



Answers to Frequently Asked Questions from Attendees

The American Leadership Academy (ALA) exists to support programs that provide education and training for college students and alumni in the areas of leadership, scholarship, service, citizenship and free enterprise. The programs supported by the ALA will promote the value of education, ethics, leadership, citizenship, patriotism and service, and healthy and successful lifestyles. They also will provide marketable skills attendees can use immediately.

The current educational programs, held during winter and spring break periods in Los Cabos, Mexico, originated over 10 years ago. Since then, several thousand men from campuses across the nation have participated in an outstanding educational experience. Many have returned to their campuses significantly changed and enthused, and we've received hundreds of letters and E-mails reinforcing that our program has a positive impact.

Since we've been doing this for a while, let us try to answer some of the most common questions people have about the program and travel to Mexico.

Q: What is the Cabo Leadership Experience (CLE)?

A: It's a one-week program that brings successful, accomplished alumni and friends from many different professions together with current undergraduates to exchange ideas, provide a forum for discussion and teach life-lessons and skills learned during their lives after college. It is an inspirational, motivational and educational experience for men who want to be more effective leaders and more successful in whatever career choice they may pursue.

What it is NOT is just a subsidized Spring Break or a parting gift for seniors. You are required to attend the classes and participate fully in the program. If you aren't coming for this purpose, or are not interested in working to be a better leader, or in learning from successful professionals, please go somewhere else for Spring Break.

Q: Who should attend?

A: The program is designed for your youngest/newest members and priority for registration will go to freshmen and sophomores and those who have not been before. Generally, those in your group who aspire to leadership, or who are focused on success – both in college and after – are the best prospects. Look for men with ability and potential, even if they haven't used it yet. The CLE will give them a head start on their peers and make them more valuable to your group and its future success – otherwise, we'll both be disappointed with your experience.

Q: How do I apply to Attend? How do I sign up?

A: Every campus should have a student contact to work with the ALA to promote the program to members and coordinate the reservation and registration process. When attendees are selected, the ALA should be contacted to ensure there is space available for the number of attendees and the session/s or week/s preferred. **Do not purchase tickets until this is done.**

Once the ALA confirms your spaces, attendees should purchase tickets with arrival and departure dates matching the start and end dates of the session you wish to attend. **We have very limited ability to allow you to arrive early or depart late and, if space is available, there will be a cost to you for extra room nights.** We have a partner travel agent who will work to find you the best possible rates and provides 24/7 support during your trip.

After purchasing tickets, you will go online to our website (www.ALACabo.org), click the “Register Here” icon and create your registration record. You should be ready to provide your itinerary/flight details, emergency contact information, passport number and pay the registration fee by credit card or online check. **You must have a valid passport to travel between the U.S. and Mexico.** When you submit your registration, you’ll get a confirmation E-mail with more info about travel to Mexico, what to do and what to expect when you arrive. Then, just let us know if your itinerary changes. We’ll reserve your room, arrange your airport shuttle and see you in Los Cabos!

Q: Is travel to Mexico safe?

A: Travel to any foreign country has its challenges, but travel to Mexico – and Los Cabos in particular – has become a regular event for many in the U.S. Los Cabos has ten major airlines and a modern airport that serve the region. As one of Mexico’s most active and popular resort areas, the community caters to U.S. visitors, so English is spoken widely. Cabo has a Costco, Sam’s, Wal-Mart, Home Depot and OfficeMax to serve the community, as well as many of the usual U.S. fast food establishments. It remains one of the safest tourist regions in all of Mexico.

NOTE: This year, there were many concerns about violence in Mexico related to drug cartels and also the outbreak of swine flu. Because Los Cabos is 1,000 miles south of the border (where much of the violence occurred) and over 300 miles from the Mexican mainland, it is insulated from most problems in the rest of the country. During the Spring Break season (January through April) of 2009, there were no reports of drug-related violence and no cases of swine flu reported in Los Cabos.

