



Medical and Evacuation Procedures

Mexico 2027

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Introduction

Medical screening

As with all expeditions careful planning is essential to ensure that all individuals enjoy a safe successful trip. Some members of the expedition team (including all volunteers and staff) may have significant pre-existing health problems or disabilities, which in the field, could potentially lead to problems.

Medical questionnaire - All participants will be required to enter their medical details onto the Operation Wallacea data portal. Details of how to log on are sent out upon receiving the booking from the participant. The data is stored securely and is initially only available to certain Operation Wallacea staff members, and, for groups of school students, the teacher leading the group.

Screening - All medical forms are assessed by Operation Wallacea. The terrestrial and marine project manager may seek to contact the participant to gather further information, which they would then enter on to the portal.

Following the initial screening by the terrestrial and marine project manager, the details are then passed to the on-site medic. He or she can ask for further information, and will have an opportunity to discuss any issues of concern at a medical meeting (between the expedition medics and Operation Wallacea staff) held approximately 3 months prior to the expedition. The team of medics will discuss any potential medical issues, advise anyone if a further consultation with a medic is required and will also suggest additions to the medical kits in light of any pre-existing health problems highlighted.

Insurance - Operation Wallacea requires all participants to purchase medical and travel insurance for their expedition. Details of these are provided in advance of their expedition so they are available to operational staff in the event they should be required. Operation Wallacea evacuation procedures are designed so that there is no delay waiting on insurers before providing care thus expediting the administrative processes behind organising an evacuation.

Roles in the event of an Emergency

Carefully planned evacuation protocols are in place in all of the sites in Mexico. All staff will have training on the evacuation procedures and protocols.

Once a major incident leading to an evacuation is identified the Terrestrial or Marine Project Manager will take overall control and will decide the level of emergency evacuation required for the patient. These are classified as either: Medium Priority, High Priority or Emergency.

Medium Priority – Cases in which the patient is in no immediate danger but the onsite facilities are unable to cope were their condition to deteriorate. An example of this would be dehydration due to sickness. This requires the patient to be moved as quickly as possible without the need to hire special vehicles or boats to the nearest appropriate suitable facilities in Xpujil, Chetumal or Playa de Carmen.

High Priority – Cases where the patient’s health is at risk if immediate action is not taken. An example of this is a broken bone. This requires transportation, via specially arranged vehicles to medical facilities available in Xpujil, Chetumal or Playa del Carmen in the case of decompression sickness.

Emergency Priority – Cases requiring the fastest possible transfer, usually by air to Rivera Mayan in Playa del Carmen.

In the case of an Evacuation, the Terrestrial or Marine Project Manager will be responsible for contacting the insurance company.

Medical Facilities in Country

Camps

There are medical officers (doctors, nurses, paramedics) at each of the field camps being operated (Kalam Cab, Hormiguero and Dos Naciones camps in Calakmul and Akumal marine site). Each of these medical officers has a medical kit designed to treat common conditions and to stabilise the patient in the event of a more serious case where evacuation is needed.

Anti-Venom

Anti-venom specific to the vipers and tropical rattlesnake are available in hospitals in Xpujil, Chetumal and Playa del Carmen. Chetumal is a maximum of a 3-hour drive from the forest survey sites in Calakmul and Playa del Carmen is a 30 minute drive from the marine sites in Akumal. As it is always advisable to administer anti-venom in hospital surroundings due to the risk of anaphylactic shock, and patients have up to 4-6 hours following a snake bite before requiring treatment, anti-venom will not be stored on site because patients can be evacuated to a hospital within 3 hours of being bitten. Checks will be made with each hospital prior to the start of the expedition to ensure that they have sufficient stock of the anti-venoms.

Facilities in Chetumal

Suitable for medium, high and emergency priority evacuations from the forest camps in Calakmul Biosphere Reserve

Clinica Carranza

Address: Avenida Venustiano Carranza #366, Chetumal, Quintana Roo, Mexico

Tel: +52 983 835 1440

Email: atencionclinicacarranza@gmail.com, Website: <https://clinicacarranza.com.mx/>

Clinica Carranza is a large (100+ beds) private hospital which has been offering the highest quality medical care in Chetumal for the last 20 years. The hospital has a separate accident and emergency building that is fully equipped to deal with all kinds of emergencies, state of the art diagnostic equipment, including MRI scanners, ultrasound and X-ray, a separate pharmacy, laboratory for clinical analysis, several operating theatres, and very highly trained bilingual doctors.

Facilities in Xpujil

Suitable for medium, high, and emergency priority evacuations from the forest camps in Calakmul Biosphere Reserve

Hospital de Xpujil

Calle Silvituc entre Becan y Balankan, Xpujil, Quintana Roo, Mexico

Tel: +52 982 87 1 61 00

Hospital de Xpujil is modern, moderately sized hospital equipped to deal with the majority of incidents. The hospital facilities include diagnostic equipment, ultrasound and X-ray, a separate pharmacy and laboratory for clinical analysis. Ambulance available for transfers to Chetumal.

Facilities in Playa del Carmen

Suitable for medium, high and emergency priority evacuations

Hospiten Riviera Maya

Address: Colonia Balamcanché, Lote 1, MZA.30, Carr. Federal, Playacar Fase II en Playa del Carmen, C.P. 77710, Quintana Roo, Mexico.

Tel: +52 984 803 1002, Fax: +52 984 803 1606

Email: Rivieramaya@hospiten.com, Website: <https://hospiten.com/en>

Hospiten is a small, but very well equipped, Spanish hospital group offering a full medical surface to Western European standards. The hospital contains a trauma department, state-of-the-art equipment, European-trained bilingual doctors, operating rooms, a full stock of medicines, and is suitable for all kinds of diagnosis, treatment and emergency care.

