

# Mexico

For other places with the same name, see [Mexico \(disambiguation\)](#).

**Mexico** (<https://www.visitmexico.com/>) (Spanish: *México*) is known for its cuisine, art, archaeology, history, pyramids, music, museums, haciendas, 9,600 km (6,000 mi) of shoreline, superb architecture, weather from snow-capped mountains in the Sierras to rainy jungles in the southeast and desert in the northwest, many golf courses and excellent fishing. Along with Chile, Colombia, and Peru, this once-poor nation is one of the *Pacific Pumas*, seeing significant economic growth and improved infrastructure during the 21st century.

## Regions

### **Baja California** (Baja California, Baja California Sur)

The vast western peninsula, stretching 1,200 km from Tijuana on the US border to Cabo in the south. A land of deserts and undiscovered beaches. One of the biggest whale migrations takes place here every year from December to April. Also includes the far-off-shore Guadalupe Island.

### **Northern Mexico** (Chihuahua, Coahuila, Durango, Nuevo León, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tamaulipas)

The expansive deserts and mountains of the border states; mostly ignored by tourists. Culturally and physically a world away from the tropical south. Includes the bustling industrial city of Monterrey, Mexico's 3rd largest and most affluent, and Copper Canyon, the country's only railroad passing through gorges and indigenous villages.

### **The Bajío** (Aguascalientes, Guanajuato, Zacatecas, San Luis Potosí, Querétaro)

The former colonial heartland, this is one of Mexico's most historic regions filled with well-preserved colonial towns that grew rich from silver mining. Includes San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato amongst other lesser known towns.



Mexico regions

**Central Mexico** (Hidalgo, Mexico City, Mexico State, Morelos, Puebla, Tlaxcala, Veracruz)

Mexico City, always the political, cultural and economic center of the country with a sophisticated urban core and a huge urban sprawl surrounding it. Also includes the awesome ruins of Teotihuacan, the historic city of Puebla and Veracruz, one of the country's most overlooked regions.

**Pacific Coast** (Colima, Guerrero, Jalisco, Michoacan, Nayarit, Oaxaca)

Tropical beaches on Mexico's southern coast; Jalisco the birthplace of mariachi and Tequila; Guadalajara, the nation's second largest city; and the Oaxacan highlands, famous for their distinct cuisine.

**Yucatán and the South** (Campeche, Chiapas, Quintana Roo, Tabasco, Yucatán)

Jungle and impressive Mayan archaeological sites, along with the Caribbean and Gulf coast with well-known resorts like Tulum and Cancun. The colonial city of Merida and the jungle ruins of Palenque. Geographically isolated from the rest of the country, part of Central America (the dividing line being the Isthmus of Tehuantepec), it is culturally closer to Guatemala and Belize than the rest of Mexico, where Mayan culture is very much alive.

## Cities

- **1 Mexico City** – Capital of the republic, one of the three largest cities in the world, and a sophisticated urban hub with a 700-year history. In Mexico City, you will find everything from parks, Aztec ruins, colonial architecture, museums, to nightlife and shopping.
- **2 Cancún** – One of the world's most popular and famous beaches, known for its clear Caribbean waters, its lively party atmosphere, and its wealth of recreational facilities. During the U.S. college Spring Break (mid-Feb to the end of March) it is noted for drinking, sunburns, and debauchery.
- **3 Guadalajara** – A traditional city, capital of Jalisco state, and the home of mariachi music and tequila. Guadalajara is blessed with perpetual spring weather and its colonial downtown is graceful and sophisticated.
- **4 Mazatlan** – Lively Pacific coast town, Mazatlan is a shipping port, a transportation hub with ferries to Baja California, and a beach resort destination with miles of sandy shore. It is a popular U.S. college Spring Break destination due to its variety of affordable lodging options.
- **5 Monterrey** – A large modern city that is the commercial and industrial hub of Northern Mexico. Monterrey enjoys a dry, mountainous setting and is known for its high-quality



Map of Mexico

educational and transportation infrastructure.

- **6 San Luis Potosi** – A colonial city in central Mexico that was once an important silver producer, but today, relies on manufacturing for its economic base.
- **7 Taxco** – In central Mexico west of Cuernavaca, this steep mountain town was once a major silver producer, and now has a strong place in the trade of decorative silver, from cheap fittings to the most elegant jewelry and elaborate castings.
- **8 Tijuana** – Mexico's busiest border crossing for pedestrians and private vehicles, and a long-time bargain Mecca for southern Californians due to its proximity to San Diego.



Plaza de la Constitución, also known as Zocalo, Mexico City

## Other destinations

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- **1 Copper Canyon** (Barrancas del Cobre) – An exotic destination for travelers looking for a unique remote adventure! An awesome mountain rail ride -- one of the greatest in the world -- takes you upwards over 2,440 m (8000 feet) on the CHEPE, the Chihuahua al Pacifico Railway. Hiking, horseback riding, birding, and Tarahumara Indians. Copper Canyon, the Sierra Madre and the Chihuahuan desert of Mexico. This area is designed for adventurous individuals who will tolerate some rough travel to get to their points of interest (although the famous train ride isn't demanding at all). Copper Canyon, a magnificent remote wilderness is not likely ever to become a mass market destination.
- **Sea of Cortez** (Gulf of California) – See whale birthings, swim with dolphins, and sea kayak in the warm waters of the Sea of Cortez, along the eastern coast of Baja California, near La Paz. National Geographic says the sunsets at San Carlos are some of the most spectacular in the world.
- **2 Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve** – Protected natural areas in the highlands of the state of Michoacán. Millions of butterflies come to the area between November and March of each year, although numbers have declined sharply. This is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- **3 Sumidero Canyon** – From docks on the Rio Grijalva (the only major river within Mexico) near Tuxtla Gutiérrez in Chiapas state, tour launches take you into this steep-walled National Park. You'll likely see vast flocks of flamingos, pelicans, and other waterfowl, as well as crocodiles.
- **Pueblos Mágicos** (magic towns) - The Mexican government has designated over 100 scenic small towns as **Pueblos Magicos**. States can apply to have towns added to the list, but they must provide sites of genuine touristic value (historical or cultural) and guarantee adequate levels of tourism infrastructure. All Pueblos Magicos are within a few hours drive of a major city with good airline connections. Some of the Pueblos Magicos (such as Tequila)



The moon is rising over Copper Canyon

are well-known and quite popular. Most are off the beaten path and offer rich opportunities for quiet exploration.

## Archaeological sites

- **4 Chichen Itza** – Majestic Mayan city, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1988 and was voted as one of the New Seven Wonders of the World.
- **5 Ek Balam** – A reconstructed Mayan site, famous for its unique decorated stucco and stone-carved temples that you can climb.
- **6 El Tajín** – In the state of Veracruz near the town of Papantla. A UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- **7 Monte Alban** – In the state of Oaxaca, a Zapotec site dating from about 500 BC. A UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- **8 Palenque** – Mayan city in the state of Chiapas, Palenque famous for its elaborate paintings. Also well known for having the largest tract of rainforest in Mexico located in the same area.
- **9 Teotihuacan** – An enormous pre-Columbian site with several large pyramids near Mexico City.
- **10 Tulum** <sup>w</sup> – Mayan coastal city with spectacular Caribbean vistas. Dates from late Mayan period.
- **11 Uxmal** – Impressive Mayan city-state in the Puc Region, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996.



Palenque

## Understand

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<b>Capital</b>	Mexico City
<b>Currency</b>	Mexican peso (MXN)
<b>Population</b>	124.7 million (2017)
<b>Electricity</b>	127 volt / 60 hertz (NEMA 1-15, NEMA 5-15)
<b>Country code</b>	+52
<b>Time zone</b>	Central Time Zone
<b>Emergencies</b>	911
<b>Driving side</b>	right
<a href="#">edit on Wikidata</a>	

Mexico, the **United Mexican States** (Spanish: *Estados Unidos Mexicanos*), is one of the most visited countries in the world. Much of the tourist industry is centered around the beach resorts as well as the *altiplano* in the central part of the country. Visiting the northern interior allows visitors to get off the beaten path a bit. U.S. American tourists tend to predominate on the Baja California peninsula and the more

modernized beach resorts (Cancún, Puerto Vallarta), while European tourists congregate around the smaller resort areas in the south like Playa del Carmen and colonial towns San Cristobal de las Casas. Canadians often favor smaller beach resorts like Huatulco or Ixtapa.

## Climate

Mexico uses the metric system for all measurements. All weather forecasts are in Celsius (°C).

### Central and southern Mexico

April is already the hottest month, especially at the coast and on the Yucatan peninsula. Towns which aren't that hot in April and during the summer are Mexico City, Toluca/Metepec, San Cristobal de las Casas, Pachuca and Zacatecas.

Hurricanes can be common in the coastal cities specially those near the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico.

### Northern Mexico

It gets rather cold during the winter except on the coast. There is sometimes snow in certain places like the Sierra Madre of Chihuahua, Durango, Coahuila, Nuevo León and northern Tamaulipas.

Northern Mexico gets very hot during the summer with sudden violent storms in the afternoon, with heavy rain and hail. The temperatures during the day can exceed 39°C (100°F). Less hot during the summer is Tijuana.

## Landscape

High, rugged mountains; low coastal plains; high plateaus; temperate plains with grasslands and Mezquite trees in the northeast, desert and even more rugged mountains in the northwest, tropical rainforests in the south and southeast Chiapas, Yucatán Peninsula semiarid in places like Aguascalientes, San Luis Potosí and temperate coniferous and deciduous forests in the central part of the country Mexico City, Toluca.



Pico de Orizaba or Citlaltépetl is Mexico's highest mountain

## Holidays

Actual non-working days may shift to the Monday before the holiday, so check an up-to-date calendar. Government offices are closed nationwide on official holidays and on election days.

Date	Name	Things to know	Official?
January 1	New Year's Day ( <i>Año Nuevo</i> )		official
January 6	Epiphany ( <i>Día de los Reyes Magos</i> )	Celebrating arrival of the Three Wise Men to see and bring gifts to the baby Jesus	not official
February 2	Candlemas ( <i>Día de la Candelaria</i> )	Catholic holiday related to Christmas	not official
First Monday of February	Constitution Day	For the events of 1917	official
February 24	Flag Day ( <i>Día de la Bandera</i> )		not official
Monday on or before March 21	Birth of Benito Juárez	Mexico's first president of indigenous origin.	official
March or April	Easter ( <i>Pascua</i> )	Easter is widely observed nationwide, according to the yearly Catholic calendar (the first Sunday after the first full moon in Spring).	
April 30	Children's Day ( <i>Día del Niño</i> )		
May 1	Labor Day ( <i>Día del Trabajo</i> )		official
May 5	Cinco de Mayo	For the Battle of Puebla against the French army in 1862. Visitors from the U.S. may be surprised to learn that it is not a major holiday in Mexico, and is not much celebrated by locals, except in the <u>state of Puebla</u> .	not official
May 10	Mother's Day	A particularly important family-centric holiday. Some cities hold parades. Offices may be closed, restaurants will be packed full, and mariachi bands will race from one family to the next. If you are visiting someone's home, bring flowers for the mothers and grandmothers.	
May 15	Teacher's Day ( <i>Día del Maestro</i> )	A day to appreciate schoolteachers. Some schools close and others have special activities.	not official
September 1	Presidential Address Day		



September 15	Cry of Dolores ( <i>Grito de Dolores</i> )	A patriotic holiday to celebrate the first event of the Mexican War of Independence in 1810, especially in the city of <u>Dolores Hidalgo</u>	not official
September 16	Independence Day	Celebrates the start of the 11-year-long fight for the independence from Spain that began in 1810	official
October 12	Day of the Race ( <i>Día de la Raza</i> )	Related to Columbus' arrival in the Americas in 1492	not official
November 2	Day of the Dead( <i>Día de Muertos</i> )	The Mexican answer to Halloween celebrates family and friends who have died. Expect sugar candy shaped like skulls and <i>pan de muerto</i> (a somewhat sweet type of white bread).	not official
Third Monday of November	Mexican Revolution Day	For the events of 1910.	official
December 12	Virgin Mary of Guadalupe Day	A Catholic religious holiday, and one of the most important Mexican holidays	not official
December 24	Christmas Eve ( <i>Nochebuena</i> )	Normally a full non-working day. Usually a family-centered evening. May be preceded by nine days of parties in the evenings, called <i>Las Posadas</i> ("the inns").	not official
December 25	Christmas ( <i>Navidad</i> )		official
December 31	New Year's Eve	Normally a full non-working day. Expect firecrackers and lots of noise at midnight.	not official

## Time

The 24-hour clock system is used for time keeping. Mexico uses the same four time zones as the contiguous United States, but three of them are only used in peripheral parts of the country.

