Behavior/Culture Notes:

Safety

- **Be your brother's/sister's keeper.** Help each other, bear each other's burdens, and look out for each other. The more you take care of each other, the less the directors have to take care of you (in other words, you get more freedom.)
- **Follow the "buddy system."** While you don't have to stick with the same person for the whole tour or even a whole day, you need to be with at least one other person or in sight of the group, especially when we're in large cities. This is for your safety and your parents' peace of mind; plus, it helps us find you if you're lost. Don't worry, unlike the MTC, we'll let you go to the bathroom alone.
- **Maintain radio contact.** At least one person in your group should have his or her radio turned on and turned up.
- **Don't flash cash.** It's as rude and dangerous abroad as it is at home. Be street smart and discrete. If you need to pull out cash, do so inconspicuously. Try to arrange your cash for the day in the hotel. Always use your money belt/neck pouch/whatever. Plan on any money in your pockets being lost or stolen. Keep your camera close to your body. But don't be scared of people. I feel safer in MesoAmerica than in many places in the US.
- **Men--Don't get in fights.** Obviously, you're not going to try to get into a fight, but you might end up unintentionally if you insult a Latino's manhood or womanhood. Also, don't feel like you have to defend the dignity of our girls. They can deal with an insult. Remain calm (and out of jail).
- **Women--Don't flirt.** While you're all chaste and pure, MesoAmericans have seen too many unchaste college and high school students on spring break. Anything other than a firm "no" is taken as "yes"--as is smiling, giggling, politely saying hello, looking directly at a man, being blonde, being American, etc.
- **Don't date.** Please be safe. While it's wonderful to do things with people you meet, don't pair off with the locals--even just for a day (remember the "buddy" rule above). As for hooking up with someone on the trip... truthfully, we'd prefer that you wait to date and/or fall in love AFTER we get home. However, if you're overwhelming smitten, just be polite. Remember that no one wants to suffer through your gooey love talk on the bus or the uncomfortable silences after you break up.

Politeness Don'ts

- **Don't shout, screech, or laugh loudly.** Most Latinos speak in low tones. Remember other patrons in hotels.
- **Don't take pictures of people without permission.** While most people don't mind if you take their picture, others will be extremely embarrassed, irritated, or even angry at being your tourist attraction. To ask permission, just hold up your camera and say inquisitively "Photo?" They'll get the idea. In some cases, they may ask for money or may say no. Respect their wishes. Asking permission can actually be a great way to make friends and talk to people. You might even ask their names--it's not only great for scrapbooks, it's a fun way to start a conversation.
- **Don't use a flash when the signs say not to.** You'll get us kicked out of places.
- **Don't brag or disparage.** You'll find patriots in every country. Be humble and learn from what you see.
- **Don't compare life in the US to life in Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, or Honduras.** Accept what you see and experience it for what it is. Latin food, culture, etc. are enviable in many aspects.
- **Don't complain.** The food won't taste the same as what Taco Bell sells (it will be better), hamburgers will cost a fortune, toilet paper will feel different, and the art will look different (very few pudgy cherubs). Appreciate what you see and experience the countries for what they are--not for what they aren't. Try new foods, new words, new mannerisms, etc. and embrace such opportunities as part of the experience.
- **Don’t be rude or impatient:** You will have to wait sometimes. It’s not easy moving around 40 people.
- **Don’t be late.** We’ll wait for 5 minutes and then leave. Being late waste everyone else’s time.
- **Don’t mock language, customs, mannerisms, etc.** Not only is this horribly rude, egocentric, and maybe even racist, in reality, your language, customs, and manners are just as strange to others.

Politeness Dos

- **Remember that you are an ambassador of the tour, BYU-Idaho, the Church, Idaho, you home state, and the United States.** Try to avoid helping people think negatively of any of them.
- **Remember how blessed you are.** Every trip is a once-in-a-lifetime experience; make the most of the opportunity. Because we’re gone for only 4 weeks you can’t afford to be anything less than excited, cheerful, pleasant, patient, tolerant, understanding, positive, fun, grateful, gracious, and humble--among other things. When you feel grumpy, remember the many other students would love to be here but can't due to family commitments, lack of money or time, etc.
- **Be cooperative.** The more you help get things going, the faster they’ll go. Think in terms of what’s best for the whole group, not just yourself. You’ll have plenty of free time to satisfy your personal whims.
- **Keep your cool when things go wrong.** They always do. Be flexible. Some of the best experiences are the result of things going wrong or of people making a mistake.
- **Assume the directors are doing all they can.** Even the best-laid plans can fall apart. Although your directors are amazing, brilliant, and charismatic, they are (for now) only human.
- **Listen to directors’ instructions carefully.** You can't afford to be late, miss the bus, or do poorly in a class.
- **Be nice to Alisa, the TA.** She speaks for the directors. And frequently chooses what you eat and assigns where you sleep.