



C I C H A Z

centro de investigaciones científicas  
de las huastecas "aguazarca"

## Let's Go! CICHAZ

*Centro de Investigación Científica de las Huastecas  
"Aguazarca"*

*Calnali, Hidalgo, México*

*Member, Organization of Biological Field Stations*

### Introduction

Welcome to CICHAZ! We hope you have a fun, safe, and productive stay. Common sense applies. If you break something, use something, or get something dirty, please fix it, replace it, or clean it up.

**We operate the field station out of a rural residence in a remote area of rural Mexico.** Keep in mind that there is only a minimal first-aid clinic in Calnali, and only marginally better care in Zacualtipán and Huejutla, each over an hour away. The nearest good hospitals are in Pachuca and Tampico, 3 ½ and 4 hours away, respectively. Make sure you have appropriate medication/training for any conditions or allergies you have. **The facilities we operate do not conform to U.S. or any institutional safety standards. By working, visiting, or volunteering at CICHAZ, you assume any and all risks and responsibilities and release the owners and users of CICHAZ, as well as their employers and affiliated institutions, from any and all liability.**

### Getting There

#### By bus and taxi:

From **Mexico City's** Terminal Norte, there are occasional Estrella Blanca second-class (unairconditioned, slow) buses to Calnali, about 5 hours, for about \$120 pesos. There are also frequent Estrella Blanca buses to Huejutla and Molango, both of which stop in Molango (about 4 hours) where you can take a taxi into Calnali (\$300 pesos, another 40 min). **Taxis stop running in the late evening.** From the **Mexico City airport**, the easiest thing to do is to take a first-class airport bus to the **Pachuca** bus terminal (\$170 pesos) and then catch one of the aforementioned buses north, although they often fill up in Mexico City and you may have to stand for a while. The bus passes right by CICHAZ

before entering downtown Calnali; ask the bus driver to look out for the bougainvilleas on the left hand side after crossing the bridge before Calnali.

You can also make arrangements for a Calnali taxi to pick you up at the Pachuca bus station (\$700).

From Tampico, there are several first-class ADO buses from the downtown ADO terminal to Huejutla several times a day (4 hours, about \$200 pesos). From Huejutla, there are 1 or 2 combis (minibuses) to Huejutla. You can also take a taxi from Huejutla to Calnali (about \$500).

From Cd. Valles, take a bus to Tamazunchale and then ask for directions to the Huejutla bus stop; there are buses for about \$50 pesos that take about an hour and run every half hour. Follow directions from Huejutla as above.

### **By car:**

#### *General tips for driving in Mexico*

On rural roads, a left turn signal usually means "pass me", unless the car is slowing down, and a right turn signal means "do not pass". When turning left, do not use your turn signal; slow down and stick your arm out the window to indicate a left turn.

Slow down for topes (speed bumps) through towns and small settled areas.

Be on the lookout for washouts and rockslides. Branches on the ground and red cloths on vegetation mean there's danger ahead, as do hazard lights on the vehicle in front of you.

Gas is available in several places in and around Calnali, including Miguel's across the street, sold out of 20-L jerrycans at a slight markup. The gas is fine, but it's cheaper and more convenient to try and fill up in Molango, Atlapexco, or Huejutla.

### **Directions from Tampico, College Station, Brownsville, McAllen, and points northeast:**

Follow signs to Pánuco, Veracruz. At Pánuco, head south towards Tempoal (recommended: El Palenque restaurant on east side of highway), then bear southwest towards Huejutla. Gas up in Huejutla, as it's the last real gas station before Calnali. It's slightly over an hour to Calnali. Follow signs out of Huejutla towards Mexico City and Pachuca. Right after leaving the built-up area of Huejutla, turn left towards Atlapexco. Immediately before Atlapexco, turn right onto bypass road towards Yahualica. Keep going straight through Tlalchihualica and Mecatlán (do not turn uphill towards Yahualica). You'll go over a bridge after Mecatlán, and the kilometer markers now count down to the Calnali turnoff. There are frequent rockslides on this road, so be careful.