- **Northwest Zone** (UTC-8, corresponds to U.S. Pacific Time): Baja California (state)
- **Pacific Zone** (UTC-7, corresponds to U.S. Mountain Time): Baja California Sur, Chihuahua (state), Nayarit, Sinaloa, Sonora
- **Central Zone** (UTC-6, corresponds to U.S. Central Time): The rest of the country, except Quintana Roo
- **Southeastern Zone** (UTC-5, corresponds to U.S. Eastern Time): Quintana Roo



Mexican time zones

Almost all of Mexico observes daylight savings time (DST) from first Sunday in April to last Sunday in October. Communities on the U.S. border, except in Sonora, observe DST on the U.S. schedule. The entire state of Baja California also observes DST on the U.S. schedule. There will be several weeks each year

when the U.S. is on DST, but most of Mexico is not. The state of Sonora south of Arizona, does not observe DST since Arizona doesn't have it either.

## History

### Pre-Columbian

*See also: Indigenous cultures of North America*

Among the earliest complex civilizations in Mexico was the **Olmec** culture that flourished on the Gulf Coast in 1500 BCE. Olmec culture diffused through Mexico into formative era cultures in Chiapas, Oaxaca and the Valley of Mexico.

In Central Mexico the height of the classical period saw the ascendancy of Teotihuacan, which formed a military and commercial empire. It had the largest structures of pyramids built in the pre-Columbian Americas.

During the early post-classic Mexico was dominated by **Toltec culture**, and the lowland **Maya** had important areas at Calakmul and Chichen Itza. At the end of the post-Classical period, the **Aztecs** built a tributary empire covering most of Central Mexico. The Mesoamerican cultural traditions ended in the 16th century and over the next centuries, Mexican indigenous cultures were under Spanish colonial rule. However, contrary to popular misconceptions neither the Maya nor the Aztec culture ever entirely "disappeared" and to this day many Mexicans trace at least part of their heritage to indigenous roots and language such as Nahuatl and numerous Maya tongues are still spoken by hundreds of thousands or even millions of Mexicans. Indigenous elements are visible even today in loanwords in Mexican Spanish, traditional dress, Mexican cuisine, architecture and even religious observances (nominally "catholic" to varying degrees). The eagle and the snake on a cactus depicted on the Mexican flag, for example, refers to an Aztec legend about the founding of Tenochtitlan, the city that now is Mexico City.

### Colonial and early independence

Mexico remained under Spanish colonial rule until 1821 when it declared independence under the terms of "Plan of Iguala". After the short lived Mexican empire of 1821-1823 (former Spanish general and independence hero Augustin de Iturbide briefly declared himself emperor but was overthrown after two years) Mexico became a republic with a fragile balance of powers between liberals (allied mostly with urban merchants) and conservatives (allied with the church and big landholders) and Antonio López de Santa Anna became president several times while also being overthrown by his opponents several times thus having eight non-consecutive terms as president as well as five "permanent" exiles.

### Independent Mexico

The early Mexican state was anything but stable. Texas (under the leadership of US-American immigrants who wanted to make Texas a slave-holding state of the US) and Yucatan seceded at several points. Maya rebels fought against both the Yucatan independence movement and the federal government in the so called "Caste war".

After Texas gained *de facto* independence a disagreement as to its southern border (the Nueces river as claimed by Mexico or the Rio Grande as claimed by Texas) led to the involvement of the US in a brief war that ended in a devastating defeat for Mexico (the line about the "halls of Montezuma" in the marines' song



refers to the presidential palace in Mexico city that was conquered by the US) and the loss of Alta California (now the US state of California), Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico as well as the definite loss of Texas north of the Rio Grande.

The ceded territories were rapidly colonized by immigrants from Europe and the eastern United States; see Old West.

## **French intervention and Second Mexican empire**

In 1861, when president Benito Juárez suspended the payment of Mexico's debt, France decided to invade the country in order to regain some or all of its money. This was only possible because the United States, which had declared in its Monroe Doctrine that it wouldn't tolerate any European intervention in the sovereign states of the Americas, started its Civil War that same year. After overthrowing the government (though Mexican resistance against the occupiers never ceased) the French installed a Habsburg prince as emperor Maximilian I to act as their puppet. While the Mexican monarchy had some support among conservatives its days were numbered when the French troops were withdrawn after the end of the American Civil war, and in 1867, Maximilian was executed by firing squad. Cinco de Mayo, which in the US is often mistaken to be "Mexican independence day", is celebrated in remembrance of the battle of Puebla that occurred during the French occupation and was decisively won by Mexican republican forces.

## **Benito Juárez**

Benito Juárez was the first president of indigenous descent in all of Latin America and is one very few figures that is still almost exclusively seen as a positive figure in Mexican history. He was president from 1858 to 1864 and again from 1867 to his death in 1872. His saying "el respeto al derecho ajeno es la paz" (respect for the rights of others is peace) is still frequently quoted.



Statue of Benito Juárez in Hidalgo

## **Porfirio Díaz**

Porfirio Díaz, a general during the French intervention rose to power shortly after the death of Juárez and ruled Mexico from 1876 to 1911. While initially willing and able to reform and modernize the country, the sheer length of his reign and his corruption led to a lot of unhappiness about his government and in 1911 the Mexican revolution broke out to unseat him from power, but it soon devolved into factional fighting between various claimants for power and attempts at radical social and economic reform.

## **The Mexican Revolution**

The Mexican Revolution started with resistance against a blatantly fraudulent election manipulated by Porfirio Díaz, but the revolutionary forces could not agree on their goals, ultimately resulting in a lot of infighting and even an US intervention.

## **Under the PRI**

Once the dust of the revolution had settled the Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI [pronounced /pree/] for its Spanish name) became the dominant political force and all presidents before the early 1990s were members of the PRI. They did not however establish a one party state and other parties were still legal and

participated in elections, however the success of the PRI candidate (especially at the federal level) was almost always a given. As such political power struggles mostly took place within the PRI with more conservative or left wing factions gaining the upper hand from time to time. In 1988 during a presidential election that was actually close for the first time in decades a computer that counted the votes supposedly crashed and the words with which this was announced "se cayó el sistema" are noted for their ambiguity as they can mean either "the computer broke down" or "the (political) system fell". Nonetheless according to the official result (which was and still is doubted by many) the PRI candidate won a six year term in office just narrowly surpassing the 50% threshold needed to avoid a runoff election. In 2000 the PRI finally lost its first presidential election when Vicente Fox of the conservative National Action Party (PAN) won a narrow victory in a three-way race. In 2006 the PAN won again with Felipe Calderon being elected president but in 2012 the PRI returned to power with Enrique Peña Nieto, who promised to end the drug war being elected to the presidency. Whether this proves temporary or the PRI has indeed regained its once dominant status, remains yet to be seen.

## Mexico today

Despite problems such as corruption and the drug war in the North (with some areas under *de facto* control of different cartels), Mexico has grown steadily, and there have been democratic multiparty elections with peaceful transition of power. A fairly stable three party system has emerged: the PAN (conservative) and PRI (centrist, catch all, sometimes leftist) have each won the presidency several times and the PRD (left of the PRI) has been a serious contender in almost all elections.

The drug war is ongoing and some parts of the country are not entirely safe, but the situation has bettered a lot after the 2000s. Generally the North with cities such as Ciudad Juarez notorious for their violence is more dangerous than the south and Yucatan is among the safest regions in Latin America. For more on the effects of the drug war see the stay safe section of this article and the individual region articles.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) assumed power on December 1, 2018, after waging a populist, anti-corruption campaign and winning the 2018 election with more than a 30% margin over his next closest opponent. He is the leader of the center-left National Regeneration Movement (MORENA). Having had a reputation as a leftist firebrand in the past, AMLO has moderated his politics in order to appeal to a wider share of the electorate, though he remains a solidly left-leaning, populist politician. Under his leadership, Mexico has served as a moderator in wider Latin American politics, for example, in the Venezuelan and Bolivian crises, while also navigating relations with the United States government over trade and migrant issues.

## Get in



**Note:** Mexico charges \$390 pesos (May 2016) per person that has spent more than 7 days (inclusive) in the country, e.g., 1st to 7th is 7 days.

Payable on exit whatever the mode of transportation. On entrance, officials may say that 7 days is non-inclusive but you will find out otherwise when you exit the country.

If you flew into Mexico on a commercial flight, the cost of your plane ticket already included the tourism tax and you absolutely do *not* need to pay it again upon exiting. You will need to prove to the border officials that you have already paid, by showing the following:

1. Your FMM card you received upon arrival, and

## 2. An itemized receipt from your flight purchase showing the Tourism Tax

Certain foreign nationals who can enter Mexico with only a passport and FMM Card, and stay up to 180 days as tourists (30 days for business travelers) are no longer granted the full 180 days by default as is it was in the past. Always check your passport stamp and FMM card upon arrival to determine how many days are granted before walking away from the immigration counter. Ask the immigration officer if you cannot read the handwriting to be sure how many days you are granted to stay in the country. NEVER assume that you are granted the full 180 days or they will automatically tell you if you are given less than 180 days. You can arbitrarily be granted any number of days from 3 to the full 180 days depending on the whim of the immigration officer who can also check for an onward ticket out of Mexico, hotel reservations, proof of funds, etc. Travelers have reported to have been detained for over-staying the less than 180 day time allotted to them when they entered and it is uncertain how long the travelers are/will be detained (at any length of time) before deportation out of Mexico. The immigration authorities and military do set up random checkpoints in the interior to stop passing traffic and check the travelers' ID cards (Mexican nationals) and the visa status of foreign nationals.

## Visa and other entrance requirements

According to the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores) (<http://www.sre.gob.mx/english/>), certain foreign nationals who intend to stay in Mexico fewer than 180 days for the purpose of tourism or 30 days for business can fill out a tourist card at the border or upon landing at an airport after presenting a valid passport, for US\$22. If arriving

via air, it is included in the price of the fare. This service is available to citizens of Andorra, Argentina, Aruba, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Ireland, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macau, Malaysia, Malta, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Palau, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Romania, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, United States of America and Uruguay (see official list [here](http://www.inm.gob.mx/index.php/page/Paises_No_Visa/en.html) ([http://www.inm.gob.mx/index.php/page/Paises\\_No\\_Visa/en.html](http://www.inm.gob.mx/index.php/page/Paises_No_Visa/en.html))). Permanent residents of the United States, Canada, Japan, United Kingdom, and Schengen area countries are also eligible for visas on arrival regardless of citizenship.



Visa policy of Mexico



Mexican entry stamp

The Mexican tourist card is a *Forma Migratoria Múltiple* (Multiple Immigration Form), or FMM. It has a perforation that divides the card into two parts, of which the right side asks for some of the same information requested on the left side. At entry, after reviewing your passport and filled-out FMM, the immigration officer will stamp your passport and the FMM, separate the FMM along the perforation and give the right side of the FMM back to you with your passport.

Keep the FMM with your passport at all times. It is your responsibility to make sure the right side of the FMM is returned to the Mexican government at time of departure so that the bar code can be scanned, thus showing that you left the country on time. For example, if you are flying with Aeromexico, they will ask for your passport and FMM at check-in for your flight home, then staple your FMM to your boarding pass. You are expected to then hand the boarding pass together with your FMM to the gate agent as you board your flight. If you lose your FMM during your visit to Mexico, you may be subject to substantial delays and fines before you can leave the country.

Electronic Authorization System (SAE, Autorización Electrónica) ([http://www.inm.gob.mx/index.php/pag/e/Inicio\\_Autorizacion\\_Electronica/en.html](http://www.inm.gob.mx/index.php/pag/e/Inicio_Autorizacion_Electronica/en.html)) for travelling to Mexico is available on the Internet for nationals from Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine. Russians, Ukrainians, and Turkish citizens with permanent residency or a valid visa to Canada, the US, Japan, the UK, or any Schengen country don't need an SAE. Other nationalities must contact a Mexican consulate in order to find out the requirements for citizens of their country, and may have to apply for and obtain a visa in advance of travel. If you are in need of other information, Mexico has diplomatic offices in the following cities around the world. The consulates in the USA are typically open for business to non-citizens (by telephone or in-person) only from 08:30 to 12:30.

