

My Mexico Trip

Feb + March, 1960.

B. Jackson



I.

Our 18 day trip, by bus.
down in Mexico

Our decision to take this trip was made long before we left home, so we had our small pox vaccinations well in advance, knowing that it is a must, or they will vaccinate you before you leave their country.

We secured our tickets from the Grey-Round Bus Travel bureau in Phoenix a few weeks before our departure, Feb. 16th. We were sent over to the office of the Mexican Consul in Phoenix to get the "necessary" tourist cards" - Altho it was posted ^{on the door} that he should be there, all was locked up. An office man near to ruin told us, with a laugh, that he was "out and in". This is quite typical of slack business ^{methods} of the Mexican - The Bus office secured them later - They cost 3⁰⁰.

We had been briefed on getting pills for the so called "Mexican sickness" which tourists who eat + drink, carelessly, are apt to get. We didn't get any as it turned out didn't need to.

Later

I pause to give you an idea of the route we followed, from this crude draft. (not to scale) - with brief explanation telling about history of 2 highways.

Our Departure.

They picked us up the morning of the 16th at Mesa. The bus having started from L.A. the day before, etc. Where we were greeted by our Mexican escort "Victor" Junigo - We entered the ^{American} bus, nearly full of chattering tourists, which was to carry us that day to the border city of El Paso for the night. Being the last ones on the bus we had seats in the rear over the back wheels, but were assured there would be "seat rotation" occasionally, and there was. ^{However} but, the ubiquitous "get there first" tourist, we noticed, managed cleverly to avoid back seats. Myra was a victim of "backseatitis" more than she should have been.

From El Paso on, we were in Mexican buses & had Mexican drivers.

3.

These Mexican buses were superior - air conditioned, toilet in rear - Also located in rear was a box filled each day with ice with bottles of soft drinks + beer could be secured for a peso, each. This was a convenience, since safe water is hard to get. I, however, always carried a pint thermos of water, filled at hotel the ~~night~~^{morning} before -

Let me pause here to describe our well liked + popular escort, Victor - He was a 25 yrd. 3^d year law student at U. of M. - during the school year, son of a former judge handsome, with characteristic black hair well built. - We found him so very well informed about his country - as to ~~their~~^{its} history, economics, arts - & he knew American + our politics - very world minded - He was always ready to inform & help us. He was a good salesman for Mexico Had been married a few months & his lovely bride joined us at M.C. for the return trip to L.A. She showed more Spanish blood + he quite of the Indian side

4.

Route

Can you follow me on this crude map + I'll give you an idea of the route we followed - (see map + then pass around)

Personnel of Group (28)

Never have I been a member of a travel group, where I found, without exception, every one ^{so} eager to cooperate with their leader + agreeable - no griping.

They varied in number, but averaged about 28 = 3 couples, 3 from Seattle, Wash.

About 12 women, unattached. Mostly widows, + 2 unattached men, one over eight, from Lower Calif - a recent widower. The group

came from the western states - Colo, Oregon, Calif - Idaho - B. Columbia - only three, bred east of the Miss. River.

A fine bunch. (Pass picture around)

Mexico, a briefing

May I tell a few cold facts about ^{of} Mexico - In size - 3 x Texas

Pop. 27 odd million incl M.C. - a population 7 over 4 million. Quadalajara 377

5.

It is an old country, with Indian civilization going back ^(think there come groups of people) thousands of years.

It is a so-called "land of contrasts" —

a. in civilization eg. modern sky scrapers
+ abate huts tucked in

b. in climate

snow covered mountain peaks ^{17,000 ft Popocatepetl}

tropical jungles ^{Ixtaccuahuatl}

+ Es-tá-se'wath

c. people.

up to date moderns + not any distance away people of ancient races living in primitive fashion.

The people are mostly a blend of Spanish + Indian (18 million) with about 2 million Caucasians + 7 million Indians

Brief history

Invasion by Spanish under Cortez 1520 + we know little about Indian tribes who lived there - Due to the help of tribes who were forced to pay heavy tribute to the Aztecs he forced Mexico to surrender. They, the Spaniards promptly destroyed ^{+ how deplorable} most of their ^{aztec} culture. Under 300 yr. rule of Spain, most of their ^{aztec} treasure of gold + silver was taken

6.
out, making Spain richest country of Europe
for a while. Mexicans finally revolted +
set up a republic in early 18 hundreds.

