

IPADE Mexico City Trip-Winter Break 2008

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So there I was riding on the Primera Plus (a travel bus) on my way to Mexico City watching “Stardust” in Spanish. I had spent the previous two weeks mostly in the astounding state of Guanajuato (a few hours north of Mexico City). I was privileged to see the many breathtakingly stunning cities of Mexico including Celaya, Guanajuato, Querétaro, Leon, San Miguel, Guadalajara and a pleasurable road trip to the coastal resort city, Puerto Vallarta overlooking the Pacific sunset. With a lot of help from my friends, I was put on the 10:30 pm ride to Mexico City. I arrived in my hotel room at the Presidente InterContinental Hotel a little after 2 am and my roommate woke up, but was relieved to see I had finally made it safely all in one piece. We said good night and I took in a little shut eye before the 6:30 am wakeup.

Monday, we began the morning with a fresh new start everyone crisp and shining. Once we were all accounted for, we took the luxurious tour bus to IPADE. We arrived in IPADE and immediately developed a line awaiting our instruction binders and name tags for the week. As we were waiting in line, the IPADE students came strolling in and I was fortunate enough to be in the back of the line and one of the first to meet and greet our IPADE amigos and amigas (friends). Right from the very beginning they were all smiles inviting us to IPADE like we were close family that had just been gone for a few years. It was such a remarkably warm welcoming.

We began by dining with our team of 11 students (10 teams total), our team consisted of 8 IPADE students and 3 University of Illinois MBA students, where we had a rich and delicious breakfast. Then we commenced the introductory in the IPADE alumna hall welcomed by Alfonso Bolio Arciniega. Oscar Carbonell gave the program overview, and later Juan Carlos Nunez spoke to us on Mexican economic models followed by a sophisticated coffee/soda break. The next speech was “Political decisions and their impact on Mexican enterprises” by Agustin Llamas. In the afternoon, we had a fascinating talk entitled “PCD (Papel, Carton y Derivados), a fast growth in the Mexican market” by Arturo Ledesma. One of his points was to use “common sense” which I agree that it can be easily overlooked in the complexities of business.



Later we were hosted by our IPADE friends who showed us the heart of Mexico City. Our first visit was the historical “La Casa de los Azulejos” (The House of Tiles) built in the 16th century. Here we had lunch in the flagstaff store of “Sanborns” owned by Carlos Slim Helu, the richest person in Mexico and one of the richest people in the world. In addition “Sanborns” is the most important restaurant in Latin America, which includes a chain of department stores where the customer can find almost anything from aspirin to a luxury watch. Then we were shown the Cathe-

dral, the Palacio Nacional and the Templo Mayor (an Aztec sacred site). We were also shown the Bellas Artes Museum where we admired the timeless art pieces of Diego Rivera. We were finally taken to the Sears Building that overlooked the city over coffee and conversation in Spanish, English and a little “Spanglish”. Then we were taken back to our amazing hotel, the Presidente Inter-Continental Hotel, one of the finest hotels in all of Mexico City for a good night’s rest.

Tuesday morning, we awoke in good spirits and began with an interesting speech by Carlos Gomez an executive of Sport City. Next, a presentation was given by an executive of Cinepolis, one of the major cinema chains in Mexico in which I had the pleasure to view the film “Morirse esta en hebreo” (“My Mexican Shiva”) in one of Guanajuato’s theatre. Then we were off on a cultural visit to the National Museum of Anthropology. The National Museum of Anthropology was filled with enlightening art and artifacts



including exhibits from the Mayan (Classic period from 300 to 900 AC) and Aztec (Late Post classic period from 1250 to 1521 AC) periods. Two prominent artifacts displayed there are The Sun of the Stone commonly known as the Aztec Calendar and the Xochipilli Statue (16th century Aztec statue).

Subsequently, we went back to IPADE to work on our presentation for a few hours. After we had finished, my fellow University of Illinois MBA associates and I decided to venture the metro for our journey back to the hotel. The little odyssey was a lot of fun and a grand experience to see the hard working people of Mexico City bustling throughout the city. We arrived back at our hotel with the rest of the evening so we decided to stroll around Polanco, the area by the hotel which happened to be the nicest area in Mexico City. We first partook on rich coffee at a nice quaint café and ending the night with delectable food at a nice restaurant in Polanco.

