



Operation Wallacea 2026, Mexico Terrestrial & Marine - Research Assistant Kit List

INTRODUCTION

This document is a guide to the expedition kit you will need for your expedition based on what you will be doing in Mexico and the experience of previous expeditions.

When packing you need to be thinking of the minimum amount you can take whilst remaining comfortable and safe. Check your airlines baggage and hand luggage allowance and ensure to weigh your bag before you go. You want to be aiming for light, compact, durable, quick-drying and versatile equipment. The list below is essential kit – unless stated as optional. If you have any questions about the information below please do not hesitate to contact your nearest Opwall office or email mexico@opwall.com.

SUMMARY CHECKLIST

Summary Checklist	Tick off once you have gone through each section of your kit list.	Tick Box
Kit list video	Ensure you watch the kit list video that accompanies this pack	
Documentation	What documentation you are required to bring on site.	
Hand luggage	What to include in your hand luggage.	
Core Kit	What core kit to bring for your expedition.	
Clothing essentials	Clothing that you will require on site.	
Terrestrial Kit	What specific kit you will need for the terrestrial part of your expedition.	
Marine Kit	What specific kit you will need for the marine part of your expedition.	
Organising, packing & added extras	Top tips for packing and organising all your expedition gear and some added optional extras for you.	
Toiletries	Guide to the toiletries you will require.	
Medical Kit	Essential medical kit for the expedition.	
Helpful Resources	Suggested resources to learn more about the region before your expedition, or to help you with your expedition prep	
Money	What money you need and the easiest way to bring it to site.	
Food	What food to expect on site.	
Washing facilities	What are the washing facilities like on-site.	

DOCUMENTATION

Documentation	We would recommend bringing a physical paper copy of the following documentation.	Tick Box
Insurance documents	Bring a copy of your personal insurance documentation.	
Photocopy of passport	This is in case your passport gets lost so keep it in a separate location to your passport itself.	
ID Guides	Bring a copy of your ID guides included in this pack.	
Internal Travel Documentation	Bring a print out of your travel documents, along with any information for required VISAs.	

HAND LUGGAGE

Hand luggage	Unfortunately, working in such remote locations often involving numerous flights and forms of transport, luggage can be delayed. It is best to be prepared just in case, so here is what we recommend you pack in your hand luggage.	Tick Box
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Valuables	Think passport, money, camera, phone etc. If completing your dissertation you will most likely wish to bring your laptop and this should be taken in your hand luggage.	
Personal medicine	Extremely important to bring your personal medicine with your hand luggage!	
Change of clothes	Including spare underwear.	
Head torch	Essential for your expedition, so this is not something you want to lose. Small headlamp models can be ineffective at spotting wildlife such as herpetofauna so keep that in mind when browsing for one. Don't forget spare batteries!	
Toiletries	Tooth brush and wet wipes.	
Sleeping bag/liner	If you have to borrow a sleeping bag its nice to have your own liner to use.	
Walking boots	Wear these on the plane, reduces space and makes sure you don't lose them.	
Travel adapter & power bank	Pack these so you can keep your devices charged and usable during transit and unexpected delays.	

CORE KIT

Core kit	These are things you will need no matter which expedition site you are going to.	Tick Box
Rucksack	Please do not bring a suitcase. Some of the forest camps require you to carry your bag in steep terrain for up to 15 minutes so you will need to be able to carry it on your back. Minimum 50 litre capacity.	
Day bag/Small rucksack	Needed for field work for carrying water, paper, pens, binoculars, cameras etc.	
Sleeping Bag	It will be fairly warm at night so we recommend a 1-2 season sleeping bag and a sheet or sleeping bag liner that can be used on particularly warm nights.	
Roll mat or Thermarest	Necessary for comfort when sleeping in a tent in the forest so please do bring one. Roll mats can be purchased very cheaply, whereas Thermarests are more of an investment (be sure to buy a repair kit).	
Water bottle/platypus	A combination of leak-proof plastic bottles (minimum 2 litres) is imperative. The 'hydration systems' on the market (Platypus, camelback, Ortileb) have the advantage of packing flat when not in use.	
Travel towel/Sarong	Don't bring a big thick towel as it won't dry quickly enough.	
Watch with alarm	It doesn't have to be anything technical. A travel alarm clock will also do.	
Notebook and pencil	Essential for all projects!	