Pass the town of Calnali , on your right, and both turnoffs for Calnali/centro. CICHAZ is on your right about 100 m after the second turnoff.

**By car from Cd. Valles, S. L. P., Monterrey , Laredo , and points northwest:**

Drive south on federal Highway 85 to Tamazunchale; right after the bridge, turn left towards S. Felipe Orizatlán. Bypass S. Felipe Orizatlán, then turn right towards Mexico City/Pachuca before you enter Huejutla. The bypass road will cross Hwy. 105; keep going straight towards Atlapexco and follow directions above.

**By car from Tuxpan, Veracruz port, and points southeast:**

From Álamo , Veracruz , follow signs to Chicontepec. At Benito Juárez, keep going straight on towards Atlapexco and Huautla (do not turn towards Chicontepec). The last gas station is right before Atlapexco. Keep going straight towards Atlapexco, and stay on the bypass road to the right of the town of Atlapexco . Immediately after passing the town, turn left towards Yahualica and follow directions as above.

**By car from Mexico City , Pachuca , and points south and southwest:**

Take Hwy. 105 north through Zacualtipán. There can be dense fog from this point on. Gas up in Molango. Right before Ixtlahuaco, turn east (downhill) towards Calnali. After about 20-30 min, you'll cross a bridge over the Río Calnali (Calnali-mid). CICHASZ will be on your left next to the Vidrios y Aluminio sign.

**By donkey from Pochutla:**

The donkey knows where to go.

## Keys

- Key sets are hanging on a hook in the main dining room. Each has four keys. One goes to the front door, another to the garage door, one to the fish room, and one to the back door.
- The door to the second floor deck has a padlock that can only be unlocked from inside the house. Be careful not to lock yourself out when you go on to the deck – it happens!

## Arrival Checklist

### *Water*

- **Please conserve water** as much as possible. Supply can be intermittent. The black plastic reservoir on top of the roof is filled intermittently with chlorinated

water for bath and kitchen use, and we have gone up to 48 hours without running water. This water is chlorinated and fine for brushing teeth and showering, but don't drink it.

- If you're keeping aquatic creatures, turn on the water to the dechlorinated water reservoir on the roof and treat with 35 ml Amquel once it's full.
  - White PVC taps in fishroom and interior lab room produce dechlorinated fish water from the rooftop reservoir. **Please conserve water** as much as possible. Supply can be intermittent.

### ***Propane Gas***

- Upon arrival at CICHAZ, go up to the roof and open the valve to the propane tank, then light the pilot on the hot water heater.
- Make sure there is propane – if the level is low, you need to flag down the propane truck next time it drives by (the driver rings a bell)
- To light the boiler if necessary, bring a flashlight, a lighter (avoid crappy little local matches, get the big wooden ones if you can find them). There should be a pair of pliers permanently there. Follow instructions printed on the boiler for lighting pilot and boiler; use the pliers to turn the metal knob.

### ***Electricity***

- The fuse box is on front of the house and breaker may have to be turned on to get power.
  - Extra fuses are in the storage room and on the window sill closest to the fuse box.
  - Please replace with identical fuses from hardware store in town.
  - Power is "dirty" and fails occasionally, so bring voltage regulators if working with delicate equipment. A headlamp is a great accessory to have.

### ***General***

- Check shoes and drawers for tarantulas and scorpions.
- First aid stuff is on top of the science fridge.
- Rechargeable batteries are in the utility room along with tools, etc. (probably disorganized).
- Headlamps and bug spray are in the main dining room.

## **Bathrooms**

### ***Toilets***

- Try to urinate in the garden rather than in toilets. Anything that goes down the drains ends up in the river downstream of town, untreated.
- Put toilet paper and other sanitaris in trashcans rather than down the toilet. The plumbing can handle a tiny bit of paper (one wipe).
- If the water is off, fill a bucket with water from the fish tanks outside and pour the water into the toilet when you are done.

### ***Showers***

- Try to keep them brief.

### ***Sinks***

- Tap water is chlorinated and fine for brushing teeth, but don't drink it.