A few years later, territory now comprising
Texas pulled out. Then after Mexican War
we acquired Calif; Arizona + New Mexico
Their struggle for a stable government
lasted till up in 1900 - In meantime
Country was torn by civil strife and
we recall names of some leaders, as

Juarez - Presidents Diaz + later Francisco
Madero - Villa, Obregon, Calles - Madero
As stripes were settled, liberal laws enacted
freed millions of Indians from bondage.

Their present president, Lopez Mateos, is
well thought of, inside + outside of Mexico
+ is leading his country wisely - ^{problem?}
(Conversation about "What is Mexico's greatest

Our trip down to M.C.

We covered 1300 miles in reaching M.C.
Always stopping at a good hotel at night.
+ it took us from Mesa nearly 5 days.
Stopping at after El Paso, at Chihuahua,
Durango + Leon with elevations at 4000 + 9000 ft.

Before leaving border of D.A. at El Paso we were able
to get U.S. money changed into Mexican + not ready for trip.
(Show money)

We passed thru some farming land which
was being crudely cultivated with teams of
oxen. When we ~~passed~~ ^{passed} thru the little
villages, the streets were so narrow, we
could almost reach out + touch people
or merchandise displayed. Sometimes, well
frequently, thru an open door way, we ^{caught}
glimpses of pretty courtyards with plantings
and flowers. Their home life is discreetly
shut off from the streets. ^{They have beauty + color.} The water
situation makes it necessary for women +
sometimes men to carry water from
some distance, in pails, jars on head + frequently
in large cans on sides of a patient burro.
One noon we had a typical Mexican ^{small} ^{town} ^{lunch}
at a place called "Zacatecas" ^{25,000} with a marachi
band of 5 or 6 busy men, playing marachi ^{music}
at a lively + loud pace. They were seated all ^{at once}
The tables, ^{which} had beautiful green centerpieces + they
gave us 2 prizes by calling numbers - - -
1. first had ^{legilla + fruit juice} fruit compote - a rice, spaghetti
dish with cheese sauce. 2) a meat pastry concoction
3) beef slices in sharp sauce. 4) tortas with cheese ^{sauce}
5. custard - 6) black coffee.

7. B

My impressions of this primitive country through which we passed, seem more vivid than the sight of ^{the} cities of art treasures - famous cathedrals, etc. A lot of it was desert country & any raising of crops done by irrigation - Animal life was abundant - with cattle not sleek & fat like ours, whole fields of goats, some horses. The dwellings were mostly gummy little adobe shacks & where there were irrigation ditches, you would invariably see women bent over, washing their clothes some times with a washboard.

Tell in general
about churches (later)
or cathedrals

Lester
after Chihuahua

Mexican plumbing can't be bragged about. Our third night stop at Durango - found us at a motel called Mexican Courts - the only 2^d rate lodgings we had - Victor warned us before we landed, that we could expect

8.
Some discrepancies like a cracked window pane
or else. All was well with me, as I looked
over my section, clean + good bed, which
after all is most important when travelling
I hadn't been settled very long however, before
I heard a commotion outside people walking
by + talking excitedly - I went out to
hear this story from Mrs Oleson of Seattle

At ^{at night} Chihuahua, we visited the ^{house} home
of the patriot Pancho Villa - His widow
apparently is trying to make a living by
exhibiting the home and his belongings
even to the old auto in which he met his death.
As you saw by the picture, she is a charming
woman - She had on the wall an ^{enlarged} ~~large~~
portrait of herself, done in Hollywood, where
she visited ^{at one time} - She was a beautiful young woman.
The next day we lunched in a very
modern + beautiful hotel at Torreon
Here is a typical contrast again, - this
ultra modern hotel among buildings
of old country primitive style. (Picture)

4.

On the walls were beautiful mural paintings of mostly modern scenes - The lunch was served beautifully, & equally good to eat, five courses from shrimp cocktail to tortes & black coffee.

One very interesting stop was at the old silver city of Guanajuato - the streets here were so very narrow, our big bus in order to turn a corner would have to stop & back once or twice. Silver was taken out of here in 1500's - but in 1800 a Frenchman discovered the rich deposits & on this beautiful hillside, this city of fame in its day developed. He died a poor man, leaving from his wealth back to the people by building Cathedrals & public buildings. They say there's silver in paving of streets. We visited the fabulous opera house - It rivals the best of NYC with 5 tiers of balconies - iron work grilles, stowing metals of gold & silver. Beautiful chandeliers. This city is now a mecca for retired professional folk. There are many artists. Each year plays are enacted in this beautiful opera house. I thoroughly enjoyed this city & could stay longer than an hour.

Tell the pig (200[#]) episode which took place as we were leaving.