If you cross the border via road, do not expect the authorities to automatically signal you to fill out your paperwork. You will have to locate the border office yourself.

The immigration officer at your point of entry into Mexico can request that you demonstrate that you have sufficient economic solvency.

The immigration officer can demand a round trip ticket. Be advised if you only booked a one-way ticket to Mexico: The airline may want to see a ticket that carries you out of Mexico, especially when flying from an equally or less developed country than Mexico – also if your passport is from a highly industrialized nation. It could be that the airline wants to see that onward ticket as "early" as at the gate, where you may not have enough time to buy one. So have at least an onward ticket from specialized websites for around US\$10 (Nov 2021) ready when heading to the airport for your flight for Mexico.

If you do not intend to travel past the "border zone" and your stay does not exceed three days, U.S. and Canadian nationals require only a proof of citizenship. Reentry into the United States generally requires a passport, but a U.S. or Canadian Enhanced Drivers License (or Enhanced Photo ID) or U.S. passport card is acceptable for reentry by land or sea.

## **By plane**

### **From the United States and Canada**

There are hundreds of daily flights linking Mexico to cities large and small throughout North America. This includes legacy carriers such as Air Canada, Aeromexico, Alaska Airlines, American Airlines, and Delta, and discount airlines such as JetBlue, Spirit, WestJet, and Southwest Airlines. Also to be considered is the Mexican discount carrier **Volaris**, which operates from several major US cities (including Chicago, Denver, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Oakland, Orlando, San Diego and Portland) through their hubs in Mexico City and Guadalajara. The other carrier, **Interjet** also serve Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, New York City,

San Antonio and Houston. In return, **United Airlines/United Express** (operated by Express Jet and Skywest) fly to additional cities in Mexico besides Guadalajara, Mexico City, Cancun, Puerto Vallarta and other major beach resorts (which are already served by multiple US and Mexican carriers) such as to Aguascaliente, Chihuahua, Ciudad de Carmen, Durango, Huatulco, Leon/Guanajuato, Oaxaca, Merida, San Luis Potosi, Tlaxcala, Toluca, Toluca, Toluca, Toluca, Tampico, Veracruz and Villahermosa from Houston. Flights to additional Mexican cities are operated by Aeromar on a code-share basis.



Aeromexico planes at Benito Juarez International Airport

As in the United States and Canada, you will have to clear immigration *and* customs at your first Mexican port of entry, even though that airport may not be your final destination. (For example, many trips on Aeromexico will involve connecting through its Mexico City hub.) You will then have to re-check your bags and go through security again to proceed to your next flight segment.

### **From Australia or New Zealand**

Fly from Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne or Auckland (NZ) direct to Los Angeles on American Airlines, Delta, Qantas, and United. Air New Zealand offers one-stop air service from Australia and non-stop air service from Auckland to Los Angeles. Hawaiian Airlines and Air Tahiti Nui offer one- or two-stop air service to Los Angeles from Australia and New Zealand.

Many airlines continue from Los Angeles to Mexico including AeroMexico/Aeromexico Connect, Alaska Airlines, Volaris, Interjet, United and Virgin America, some of which have interline or alliance ticketing and baggage check through. More options are available if connecting through another US city. Also, make sure to have a good look at visas beforehand – even just for transit you will need something for the US, and if you get a visa waiver, they treat Mexico as part of the US, meaning if you stay longer than 90 days in Mexico, you will need to travel further south before returning to the US.

### **From Europe**

Most commercial airlines link Mexico directly from Europe. There are direct flights to Mexico City (**MEX**<sup>IATA</sup>) and Cancun (**CUN**<sup>IATA</sup>) from Paris (**CDG**<sup>IATA</sup>), London (**LON**<sup>IATA</sup>), Madrid (**MAD**<sup>IATA</sup>), Amsterdam (**AMS**<sup>IATA</sup>), and Frankfurt (**FRA**<sup>IATA</sup>). Some carriers will serve both Mexico City and Cancun while others will only serve one and not the other (usually only to Cancun such as those from Russia and Italy). Additional flights to Cancun from Europe may only be available as charters and some may operate during the winter months (December–February) only. It is always worth to compare flight offers from air carriers and charter companies who can bring you to Mexico City or Cancun via many European hubs. The flight duration from those cities is always approximately 11 hours.

### **By train**

From the United States to Mexico the nearest **Amtrak** (<http://www.amtrak.com>) stations are in San Diego, Yuma, Del Rio and El Paso. The frequent *Pacific Surfliner* (<http://www.pacificsurfliner.com>) connects San Diego from San Luis Obispo via Los Angeles; while the *Sunset Limited* (<http://www.amtrak.com/sunset-limited-train>) and *Texas Eagle* (<https://www.amtrak.com/routes/texas-eagle-train.html>) pass by Yuma, El Paso and Del Rio between Los Angeles and San Antonio. In San Antonio the *Texas Eagle*



continues northwards towards Chicago while the *Sunset Limited* continues east to New Orleans. Amtrak trains do not cross the border into Mexico so passengers continue to the border by local public transportation or by taxi from the Amtrak station.

There are no trains to the US/Mexican border from anywhere within Mexico or to the other border with Mexico's southern neighbors (Belize and Guatemala).

## By car

American automobile insurance is not accepted in Mexico; however, it is easy to obtain short-term or long-term tourist policies that include the mandatory liability coverage, theft and accident coverage for your vehicle, and often, legal assistance coverage. Should you decide to drive to Mexico, the Transport and Communications Secretariat website (<http://www.sct.gob.mx/>) has free downloadable road maps.

Foreign-plated vehicles must obtain necessary permits before being allowed into the interior of Mexico. This can be done at the border checkpoints by showing your vehicle title or registration, as well as immigration documents and a valid credit card. It is now possible to apply for your vehicle import permit online. Vehicle permits will only be issued to the registered owner of the vehicle, so the papers will have to be in the name of the applicant. The Baja California peninsula and the northern part of the State of Sonora do not require a permit.

Due to the incredibly large volume of drugs and illegal immigration (into the US) and drug money and weapons (into Mexico) crossing the US-Mexico border, expect long delays and thorough searches of vehicles when crossing the border. At some of the busiest crossings, expect a waiting time of 1–3 hours.

## By bus

The Mexican bus system is reportedly the most efficient in the world. Buses are without a doubt the backbone of personal intercity transport in Mexico as private car ownership is a lot lower than in its neighbor to the north and trains mostly serve cargo and tourism purposes. Chances are, you will meet a lot of locals, traveling by bus. Rates by distance are generally comparable to those of Greyhound in the U.S., but there are more departures and the system serves much smaller villages than its American counterpart. There are many bus companies based in Mexico with branch offices in major U.S. cities with a few such examples noted below:

- **Autobuses De Oriente (ADO), Omnibus Cristobal Colon (OCC), Autobus Unidos (AU)** (<http://www.ado.com.mx>) Connects the USA border from Matamoros to the interior of Mexico along the gulf coast and once nightly buses from Cancun and Merida to Belize City (two separate routes). At other times passengers connect to onward buses to Belize in Chetumal and to Guatemala in Tapachula, Palenque and Ciudad Cuauhtémoc near the Guatemalan border in Chiapas.
- **Omnibus Mexicanos, Noreste, Omnibus Express** (<http://www.odm.com.mx/>) Offers intrastate travel from the border areas to several cities within the U.S. state of Texas and from Texas to Georgia, North Carolina and Florida as **Omnibus Express** (<https://www.omnibus-express.com/>)
- **Autobus Americanos** (<http://www.autobusesamericanos.com.mx/>) -- co-brand between **Grupo Estrella Blanca** (<http://www.estrellablanca.com.mx/>) and **Greyhound Lines** (<http://www.greyhound.com/>)



Crossing into Mexico from the U.S.  
near Tijuana



[www.greyhound.com](http://www.greyhound.com)) for cross border travel between the U.S. and Mexico.

- **Greyhound Mexico** (<http://www.greyhound.com.mx>) Connects Monterrey to Laredo, TX via Nuevo Laredo. They also operate **Cruceros-USA** connecting Tijuana to Los Angeles via San Diego and Santa Ana.
- **Greyhound** (<http://www.greyhound.com>) offers tickets from the US to major Mexican cities with **Grupo Estrella Blanca** (<http://www.estrellablanca.com.mx>) further south of the border, including Monterrey, Querétaro, Durango, Mazatlan, Torreon, Guadalajara and Mexico City. It is best (and cheapest) to buy a round-trip Greyhound ticket since it may be more difficult and expensive to buy a ticket from Mexico to a US destination which is not a major city. When departing from Mexico, the local bus line (usually Futura) will change the Greyhound-issued ticket into its own, free of charge.
- **El Expreso** (<http://www.elexpreso.net/>) Houston based company that connects cities and towns in Mexico bordering Texas to Florida, the Southeastern part of the U.S. and to Chicago from several cities in Texas.
- **Turimex Internacional** (<http://www.turimex.com/en/>) Subsidiary of **Grupo Senda** (<http://www.gruposenda.com>) for onward connections to Florida, the Southeastern part of the U.S. and to Chicago via Texas.
- **TAP Royal** (<http://www.taproyal.com>) A subsidiary of **TAP** (<http://www.tap.com.mx>) connecting Tijuana and Nogales to Los Angeles, Phoenix and Las Vegas.
- **TUFESA** (<http://www.tufesa.com.mx/home.html>) Connects Sinaloa, Sonora and Baja California in northwestern Mexico to multiple cities in California, Arizona, Utah and to Las Vegas NV via Los Angeles and Phoenix .
- **El Paso-Los Angeles Limousines and Los Limousines** (<http://www.eplalimo.com/>) Travels the I-10 corridor along the American side of the border from El Paso to Los Angeles and from El Paso towards Denver via Las Cruces NM along I-10 and I-25. Goes south from El Paso towards Torreon via Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua City, etc. along Fed Hwy 45 as **Los Limousines**.
- **Los Paisanos** (<http://lospaisanosautobuses.com/>) Connects El Paso to several cities in California, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas and Missouri. They also have direct service from El Paso to Phoenix, Roswell NM and Caldwell ID in the U.S. The same company also offer service from El Paso to several cities in Chihuahua state, Zacatecas state and Queretaro in Mexico.

A ticket to a major Mexican city from the southwestern U.S. can be bought for US\$60 round trip (San Antonio TX to Monterrey N.L.). These companies, however, cater mostly to Hispanics or Mexican Nationals living in the U.S. and operate mostly in Spanish.

In Mexico City (main transportation hub), buses from the U.S. border arrive at Terminal Norte. Buses going to Chiapas and Quintana Roo leave from both Terminal de Autobuses de Pasajeros de Oriente (TAPO) and Terminal Norte (same as U.S. bound buses). If going between bus stations, there are ticket desks for taxis at all bus stations where passengers can buy a ticket for a sitio taxi to transfer to the next bus station. Likewise if passengers are traveling light they can also use the metro which serves all major bus stations for a fraction of the taxi fare.

Onward connections to/from Guatemala through Tapachula and to Belize through Chetumal. There are additional connections (by shuttle) between San Cristobal de las Casas and Antigua Guatemala (via Comitán, crossing through Ciudad Cuauhtémoc/La Mesilla). The tickets on these shuttles are purchased from one of many agents in San Cristobal de las Casas. Passengers typically change vehicles at the border. The following offer regular first class pullman services out of Tapachula to Central America:

- **Ticabus** (<http://www.ticabus.com>), La Terminal OCC 17a Calle Ote #45 (*Along Calle 17a Ote between 1a Ave Nte y 3a Ave Nte*), ☎ +52 962 625-2435. (Ticket office) M-Sa 06:00-14:00. International bus company going across the Central American isthmus between

Panama City and Managua. From Managua one route goes to Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula in Honduras while another continues along the Pan American Hwy to San Salvador, Guatemala City and Tapachula in Mexico. They also have another north-south route connecting El Salvador to Honduras. Passengers can transfer to Hedman Alas (<https://hedmanalas.com/>) (another unaffiliated company) in Guatemala City if going to Honduras. (updated Aug 2020)

- **Linea Dorada** (<https://www.facebook.com/lineadoradagt/>), ☎ +502 2415-8900. Goes east towards Guatemala City via Huehuetenango and/or Quetzaltenango. Passengers transfer in Guatemala City to go to Flores (nearest city to Tikal). Phone number is the Guatemala number. (updated Jun 2018)
- **Trans Galgos Inter.** (<https://www.facebook.com/TransGalgosInternacional/>), ☎ +502 2220-6018. departs 13:00 Check schedules.. International services to Tapachula from Guatemala City via El Carmen, Retalhuleu and Coatepeque on one route and twice daily to San Salvador on another. They also operate a third domestic route to Quetzaltenango from Guatemala City. They also book onward travel all the way to the U.S. border through Mexico. US\$17.

