

WTM – Welcome to Mexico!

A land where every stop light is an adventure. You will be urged to buy everything from gum to phone cards.

A land where the needs will break your heart.

A land where you have to be on guard.

A land of sunshine and cactus.

A land of toll roads and crazy truck drivers.

A land of Manzana Lift Apple Soda and tacos.

A land of police and military searches on the highway.

A land of imprecise definitions.

The Send Off

We had a WONDERFUL time Sunday Nov. 25th at Tim and Marcy's house. They had a farewell party for us and there were over 70 friends who came by. It was such a blessing!! I think there must have been a lot of onions in the food because I kept having trouble with my eyes watering. WE KNEW WE HAD A GREAT COMPANY OF PEOPLE PRAYING FOR US AS WE BEGAN OUR 3000 MILE JOURNEY. TRUST ME; WE NEEDED IT!

The Journey

We arrived in Laredo, TX Sunday night after midnight. We were supposed to meet Alfredo, my brother in law, Monday morning but he had car trouble so he did not arrive until late Monday night. We were waiting for him so that we could cross the border with him. I am really glad we did. To have him there to interpret for us and guide us was invaluable.

He was legalizing 2 vehicles into Mexico. He had contracted with a company that did the paperwork for him and then crosses with him at the border. They advertise everywhere in the border towns and are called "Nacionales" companies. It was after noon before his papers were ready and we left Laredo.

At the first entry point Jo'ell and I got a green light so they did not search our vehicles there. We then went inside and applied for our **Tourist Visa** which is good for 180 days, or about May 30th, 2008. We are required to return to the border at that time to renew them. We also got our 6 month permits for our vehicles.

We will be applying for our FM 3 Visa's as soon as we can save up the money. This Visa is a **Permanent Resident Visa** and will allow us to stay in the country indefinitely without having to return to the border every 6 months. The only problem with this is the expense. Each FM 3 costs \$450 per year. We were originally told only Jo'ell and I would need these so it would be \$900 a year. We have since been told our whole family is required to have them. The rule to have them only for the adults only applies to the Free Zone (within 30 miles of the border.) So that will be $7 \times \$450 = \3150 . WTM Welcome to Mexico! Don't forget your wallet! *We experienced the Lord's gracious provision all along the way and I know that God will provide for these needs. 2 Cor. 9:8.*

Our border crossing experience got more interesting when we got to the big checkpoint that is at the edge of the 30 mile Free Zone. Jo'ell got a green light and Alfredo and I each got the red. There the fun began. The guard wanted us to empty out all the contents of my trailer. Long story short Alfredo was able to talk them out of this and we were allowed to leave. We did not end up paying taxes on these goods, which I think would have been up to 10%. We were really not supposed to be taking household goods in on a tourist visa anyway, so the Lord was definitely looking over us! To re-buy these items in Mexico would have cost us a lot.

By this time it was around 5 pm Tuesday Dec. 4th. We then proceeded to drive for the next 21 hours straight! We arrived in Guadalajara at 2 pm Wed. and met Lisa King from Harvest Language Center. We spent our first night sleeping at the Language Center. We met Lad and Amy DeGraffenried who graciously delivered some air mattresses for us to use as ours were buried in the trailer. Thursday morning we got a cell phone, and made some calls on houses for rent. John Rodgers, our fellow missionary with Tecate Mission, drove 100 miles from Autlan to help us with this process. He was awesome and we made arrangements to look at a house for rent Friday morning at 7:30 am. We met the landlord, a businessman named Ignacio. We liked the house and made an agreement to rent it. We met him that night and paid for 3 months up front since we had no one who owned property in Mexico to co-sign for us.

We love the house! It is really big and is only \$700 a month. We stayed at Lad and Amy's Friday night and began to move in Saturday morning. The first day our kids met the neighbor kids and were able to play ball and ride bikes together and get to know each other in spite of the language barrier. I was greeted by Hector who lives two doors down and welcomed to the neighborhood. Later that evening we met Angel and Lupita and their two children, Adrian and Alice, who live across the street. Lupita teaches English at the grade school and was a big help to us in calling the propane company to come fill up our tank so we could have hot water and a stove. We hope to get the phone hooked up and get an internet connection Mon. the 10th. This will be great so I can hook up the VOIP internet phone so we can call the States for a low rate. It will allow people in the States to call us on a Salem, OR number! The wonders of technology these days! No more one-dollar-a-minute for International calls.

Yesterday we arrived in Autlan to visit John and Elizabeth Rodgers for several days. We had a wonderful time last night attending 2 English classes taught by Elizabeth at

LaRoca. I am very excited to get involved teaching Level 1 in as soon as I am through with Language school in August. The English classes are now on Christmas break and tonight John and Elizabeth are hosting a Christian movie night at there home for some of the students. John is making some chicken soup; should be a great time!

Morgan's birthday is Tuesday, Dec. 12th. Pam Horton and several other mom's from Bethany gave us a "Birthday in a Box" for Morgan. It has gifts and decorations for Morgan's party since we would be in Mexico. Thanks! Very cool! Some people are incredibly thoughtful and giving, as well as creative!

We are excited to begin making relationships during our stay in Guadalajara as well as helping John and Elizabeth in their ministry in Autlan as we are able. A special thanks again to all of you who have prayed for us and to those of you who have given sacrificially. I am confident God is at work and daily seeking His blessing on our ministry, so I am expecting great things!

Please check out our website as you are able. I am sending out this update on Johns computer in Autlan. I hope to be able to arrange a internet connection for our house in Guadalajara when we get back next week. You can reach me via email at rick@mexico4him.org.

Rick Bruggeman

Col. 1:9,10