## **Garbage**

Once a week, usually on Fridays, the garbage truck drives by. They make their presence known by ringing a bell. The neighbors will usually tell you when the truck is coming. Bring the trash to the curb in front of the field station and give the collectors 5-10 pesos depending on how much trash there is to collect

## **Food**

### **Groceries and foraging**

#### ***CICHAZ***

- CICHAZ produces coffee, lots of citrus, papayas, beans, peaches, bananas, and herbs. Help yourself to firewood, fruits, and vegetables. Be sure to try the pomarosa (rose-flavored fruits in season in May/June) near the path to the river.
- There should be a supply of raw coffee beans. Feel free to ask Irma for more. The unprocessed dried beans are kept in sacks in the computer room upstairs. To roast them, put about 2 cups in the popcorn popper and run it for 2 hours (medium roast).
- There is a coffee grinder, a coffee maker, and a French press.

### ***Karla and Miguel's store (directly across the street)***

- You can get general staples here (milk, basic veggies, eggs, beer, water, snacks, packaged flour tortillas, etc)
- 20-L water bottles can be exchanged for ~12 pesos. Bring your empty in exchange for a full one.
- Santa Clara milk is all milk, other brands are cut with vegetable products.
- Cases of big and small Victoria beer bottles are available. They usually don't charge a deposit on the bottles, but these need to be **returned** before you leave.
  
- For wheat flour and other basic staples not available at Karla and Miguel's, try **Miscelanea Nelly** located across the street a few houses to the left of Karla and Miguel's.

### ***Abarrotes El Coyote***

- This is the main supermarket in town, you can get American-style white bread and all the basics here except fresh meat and veggies.

### ***Market***

- Fruit and vegetable stands are set up most days of the week. A butcher shop by the *presidencia* (town hall) has fresh meat. The chicken stands sell both fresh chicken and tasty rotisserie chicken.
- If you want fresh corn tortillas, you'll have to go to tortillerias in town. Everyone in the neighborhood has their own family cornfield (*milpa*) and makes them by hand more or less as they have done for the past 1000 years or so.
- The fresh bread, available next door and in town, is very good, but it's nearly all sweet bread.
- Market day is **Sunday**. Show up by 11 am to ensure you'll find everything you need. See glossary for specific items available in the market. The most unusual items are sold by elderly indigenous ladies sitting on the ground, mostly in the central plaza.

## **Eating out**

- Some of the best food is sold at taco and other small family stands – see glossary for specifics. **Hotel Oviedo/Restaurant La Jarochita** has substantial and delicious meals for about \$120.

## **Kitchen**

### ***Refrigerator***

- Please put anything smelly in the “science fridge” located in the utility room.

### ***Stove and Oven***

- There are reports that the oven isn't lighting properly. There is a microwave, too.

### ***Dishes***

- Please minimize the soap and water used to clean dishes
- Dishes should be done after each meal to minimize ants, roaches, etc – this is the tropics, after all.
- Please use the blue sponge for washing dishes.
- Please do not use any metal utensils when cooking with the non-stick pots/pans.

### ***Counters***

- After cooking, please wipe down the counters with the yellow sponge.

## **Sheets and Towels**

- Sheets and blankets can be found in the black chest on the second floor landing (in the corner).
- Towels can be found in the book shelf on the second floor.
- When you leave, pile sheets and towels on washing machine.

## **Laundry**

- Wash clothes in washing machine, then hang on second floor terrace to dry. If it is raining, hang clothes on the back patio.

## **General Cleaning**

- The kitchen floor should be swept regularly to avoid bugs.
- Irma will come to clean the house twice a week, but guests are expected to clean up after themselves.

## **Communication**

### ***Internet***

- Internet service may or may not work inside the house. There is an unsecured wireless network. There are several internet cafés in town, including one on the main street (La Web@) across from the Hotel Oviedo

### ***Printer***

- Install CDs for Mac and PC are in the file cabinet on the other side of the desk from the printer.

### **Phone**

- We don't have a landline, all communication is by cell phone.
- If calling from outside Mexico, country code is +52-1 for a cell phone and +52 for a landline.
- To call from Mexico to a foreign country, dial 00 and then the number.
- *Tarjetas Telcel* (phone cards) are available at Don Magdaleno's store down the street and elsewhere in town. Substantial discounts (more minutes) apply if you buy higher-value cards (\$200 or \$500).