## By boat

- Border crossing from Guatemala.
- Cruise ships from the United States.

## Get around

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Travelling in Mexico is most practical by bus, car, or air. Passenger transport by train is almost nonexistent. Except the **Chihuahua del Pacifico** rail line which pull out every morning at both ends of the line, one from Los Mochis on the Pacific coast, across from Baja California, and the other from Chihuahua in the east (due south of El Paso, Texas). They cross each other roughly midways at **Divisadero and Barrancas** Copper Canyon stations at an altitude of 2100 m (7000 ft).

## By car

*Main article: [Driving in Mexico](#)*

Due to a government scheme in the early 1990s to create infrastructure, the best roads are toll roads. Toll roads can be relatively costly but are much faster and better maintained. First-class buses generally travel by toll roads (and the toll is included in the ticket price).

US vehicle insurance is not valid in Mexico. Mexican auto insurance has been required since 2018; if you have even a minor accident without insurance, you could land in jail. MexiPass (<http://www.mexipass.com/>) and AAA offer Mexican auto insurance.

When traveling on Mexican roads, especially near the borders with the United States and Guatemala, one will probably encounter several checkpoints operated by the Mexican Army searching for illegal weapons and drugs. If you are coming from the United States, you may not be used to this, and it can be intimidating. However, these are rarely a problem for honest people. Simply do what the soldiers tell you to do, and treat them with respect.



Highway 120 passing through the village of Pinal de Amoles

The best way to show respect when entering a checkpoint is to turn your music down, lift sunglasses from your face, and be prepared to roll your window down. They should treat you with respect as well, and they usually do. If you are asked to unpack any part of your vehicle, do so without complaint. It is their right to make you completely unload in order for them to inspect your cargo.

Tourists are often warned about travelling on roads at night. Although *bandidos* are rare in more metropolitan areas, err on the side of caution in more rural areas. The best bet is to drive during only daylight hours. Cattle, dogs, and other animals also can appear on the roadway unexpectedly, so if you do have to drive at night, be very cautious. If possible, follow a bus or truck that seems to be driving safely.

Foreign drivers' licenses are recognized and recommended. Speeding tickets are common, and to ensure your presence at the hearing, the officer may choose to keep your license. He is within his rights to do so. Beware though, police officers are known to keep driver's licenses until they are given a bribe.

At petrol (gas) stations, make sure the pump is zeroed out before the attendant begins pumping your gas so that you don't end up paying more than you should. There is only one brand of gas station (Pemex) and prices are generally the same regardless of location, so don't bother shopping around.

Good maps are invaluable and the Mexico maps included in "North American Road Atlas" books are worse than useless. The Guia Roji maps are particularly good.

If you arrive in Mexico by airplane but would like to drive around the country, all major car rental companies are present in Mexico. However, you must know that they operate under a franchise scheme, and therefore their policies and the overall way to do business are very different than those in other countries. Most of the times they will publish prices that may look very attractive, but may not include insurance, taxes and other mandatory fees, the best thing to do is call in advance to find out the final price to pay. There are some local companies which do include all bells and whistles in their rates, Veico Car Rental (<https://www.veico.com/>). City Car Rental (<https://www.citycarrental.com/>) offers good prices and have rental offices as most major cities in Mexico.

Throughout the mainland of North America including the Mexico, traffic moves on the right with most cars being left-hand-drive (as in Belize, Guatemala, and the United States of America). The only areas of North America that do not drive on the right are on some Caribbean Islands.

## By plane

Mexico is a large country, and with the low-cost revolution that started in 2005, new (budget) airlines came in and expanded, offering competitive fares that rival bus travel over long distances. The low-cost airlines are VivaAerobus and Volaris.

Major airlines hubs for all or several of the airlines are in Mexico City, Guadalajara, Cancun, and Monterrey. There are additional point to point services from several other cities.

The main airlines providing service to over 60 cities within Mexico are:

- **Aeromexico/Aeromexico Connect** (<http://www.aeromexico.com>), ☎ +52 55 5133-4000 (MX), toll-free: +1-800-237-6639 (US). Is the 'national' and 'legacy' carrier with hubs in Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey. They're also a member of the SkyTeam Alliance. (updated Apr 2016)
- **Aeromar** (<http://www.aeromar.com.mx>), ☎ +52 55 51-33-11-11, toll-free: 01 800 237-6627 (MX). Small regional airline flying ATR aircraft. (updated Apr 2016)

- **Magnicharters** (<http://www.magnicharters.com>), ☎ +52 55 5678-1000, +52 55 5678-3600 (DF), +52 81 2282-9620, +52 2282-9621 (MTY). Headquartered in Mexico City, their major hubs are in Monterrey and Mexico City. Primary destinations are resort areas preferred by leisure travelers, such as Cancun or Puerto Vallarta. They also offer flights to Las Vegas and Orlando in the U.S. (popular among Mexican travelers). For many years, Magnicharters sold only complete travel packages that include airfare, hotels, and meals, but for the past several years, they have been permitted to operate as a common carrier (under the name Magni) and can also sell tickets for flights only. (updated Oct 2022)
- **VivaAerobus** (<http://www.vivaaerobus.com/mx>). Low-cost, Ryanair-like airline with hubs in Cancun, Monterrey, Mexico City and Guadalajara and new focus cities in Merida and Puebla. They expanded service to the USA after 2011. (updated Apr 2016)
- **Volaris** (<https://www.volaris.com/>), ☎ +52 55 1102-8000, toll-free: +1 855 865-2747 (US). Hubs are in Mexico City, Tijuana and Guadalajara with focus cities in Cancun, Monterrey and Leon. They also have an additional hub in San Jose Costa Rica and a focus city in Los Angeles, outside of Mexico. Since the demise of Mexicana in 2010 they had expanded and taken over many of Mexicana's routes and airport slots within Mexico and the U.S. They had since expanded services to more cities in the U.S., Costa Rica, El Salvador and Nicaragua. (updated Apr 2016)

There are also small airlines operating within certain areas such as:

- **Calafia Airlines** (<https://www.calafiaairlines.com>), ☎ +1 619 489-1439 (US), toll-free: 01 800 5603949 (MX). Operates scheduled flights between multiple cities in the Baja California Peninsula and from the Baja California Peninsula to Chihuahua, Jalisco, Sonora and Sinaloa states. They also connect the Baja California Peninsula to Leon (Guanajuato), Monterey (Nuevo Leon), Mexico City and San Luis Potosi, all in the smaller Embraer ERJ and Cessna aircraft. They also connect Palenque and Tuxtla Gutierrez (Chiapas) to Mexico City and Cancun . They also offer charters and air taxi services too. (updated Apr 2016)
- **Aerotucán** (<https://www.aerotucan.com.mx>), ☎ +52 952 502-0840, toll-free: 01800 640-4148. Flies between Oaxaca City, Ciudad Ixtepec, Huatulco and Puerto Escondido in Oaxaca state with the Cessna Grand Caravan plane. (updated Sep 2022)
- **Mayair** (<http://www.mayair.com.mx/>), ☎ +52 987 872-3609 (MX), +1 414 755-2527 (US & CA), toll-free: 01800 962-9247. Operates regional flights from Cancun to Cozumel, Chetumal and Merida and from Villahermosa to Veracruz and Merida in the smaller Cessna 402 (9 seats), Dornier 228 (19 seats) and Fokker 50 (50 seats) aircraft. (updated Sep 2022)
- **TAR** (<http://www.tarmexico.com>), ☎ +52 55 2629-5272. Hub in Queretaro with focus cities in Guadalajara, Monterrey, and Puerto Vallarta to multiple destinations with Embraer ERJ145 jets nationwide and expanding. (updated Sep 2022)

Remember that on the Viva Aerobus fares "Zero" and "Light", you cannot check in earlier than 4 hours and 8 hours before departure respectively. As of Nov. 2021, the website and app won't tell you that if you try it earlier. Instead giving you an random error message or telling you to check-in at the airport for additional cost, which is not needed.

## By bus

### Intercity buses

For going from one city to another, the apps of CheckMyBus and Busbud show the departure times and the according bus company.

If traveling by bus, be sure to take the express (first class) buses (*directo, sin escalas, primera clase*), if available. First class buses are usually direct routes and are the best option for most. These buses are comfortable, have washrooms/toilets and will generally show movies, which may or may not be in English with Spanish subtitles (or vice versa). Others may even offer a drink and a little snack. First class buses travel over longer distances between cities use toll freeways where available. They may make scheduled stops (*semi-directo*) at specific bus stations en route otherwise they make *no* stops en-route (*sin escalas*).

Other buses such as the second class (*economico, ordinario, local*) buses may be very similar to first class only they travel along secondary highways through cities, towns and villages and stop anywhere along the road on request. Second class bus routes are typically shorter and will take considerably longer to travel over longer distances (such as from Cancun to Mexico City) with multiple stops and multiple transfers, it is not worth the few pesos saved over first class buses. They are fine for more local travel, such as between Cancun and Playa del Carmen or to somewhere along the highway in between. In other places they may be more frequent and more available than first class such as going to Zempoala (town) from Veracruz (city). Some of the second class buses may even be chicken buses (*polleros*) in rural, off the beaten track, places.

Executive (*Ejecutivo*) and Luxury (*Lujo*) lines cost about 60% more than first class, are faster, usually have larger seats, and they have less frequent departures; they rival flying business class on a plane and are a good option for elderly or business travelers or overnight travel in lieu of a night's stay at a hotel (or hostel).

When acquiring tickets for the bus, the local custom is that the passenger comes to the terminal and buys the ticket for next available bus going to the desired destination with first and deluxe class buses unless it is during busy travel times such as Easter and Christmas. During busy travel times tickets can be booked one or two days in advance online or at the station. With second class buses, tickets can be purchased at the station within 2 hours of a departure, no advance reservations prior, at the beginning of a route or the fare paid to the driver if picked up from along side of the road.

With the advent of NAFTA, some bus companies are now offering service from cities in several US states. The major bus companies offering these kind of services are:

- **ABC** (<http://www.abc.com.mx>) (*Autobuses de Baja California*). Bus services up and down Hwy 1 in the Baja California Peninsula in both Baja California Norte y Sur states and along Hwy 2/2D to western Sonora (updated Oct 2016)
- **ADO** (<http://www.ado.com.mx>) (*Autobuses Del Oriente*), ☎ +52 55 5133-5133, toll-free: 01 800-009-9090. They operate the **ADO, ADO GL, AU (Autobus Unidos), OCC (Omnibus Cristobal Colon), Platino, Texcoco, Diamante, Estrella de Oro** (<http://www.estrelladeoro.com.mx/>), **Cuenca and Pluss** bus lines and the **ClickBus** (<http://www.clickbus.com.mx>) booking site (formerly Boletotal & Ticketbus). They are a major bus company in the eastern and southeastern part of the country towards the Guatemalan border in the states of Guerrero, Puebla, Veracruz, Chiapas, Tamaulipas, Tabasco, and the Yucatan Peninsula (Yucatan, Quintana Roo and Campeche). Travel towards Guatemala via Tapachula or Tuxtla Gutierrez; to Belize through Chetumal and the United States border through Matamoros. They only offer cross border buses to Belize City from Cancun and Merida via Chetumal.
- **Autobuses Coordinados de Nayrit (ACN)** (<https://www.acnautobuses.com/>), toll-free: 01800 026-73-73. They serve mainly in the western and northwestern states of Baja California Norte, Jalisco, Michoacan, Nayrit, Sinaloa and Sonora in Mexico and California (historically 'Alta California') in the U.S. (updated Jul 2017)



