

## Crossing into Mexico



Welcome to Mexico! Whether the country's fascinating and exciting history beckons you, or you're lured by the promise of sunny beaches, crystal clear water and unsurpassed fishing—we're sure Mexico is a tropical adventure you'll want to experience over and over again. Both the Baja California peninsula and mainland Mexico offer the traveler a world of cultural and recreational amenities.

But before you hit the road, there's a few things you should know:

### HOW DO I GET IN?

As of June 1, 2009 land or sea travelers must have a valid U.S. passport, passport card or WHTI-compliant document. WHTI-Compliant Travel Documents for U.S. citizen travel via land or sea are: Trusted Traveler Cards (NEXUS, SENTRI or FAST); State Issued Enhanced Driver's License (when available); U.S. Military Identification with Military Travel Orders; U.S. Merchant Mariner Document when traveling in conjunction with official maritime business; Native American Tribal Photo Identification Card; Form I-872 American Indian Card. As the cutoff dates/requirements keep changing, it is advisable to check for the latest information before leaving home. For the latest entry requirements, contact the Embassy of Mexico website at [www.embassyofmexico.org/eng/](http://www.embassyofmexico.org/eng/) or contact the Embassy of Mexico at 1911 Pennsylvania Avenue N. W., Washington, D.C. 20006, telephone (202) 736-1000, or any Mexican consulate in the United States for the most current information.

You can enter or leave Baja Mexico at the following Mexican border towns: Tijuana, Otay Mesa, Tecate, Mexicali, and Algodones. Keep in mind that Tijuana is the busiest border crossing in the world. Both the Baja California peninsula and the Sonora area are considered Free Trade Zones. When crossing into these regions, there are no procedures to comply with and all that is required is valid vehicle registration, proof of citizenship, and a vehicle permit and tourist card, if you're planning on staying more than 72 hours. Tourist cards are available at immigration offices/booths at the border, at airports, or other points of entry.

You can enter or leave mainland Mexico at the following Mexican border towns: Nogales, Arizona to Nogales, Mexico; El Paso, TX to Ciudad Juarez, MX; Laredo, TX to Nuevo Laredo, MX; McAllen, TX to Reynosa, MX and Brownsville, TX to Matamoros, MX.

Clearing customs may vary from 30

minutes to several hours. The best time is on weekdays, early in the morning.

### HOW DO I OBTAIN A PERMIT?

At the border, drive your vehicle to a Mexican customs office and present an original plus two (2) copies of the following documents:

- Valid proof of citizenship (passport or birth certificate)
- The appropriate immigration form (tourist card)
- The valid vehicle registration certificate, or a document, such as the original title that certifies the legal ownership of the vehicle. It must be in the driver's name.
- The leasing contract (if the vehicle is leased or rented) which must be in the name of the person importing the car. If the vehicle belongs to a company, present the document that certifies the employee works for them.
- A valid driver's license, issued outside of Mexico.
- A processing fee to either a Banjército (Mexican Army Bank) branch located at a Mexican Customs (Aduanas) office at the port of entry, or at one of the Mexican Consulates located in the U.S.
- An international credit card, also issued outside of Mexico (American, Express, Diner's Club, Mastercard or Visa) in the name of the driver of the vehicle.

Note: If you do not possess an international credit card, you will be asked to post a cash deposit of between \$200-\$400, payable to the Federal Treasury, issued by an authorized bonding company in Mexico.

Once you have the originals and photocopies of these documents, present them to the Vehicular Control Module located in Customs to process the importation permit. All documents and the credit card must be in the name of the owner, who must also be in the vehicle when crossing the border.

Your international credit card will be charged an amount in national currency equivalent to approximately \$30.00 USD at the Banjército.

Upon your departure from Mexico, and if the vehicle is not going to be driven back into Mexico, the permit for temporary importation must be cancelled at Customs. Please remember, if your car is found in Mexico beyond the authorized time, or without the appropriate documents, it will be immediately confiscated.

You can now fill out your vehicle permit online at the following web page:

<http://www.banjercity.com.mx/site/imagenes/iitv/instruccionesIITV.html>

U.S. and Canadian citizens are required to obtain a Tourist Card from any Mexican Embassy, Consulate, Tourist Office or right at the border. Despite any advice, official or unofficial, to the contrary, vehicle permits cannot be obtained at checkpoints in the interior of Mexico. If the proper permit is not obtained at the Banjercito branch at the port of entry, do not proceed to the interior.

You do not need a card if you are visiting the immediate border zone or the city of Ensenada provided you do not stay in Mexico longer than 72 hours. We recommend that you carry proof of citizenship, whether or not you obtain a tourist card.