CLOTHING

Clothing	These are the general items of clothing you will need for your expedition. We have included rough quantities for each item but please feel free to bring more or less, it's personal preference and up to you...as long as it fits! For the forest, you should bring clothes that you don't mind getting dirty! Synthetic (wicking) fabric is the best as it is quick drying, but cotton is kinder to the skin. Don't forget to buy your Opwall t-shirt(s)!	Tick Box
Walking boots	Make sure your boots have firm ankle support, a semi-flexible sole with good grip and dries relatively quickly. Wear these on the plane to save space.	
Waterproof Jacket/Poncho	Jungles can often get quite extreme periods of rain so a lightweight rain jacket is invaluable. Expensive heavy Gore-Tex raincoats are not recommended as they are very hot. We highly recommend you bring a rain poncho as this will allow you to keep paperwork dry on survey.	
Waterproof trousers	Waterproof, quick dry for warmer sites, important to be thick and warm for cooler sites.	
T-shirts (7-8)	You will get sweaty at the forest site so it's worth bringing plenty. Due to mosquitoes, please do not bring crop tops.	
Long sleeved shirts (4-5)	Insects are quite prevalent so you'll need to cover up on survey, and also protect yourself from any rough vegetation.	
Lightweight long baggy trousers/walking trousers (3)	These can be worn more than once but you will need long trousers for surveys in the forest. Looser is better as insects can bite through skintight fabric.	
Shorts (3)	Useful for wearing in camp at the forest site. Due to mosquitoes, please do not bring short shorts.	
Hoodie/Jumper	For flights and the air conditioned coaches.	
Nightwear/Pyjamas	You will be in shared accommodation.	
Underwear, socks and bras	We recommend you bring enough underwear for 2 weeks. And for long treks, it may be better to wear hiking socks over cotton socks. Bring multiple bras.	

Fleece top	May be nice to cover your arms from mosquitos without overheating.	
Hat or Bandana	Useful to protect you from the sun.	
Sunglasses	A good pair are useful to protect your eyes from the sun and glare reflected from water in the marine site.	
Comfortable shoes/flip flops/sandals	1 pair - it may be muddy depending on the weather so keep that in mind if considering flip flops.	
Swimwear	For your time at the marine site.	
Additional clothes	One set of 'regular' style clothes for when you are at any hotels during your transfers or for travelling back at the end of the expedition.	

TERRESTRIAL ONLY

Terrestrial only	Below you will find equipment specific to the terrestrial portion of your expedition.	Tick Box
Head torch	Essential for the expedition as previously mentioned.	

MARINE ONLY

Marine only	Below you will find equipment specific to the marine portion of your expedition.	Tick Box
Dive Training Materials	If you're learning to SCUBA dive on expedition, you will need dive training materials. These are now entirely online so to make things easier for you we've arranged them on your behalf. You'll receive an email from us in the run up to the expedition with login details and information on how to access them. We highly recommend bringing a smartphone or tablet with you so you can then access them on expedition. If you have independently bought dive training materials please let us know as soon as possible by emailing diving@opwall.com .	
Marine medical forms	You must complete these online via the Opwall portal at least 3 months prior to travel. It's recommended that you bring out a printed copy of the completed form with you on expedition, particularly if you've had it signed by a doctor or dive medic.	
Proof of dive qualification	If you are already a qualified diver, we will require proof of your dive qualifications on site. We do accept non-PADI qualifications, as long as it is equivalent to or more advanced than PADI Open Water.	
Wetsuit or rash vest	If you wish to use one it is essential that you bring your own wetsuit. The purpose of a wetsuit is twofold, to keep you warm whilst underwater, and to protect you from marine life that may sting you. It is for this reason you cannot dive in just your swimwear. The water is very warm though so a rash vest and swim shorts is actually the best option. If you do wish to use a wetsuit, ensure that the neoprene is thin (3mm or below).	
Dive watch or computer	This is a requirement under PADI regulations for qualified divers. However, PADI allows Open Water divers to go off diving in buddy pairs on their own without a Dive Master whereas Opwall regulations require that all divers are accompanied by a Dive Master who times their dives. Under these circumstances we don't consider it necessary but if you have a waterproof watch or dive computer please take it.	
Mask, snorkel and fins	The hire costs of these items is already included in your package price to Opwall so these items will be provided for you to use onsite. You may however wish to bring your own mask & snorkel if you already have one.	

ORGANISING, PACKING & ADDED EXTRAS

Organising, packing & added extras	Top tips for packing and organising all your expedition gear and some added optional extras for you. Label your baggage, clothes and kit; there are many volunteers, and some may have the same or similar items to you.	Tick Box
Waterproof plastic/zip lock bags/dry bag/bin liners	These are very useful to keep the water out of your kit and clothes. You can line your rucksack with a bin/garbage bag and have smaller bags for clothes and items like your camera.	
Camera	You will have lots of opportunities to take pictures but please bring a waterproof carrying case/bag for the camera	
Binoculars	These are really useful to see much of the wildlife in the forest. 8x42 are the best to bring but any you may have at home will suffice.	
Earphones/cards/book	Coach journeys can be long so bring something to keep yourself entertained.	

Language/phrase book	This is a recommendation stressed by previous volunteers. Also worth noting many translating apps allow you to download language packs you can use offline	
Folding fan	You will be glad you brought one when the midday heat hits.	
Handheld mirror	You will have no access to mirrors in the jungle so it may be useful to bring one.	
Earplugs/eye mask	If you are someone that generally struggles to sleep, you may find that the lively sounds of the jungle or people walking by with their torches on keeps you awake. Also useful for a long plane and coach journey!	
Nail clippers/tweezers	If you are staying in camp for a long amount of time these will be very useful.	
Wellies	In random years we have experienced unusual levels of rain, therefore we do recommend bringing wellies if you're able to. They are also good for protection from wildlife.	
Snacks & condiments	Cereal bars, protein bars or things to spice up your meals!	