Buses at Morelia bus station

- **Autovias** (<http://www.autovias.com.mx/>), toll-free: 01 800-622-22-22. serving Colima, Guerrero, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacan, Mexico DF, Estado Mexico and Queretaro. Other subsidiary brands include Allegra, La Linea (<http://www.lalineacom.mx>) and the Pegasso ([http://pegasso.mx](http://pegassomx.com)) brands. (updated Aug 2017)
- **Costa Line AERS** (<http://www.costaline.com.mx>), ☎ +52 55 5336-5560, toll-free: 01 800-0037-635. Serves mainly in Mexico state, Morelos and Guerrero from Mexico City. They also operate the **Turistar**, **Futura** and **AMS** bus lines.
- **ETN (Enlaces Terrestre Nacionales), Turistar Lujo** (<http://www.etn.com.mx>). They offer a 'deluxe' or 'executive' class seating with 2 seats on one side of the aisle and one on the opposite side with more leg room and an ability to recline into a lying position. They go to Aguascaliente, Baja California Norte, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Durango, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Mexico, Mexico City DF, Michoacan, Morelos, Nayrit, Nuevo Leon, Oaxaca (coast), Queretaro, San Luis Potosi, Sinaloa, Sonora, Veracruz (Poza Rica, Tuxpan) and Zacatecas states
- **Grupo Estrella Blanca (White Star)** (<http://www.estrellablanca.com.mx>), ☎ +52 55 5729-0807, toll-free: 01 800-507-5500. They operate the **Anahuac** (<https://www.autobusesanahuac.com.mx/pages/>), **Elite** (<https://www.autobuseselite.com.mx/>), **TNS (Transportes Norte de Sonora)**, **Chihuahuanese** (<https://www.chihuahuenses.com.mx/>), **Pacifico**, **TF (Tranporte Frontera)**, **Estrella Blanca**, **Conexion**, **Rapidos de Cuauhtemoc**, **Valle de Guadiana** and **Autobus Americanos** bus lines. As the largest bus company they serve much of the northern and northwestern part of the country such as Aguascaliente, Baja California Norte, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Durango, Distrito Federal (DF), Guanajuato, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Estado de Mexico, Michoacán, Morelos, Nayarit, Queretaro, San Luis Potosi, Sinaloa, Sonora and Zacatecas states, up to the US border. They sell tickets for onward travel to the United States from the border on **Greyhound Lines** (<http://www.greyhound.com>) (and vice versa).
- **Estrella de Oro (Gold Star)** (<http://www.estrelladeoro.com.mx>), ☎ +52 55 5133-5133, toll-free: 01 800-009-9090. operates mainly between Mexico City and various places in Distrito Federal (DF), Guerrero, Veracruz and Hidalgo states. They are now a subsidiary of Grupo ADO but continue to operate as a separate company and brand.
- **Estrella Roja (Red Star)** (<http://www.estrellaroja.com.mx>), ☎ +52 222 273-8300, toll-free: 01 800-712-2284. Travels mainly between Mexico City and Puebla.
- **Primera Plus** (<http://www.primeraplus.com.mx>) (*Grupo Flecha Amarilla*), ☎ +52 477 710-0060, toll-free: 0800 375-75-87. Subsidiary of Grupo Flecha Amarilla which also include **ETN**, **Turistar Lujo** (<http://www.etn.com.mx>), **Servicios Coordinados**, **TTUR** (<http://www.ttur.com.mx>) and **Flecha Amarilla** (second class service) bus lines. They serve Jalisco, Michoacán, Guanajuato, Colima, Aguascalientes, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, México, D.F., Nayarit, Estado de Mexico, Hidalgo, Guerrero and Sinaloa states
- **Grupo Flecha Roja, Aguila** (<http://www.grupoflecharoja.com.mx/>), ☎ +52 55 5516 5153, toll-free: 01 800 224-8452. Operates mainly between Mexico City and various places in northern part of Mexico state into Queretaro state on the Flecha Roja brand and to the southeastern part of Mexico State into Guerrero and Morelos states as **Aguila**.
- **FYPSA** (<https://www.facebook.com/AutobusesFYPSA/>), ☎ +52 951 516-2270. operates mainly between Distrito Federal (DF), Mexico state, Oaxaca and Chiapas states.
- **Omnibus de Mexico** (<http://www.odm.com.mx>), ☎ +52 55 5141-4300, toll-free: 01 800-765-66-36. They serve much of the central and northern part of the country such as Aguascaliente, Colima, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Durango, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Jalisco, Michoacan, Nayrit, Queretaro, San Luis Potosi, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tamaulipas, Veracruz and Zacatecas states, up to the US border.
- **Pullman de Morelos** (<http://www.pullman.mx/>), ☎ +52 55 5545-3505, toll-free: 0800 624-03-60. Operates buses in/around Guerrero and Morelos. They operate the Ejecutivo Dorado



(Golden Executive), Pullman de Lujo, Primera Clase, Primera Federal and Primera Local (2nd class).

- **Grupo Senda** (<http://ticket.gruposenda.com/en/>). They serve much of the north central part of the country such as Aguascaliente, Colima, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Durango, Guerrero, Jalisco, Michoacan, Nuevo Leon, Queretaro, San Luis Potosi, Sinaloa, Tamaulipas and Zacatecas states, up to the US border as. From the border they continue up to the southeastern and central U.S. states of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee from Texas as **Turimex Internacional** (<http://www.turimex.com/en/>). They also operate the and **Del Norte** (<https://transportesdelnorte.com.mx/en/>) and **Coahuilenses** bus lines in north central part of Mexico, south of Texas.
- **TAP** (<http://tap.com.mx>), toll-free: 0800-0011-827. Operates bus more or less along the Hwy 15 corridor between Tijuana and Guadalajara and other places off of the Hwy 15 corridor in Baja California Norte, Guerrero, Jalisco, Michoacán, Nayarit, Sinaloa, Sonora, Estado de Mexico and Mexico DF. They also operate the **TAP Royal** (<http://www.taproyal.com>) bus lines from the border to Los Angeles, Phoenix, Las Vegas and Tucson in the southwestern part of the U.S. (updated Aug 2017)
- **Zina Bus, Excelencia, Excelencia Plus** (<http://autobuseszinacantepec.com.mx/>), ☎ +52 55 5278-4721. Goes from Mexico DF to the surrounding Mexico, Guerrero and Michoacan states. The company also operate **Autobus Pegasso** (<http://pegasso.mx>) to Guanajuato and Querétaro as well as Estado de Mexico and Michoacán.

The above are major bus lines traversing much of the country with some crossing the border into the U.S. No bus company holds a large market share nationwide like Greyhound in the U.S. but some do have a greater market share in certain regions. There are over 200 other companies and drivers' unions operating buses not listed in the above which you will find once there or see (or add to) the specific articles of a region, city or town.

## City buses

If traveling within a city, you will find public transport systems full of the popular "peseros". "Peseros" are small buses with varying color codes depending on the city you are in. Usually the route taken is written on cardboard attached to the windshield or with wet and then dried soap or chalk on the windshield listing the local colonias (neighborhoods) and points of interest (Wal Mart, Costco, malls, hospitals, universities, etc.) the route serves and are not numbered.

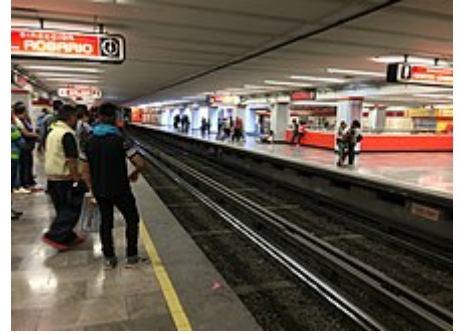
In some cities bus stops are uncommon and you are expected to signal the bus to pick you up and drop you off wherever you want. If you don't find a stop button in a pesero; just shout the word "baja!" for it to stop. Fares are cheap and vary from M\$5-15 (Feb 2022) approximately.

## By carpooling

You can check, if there are rides offered for your route on Blablacar. Especially between bigger cities the chances are good. In order to see the prices in pesos, you need to (re)install the app and choose Mexican pesos. Prices are about 30-50% less than taking an intercity bus.

## By train

There is no intercity train service in Mexico, but a few tourist passenger train routes do exist in Mexico. One popular route is the **Chihuahua al Pacific Railway (CHEPE) operated by Ferromex** (<http://www.chepe.com.mx>) between Los Mochis and the city of Chihuahua, through the Copper Canyon. In the state of Jalisco there are a couple of lines which travel from the state capital city of Guadalajara to the nearby tequila distilleries in the small town of Amatitlan on the **Tequila Express** (<https://www.tequilaexpress.mx/>) and to the Jose Cuervo distilleries in the town of Tequila on the **Jose Cuervo Express** (<http://www.josecuervoexpress.com>). There is also passenger service from Tijuana to Mexicali on Saturdays.



Mexico City subway

It may be possible to hop aboard or on top of freight cars in some parts of the country (if you happen to be an adventurer) as many migrants traveling from Central America to the USA are doing this. The prospect of hopping the freight is dangerous due to the lack of restraints which results in falling off, getting run over by the wheels, getting hit by an oncoming train (if fallen into the wrong spot), or being robbed by bandits along the way.

Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey have subway and/or light rail services.

Mexico City has a suburban light rail system called Ferrocarril Suburbano that operates 3 lines in Estado de Mexico. An intercity rail line connecting Mexico City to Toluca is scheduled to open in 2023.

A major high-speed train route is under construction in the Yucatan (<https://www.trenmaya.gob.mx/yucatan/>) and slated to open by 2024. Dubbed *Tren Maya*, the sleek, modern trains will open up a range of inland tourist destinations to the millions of annual visitors who come to Cancun and the Riviera Maya. The 948-km rail route goes along the Caribbean coast between Cancun and Chetumal at the Belize border. It provides access to Merida and has stations at archeological sites like Chichen Itza, Edzna, Tulum, and Palenque. The rail line will be operated by the Mexican military to ensure security. The project is not without controversy. Although the referendums to approve and fund the project received over 90% support from voters, environmentalists have criticized the destruction of sensitive areas along the coast and fiscal conservatives fret over cost escalations. The project, however, continues and appears on schedule.

## By taxi

Ride-hailing is available in Mexico and the following are the most anticipated providers:

- **Uber** (<https://www.uber.com/global/en/cities/mexico-city>). Works in Mexico City and other cities. (updated Nov 2021)
- **Cabify**. (updated Nov 2021)
- **Didi**. (updated Nov 2021)
- **Bolt** (<https://bolt.eu>). Includes three cities. (updated Nov 2021)

## By thumb

One upside of the high petroleum prices is that hitching is beginning to be more common in Mexico again, particularly the rural areas. In areas near big cities, hitching should be more difficult, and is not really advisable for security reasons.

However, in village areas, this will be really possible and most likely a nice experience. Since villagers have always had a hard time affording gas, and nowadays many are turning to picking up paying hitchhikers as a way to afford the next trip into town. Baja California, the Sierra Tarahumara and Oaxaca and Chiapas all have good possibilities for the hitchhiker.

Hitchhiking possibilities vary according to region. Mexican culture is often accepting of hitchhiking and it's a common practice among Mexican youngsters going to the beach in Easter vacations, though in some cases a money contribution is expected for gas because of its relatively high prices. You should make it clear that you have no money to offer before accepting the ride, if this is the case. If you're willing to pay, trucks will often provide lifts for about half the price of a bus ticket. Of course you may be able to negotiate a better deal. Hitchhiking is considered fairly safe and easy in the Yucatán Peninsula.

## Talk

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See also: [Spanish phrasebook](#)

**Spanish** is the *de facto* national language. Spanish is used by virtually the whole population and all public communications (signs, documents, media, etc.) are conducted in the language.

Mexico has one of the richest diversity of more than 60 **indigenous languages** spoken with official recognition. These languages are spoken within the communities that are largely segregated from mainstream mestizo society. About 5% of Mexicans speak an indigenous language. Most of these communities are fluent in Spanish as well.

Many Mexicans do not speak English, even though it is understood by many in Mexico City, tour guides, and workers in popular tourist attractions. Because of this, a good knowledge of Spanish is essential for the independent traveller.

The most popular foreign languages to learn within Mexico after English are French, Italian, German and Japanese. German, French, and Russian may be known by some in the tourism industry, but among clerks, policemen, and drivers (most particularly the last) there is basically no such thing as knowledge of foreign languages. Bilingual signs in Spanish and English might be available in popular tourist destinations.

## See

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Many travelers come to see Mexico's natural wonders, including:

- **Copper Canyon** - ride the train through an enormous canyon system in the northwestern mountains
- **Mesoamerican Barrier Reef** - scuba dive the coral reefs in the warm waters of the Mexican Caribbean
- **Sea of Cortez** - see migrating whales, sea lions, dolphins and more
- **Volcano Belt** - climb Mexico's highest mountain peaks and see active, dormant, and inactive volcanoes
- **The total solar eclipse** on Monday 8 April 2024 tracks northeast from Mazatlan to Durango, Torreon and Piedras Negras then across Texas.