Wednesday would be filled with excitement and escapade. The morning started once again with our chipper selves riding the comfy tour bus to IPADE followed by more amazing breakfast and conversation. Then Rodolfo Bermejo an executive spoke to us on Entertainment with Social Responsibility in Mexico. Rodolfo Bermejo being an expert of the entertainment business had the most entertaining speech. He told us a few hilarious jokes, vivid stories and closed with his current work introducing a channel specifically focused on “good” entertainment filled with education and family value entertainment.

Later we went back to listen to Carlos Moctezuma, an executive for HOMEX. This was a special lecture for me personally because HOMEX carries such a heavy social interest in Mexico. Basically, the company builds affordable homes for entry-level consumers. On my journey throughout



the previous two weeks, I was able to observe work accomplished by HOMEX. And I could see that HOMEX is a key element of setting a positive standard affecting the lives of several Mexican families meanwhile spurring the Mexican economy not just through the building of homes, but creating needed infrastructure and adult education.

Next was a case study by Mario Zavala on the corporation, CEMEX. It was an inquisitive time similar to our case studies at the University of Illinois MBA program. After the case study,

we left IPADE to see CEMEX from a first-hand experience. First, we toured the production side of CEMEX where CEMEX's product is produced, loaded and transferred throughout Mexico City. Then we toured the headquarters and logistic side of CEMEX where all the trucks of Mexico City are coordinated. And finally, we toured the R&D portion of CEMEX where many new innovations are being tested and developed. It was a striking, all-around tour of CEMEX where we were given the opportunity to see what CEMEX really does and the major role CEMEX plays in the infrastructure of Mexico and its fast growing economy. After our tour, we hungrily made it back to IPADE and feasted upon all the countless flavors of Mexican cuisine at a Mexican food tasting where we had dishes like mole con pollo. Mole is a tasty chocolate sauce usually mixed with savored chicken and all under the melody of a vibrant Mariachi band.

Our Thursday began with the morning speech given by Ricardo Murcio on Mexican Management Psychology, a very interested topic which went into explaining why humans have certain behavior patterns given their environment and he went further into how that culture is developed and influenced by that environment. The lecture was very interesting and it allowed our IPADE and University of Illinois MBA students to better understand each other and it left us with an even deeper understanding of each other.

Then the CEO of Am-Pm gave us a speech. Am-Pm is a delivery service substituting the services of the Mexican Postal Service much like that of FedEx, but more on a regional and local level in Mexico. It was very interesting to hear the evolution of Am-Pm of how a small company could develop and eventually become a leader in the market.

Then the last speech of the day was given by Gerardo Rojas, an executive of Starbucks coffee in Mexico. He offered



many interesting facts of the growth and development of the Starbucks market in Mexico. Most notable fact, there are almost 200 Starbucks now in Mexico. We were given time to work on our future presentation for the next day. After the presentation preparations, Thursday evening was filled with a night at Mamba Rumba, a great salsa dance club where most of the IPADE and University of Illinois MBA students gathered for an eventful night of salsa dancing.

The week had come and went so fast-- filled with several unforgettable memories to last a lifetime: rich and delicious food, great people and amazing experiences. We were pleased to see that Dean Mary Miller, Associate Dean of the University of Illinois MBA program, was able to share our last day with us. It began with a superb breakfast and afterward we were on our way to the Grupo Modelo Tour. Grupo Modelo is a major brewing company located in Mexico. On the tour, we toured the distillation and production plants of the Modelo beers. Later, we were fortunate enough to taste a sample of the fresh brews offered by Grupo Modelo like Corona and one of my favorites, Negro Modelo, accompanied by an array of all the other Modelo brews.

Later in the afternoon, we ended our journey with a final presentation given by us, the students. The presentations comprised of an overview of the restaurant that our teams visited on Monday combined with a synopsis of our experiences of the week. Many thanks and appreciation was given to the never-ending generosity that was so graciously given by our hosts, the IPADE family. One last note, many personal thanks from myself and the entire University of Illinois MBA family to IPADE for giving us the opportunity to experience such a rich and priceless journey.