### **Equipment**

- Dissecting scope, scale, drying oven, RNase Away, RNALater, and 1.5 ml tubes are available in the dry lab, along with at least one Flip HD camera you're welcome to use.
- There are also blank DVDs, rite-in-the-rain paper, etc.

### **The Garden**

- There is a nest of Africanized honeybees about halfway to the river and on the left. Don't bother them.
- Introduced fire ants are a pest here just like in Texas. They are merely annoying unless you are allergic.
- There is an abrupt drop-off to the river, exercise caution with young children or impaired adults.
- Don't remove any fish from this stretch of river, as this is our long term study population.

### **Health**

The clinic is located in Barrio Tlala southeast of downtown. Several private physicians are available for less urgent matters. A first aid kit is on top of the science fridge.

The best pharmacy in town is in the narrow street one block south of the main street.

Biting gnats and mosquitoes abound, apply insect repellent liberally. **Do not get insect repellent anywhere near fish, fish tanks, or fish supplies.**



If you've never been to Mexico before, you will get an intestinal bug. Pepto-Bismol, Imodium, and harder stuff are available at pharmacies in town. If lots of locals are eating someplace, it's likely to be perfectly safe. But if it's your first time you will get sick no matter what you do.

## Neighborhood

We strive to be an integral part of the local community. We are fortunate to have great neighbors who help keep CICHAZ secure and running smoothly. Patronize local businesses as much as possible. Neighborhood kids will often come into the living/dining area after school and on weekends to play. There is a small, growing library of children's books; each kid can take one book home at a time and has to bring it back before taking another. Contribute Spanish or Spanish/English kids' books if you can, and feel free to leave grown-up books/magazines in any language behind if you're done reading them.

- Clemente and Irma Hernandez, and their children Ricardo, Osvaldo, Heriberto, Yesica, and Mareli are the primary caretakers of CICHAZ. They live across the street directly in front of the Taller de Vidrios next door. Ask them for help with anything you need.
- Karla and Rey and their children Diego, Miriam, Mariana and Yasmin, next door at the Taller de Vidrios and Abarrotes San Antonio, sell dry goods, milk, fruits and vegetables, fresh tortilla dough, beer, and occasionally marinated meat. Rey can do any metal or glass work you might require.
- Ernestina is the older lady next door on the other side of the house.

## Entertainment

### *TV/ DVD Player*

The TV is on its last legs. To enjoy our movie collection, use your laptop and plug in to the big monitor and speakers in the living room.

## Departure Checklist

<b>Roof</b>	
	Blow out the pilot light on the hot water heater
	If you've kept aquatic creatures, turn off the water to the dechlorinated water reservoir.
	Close the valve to the natural gas tank
<b>Kitchen</b>	
	Make sure Clemente and Irma know about any perishables you leave in the fridge on departure.

	Put spices/pastas/rice/beans in refrigerator
	Throw away sponges
<b>Bathrooms</b>	
	Empty trashcans into can in the back
	Gather sheets and towels for the laundry and leave them on the washing machine for Irma
<b>Bedrooms</b>	
	Strip beds
	Lock windows
<b>Office</b>	
	Unplug printer
	Lock windows
	Lock balcony door
<b>General</b>	
	Leave all lab and fishroom areas as you found them on arrival.
	Lock up the house
	Turn off all lights
	First time visitors need to sign the wall

## Phone Numbers

- Primitivo (Primi), Calnali cab driver 771 729 3606
  - Can pick up visitors at the Pachuca bus station (*terminal*) an hour and a half after the bus is scheduled to leave Mexico City.

## Mexican Glossary

### Transportation

*Camión*: bus

*Central* or *Terminal*: bus station

### Food and drink

*Vino*: wine and also hard liquor, e.g. tequila, rum

*Quelites*: catch-all term for any leafy vegetable

*Empanada*: called a *gordita* in Texas, thick cooked corn masa stuffed with something yummy. Try the *empanadas de alberjón* in the market.