Popocatépetl's 16th century monasteries are World Heritage Sites

There are 35 UNESCO world heritage sites in Mexico as of 2018, more than anywhere else in the Americas. Most of them are in the cultural category and relate to either the pre-Columbian civilizations in the area or to early colonial cities established by the Spanish *conquistadores* and missionaries. Much of

Mexico is mountainous with some mountains rising higher than 5,000 m over the sea level.

Mexico is on the border of two bioregions; both North American wildlife and Central and South American wildlife can be seen in the country. A number of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves are in Mexico as well as a number of RAMSAR wetlands.

The Mexican Tourism Ministry (SECTUR) has a program called *Pueblos Magicos* to identify and develop tourist programs in smaller, lesser known destinations. Towns designated as Pueblos Magicos usually are rich in colonial heritage, maintain cultural traditions, or offer spectacular natural wonders. These towns are the kinds of places a couple would go for a romantic weekend because they often feature interesting historical sites in a quaint setting with local bed and breakfast inns, regional cuisine in the local restaurants, and good accessibility from major cities.

## Buy

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### Money

The currency of Mexico is the *peso*, denoted in Mexico as "\$" (ISO code **MXN**) and in Wikivoyage as "M\$". It is divided into 100 *centavos*. Prices in US dollars (in tourist areas) are labeled "US\$" or sport an S with a double stroke.

Coins are issued in denominations of 5, 10 (steel), 20, and 50 centavos (brass; new 50-centavo coins issued from 2011 onwards are steel and smaller in size) and 1, 2, 5 (steel ring, brass center), 10, 20, 50, and 100 pesos (brass ring, steel or silver center), but it's extremely rare to find coins valued at more than 10 pesos.

Banknotes are produced in denominations of 20 (blue), 50 (pink-red), 100 (red), 200 (green), 500 (brown), and 1,000 (purple and pink for the latest issue, purple for older issues) pesos. The current issue of 20, 50 and 100 peso bills are made from polymer plastic, and there are several different series of all banknotes. Ten-peso notes exist, but are very rare and no longer issued and accepted.

#### Exchange rates for Mexican pesos

As of January 2023:

- US\$1 ≈ M\$19
- €1 ≈ M\$20
- UK£1 ≈ M\$23
- CA\$1 ≈ M\$14
- Japanese ¥100 ≈ M\$14

Exchange rates fluctuate. Current rates for these and other currencies are available from XE.com (<https://www.xe.com/currency/mxn-mexican-peso>)

### Converting from pesos into dollars, euros and pounds

Your usual currency equaling between 18 and 22 pesos, do this to convert: Divide by 100 and multiply by 5. Example:

- 600 pesos ->  $6.6 \times 5 \approx 33$  of your usual currency

When your usual currency equals between 22 and 29 pesos, do this to convert: Divide by 100 and multiply by 4. Example:

- 700 pesos ->  $7.7 \times 4 \approx 31$  of your usual currency

And your usual currency being between 29 and 40 pesos, do this to convert: Divide by 100 and multiply by 3. Example:

- 800 pesos ->  $8.8 \times 3 \approx 26$  of your usual currency

This works well for everyday expenses. For rather high amounts of money, it's better to convert with the exact exchange rate, e.g. with an app.

## **Acceptance of other currency**

"Old" pesos (issued before 1993) are no longer accepted, but are usually collected by numismatists.

Merchants may accept US dollars at a lower exchange rate. US dollars are widely accepted in the far north and in tourist locales elsewhere.

Other currencies such as the euro, pound sterling, and Swiss franc are generally not accepted by merchants, and even banks headquartered in Europe may refuse to accept euros for exchange. On the other hand, most banks and exchange offices (*casas de cambio*) will widely accept them.

If you arrive from the south and still carry Central American currency around try to exchange them as soon as possible, as outside of the immediate border area not even banks will accept them. As all Central American countries either have the US dollar as their national currency (El Salvador and Panama) or have it circulating to varying degrees as a *de facto* second currency and virtually all banks in Central America and most banks in Mexico accept US dollars (usually at better rates than any other currency) your best bet is to "triangulate" your money from local currency to dollars and from dollars to pesos rather than exchanging them directly, which can be difficult and expensive. Should you have forgotten to exchange your money and the banks are closed, street money changers (called *coyotes* or *cambistas*) don't have fixed opening hours and often have better rates. Be careful however, as they do from time to time rip off foreign visitors with bogus calculators, wrong rates and counterfeit or outdated (and thus worthless) bills.

## **Banking**

### **Exchange into pesos**

If you have brought cash in US dollars or euros, the best places to change your money are at an arrival airport (such as MEX and CUN), where many money exchanges are located already in the arrival hall (where you can also compare some exchange rates and choose the most convenient) and, normally, at airports, the exchange rate is usually fair. Be sure to pass through Customs before looking for foreign exchange as inside the customs zone in Cancun the rate is far lower than the greediest street vendors ask.

If you would like to wait until later to obtain Mexican currency, try not to change at your hotel, as the rates there tend to be extremely disadvantageous for tourists. However, some hotels provide exchanges as a courtesy, in this case it is best to ask just to make sure. Often, you can find money exchanges at strategic places in most tourist destinations and near the hotel (zones). The exchanges rates should not differ drastically from the ones at airport. If you are unfamiliar with Mexican money (bills, coins), try to stick to official foreign exchange booths. In several internationally popular beach destinations like Cancun and Los Cabos, local merchants are accustomed to US dollars and will often accept them as payment (they even have dual-currency cash registers and drawers). However, do bear in mind that the convenience of such "private" money exchange usually comes with a slightly unfavorable exchange rate.

### **Acceptance of payment cards**

Credit and debit cards (with Maestro or MasterCard/Visa affiliation) are widely accepted in Mexico. You can use them at ATMs as well as in most department stores, bigger restaurants, gas stations, but be sure that outside cities you always carry sufficient cash in pesos in your pocket, and generally verify the possibility

to pay with card before consumption. Smaller (often family run) businesses often accept only cash. Most of the time, an extra 5% when paying with card is added. Also, you cannot get lower prices if you haggle unless you pay cash. Often, you can pay half or less by acting like you are leaving.

While many Pemex stations accept credit cards, especially in locations that have heavy tourist traffic, some do not; travellers who intend to pay by credit card should always ask the attendant if the card is accepted before pumping begins.

## Withdrawing pesos

ATMs are easy to come by. Bank of America customers can avoid ATM fees by using Santander Serfin ATMs. Other banks may have similar policies, check with your respective institution. For example, Banamex bank is owned by Citibank/Citigroup, and Bancomer is owned by BBVA, who is related to Chase in the United States. Ask to your bank if they have relation with Mexican banks, and the advantages that such ally can provide. Otherwise, do not be surprised to find yourself with a fee for each withdrawal. ATMs ask you if you want to accept the shown fee. In some ATMs you need to put your credit card inside crosswise.

These ATMs are commonly in the city center *and* have low withdrawal fees for using a non-American credit card:

- **BanCoppel** – M\$18
- **banamex / citibanamex** – M\$31
- **Santander** – M\$35
- **Banorte** – M\$46

Other ATMs are:

- Banco del Bienestar – M\$12
- Banca Inbursa – M\$17
- Caja Popular Mexicana – M\$17
- Banjercito – M\$19
- BanBajío – M\$23
- Banca Mifel – M\$26
- Banco Azteca – M\$30
- CI Banco – M\$58
- MULTIVA – M\$67
- HSBC – M\$74
- banregio – M\$81
- Scotiabank – M\$100–110
- bankaool – M\$109
- Afirme – M\$162
- BBVA / Bancomer – M\$174

There is no difference between Mastercard and VISA. The fees are as of November 2021 if not stated different.

ATMs in smaller towns can run out of currency; sometimes this is a regular occurrence. Check with the bank (or locals) about the best time to use the ATM and never wait until the last minute to get cash.

## Tipping

Tipping in Mexico is similar to the United States. It is usually from 10 to 15%.



Meals have a 10% to 15% tip (this includes fast food deliveries). This tip is usually left by most people in restaurants, although it is not so common in street restaurants or stands, where the tenders usually have a can or box where people deposit coins.

It is generally common to leave a tip on the table after paying and therefore having small change is very useful.

Mexican bars and night clubs often charge directly to the bill 15% of the total amount (taxes included). That is illegal in most cases because of the imposition of the tip and because they calculate the 15% with taxes included. In large groups, or in nightclubs the barmen expect the customers to deposit their tip in a cup left on the table before serving the drinks so the service they give is in function with the tip they received.

It is also customary to give a tip to the person who sometimes guard the car as if they were valet parking; in Mexico these people are often called *viene viene* (literally: "comes, comes") or *franeleros* and usually people give them M\$3-20 depending on the zone, although they sometimes ask for bigger sums of money when the car is left close to a night life area.

In medium and large retail stores such as Wal-Mart there are uniformed helpers, usually children or the elderly, who bag the products just after the clerk has scanned them. This role is called *cerillo* (Spanish for "match"). It is common for these helpers to not have a basic salary, so all the money earned is from the tips people give them. Most customers give M\$2-5 depending on the number of products. Cerillos also put the bags in the cart and if the load is large they can even help bringing it to the car and unloading the bags; in these cases, they normally receive more than M\$15.

Tipping is not expected in cabs or buses, except when it is a tour. In some populated Mexican restaurants wandering musicians enter, play, and expect the customers to pay something, although this is voluntary. In filling stations, the workers usually get M\$2-5 for every gasoline load. In stadiums people give a small tip to the person who shows the place where they should sit. Tips are also given to bellboys, barbers and people that work in similar services.

## Shopping

If there is no price tag, **ask for the price first**. The simple question is "¿Cuánto cuesta?" and is easily understood by Mexicans.

Some shops show the price in **pesitos**. That's the diminutive of peso and means the same.

- Weights are measured in kilograms. Length is measured in centimeters and meters.
- For clothes and shoe sizes, the "Continental" measurements are used.

Merchants can be picky about the state of your paper money and may scrutinize it and reject anything with rips. Try to keep it in as pristine condition as possible. Reputedly, this is more the case the farther south you go. In any case, you can easily enter a bank with some damaged bill to get it exchanged into another one.

Merchants are often reluctant to make change in smaller towns. Try to avoid paying with overly large denominations; the best customer has exact change. In rural areas, your 'change' may consist of chiclets or other small commodities.



Spices for sale at a market in Oaxaca

Merchants, specially those in small markets ("tianguis") and street vendors are no strangers to haggling. Try asking "¿Es lo menos?" ("Is this the smallest price?"), The more rural and less touristy the area you're likely to have more success.

- **Indigenous Art** A visit to anywhere in Mexico will give one the opportunity to buy art made in the "old world" manner that reflects the diverse ethnicity of Mexico. Included in these articles would be textiles, wood carvings, paintings and carved masks that are used on sacred dances and burials.
- **Timeshares** When visiting the **resort** cities of Mexico (e.g. Cancun, Puerto Vallarta or similar), it is more than common to be approached on the streets, in bars, in restaurants and anywhere with offers of gifts, free rental cars, free nights, free dinners, free anything that may appeal to you, just for visiting and listening to a presentation to buy a timeshare. Unless you are severely desperate for something to do, you may want to ignore those making the offer and stay away from those *free* offers. While the properties are very nice, great locations and plenty of amenities, this is not the place to *learn* about timeshares. Do your homework before even thinking about buying a timeshare, see what the values are in the *resale* market and understand the *rights* you are buying and the future costs. Collecting on the *free* offers may be difficult, if not impossible.
- **Automobiles** It's certainly worth going over and importing a car back from there, although importing it to the EU/US standards is the hard part. Recommended are the Ford Fusion (like the British Ford Mondeo, but more upmarket) and the Chrysler 200 (the 2.4 model is worth it). Volkswagens can be substantially better-equipped than European or North American counterparts. The Passat sold in Mexico is not the same car as in Europe, and is substantially bigger, however, engines are the same as in Europe, except for the 2.5 petrol.
- **Cuban cigars** are a fun novelty for tourists from the US and are widely available. It's still illegal to bring them back to the US, although the worst that's likely to happen is they'll be confiscated by customs.

## Do

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The warm Mexican climate, spectacular nature and long coastline make the country great for outdoor life, especially water sport.