All non-Mexican citizens will be charged a fee of approximately \$30 USD for each tourist card (FMT) or other immigration forms, payable in pesos.

- Single entry card: Valid for up to 90 days.
- Multiple entry card: Permits unlimited entry into Mexico for 180 days. Card must be used within 90 days of issuance.

Have your tourist cards validated at the point of entry. If you overstay your time limit, you'll be subject to a fine.

### ANSWERS TO COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1) The temporary authorization for the importation of vehicles is valid for any type of vehicle weighing less than three tons for periods of up to six months (180 days).

2) The temporarily imported vehicle may be driven across the border multiple times during the authorized period.

3) Always carry with you the importation permit when driving your car in Mexico. Do not leave this document in the vehicle; it is indispensable in the case of damage, theft or accident.

4) The sale, abandonment, or use of the vehicle for financial gain will result in its confiscation.

5) The vehicle temporarily imported by the owner may be driven in Mexico by the spouse or adult children, as long as they have the same immigration status. Other persons may drive the vehicle as long as the owners is in the vehicle.

### IS INSURANCE REQUIRED? WILL I NEED A VEHICLE PERMIT?

Mexican car insurance (bring proof of insurance) is mandatory. Mexican authorities only recognize insurance policies issued through a Mexican-licensed company. It is strongly recommended that you

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purchase Mexican insurance before crossing the border.

Sanborns is a full service insurance company that helps travelers obtain the most complete insurance for their car/RV, through mail and e-mail.

**Important Note:** Be sure to cancel your vehicle permit before you leave Mexico and get a receipt. Failure to turn in your vehicle permit before the expiration date may result in very high fines or you may be denied entry on your next trip. Permits cannot be mailed back (no exceptions). The “only 1-six month permit per year” rule is still enforced, but you may be able to cross at a different bridge.

### ARE THERE ANY RESTRICTIONS AS TO WHAT I CAN BRING ACROSS THE BORDER?

Personal baggage (in reasonable quantities) is duty-free, provided all items are declared upon entry and are for your own personal use. Foreign-made items (such as cameras, binoculars, etc.) should be registered with U.S. Customs before crossing the border. This will verify (upon re-entry into the U.S.) that such items were not purchased in Mexico. Personal effects may include shoes, personal computer, CD player, 5 DVDs, 20 music CDs or audio cassettes, and a cellular phone. Any tourist carrying such items, even if duty-free, should enter the “Merchandise to Declare” lane at the first customs check-point. If you have no merchandise to declare, you must go through the Stop and Go light check point. A green light means proceed ahead without inspection. A red light means stop for inspection.

You may take into Mexico a carton of cigarettes, up to 50 cigars, 1 still camera, 1 motion picture camera, 1 video camera, 12 rolls of film, and 12 blank cassettes. Tripods are allowed in most areas, but a special permit is required for their use in historic sites. There are certain restrictions regarding agricultural items: most fruits are prohibited, and if you decide to take fruit or meat with you into Mexico, you will not be allowed to bring these items back with you, and there is a fine of \$50-\$1000 if you fail to declare agricultural items. It's recommended that you ask a CBP Officer for a list of items you are allowed to bring back with you before you go to Mexico.

### WHAT ABOUT FISHING?

While fishing is fantastic in Mexico, there are few tackle shops in Baja.

### WHAT ABOUT FIREARMS?

Do not bring firearms into Mexico.

### AM I ALLOWED TO BRING MY PET?

Yes, as long as your paperwork is original (no copies) and current. You will need:

1. A vaccination certificate issued within the last three months stating that your pet has been vaccinated against rabies, hepatitis, pip and leptospirosis.

2. An official health certificate that must be issued by a veterinarian no more than 72 hours before entering Mexico.

You may enter the country with up to

two large pets (dogs or cats). If you have more than two pets, you would need permission, which could be obtained from the Mexican consulate nearest you.

### I'M CONCERNED ABOUT HEALTH CONDITIONS.

While health conditions are generally good, especially in areas frequented by tourists, travelers everywhere should take certain precautions:

- Avoid overindulgence in food, beverages and exercise.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Avoid tap water. (This includes ice cubes, water used to mix drinks, and water used for brushing teeth). Request agua purificado (purified water) or agua mineral.
- Choose carefully when selecting dairy products and vegetables. If you'd like to sample fresh fruit, it is best to select fruit which must be peeled.

### SAFETY AND SECURITY

To avoid problems when passing through customs, keep medicines in their original, labeled containers. Bring copies of your prescriptions and the generic names for the drugs. If a medication is unusual or contains narcotics, carry a letter from your doctor attesting to your need to take the drug. If you have any doubt about the legality of a certain drug, consult the Mexican embassy before you travel.