~~After~~ The 4th ^{we stayed} ~~rate~~ ^{at} the old fashioned hotel in Leon, where the bed. rooms were old style, & the foyer very up & date & on the top floor a most beautiful roof garden filled with flowering plants, gladiolas, petunias, and many others. The next day took us into Mexico City -

in late afternoon. Our hotel, called "Guadalupe Hotel", was nicely located just a short walk, from the main Juarez Ave. Across the street from which was old Alameda Park. when we stopped to rest our weary feet when on a walk.

They greeted us warmly got our bags out & assigned us our rooms, as usual, & promptly invited us into the d. room for cocktails & a procedure not going over with our trio -

How did we spend our 5 days in this lovely old city of over 4 million? I'll tell you later - The Chinese here

is delightful. It is sub-tropical in location but the altitude of over 7000ft. makes for cool nights + just rule days - 4 to 70°s - (Summer has a rainy season)

The Bus Company entertained us 2½ days + the rest of the time we were on our own. I'll mention ^{first} briefly places of interest where we were taken, on tour.

The Pyramid Tour was a day of great interest. These pyramids, estimated by carbon test to be 3000 yrs old are 30 miles out of M.C. - They are larger than those of Egypt. ~~A~~ (Picture). M + I with others did some climbing up Pyramid of Sen. After we reached the first platform we were quite warm with hot sun beating down + were glad to call that enough. It provided us with a beautiful view. Who built these so well is a mystery forever sealed. One is overawed by their size. On way we stopped at famous Shrine of Guadalupe. Cathedral (picture)

An interesting side stop was when we pulled up at a little ^{open} stall at the road side where they had various articles for sale - there was an added attraction - a man demonstrating the ^{many} uses of the agave plant, or called "century" plant. From its ^{fibres} they make ^{cloth} paper, ^{needle-thread} & rope - they mash the inside, ferment it & make "pulque", a mild liquor also the fiery "tequila" a national drink.

A couple of half grown boys with a stupid looking burro brought laughs from the crowd when some one, at their suggestion, bought a bottle of pop - & gave it to the burro. He held it to his teeth, threw back his ^{wide} head & drank every drop. We lunched at the ^{famous} Grotto - a restaurant way under ground & partially open at top. Cold down there.

On our return we visited the Acolman Monastery, now deserted since 1948, when all monasteries of Mexico were sacked. We wandered thru the rooms - a large formerly d.r. & kitchen with huge fireplace. I sat in stone like seat, in what was one of their cells, where they could look out over the landscape & meditate.

13
He didn't miss, in fact visited twice the
famous Cathedral of Mexico on ^{largest in world, America} Zocoba Sq -
where also is found Palace of Justice & the
Pawn Shop - In P. of J. - there are many old
Aztec relics - one the fold Aztec calendar -
a circular, thick stone slab, 12 ft in diam.
weighing tons - It was discovered among
some ruins - On it is inscribed the ^{calendar}
of 18 months, of 20 days each - leaving 5
days for holidays - Considered better than ours,
also shows vast knowledge of stars & constellations.
The Floating Gardens at Xochimilco was
our lunch stop one day - You've seen those
pictured perhaps (Pass folder) About 20 ^{covered}
of us were ushered on to this large flat,
boat, propelled by man who with a long
pole pushed it on bottom as water was shallow.
A table thru center afforded place for
us to unpack our box lunches which
had been made ready for us. He also ^{women} ^{gave}
had been given beautiful bouquets of
Camelias, pansies & ferns. After much
pushing & twisting our boatman got us
clear of other boat loads & we were on
our way in canals - Small canoes, with
Indian women & pretty small girls crowded

around us selling everything from flowers to serapes. We had lovely music provided by 3 men on a boat brought close to us, playing guitar, yicker & bass viol Victor, who had a beautiful voice sang for us to accompaniment of orchestra - ~~love~~ ^{you will be - will be} "You be true to me" - Our crowd warbled also on Let me Call you Sweetheart - Oh 'twas quite romantic.