- **Surfing** – Baja California, Vallarta, Oaxaca
- **Sea kayaking** – Baja California
- **Snorkeling** – Baja California, Cancun, Cozumel, Isla Mujeres, etc.
- **Scuba diving** – Cancun, Cozumel, Isla Mujeres, Acapulco, Cabo San Lucas etc., and cave diving in the cenotes of the Yucatán Peninsula.
- **Whale watching** – Baja California, Guerrero Negro, Mazunte, Zipolite
- **White water rafting** – Veracruz
- **Visit a volcano** – Mexico, Toluca etc.
- **Take a ride on the Copper Canyon Railway**
- **Enjoy the beautiful coast line and beaches of Oaxaca** – Huatulco, Mazunte, Zipolite, Puerto Angel, Puerto Escondido, etc.
- Go for a **horseback ride** in the Copper Canyon



Mayan Ruins of Tulum

- **Visit the archaeological sites** like Chichen Itza, Tulum, Coba, Monte Alban, Calakmul, Palenque, etc.
- **Volunteering** – Chiapas, Xalapa, Veracruz or many other destinations
- **Visit ecological parks** – Mayan Riviera, Chiapas, Tamaulipas
- **Trekking and viewing cave paintings** Baja California

## Sports

**Football** (soccer) is Mexico's national sport, and its top men's league, the **Liga MX** (<http://www.ligamx.net>), is one of the best funded outside Europe. The big four teams in the Liga MX are **América** (<http://www.clubamerica.com.mx>), **Chivas** (<http://www.chivasdecorazon.com.mx>), **Cruz Azul** (<http://www.cruzazulfc.com>) and **Pumas** (<http://www.pumas.mx/>). The rivalry between Guadalajara's Chivas and Mexico City's América, known as *El Súper Clásico*, *El Clásico de Clásicos* or just *El Clásico*, is the biggest in Mexico, and fixtures between the two sides are guaranteed to draw partisan sell-out crowds. The Mexican national team is also a regional powerhouse, and matches against its northern neighbour, the United States, are particularly charged affairs.

**Baseball** is perhaps the second biggest team sport in the country but it is very much a regional affair. The best players make it to Major League Baseball, but the national league is well worth watching for its own brand of excitement

**American Football** has a long tradition in Mexico but has often been relegated to third fiddle by the more popular soccer and baseball. Estadio Azteca has seen a handful of NFL games (including, at a time, the best attended NFL game in league history up to that point) and besides a long-standing college league, there is now also a professional league with teams focused in and around Mexico City.

## Eat

See also: Mexican cuisine

Mexican cuisine can be described better as a collection of various regional cuisines rather than a standard list of dishes for the whole country. Because of climate, geography and ethnic differences, we can classify Mexican cuisine broadly in 4 great categories according to the region:

- **Northern** – Mostly meat dishes done mainly from beef and goat. This includes Cabrito, Carne Asada (Barbecue) and Arrachera. Is influenced by international cuisine (mostly from the United States and Europe), but it retains the essential Mexican flavor.
- **Central** – This region is influenced by the rest of the country, but has its own well-developed local flavor in dishes such as Pozole, Menudo and Carnitas. Dishes are mostly corn-based and with different spices.
- **Southeastern** – Is known for its spicy vegetable and chicken-based dishes. Caribbean cuisine have influences here because of the location.
- **Coast** – Has a strong emphasis on seafood and fish, but corn-based recipes can be easily found as well.



Taco stalls



Gordita

Ask for the "platillo típico" of the town, which is the local speciality that may not be found elsewhere, a variation, or the birthplace of a recipe, also consider that most of the recipes change from place to place, like tamales, in the south are made with the banana plant leaves, and in the Huasteca region tamales are very big (There are called "Zacahuil"), one is OK for a complete family.

If you are travelling here from Spain or elsewhere in Latin America, keep in mind that many Mexican dishes can have the same name, but be very different from their counterparts elsewhere. For instance, a Mexican *tamal* is very different from a Colombian *tamal*, and a Mexican *tortilla* bears virtually no similarity at all to a Spanish *tortilla*.

Traditional Mexican food can often be very spicy; if you are not used to peppers, always ask if your food includes it. "(¿Esto tiene chile? Es picante?)."

There are many food carts on the streets of Mexican cities and towns. Travelers are advised to eat from these carts with caution, as hygienic preparation practices are not always reliable. You can measure the quality of food by popularity; do not eat in lonely places, even if they are restaurants or hotels. Consider that Mexicans eat their main meal in the middle of the afternoon (around 3 o'clock), with breakfast or "almuerzo", a mid-morning affair after a very light something, like a small plate of fruit or a roll with coffee, in the very early morning. Although, many Mexicans have large breakfasts in the morning. Later, at night the meal varies from very light, such as commonly sweet rolls or breads, coffee or hot chocolate, to heavy dinner, such as pozole, tacos, and tamales. Schedule your meals accordingly and you will get a better perspective on the gauge of how busy (popular) a restaurant is.

In doing so, you may (or may not) find some of the most unique and genuinely Mexican dishes you've ever had. From these vendors, you may find tacos, burgers, bread, roasted field corn or elote served with mayonnaise, or a light cream, and sprinkled with fresh white cheese, roasted sweet potato called camote, and almost any kind of food and service you would imagine.

- **Chicharrón** – Deep fried pork skin. Quite crunchy and if well-prepared slightly oily. Heavenly spread with guacamole. Or sometimes cooked in a mild chili sauce and served with eggs.
- **Enchiladas** – Chicken or meat stuffed soft tortillas covered with green, red or mole sauce. Some may have melted cheese inside and/or on top.
- **Tacos** – Soft corn tortillas filled with meat (asada (steak strips), pollo (shredded chicken), carnitas (fried shredded pork), lengua (cow tongue), cabeza (meat from cow skull), sesos (cow brains), tripa (cow gut), al pastor (chili, pork, beef cut from a spit) or chorizo (pork sausage)). In the north sometimes flour tortillas are used. Do not expect the crispy taco shell anywhere.
- **Tamales** (singular *tamal*) – corn dough shell with meat or vegetable fillings. Tamales Dulces contain fruit and/or nuts.
- **Tortas** – Fancy Mexican sandwich. Bread roll that is grilled lightly, meat fillings are same as tacos, lettuce, tomatoes, jalapeños, beans, onion, mayonnaise and avocado. One is beginning to find tortas with the American styled cold cuts available, as well, in urban areas.
- **Huitlacoche** – (wit-la-ko-che) A fungus, much like mushrooms, found in corn. This dish is usually an additive to others. Foreigners might find it hard to stomach but Mexicans swear by it. Although most Mexicans love huitlacoche, most do not prepare it in their own home very frequently. It can be found in most markets or stores.
- **Quesadillas** – Cheese or other ingredients grilled in between corn tortillas, heavy on cheese and lighter on other items such as chicken, pork, beans, squash flower blossoms and such.
- **Mole** – Mild to medium chili based sauce made with cocoa and a hint of peanut over meat, usually served with shredded chicken or turkey. ('Pollo en mole' and this is known as Puebla

or poblano style). There are many regional moles and some are green, yellow, black and can vary greatly in flavor depending on the artistic talent or preferences involved.

- **Pozole** – Chicken or pork broth with hominy corn, spiced when served with oregano, lettuce, lemon juice, radish, chopped onion, dried ground chile and other ingredients such as chicken, pork, or even seafood, usually served with a side dish of tostadas, fried potato and fresh cheese tacos. Very fortifying.
- **Gorditas** – corn patty stuffed with chicharron, chicken, cheese, etc. topped with cream, cheese and hot sauce.
- **Grillo** – Grasshopper, usually cooked and placed inside another dish such as a quesadilla. It is frequently found in markets in the state of Morelos and other central Mexico states. This is not common in Mexico City.
- **Guacamole** – crushed avocado sauce with green serrano chile, chopped red tomato and onion, lime juice, salt, and served with somewhat thick (1/8 inch) fried tortilla slices or "totopos".
- **Tostadas** – fried flat tortilla topped with fried beans, lettuce, cream, fresh cheese, sliced red tomato and onion, hot sauce, and chicken or other main ingredient. Think a corn chip dippers, on low dose steroids, for salsas and as above. You do not usually get a plate of this automatically in many parts of Mexico as you would in the US, although they are starting to show up in resort areas that cater to US nationals automatically.
- **Huaraches** – a bigger (think shoe-shaped) version a gordita.
- **Sopes** – corn patty topped with a wide variety of ingredients such as chicken, cheese, mashed beans, and various hot sauces.
- **Carnitas** – deep fried pork meat served with a variety of salsa", to get them dry with less grease.
- **Chile en nogada** – A big green Poblano chile with a beef or pork apple stuffing, covered with a white nut (usually walnut, known as *nuez*) sauce and sprinkled with pomegranate seeds which happen to be red. The three colors represent the national flag and the dish is served nationwide around Mexican Independence Day 16 September.
- **Barbacoa** – Sheep or goat meat cooked with maguey leaves in an oven made at a hole in the ground. Think BBQ heaven without the hickory smoke or catsup-based BBQ sauce. Served with condiments and salsas in corn tortillas and sometimes in a torta bread roll.
- **Sopa de Tortilla** – tortilla chips soup usually of chicken broth, plain or with a touch of tomato flavor, and usually mild and not at all hot. Commonly served with diced avocado and fresh crumbled white cheese on top.
- **Chilaquiles** – tortilla chips with a green tomatillo, or red tomato, or mild chili sauce, usually served with chicken or eggs on top or within. Usually a mild dish.
- **Migas** – is a typical dish in the center of the country which is a guajillo chile broth with soaked bread, which you can add the pork bones with meat or eggs.

You may see a sign with "**orden de tacos**". This means usually 5 pieces, if there is no other amount stated. The word *orden* is also used for other types of Mexican food.

There is breakfast in McDonald's that you may not find in other countries. It includes:

- McMolletes
- McMuffin Huevo y Salchicha
- McMuffin a la Mexicana
- Hotcakes con Salchichas
- Desayuno Especial Mexicano
- McBurrito a la Mexicana for M\$30 (Dec 2021)



Basic burgers you may not find in other countries during the day are for about M\$30 (Dec 2021):

- Hamburguesa Gourmet
- Hamburguesa Especial con lechuga

## Drink

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Tap water is potable, but generally not recommended for drinking. Hotels usually give guests one (large) bottle of drinking water per room per night. Bottled water is also readily available in supermarkets and at tourist attractions.



Tequila store in Tequila

- Absinthe is legal in Mexico.
- Tequila, distilled from Agave (a specific type of cactus)
- Pulque, ferment made from Maguey
- Mezcal, similar to tequila but distilled from Maguey
- Tepache, made from pineapple
- Tuba, made from coconut palm tree

There are also several Mexican beers, most of which are available outside Mexico, these include Corona (popular, but not necessarily as overwhelmingly popular in Mexico as many foreigners think), Dos Equis (XX) and Modelo Especial.

Lighter Mexican beers are often served with lime and salt, though many Mexicans do not drink beer in this fashion. In some places you will find beer served as a prepared drink called "Michelada" or simply "Chelada". The formula varies depending on the place, but it's usually beer mixed with lime juice and various sauces and spices on ice served in a salt rim glass. Spicy beer is available in supermarkets; try it, it will be an experience. Other variation called "Cubana" includes Clamato cocktail, soybean sauce, salt and a little bit of hot sauce.

Northwestern Mexico, including Baja California and Sonora, also produces wines, and Mexican wine is often quite good, but most Mexicans tend to prefer European or Chilean imports.

Non alcoholic beverages:

- Chocolate
- Atole
- Horchata (rice based drink)
- Agua de Jamaica (hibiscus iced tea, similar to karkadai in Egypt)
- Licuados de fruta (Fruit smoothies and milkshakes)
- Champurrado (Thick chocolate drink)
- Refrescos (common sodas, generally sweet and made with cane sugar, not corn syrup as in the United States).



Champurrado

The legal drinking age in Mexico is 18, but not strictly enforced. In many places, consumption of alcohol in public ("open container") is illegal and usually punishable by a day in jail. Be aware of waitresses and barmen, especially at night clubs. If you are not aware of your consumption and how much you already spent, they can add a few more drinks to your account. Some do this, not all.

Alcoholmeters are widely used in driving roads. If drinking, always have a designated driver. Driving under the influence of an alcoholic beverage will result in 1 to 3 days in jail.

Mexico, especially the southern state of Chiapas, produces excellent coffee. Café con leche, usually one part coffee to one part steamed milk, is very popular. Unfortunately, many places in Mexico that are not cafés serve Nescafé or other instant coffee, so you may have to search for the good coffee, but it's there.