In order to do any treatment they require a payment up front – so ensure that an Opwall staff member, participant or school teacher has a credit or debit card on them.

Costamed Playa

Address: Carr. Federal MZ 285, El Pedregal, 77712 Playa del Carmen, Q.R., Mexico

Phone: +52 984 803 7777

Website: <https://www.costamed.com.mx/en/hospital/playa-del-carmen>

Small but well equipped to deal with accident and emergency issues, bilingual doctors available

Costamed is also available in Tulum for minor issues, 20 minutes south of Akumal

Address: Calle 3 Sur s/n, Lote 8, Villa Tulum, 77760 Tulum, Q.R., Mexico

Phone: +52 984 124 0830

Website: <https://www.costamed.com.mx/en/hospital/tulum>

Recompression Chambers

Playa del Carmen International Clinic
SSS Recompression Chamber Network

Address: Avenida 10, esq 28 Nte, Playa del Carmen, Centro, C.P. 77710, Quintana Roo, Mexico
Tel: 984 873 1365

This clinic is on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The recompression chambers are run by two qualified doctors and the clinic can also provide emergency medical care, including diagnosis, X-ray, life support and surgery.

Helicopter Support for evacuations

Helicopter Evacuations are available from the Calakmul ruins site where there is the highest risk of a fall from height. The Calakmul Archaeological Zone Office will call in the helicopter as required to the landing pad within the compound. For all other sites, vehicle or ambulance support will provide a faster evacuation route.

Communications

Forest comms

Kalam Cab base camp in Calakmul is the main operations and comms centre for the forest project. There are parts of the camp where handphone calls can be made however this can be unreliable. Since 2026, there is however good internet (Starlink) that runs when the generator is on for making calls on WhatsApp . We have radio communication with both the satellite camps and logistics base in Zoh Laguna. Each of the teams working on the transects have to take a hand held radio or runner in case an incident should take place.

Each of the forest field camps have radio and sat phone contact with the main base and there are pre-arranged daily comms times. All groups at each of these camps have to take a hand held radio or runner when walking the transects to communicate back to the camp in the event of an incident.

Marine comms

There is limited cell phone signal at the Akumal accommodation. There is however good internet for making calls on WhatsApp or through the communicator app. Once on the main highway and out of the jungle, there is good cell phone signal throughout the whole area.

Transfers

All bus and vehicle transfers have cell phones with the drivers.

Evacuations from Various Field Sites

Camps and survey sites in Calakmul Biosphere Reserve

Evacuation from the sites is by vehicle to Hospital de Xpujil (Kalam Cab: 1-1.5 hours, Hormiguero half an hour, Dos Naciones: 2 hours) for medium and high evacuations. Emergency evacuations such as spinal injuries may be conducted via helicopter to Chetumal or the Hospiten Hospital in Playa del Carmen (1.5 hours from initial call time to mobilize a helicopter).

Marine site in Akumal

Medium, high and emergency evacuation from the marine sites are by vehicle to Hospiten Riviera Maya Hospital in Playa del Carmen (maximum journey time 45 minutes drive). For emergency evacuations such as spinal injuries, an ambulance will be sent from Hospiten to collect the injured party and transfer them to the hospital (patient will be at the hospital within 1 hour of the telephone call to the hospital).

Reporting and Logging

During evacuations it is crucial that a log is kept by the Terrestrial or Marine Project Manager detailing times, personnel involved and all relevant details of each step of the evacuation process.

A full safety assessment must be carried-out after all evacuations and if a similar incident is likely all activities must be stopped until the situation has been rectified.

The Mexico Terrestrial or Marine Project Manager will collate the reports of all medical treatment and evacuations and will submit the final report to the UK office. The Mexico Terrestrial or Marine Project Manager will also submit the costs and report to the insurance company for re-imbusement of costs.

Mass Evacuations and Disaster Management

The most likely scenario is warning of an impending hurricane. Hurricanes can occur in the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico at any time from June to November but are most likely in October followed by September which are both months outside the Opwall survey season.

However, it is possible that a hurricane will occur. The most recent hurricane to occur during an expedition was hurricane Beryl, which hit the Yucutan Peninsula close to Akumal at the end of June 2024. Mexico has an excellent warning system with about a week's advance notice of any hurricanes heading for Mexico. This information phase is succeeded by a Warning Phase if the hurricane is headed for Mexico. If it looks as though a hurricane is headed for the Yucutan Peninsula, appropriate action will take place.

Being on the coast, Akumal is likely to receive a strong winds and rain. However, Tortuga Escondida (the expedition accommodation) is an extremely strong and safe concrete building, meaning that the need to evacuate is reduced. For Hurricanes rating as category 1, 2 or 3,

participants at the marine site in Akumal will not be evacuated, even in the event of the hurricane passing directly over Akumal. It is important to note that all possible precautions will be taken to prepare the building for the hurricane. Securing any items and loose furniture in the communal areas for example. All participants that are on site would stay inside the central rooms of the building, ensuring that they have enough food and water until the hurricane has passed.

For a stronger hurricane (category 4 or 5) a decision would be made on site whether to evacuate. In case of evacuation, participants would go to a shelter in Akumal town.

Due to its inland location, Calakmul is less likely to be affected by hurricanes than the coastal areas. With this in mind, the survey teams will be evacuated from the forest to the nearest town at each camp if needed.