Pack an extra set of passport photos along with a photocopy of your passport's information page to make replacing your passport easier in the event it is lost or stolen. Leave a copy of your itinerary with family or friends at home in case they need to contact you in an emergency.

The Mexican Constitution prohibits political activities by foreigners and such actions may result in detention and/or deportation. Travelers should avoid political demonstrations and other activities that might be deemed political by the Mexican authorities even if peaceful.

Contact the U.S. Embassy for further security information prior to traveling to the southern states of Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 888/407-4747 toll free in the United States, or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 202/501-4444.

### WHAT IF I WANT TO TRAVEL BETWEEN BAJA AND MAINLAND MEXICO?

This is where you'll need that car permit. Automobile and RV ferries operate between: La Paz and Topolobampo; La Paz and Mazatlan; Santa Rosalia and Guaymas. If you have not obtained a car permit before entering Mexico, you can get one in La Paz.

### COULD YOU EXPLAIN THE METRIC SYSTEM?

We'll try. For those who are mathematically minded, the following are the formulas for metric conversion. The rest of us will appreciate the charts:

### Distance & Speed Limits (Kilometers):

Kilometers refer to both distance and speed. A kilometer is approximately 5/8 mile. To convert miles to kilometers: number of miles x 1.6 = kilometers; and number of kilometers x 0.62 = miles.

9 mph	=	15 km/h
18 mph	=	30 km/h
25 mph	=	40 km/h
37 mph	=	60 km/h
43 mph	=	70 km/h
50 mph	=	80 km/h
62 mph	=	100 km/h

### Temperature (Celsius):

$9/5 \times 0C + 32 =$ Fahrenheit		
$F - 32 \times 5/9 =$ Celsius		
59°F	=	15°C
66°F	=	19°C
70°F	=	21°C
79°F	=	26°C
86°F	=	30°C
95°F	=	35°C

### Gasoline:

While gasoline is usually available along major highways, it's wise to keep your fuel tank at least half full. Gas at regular Pemex Gas stations is fine. However, travelers often filter the fuel through a chamois cloth when gas is purchased at out-of-the-way locations. Gas and oil are sold in Mexico by the liter. One U.S. gallon is approx. 3.8 liters. (One Imperial gallon is approx. 4.5 liters.) Number of gallons x 3.79 = liters. Number of liters x 0.26 = gallons.

10 gal.	=	37 liters
20 gal.	=	75 liters
30 gal.	=	113 liters
40 gal.	=	151 liters
49 gal.	=	189 liters
59 gal.	=	227 liters
69 gal.	=	265 liters

### WHAT IS MEXICAN CURRENCY?

Prices in Mexican money are often reflected by “m.n.” (moneda nacional) and prices in American money, “dills”. (dollars). The dollar sign (\$) indicates pesos as well as dollars.

To get the best rate of exchange, change some of your travelers checks into pesos at a bank just before or after you cross the border.

Banks generally open about 9 a.m., close between noon and 2 p.m. and sometimes re-open from 4 to 6 p.m.

### ARE TRAFFIC RULES THE SAME?

Yes and No. Persons involved in traffic accidents who cannot produce an acceptable policy (one issued by a Mexican-licensed company) may be detained by the authorities pending investigation. In the event of an accident, a report should be filed with your Mexican insurance company before returning to the U.S.

Slow down at all railroad crossings as they are not all properly marked and signaled and they are often uneven and can damage your vehicle.

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Be careful when using your left turn signal on a highway. A left signal on the open road is an invitation to the vehicle behind you to pass.

Do not drive at night. Nighttime hazards include livestock, which often lay on the asphalt at night for warmth, pedestrians, and vehicles without proper lights. Poor lighting and lack of shoulders on the road make rollovers a common hazard.

Watch for signs that show a series of hemispheres along a horizontal line. These indicate a topé is ahead. These speed bumps are steel or concrete domes embedded in the pavement and are guaranteed to slow you down.

Citizen-band radios are helpful when traveling in rural areas. Three channels have been established for tourists. Channel 9 for emergencies; Channel 11 for tourist caravans; Channel 13 for vehicle-to-vehicle conversation.

Curva peligroso means “dangerous curve” and curvas peligrosas means many dangerous curves.

Vado warns of a dip in the road ahead, usually crossing an arroyo. Be especially careful during and after rains as these can fill rapidly with run off water.

Precaucion means precaution—slow down and keep a sharp lookout ahead.

Alto means stop.

Do not drive in Mexico City. The traffic is heavily congested and there are only certain days when your numbered license plate is allowed, tourists included!

### WHAT ABOUT SENDING GIFTS TO OUR FRIENDS IN THE STATES?

Mark the package “Unsolicited Gift” and list the contents and fair retail value. If the retail value isn't over \$100, you can send it tax-free. If it's over \$100, it's subject to a tax, to be collected by the U.S. Postal Service, along with a handling fee of \$5.