ALA attendees receive orientation the day of arrival to acquaint you with the hotel policies, answer questions and outline expectations. We expect attendees to be good guests, both at the hotel and in town. ALA and Phi Kappa Psi have an excellent reputation in Los Cabos and we expect you will live up to that. As with a visit to any unfamiliar city, you need to act responsibly, be aware of your surroundings, stay in groups and don’t carry or “flash” large amounts of cash. There is crime in Los Cabos, as in any resort area, but it is mostly petty crime on individuals. Stay with friends and stay aware and you’re not likely to be a target.

Q: Is the water safe to drink? What about food?

A: Yes. Unlike some other areas in Mexico, the water system in Los Cabos is very modern and water and ice at hotels and restaurants is safe. Our hotel has a biologic and ultraviolet filtering system for extra safety. The food staff are licensed professionals and regular health and safety checks are done in the restaurant and bar areas. Food is purchased from proven suppliers.

NOTE: Where there have been problems, they have been associated to food from street vendors in the towns, usually late at night, as bars and restaurants close. There are few health or licensing regulations for these food carts and some keep serving food past its expiration date. We recommend you do not purchase from these vendors.

Q: What about alcohol?

A: The drinking age in Mexico is 18 and we expect all attendees to be 18 or older. Alcohol is sold and can be consumed at the hotel and at most other hotels, restaurants and clubs. If you have not done so before, this is an excellent opportunity to have a talk with your parent/s about use and misuse of alcohol and their expectations. You will need proof of age to enter most bars.

Students who choose to consume alcohol will be expected to do so responsibly. Public intoxication is a crime in Mexico and police are most vigilant during college break seasons. In addition, drunkenness, fighting or damaging property, or the possession of any illegal or controlled substance will be sufficient cause for the hotel to evict attendees or call police.

Q: What about medical emergencies?

The local police and health care systems are very capable. You should contact your parents to determine whether your home or college medical coverage is active while you are in Mexico. Then get the phone number and instructions needed to contact your provider, in case you are injured. The ALA requests emergency contact information for all attendees, so please provide your parent/guardian's contact information when you register, in case there is an emergency. Also, it is important you alert us to any medical conditions that may limit your participation or require our assistance, such as food allergies, epilepsy, sleepwalking, etc. Please indicate this during your online registration.

NOTE: The ALA carries major emergency coverage only, which includes medical evacuation to the U.S. for life-threatening injuries that cannot be treated locally. This is not comprehensive coverage, so it doesn't help with broken bones or minor injuries. We can refer you to agents for an affordable short-term traveler's policy, if you do not have other health coverage.

Q: Where will I stay?

A: Marbella Suites en la Playa is a public beachfront hotel about 20 minutes from the Los Cabos airport. Located mid-way between San Jose del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas, it is on the public bus line and convenient to many of the activities which make Los Cabos so popular to tourists. The ALA rents the hotel for 5 to 8 weeks each year for its educational programs. During the rest of the year, the hotel rents to the general public and to private and corporate groups. The hotel has 40 suite-style rooms, meeting facilities, a restaurant, pool and bar, fitness room, computer lab and a phone room where you can make unlimited free calls back to the U.S. In fact, one of the first requests we make when you arrive is that you call home to let your parent/s know you have arrived safely. We also recommend you continue to call during your stay.

Q: What is the ALA program like?

A: Unlike some leadership programs that keep participants tied up from dawn to dusk, the Cabo Leadership Experience provides 3-4 hours of classes a day, usually from 10 AM to Noon and 1 to 3 PM. These sessions are led by CEOs, entrepreneurs, lawyers, doctors, scientists, educators and other proven professionals. We also have professional speakers join us on topics specific to college students and success.