*Tamal*: corn masa with something yummy in the middle, wrapped in corn, plantain, or (best) *papatla* leaves.

*Zacahuil*: A megatamal stuffed with pork and spicy sauce. Not to be missed.

*Tacos al pastor*: seasoned pork on a shish kabob spit and a little piece of heaven on earth, available down the street and downtown next to the town hall, particularly on weekends.

*Quesadilla*: a grilled cheese taco.

*Gringa*: a grilled cheese taco with *pastor* meat. People will be amused if you order this.

*Elote*: whole ear of corn

*Esquite*: whole corn mixed with cream, salt, chile and lime. A lot yummiier than it sounds or looks. *Elotes y Esquites* carts are common.

*Camote*: sweet potato, sold by guys pushing carts that sound a forlorn steam whistle.

*Atole*: A thin corn porridge, usually flavored with *elote* or chocolate. Lots of artificial flavors too.

*Carnitas, suadero*: Meats sold in taco stands at market, which you should try although better ones are available in Mexico City. We have a magazine issue of “Chilango” that lists the 100 best taco stands in the capital.

*Guanábana*: soursop. Sporadically available fresh; often available as a popsicle; exquisite.

Beer (*chela*): *Indio* = *Negra Modelo* > *Bohemia* > *Victoria* > *Modelo* > *Tecate*

*Michelada*: any of the above plus lime juice, chile, salt, and often Worcestershire sauce, over ice. The best thing ever for outdoor work.

*Tequila*: *Herradura Reposado* > *Cazadores* > *Jimador* > *Centenario* >>>> *Ranchito Viejo* et al.

You can buy *aguardiente* at 5 pesos a liter from Karla. It will cause you to do very stupid things.

The *pulque*, sold across the river from the town square in Tlala on market days, is worth trying, along with the flavored *pulque curado*, if you can stand the crowd of drunks surrounding the place.

*Mole, adobo*: a rich sauce based on chiles, tomatoes, tomatillos, chocolate, etc. Every one is a bit different. Always worth trying.

*Jicama*: (also common in Texas): crunchy root vegetable peeled and eaten raw by itself or in salads. A perennial favorite.

*Epazote*: An aromatic herb used in cooking. Fills the curry-leaf niche for Asian food.

*Tomate (verde)*: tomatillo

*Jitomate*: tomato

Milk: *Santa Clara* (real milk) >> *Mileche*, *Nutrileche*, et al. (milk plus veggie)

*Chiles*

Fresh, from mildest to hottest:

*morrón* (green pepper), *poblano*, *serrano*, *jalapeño*, *piquín*, *habanero*

Dried:

Smoky, not too spicy, fills the sun dried tomato niche:

*Ancho*

Not smoky, spicy

*Guajillo*, *cascabel*, *piquin*

Smoky and spicy from mildest to hottest

*Pasilla*, *guero*, *habanero*

*Birria* or *barbacoa de borrego*: Stewed lamb and consomé, not to be missed

*Barbacoa de res*: steamed cow face, sublime

*Barbacoa de pollo*: Chicken steamed in maguey leaves – interesting but not spectacular

*Limón* – lime

*Lima o lima-limón* – lemon

*Nuez* – pecan

*Nuez de Castilla* – walnut (good luck finding it)

*Paste*: Mexican descendant of Cornish pasty, brought to Pachuca by miners along with soccer.

*Menudo o mondongo*: tripe soup, usually found on weekends only

### **Fauna and flora**

*Tlacuache*: possum (Virginia opossum and other didelphids). Sometimes can be found in *adobo*.

*Mapache*: raccoon

*Mahuaquite*: fer-de-lance (never actually seen).

*Mala mujer*: broad leaved stinging plant.

*Escuintle*: literally, little dog, also applied to obnoxious child.

*Vampiro*: bat.

### **Miscellaneous:**

*La Llorona*: demented lady who wanders the river bottom at night, crying for her drowned children.

*Tianguis* – market

*Papalote* - kite

*No me chingues, cabrón* – useful phrase if you suspect you're being ripped off or if someone is just being obnoxious