History of these Cuzco . →
 In passing, let me say that M. City is a beautifully laid out City with boulevards, statues of their heroes, parks & fountains. It rivals old world cities like Paris.
 We visited a very unusual building development also, called "Lava Gardens" for the very wealthy. These houses, none alike & no straight lay outs are most picturesquely placed ^{on} odd shaped lots among large black lava rocks, deposits of long ago volcanic eruptions. Architects have done everything to harmonize buildings to surroundings. We were allowed to go thru ^{one} ^{or 2} of one home, - - - & found owners were ^{or 2} ~~bookkeepers~~

We made a quick stop at the University of Mexico which is located 20 miles out of the city - Buildings are ultra modern in style. They have a large student body, 20 thousand or more, have no Greek letter societies and no dormitories - I saw a picture of their library covered with murals. The tuition is low, compared to ours in U.S. - Victor said their students aren't given credit in any but Jesuit colleges in U.S., - Their scholastic rating is very high when they compete with other nationalities -

Yes, we did attend a bull fight. They are held once a week on Sundays ^{at 12:00 PM.} Our tickets, including transportation were 5.00. They have a stadium seating 50,000 which was practically full. Yes it was a brutal proceeding and as far as I could see, the bull didn't have a chance.

- Description
1. Chief magistrate on horse rides across + backs out
 2. At a sign from him, bull is let in to arena
 3. Picadores - horsemen on padded horse - pricks bull
 4. Banderilleros - foot men with barbed darts -
 5. Matador - if necessary divert bull -
(manolete)

We stayed to see 4 bulls killed + dragged out - with 2 more yet to come - By going early we avoided crowds - Had enough.

One free day, in A.M. we crowded our way along narrow sidewalks, filled with people, to a city market. We passed shops of all kinds + grades, poor + good. A modern refrigerated meat market would be not far away from one where fresh meat was hanging on hooks, all exposed. In ^{crowd} market, there were stalls where all kinds of eatables were being sold. Large mesh bags, like mine, were receptacles for their carrots, potatoes, ^{meat} even strawberries all dumped in together. Not a paper bag in sight. Raw pineapples sold in pieces. My conversation → a kid, unshamed hanging.

Turmevaca + Taxco

South, about 10 miles of M.C. - are the much visited cities of T. + C. - We were taken this morning in a Buick, 6 passengers - was a beautiful 2 lane highway ^{toll road} down this way. We passed thru at elevation of 10,000 ft pine forests - then dropped down where rice + sugar cane were growing. Stopped briefly at C - ^{summer, Paha, Gajico, Spanish Mills, Papay} where some lumbering + hindery met + fell in love - visited the old Cortes palace - ^{Rubera, Morales} looking at paintings of ^{Max + Carlotta}.

The typical plaza or town square as we call it with large cathedral on one side a beautiful setting + I'd like to stay there. We were lauded at Taxco soon to stay over night - This old silver city or rather town now, is on a mountain side, + is now kept as a national ^{monument} ~~straw~~ - no new buildings are allowed. The plaza on 3 sides is lined with shops selling silver jewelry + few large pieces like trays, tea services - We priced a tea pot - he weighed it + told us \$60 or 70 - medium size. They have skilled artists + craftsmen - designing + making up these originals I dodged in + out trying to match up some earnings with proceeds of a Milena - Bought a little pin - On plaza a funeral procession appeared going to cathedral - In crossing street - Ingra got mixed up in it, but extricated herself.

That evening to a unique entertainment

10 - 12:30.

rather Bohemian

- 1 - seated around listening to music some dancing + drinking
- 2 - out door theatre - arte sacra ^{also enacted}
- 3 - a Tom-tom demonstration
- 4 - guitar playing + folk cock fight

to. (18)

Trip home. . by west coast

The return journey, with 5 night stops as we see, follows the west coast quite closely. It borders on east side, dense jungles - back a ways, where we were told are very fierce though small tigers - The country is very tropical in nature - We saw parrots in the trees - Where there is cultivation of the land, fruits (citrus), pineapples, rice & sugar cane are raised - We saw large areas planted to maguey plant - which takes 10 years to mature before it can be used for making tequila, the national drink. 2^d day out, we skirted 2 large lakes - where they fish with butterfly nets - It was hard to find suitable lunch stops at noon, so V. fortified us with fruit, oranges + more they sweet, pineapple + papaya - We stopped bus, got out + they carried up + passed around the fruit.

We spent 2 days at seaside, resort of Mazatlan, where they were having a yearly fiesta - like N.O. Mardi Gras Tell about egg throwing

19.

These sea side ports - & villages are
centers for a large fishing industry.
(shrimp)
In the lower states, we find
more wealth from agricultural pursuits
as land is very rich, sometimes
irrigated, & they use tractors
& other machinery in modern style.

I could go on, but this I'm sure
is enough. You've been most patient.
Sorry to say I contracted Q. fever
from oysters on bus about 2 days
from home & returned a little
bedraggled. It was a wonderful
experience & I hope I've shared
it with you so you've enjoyed it, too.

Finis

April 18⁶⁰ - for Travel Dept of Crescent Club.