanajuato Writing
Retreat 2021
Writing from Our Depth

Hello Writers!

In light of the ever-changing COVID-19 situation, I want to provide information on what we (myself and Liz Mapelli, owner of the beautiful Florecer Casitas where we will be staying) are doing to ensure the safety of all for the upcoming Guanajuato Writers' Retreat.

We will have the entire Florecer Casitas compound to ourselves, so we can easily create a Writing Retreat pod. When we are within the grounds, we will be safely isolated. Most of our activities outside the compound will be outside and in the open air.

Lodging is double occupancy in the smaller casitas; there is also a "Big House" with 2 double-occupancy rooms. The Big House, where we will share some meals and gather for end-of-day conversation and sharing of the day's writing, has easy access to move from indoor to outdoor spaces, ample windows and high ceilings for healthy air flow.

Suggested Travel precautions to start now:

As you plan to attend, it will be important for all of us to be vigilant about our health and hygiene. We want all of our retreat participants -- and our families back home -- to stay healthy.

Please take precautions now to prevent exposure to coronavirus before the trip.

- If you haven't already, please strongly consider getting a COVID-19 vaccine (both doses) and *next fall's* flu shot so you're protected from both COVID and the regular flu virus.
- Mexico, and your airline, may require proof of a negative COVID-19 test result within a short period of time before arrival. Stay alert to these requirements, and know in advance where you will go for your test. Once tested, limit exposure and activities to make sure you don't pick up the virus after being tested.
- Please observe the highest level of hygiene and travel precautions in airports and on planes. Basic precautions include: bring wipes and sanitizer gel for the airport/plane; wear a mask at all times; refrain from touching your face or the mask. There may be changes in what airlines offer for food and drink, and you may notice quite a change from pre-COVID airline options.
- If you live in (or will be visiting, prior to the Retreat) a COVID-19 hotspot, please get tested beforehand (and limit exposure and activities once you've been tested to make sure you don't pick up the virus after).
- Please create a personal contingency plan, which includes trip insurance with emergency medical options in the unlikely event something happens to cause illness or injury. For

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ultimate preparedness, have a plan for what would happen if for some reason you might have to stay in Mexico for a time. (In addition to staying on in Guanajuato and exploring every nook and cranny of the stone alleyways and resting at the end of the day with a delicious margarita).

- You may wish to enroll in the State Department's STEP program (<https://step.state.gov/step/>). This provides travel alerts and gives information about you to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate nearest to our destination.
- Please be aware that although we are here to make your trip more pleasant, ultimately you travel at your own risk. If you have underlying health conditions that make exposure exceptionally risky for you, you may wish to wait for another year's retreat.

Suggestions of items to bring:

Zinc lozenges, protective face masks, an anti-mucus agent like mucinex, powerful cough syrup, cough drops.

Group Contingency plans:

As a contingency for uncertain times, we are preparing for the possibility that the retreat may need to be postponed or cancelled, for the safety of all. With such a fluid situation, we will remain flexible and protective of guests' well-being, as well as mindful of risks of travel.

In addition to offering guidance on our own individual protections, we will communicate a collective group contingency plan prior to the trip. We want the entire group to be comfortable with the plan and collective actions, so please offer your feedback and suggestions, especially if you've traveled under similar conditions or are in the medical field.

Local resources for us while in Mexico:

Guanajuato has a large US/Canadian expat community. It has several medical and dental care options that provide excellent and modern care (<https://www.expatsinmexico.com/guanajuato-healthcare/>).

The publicly owned Hospital General de Guanajuato is the city's general hospital. The hospital provides consultation services, outpatient surgery, X-rays and has various laboratories to process blood work as well as other medical tests and samples. Some other highly recommended private and public hospitals and clinics in the area are Centro Médico la Presa, Clinica Hospital Guanajuato ISSSTE and Centro de Salud Guanajuato.

In cases like this, transparency is important. We plan to include you in our thought processes. We would love to hear your thoughts on these precautions.

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Muchas gracias,

Bonnie Wolkenstein

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