TOILETRIES

Toiletries	Good tip to travelling light is to get into small groups to combine things like toiletries to split the load of shampoo and sun block for example so you don't bring a bottle each.	Tick Box
Toiletries bag	How are you storing these	
Toothbrush & Toothpaste	Avoid bringing an electric toothbrush as you may struggle to charge it in the forest. We would recommend bringing a case to keep it clean.	
Hair and Body Wash	Biodegradable if possible, small travel sizes or bars rather than liquids to save space (make sure you have a tin if you have bars)	
Insect repellent	Malaria and dengue is extremely rare in this area but there are a lot of biting insects so for your own comfort and to protect from bites, please bring some repellent. DEET based products are very important for day to day on camp due to a natural resistance held by the local mosquitos however, if handling animals (particularly amphibians) you will need non DEET based repellent as DEET can pose a risk to the wildlife encountered.	
Talcum powder/anti-fungal powder	This is invaluable to help prevent and combat athletes foot/other fungal infections.	
Sun cream	Factor 30, minimum, is recommended. Please ensure it is a coral friendly sun-block if you intend to use it in the water.	
Sanitary towels/tampons	Please bring a supply even if you do not expect to use them as travel can disrupt your cycle.	

PERSONAL MEDICAL KIT

Personal Medical Kit	The medical provision on site is excellent and there are medics based at all camps. However, there are some items listed below you should carry yourself (as appropriate).	Tick Box
Antihistamine tablets	For insect bites. It's useful if you can bring both drowsy and non drowsy	
Antihistamine cream	Bite/sting cream. Can be very beneficial for reducing itching and swelling of insect bites.	
Paracetamol/aspirin	For headaches etc.	
Ibuprofen	For swelling etc.	
Rehydration salts	Essential! Rehydration salts kept in camp do not have the most appetising taste so please bring your own. We utilise purified water which contains a low concentration of beneficial minerals found in normal spring water. Because of this, we recommend you take a dosage of rehydration salts every day. Don't forget to read the correct dosage to ensure you are absorbing the salts correctly	
Antiseptic wipes	Cleaning cuts or grazes	
Plasters (assorted sizes)	May also be worth adding a couple of blister plasters as well as normal ones.	
Personal Medication	It is vital that you bring any prescribed medications.	
Vitamins	If you normally take these.	
Sea/travel sickness tablets	In case you need these.	

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Helpful Resources	Below you will find a selection of helpful resources for your expedition	Tick Box
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A Guide to Buying Dive Equipment	https://www.opwall.com/article/all-the-gear-but-no-ideayet/	
Top Eco-Friendly Kit Ideas	https://www.opwall.com/article/top-eco-friendly-kit-ideas/	
Beginner Fieldwork Equipment	https://www.opwall.com/article/beginner-fieldwork-equipment/	
What Equipment to Borrow or Buy	https://www.opwall.com/article/the-festive-guide-to-gearing-up-for-your-expedition/	
Top 10 Must Have Items!	https://www.opwall.com/article/lets-find-out-what-you-couldnt-live-without/	
Hair & Skin Care at a Marine Site	https://www.opwall.com/article/hair-and-skin-care-at-a-marine-site/	
Ecological Apps to Download	https://www.opwall.com/article/ecological-apps-so-you-can-identify-appsolutely-everything/	
BBC Documentaries	BBC Planet Earth, Episode 8: Jungles Documentary BBC Planet Earth, Episode 9: Freshwater Documentary BBC Life of Mammals, Episode 8: Tree Dwellers	

MONEY

Spending money is an optional extra to cover personal on-site expenditure only. This may include snacks and souvenirs you wish to purchase. The local Mexican currency is Pesos. Changing money to Pesos is possible before you leave however you can also change money at Cancun airport, or withdraw from ATMs whilst in Cancun and Akumal (NB American dollars are widely accepted but you will get a worse exchange rate).

FOOD

It is always worth thinking about bringing some extra snacks such as cereal bars as snack choices available to purchase in the forest are limited. Food in both terrestrial and marine sites is flexible to different dietary conditions, allergies and choices as long as you let us know in advance. Terrestrial site has a balanced lunch and dinner menu of local Mexican cuisine with chicken and vegetables whilst breakfast offers a selection of eggs, cornflakes, fruit, oats, milk and fruit. Marine site lunch and dinner menu is mainly vegetarian with beans, rice, pastas, potatoes and lentils. Breakfast offers a selection of fruit, cereal, toast and eggs.

WASHING FACILITIES

There will be the chance to get clothing washed by villagers or at the marine site during the expedition (around 20-40 pesos per kilo so please bring change!). Just make sure you have enough of everything to allow you to still have clothes to wear while you send others off for a few days to be washed. It is a good idea to keep one set of clothing clean for your flights to and from country, this makes your travel and the people around you more comfortable.