The goal is to help you identify and choose the best habits to make you successful in college and in life, and work with you – via alumni mentors, discussion, skill building and interaction with peers – to develop focus, direction and an action plan for your success. Perhaps the most productive time will actually be outside the classroom as you process the information with your peers and decide whether/how the concepts apply to you.

Afternoons are free to nap, enjoy the beach, or hop a bus and explore Los Cabos. There is snorkeling, golf, ATV or horseback riding, shopping – even sport fishing – a short ride from the hotel. The hotel staff can make recommendations, regardless of interests. All meals are provided at the hotel and the hotel provides a shuttle service several evenings to Cabo San Lucas and back, so you can enjoy the nightlife. These shuttles run from 8:30 PM to 1 AM and are operated by the same licensed provider used by many hotels on the tourist corridor.

Q: How can I be reached, if there is an emergency at home?

A: The hotel has a toll-free number for calls from the U.S and a direct line to the front desk, which always should be manned by someone with good English skills. Complete contact information is as follows. Make sure your parents have this information...

Marbella Suites en la Playa

Carret. Transpeninsular KM 17.5 S/N Col. Cabo Real

San Jose del Cabo, BCS 23450 MEXICO
Toll-Free Phone from U.S. (daytime – Mountain time zone): (866) 654-6160
Front Desk (24/7 or after-hours from U.S.): (520) 232-2506
Website: www.MarbellaSuites.com

Q: How much money should I bring? Do I need to convert my dollars?

A: Students are expected to furnish their airfare and bring spending money for entertainment purposes. Once you arrive, the ALA pays for your room, three meals a day, your airport shuttle, buses into town some evenings, and all educational materials.

The spending money you will need can range from \$100 to as much as \$1,000, depending on your interests. Golf at many of the resort courses is \$250, but there are many low cost activities – snorkeling is free; ATVs, horseback riding, jet skis or parasailing all are about \$50 – much the same as U.S. resort areas. Food and drink prices downtown are consistent with U.S. resorts. The hotel's concierge services can help with recommendations. Most students arrive with \$100-200 in US dollars and use their ATM card if they need more.

It's not necessary to arrive in Los Cabos with pesos. Most restaurants and clubs take U.S. dollars (though at a low exchange rate), as well as most major credit cards. American Express cards and travelers checks are not as widely accepted as Visa and MasterCard, because of higher fees charged to redeem them. Also, most ATM cards will work in ATMs in Los Cabos. The bank ATMs are most reliable and will provide cash in pesos. The exchange rate will be the daily international banking rate, so is much better than currency exchange kiosks.

Q: Is this experience really worth it?

A: That kind of depends on why you're attending, but the vast majority of students who attend, say this was the trip of a lifetime. Here's the deal – if your goals for Break are to sleep late and party all night, there are a lot of other places where you can do that much cheaper than Cabo. We recommend you save your money (and our time) and go there.

However, if you're looking for an experience that will help you focus on success and position yourself to be a top candidate for employment after graduation, this is the place to spend your time. As a previous attendee put it,

Find a way to get to Cabo for the Cabo Leadership Experience. Bug your parents, take out a loan, work two jobs, it does not matter – the Cabo Leadership Experience is going to change your life, trust me!

I mean, really, how many opportunities do you get to have lunch with a founder of TicketMaster, an advisor to U.S Presidents, or a former Special Forces officer who grew up in the Middle East? In this job market, can you afford to pass up an opportunity to make yourself a more competitive job candidate? The fact that it happens to occur in one of the most beautiful beach locations in the world is just icing on the cake.

Contact Us.

If you have additional questions, we welcome your calls at 877-257-1458, or by E-mail at Info@AmericanLA.org. You can find out more about the ALA and our program on our website at www.ALACabo.org. You also may write us at P.O. Box 245, Zionsville, IN 46077-0245.

Our travel partner for 2009/2010 is Canyon Creek Travel. They provide full travel services, as well as 24/7 assistance before and during your trip. Call the ALA travel desk at (866) 415-4900.