

SPI PROGRAM SAFETY

“Ensuring student safety and positive experiences abroad”

SPI programs are designed for mature high school students to live and study safely in a foreign country. Our programs have been in operation since 1996 (originally named PATA - Programs Abroad Travel Alternatives - and since 2004 called SPI.) Safety is our number one concern when selecting program sites and excursions. All program sites and excursions have been selected by master educators based on many factors: size, safety, low crime rates, location in the country, quality of our partner institution abroad, quality of local homestay families, and many others.

SPI maintains monthly contact throughout the school year as well as daily contact with each of our partner schools during the summer to ensure that the local condition of each program is adequate to our high standards for our students. Our executive directors make at least two site visit trips per year to ensure each program maintains our high standards of academic rigor and quality immersion.

SPI programs maintain a very good student to on-site director ratio, normally 1 director for every eight students. Our highly trained team of bilingual on-site directors, normally U.S. based language teachers, are available to students 24 hours a day to assist with their immersion experiences: helping with homestay adjustments, checking in on classes, and making sure they are taking advantage of all the wonderful excursions we provide on the weekends and in the afternoons.

We also maintain regular contact with the U.S. State Department and each of the U.S. Embassies in each of our program destination countries. The SPI team both in Austin and internationally is highly trained and knowledgeable in operating every aspect of international programs. We are parents, alumni and educators that believe in the same mission of teaching young people culture, language, independence, and communication skills that give students a truly international perspective they take with them the rest of their lives.

SPECIAL NOTE ON MEXICO PROGRAMS

The special concern of safety in Mexico has been present for many decades. Recently, an increase in drug cartel related violence primarily influenced by the high American demand for illegal drugs has plagued the border regions in northern Mexico. Queretaro, Mexico is in central Mexico in the historic and colonial center of the country which has maintained a high standard of living, strong middle class, and non-violent extremely clean cities for many years. After much analysis of the current state along the border, we firmly believe that our operations in Queretaro many hundreds of miles away remain completely unaffected. A good analogy would be if there were an earthquake in San Francisco you wouldn't tell your relatives not to visit Chicago. The same logic applies: Queretaro is one of the safest, cleanest, and most student-friendly cities in Mexico. Student experiences in Queretaro have been extremely positive for many years and we plan to continue providing this for many to come.

If you have any doubts about participating in our Mexico program we encourage you to choose one of our Spain or Costa Rica immersion experiences instead.