### ARE THERE LIMITATIONS AS TO WHAT I CAN BRING HOME?

When re-entering the U.S., list your purchases, have your sales receipts handy and pack your purchases separately for convenience of inspection.

You may bring back, free of duty, \$400 (fair U.S. retail value) worth of articles for personal or household use. If you are 21 or older, you may include one liter of alcohol if it is for your own use or as a gift.

If you've run up a tab larger than \$400, a flat duty rate of 10% will be applied to the next \$1,000 worth of merchandise.

Anything over \$1,400 is subject to varying taxes.

Bringing certain agricultural products including fresh fruits and vegetables, meats and poultry are prohibited.

### I DON'T KNOW ANY SPANISH!

That's all right, because many Mexicans speak some English—especially in areas frequented by tourists. The further you venture from these popular areas, however, the less English will be spoken. Make sure you have a good English-Spanish dictionary and a basic Spanish phrase book.

### ANYTHING ELSE?

You might want to check your health insurance policy, as some plans do not extend coverage outside the country of residence. If this is the case, you can obtain traveler's health insurance.

Make sure your vehicle is in top mechanical condition. While the Green Angels (government-sponsored mechanics who travel the main roads in green and white trucks and offer motorists assistance) can be a life saver, there are some problems they are not equipped to handle. Check all tires (including spares), fluid levels, brakes, batteries, filters, belts, pumps and radiators. Shock absorbers are very important. It's a good idea to carry extra belts and hoses, as well as the tools needed to install them. While skilled mechanics can be found in larger towns,

parts may be another story.

There are many road tolls and while tourists are supposed to get a discount, they often do not.

Speaking of tolls, there is a fee to use your video camera in any of the ruins, museums, etc. Ask with a smile, for permission to photograph and you'll usually get a positive answer. But remember that no flashes are allowed.

### WHERE CAN I WRITE FOR MORE INFORMATION?

- Discover Baja Travel Club, 3089 Claremont Dr., San Diego, CA 92117, (800/727-BAJA)

[www.discoverbaja.com](http://www.discoverbaja.com)

- Vagabundos Del Mar Travel Club, P.O. Box 824W, Isleton, CA 95641, (800/474-BAJA) [www.vagabundos.com](http://www.vagabundos.com)

- Instant Mexican Auto Insurance, 223 Via De San Ysidro, San Ysidro, CA 92173 (800/345-4701)

[www.instant-mex-auto-insur.com](http://www.instant-mex-auto-insur.com)

- Mexican Insurance Professionals, 1300 S Milton, Ste 224, Flagstaff, AZ 86001 (888/INS-4-MEX or 928/214-9750).

[www.mexonline.com/mexpro.htm](http://www.mexonline.com/mexpro.htm)

- MacAfee & Edwards Mexican Insurance Specialties, (800/334-7950).

- Director of Tourism, (Baja California Sur), Carr. Al Norte, Km. 5.5 Fracc, Fidepaz CP 23090 La Paz, B.C.S. (612/124-0100). (note: proceed with international operator number and country code 52).

The Mexican Government Tourism office can be reached by calling 800/44-MEXICO. Regional offices are:

Houston, TX: (713/880-5153)

New York, NY: (212/755-7261)

Toronto: (416/925-0704)

# Mexico

## WOODALL'S Complete Site Listings

All privately-owned campgrounds personally inspected by  
Woodall Representative Marcia Waggoner.

Unless otherwise noted, all parks listed have flush toilets and hot showers.

### Atlatomulco (Mexico)

**Parque El Ocotál** Altitude 9000 ft. From Atlatomulco take Hwy 5 E, at far edge of Santiago Acutzilapan (1st road past the Pemex Station) go 1 mi N. Enter on R. **FACILITIES:** 50 sites, 50 no hkup, picnic tables, fire rings, grills. **RECREATION:** bsktball, playground. Rec open to public. Open all yr. Phone: 011 52(7)214-9919

### Maravatio (Michoacan)

▲ **Campamento Turístico Los Azufres** (City Pk) Altitude 9300 ft. From Hwy 15, W of Cd. Hidalgo, take the Rd to Los Azufres, 12 mi. Enter on R. **FACILITIES:** 100 sites, 100 no hkup, 95 sites for tents only, cooking counter, tent rentals, cabins, ltd groc, picnic tables, grills, wood. **RECREATION:** pavilion, 3 swim pools, hiking trails. No pets. Open all yr. Phone: 011-52-443-324-2372

The largest wildcat in  
North America is  
the jaguar, which can be found  
in Mexico's southern jungles