

Around the World

with

Stan Delaplane

MEXICO CITY—At 7,400 feet Mexico City literally took my breath away. It does that to people sometimes. Unseen but dramatic changes are going on in you.

There's shortage of oxygen. You are astonished to be wined after a two-block walk. (You're walking too fast. Stroll. Window shop.)

Digestion is slower at this altitude. (Lay off the big breakfast if you want to go to the elegant restaurant tonight.)

Drinks hit you harder and faster. Airplanes must land at higher speeds in this thin air.

But everything is downhill from Mexico City. If you get that dragged out feels (as I did this time), drive an hour down to Cuernavaca at 5,000 feet and breathe deep again. A couple of days adjustment

and you can take Mexico City.

"Will it be hard to get rooms during the Olympics in Mexico City next year?"

Travel agents and hotel men here say no problem. New hotels being built. The Olympic Village in good progress. (But how anybody can run in this altitude beats me. I couldn't make 25 yards of the 100 at a brisk walk.)

A travel agent at home is the best assurance of a room. I wouldn't bet on writing direct.

On paper, Mexico still works on what they hope will happen. What does happen may be nothing. And the most polite apologies you ever heard. Example: In past years rent

cars have always been delayed. "The previous renter did not return the car on time. The car is being repaired etc." This time I had the car delivered a day in ADVANCE.

I had it parked in a lot. I had the keys in my pocket. Secure. I checked out in the morning. Put the bags in the trunk. Tipped the bellboy and said, "Adios." Turned on the key—and the battery had gone down overnight.

Just when you think, "How modern Mexico has become!"—the handle falls off the shower. (I repaired it with the screwdriver blade of my knife. This is your emergency kit in Mexico. And emergencies come often. The house repairman is ALWAYS out to lunch. Depend on it.)

In my present hotel, the flush lever of the toilet shoots a spray of water five

feet across the room. It is better than the shower.

This is no country for the impatient. Each morning you see the Americans tapping their feet in the lobby, waiting for the late arriving tour conductor. (He is having a leisurely breakfast around the corner.) You can phone. You can argue. You can swear or threaten. But you're spinning your wheels. Better to buy a newspaper and have another coffee.

"We are thinking of living in Mexico for a few months or even years..."

This is the best of all. Americans who live in Mexico live well. The handles don't fall off their showers. Or, if they do, there's plenty of time to get them fixed. They have cars and don't wait for four or rent cars.

There are towns within an hour of the capital where it's not too high and the weather is always spring.

New Mexican immigration laws make it easy for you to live here. To rent, to buy, to build. You are off the tourist hotel - restaurant economy. Living is cheap. (But you can still go to the tourist restaurants occasionally. You are not isolated.)

You have magnificent climate. Mexico City is an exciting capital. The most

modern life when you want it. And around the corner, a house built by Cortez.

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