If you walk through the city center and look for a low-priced bottle of mineral water: You get 500ml for M\$6,50 (Dec 2021) in an Oxxo, 7eleven and Farmacia Guadalajara.

## Learn

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The most important Universities in Mexico include the **UNAM**, ranked 73rd worldwide, and the best in Latin America. Its main campus is a UNESCO World Heritage site. Murals in the main campus were painted by some of the most recognized artists in Mexican history, such as Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros. **IPN** (Instituto Politécnico Nacional), **ITESM** (Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, located in Monterrey but with branch campuses in many other Mexican cities) the **Iberoamerican University** (Universidad Iberoamericana, part of the Jesuit University System) and **Universidad Anahuac**.

Most of the government-funded universities on mayor cities (state capital) have short courses on history, gastronomy and cultural subjects, most of them are almost free. Other places are the "Casa de la Cultura", (house of culture) that are historical buildings used for cultural related activities (music concerts, theater, paint and other exhibits, they also have "talleres" (workshops).

Most places have programs for foreigners to learn Spanish, or even study a whole degree. There are some other courses where you can learn traditional Mexican activities such as handcrafts.

There are Spanish language schools throughout Mexico. The city with the most schools is Cuernavaca, with more than 50 schools. Oaxaca, San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato also offer a number of schools to choose from. Prices vary; however, most schools are very reasonably priced. Many schools can arrange homestays with local Mexican families.

## Work

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Working may require a work visa, which is difficult to get if you just want to freelance for a short time.

Many important headquarters are located throughout the main cities of Mexico. Top Mexican corporations such as Televisa, Bimbo, Cemex, Telmex and Vitra are often willing to hire professionals who are native English speakers as much of their business is developed alongside North American corporations.



Hornos Beach in Acapulco



Chichen Itza, one of the most famous archaeological sites in the world



Native English speakers can pick up work as English teachers. The upside is that English speakers with no knowledge of Spanish are appreciated, because they will force their students to practice English. The downside is that salaries are somewhat low.

## Sleep

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Several hotel chains are available throughout Mexico, including Palace Resorts, Le Blanc Spa Resort, Best Western, Holiday Inn, CityExpress, Fiesta Inn, Fairmont, Hilton, Ritz, Camino Real, Marriott (Sheraton, W, Westin, Four Points) and many others. Rates have risen considerably, though most are still reasonable compared to similar U.S. or European hotels. Chain accommodations are usually clean and comfortable, good for business travelers, but not necessarily for those wanting to experience Mexico itself. There are also many all-inclusive resorts for those visiting the major beach destinations.

Boutique hotels are found all over the country; price range varies but all of them are rich in Mexican traditions, elegance and charm, the perfect way to experience the cultural heritage of each state. A great source of information is Melba Levick's book *Mexicasa*, found in many libraries and online bookstores. Otherwise an authentic accommodation can usually be found by asking locals or gringos, especially in the smaller towns.

Smaller hotels and motels along the roadside may not be safe or comfortable. If you are unsure about conditions or the safety of the room, ask to see it before paying. This will not be considered rude. Decent hotels for a low budget are usually found around the central bus station of a town. If you are going to stay at cheaper hotels in cooler areas in the winter consider bringing extra clothes, an electric blanket or a sleeping bag, as there is power, but no heat. And although it may get quite hot by afternoon outside, adobe and cement are like fridges. An electric tea kettle is also a good idea, as hot water might not be available when you want it.

There is a large backpacker culture in Mexico, and there are many hostels offering dorm accommodation and private rooms. You can expect to pay M\$100-300 (Nov 2021) for a night in a dorm, sometimes including breakfast. Hostels are a fantastic place to share information with fellow travelers, and you can often find people who have been to your future destinations.



Plaza de liberación and the Cathedral, Guadalajara

If you're travelling with children, use a plastic case (with wheels and a handle) as luggage, and it can be used as a bathtub for the kids if necessary. Budget hotels rarely, if ever, have bathtubs.

## Stay safe



**WARNING:** Consider against travelling to the following states: Guerrero, Michoacán, Colima, Sinaloa, Tamaulipas and Zacatecas.

The U.S. government recommends against traveling to the six states mentioned above because of high levels of crime and drug-related violence. Law enforcement's ability to respond to incidents in those states is generally limited.

The Mexican government makes a considerable effort to protect visitors to major tourist destinations, and resort areas and tourist destinations in Mexico generally do not see the levels of drug-related violence and crime reported in the border region and in areas along major trafficking routes.

**Government travel advisories**

United States (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/mexico-travel-advisory.html>)

*(Information last updated 12 Dec 2022)*



Mounted tourist police, Mexico City

Mexico has a reputation for being a dangerous country — a reputation that's not entirely unwarranted, but the average traveller should not be too overly concerned or cautious of their surroundings. A lot of the crime occurs between those involved in the drug trade (See [drug traffic issues](#) for more information), which doesn't affect tourists at all.

In most of the cities, location is very important as security changes from place to place. Areas close to downtown (*centro*) are safer to walk at night, especially on the "Plaza", "Zócalo" or "Jardín" (main square) and areas nearby. Stay in populated areas, avoid poor neighborhoods, especially at night, and don't walk there at any time if you are alone. Vicious beatings have been reported at resorts by people who have travelled alone, so stay alert for any suspicious-looking individual. If you wish to visit one of the slums, you should only go as part of a guided tour with a reputable guide or tour company.

Political violence in Chiapas and Oaxaca has abated, and is far less of a threat than drug-related crime. However, Mexican authorities do not look approvingly on foreigners who participate in demonstrations (even peaceful ones) or voice support for groups such as the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional and its leader, Subcomandante Marcos, even if their images and slogans are commonly sold on t-shirts and caps in markets.

Do not wave cash or credit cards around. Use them discreetly and put them away as quickly as possible.

The nationwide emergency number is **911**. Although Mexico has one of the largest police forces in the world, systemic corruption and low salaries often restrict the capabilities of law enforcement. Enlisting the help of the police almost always requires solid Spanish-language skills.

Beggars are not usually a threat, but you will find lots in urban areas. Avoid being surrounded by them, as some can pickpocket your goods. Giving away two pesos quickly can get you out of such troubles (but may also attract other beggars). Most poor and homeless Mexicans prefer to sell trinkets, gum, sing, or provide some meager service than beg outright.

In other cities, such as Guadalajara and Mexico City, are safer than most places in Mexico. However, caution is still recommended.

## Drug traffic issues

Former president Felipe Calderon waged war on the drug cartels, and in turn, they waged war against the government (and more often, among each other).

Some Mexican northern and border cities such as Tijuana, Nogales, Nuevo Laredo, Chihuahua, Culiacán, Durango, and Juárez can be dangerous if you are not familiar with them, especially at night. Most crime in the northern cities is related to the drug trade and police corruption. However, since law enforcement figures are often overwhelmed battling drug-related activities, many northern border towns that were somewhat dangerous to begin with are now a hotbed for criminals to act with impunity. Ciudad Juárez, in particular, bears the brunt of this violence, and with nearly a fourth of Mexico's overall murders, travel there requires special attention.



States with the most conflict, marked in red (2010)

Away from the northern states, cartel related violence is centered in specific areas, including the Pacific Coast states of Michoacán and Guerrero. However, exercise caution anywhere, especially at night or in high crime areas.

**As aforementioned, tourists and travellers are of no interest to the drug cartels.** Many popular tourist destinations like Oaxaca, Guanajuato, Los Cabos, Mexico City, Puerto Vallarta, Cancún, Mérida, and Guadalajara are largely unaffected by this, simply because there are no borders there. Ciudad Juárez is a primary battleground in the drug war, and while foreign travellers are not often targeted, the presence of two warring cartels, many small opportunistic gangs, and armed police and soldiers has created a chaotic situation to say the least.

Monterrey suffered a series of high-profile and particularly brazen kidnappings and murders in the mid-2000s, but the government stepped up security, and today, the city is largely peaceful, though vigilance is still advised.

As a general rule of thumb, the further away you are from the border, and the closer you are to Mexico City, the safer you'll be. Many people go to Mexico City to seek refuge from drug-related violence as many politicians and military personnel are there.

Consumption of drugs is not recommended while you are in Mexico because consumption in public areas will get you a fine and will most likely get you in trouble with the police. The army also sets up random checkpoints throughout all major highways in search of narcotics and weapons. Drug consumption is also frowned upon by a large percentage of the population.

## Advice for the beach

Jellyfish stings: vinegar or mustard on the skin, take some to the beach with you.

Stingray stings: water as hot as you can bear – the heat deactivates the poison.

Sunburns: Bring sunscreen if going to beaches because you might not find it available in some areas.

Riptides: Very dangerous, particularly during and after storms

## Public transportation

When in major cities – especially Mexico City – is better to play it safe with taxis. The best options are to phone a taxi company, to request that your hotel or restaurant call a taxi for you, or to pick up a taxi from an established post (*Taxi de Sitio*). Also, taxis can be stopped in the middle of the street, which is okay for most of the country, but particularly unsafe in Mexico City.

As chaotic as it might be sometimes, the Metro (<https://www.metro.cdmx.gob.mx/>) is the best way to move around in Mexico City: it's cheap (M\$5 for a ticket as of Feb 02, 2020), safe, has a large network covering almost anywhere you'd want to go in the city and it's extremely fast, compared to any on-street transportation, since it doesn't have to bear with the constant traffic jams. If you've never been in a crowded subway, avoid peak hours (usually from 06:00–09:00 and 17:00–20:00) and do your homework: check first which line (*línea*) and station (*estación*) you want to go to and the address of the place you're trying to reach. Your hotel can give you this information, and maps of the subway system are available on the internet and at the stations. Most stations also have maps of the vicinity.

Avoid taking the subway at late hours of the night, but during the day many stations are patrolled by police officers and the subway is safer than taking the public bus. Your major concern in the subway is the pickpockets, so keep your important belongings and wallets in a safe place.

A word of caution for people who are used to European or major American subway systems that operate around the clock: even in Mexico City, the last subway leaves around midnight, with service only resuming in the early morning. Taxis are priced accordingly, and you should keep your wits about you when moving around in the middle of the night.

If you are travelling by bus, do not put your valuables in your big bag in the storage compartment of the bus. If the police or the military controls the luggage, they might take out what they want, especially in night buses, when passengers are most likely asleep. The use of a money belt (worn underneath the clothes and out of sight) is highly recommended.

## Driving

- All distances on the signboards and speed limits are in metric units.
- Gas is likewise sold in metric units and far cheaper than in Europe (and still a bit cheaper than in the U.S.)

If driving in from the USA, always purchase Mexican liability insurance (legal defense coverage recommended) before crossing the border or immediately after crossing. When you are paying for your temporary import permit (for going beyond border areas), often in the same building there are several stalls selling Mexican auto insurance. Even if your American (or Canadian, etc.) insurance covers your vehicle in Mexico, it **cannot** (by Mexican law) cover liability (e.g., hitting something or injuring someone). You will probably spend time in a Mexican jail if you have an accident without it. And even if your own insurance does (in theory) provide liability coverage in Mexico—you'll be filing your claim from behind bars! Don't risk it, get Mexican auto insurance.



Downtown Mexico City

Never drive above the speed limit or run stop signs/red lights, as Mexican police will use any excuse to pull over tourists and give you a ticket. In some cities, the police can not give you a ticket, but they might warn you. The fine for speeding could be as much as US\$100 (M\$1870), depending on the city.

As of April 2011, police across the country are cracking down on drunk driving, particularly in Mexico City, the larger cities, and the beach resorts. There are random checkpoints throughout the country in which every driver has to stop and take an automated inebriation test. If you fail, you will end up in a Mexican prison. If you wouldn't drive drunk back home, don't do it in Mexico.

You will mostly find beggars and windshield cleaners at some traffic lights; having your windows closed at all times is especially recommendable in some areas of Mexico City. The windshield cleaners will try to clean yours: a strong and firm "no" is suggested.

## Natural disasters

Natural disasters in Mexico include hurricanes and earthquakes. Mexico City in particular is located in a seismically active area.

## Firearms

Every year a few US tourists run afoul of Mexico's strict gun laws. **Bringing guns into Mexico is illegal in most circumstances**, and this includes guns kept for personal protection on private boats. The Mexican authorities can and do search boats that dock in Mexican harbors or enter Mexican territorial waters, and if they find guns, the boat owner can find themselves in serious trouble. Concealed carry permits issued in the US are not valid in Mexico: if you try to cross the border with a concealed firearm, even inadvertently, you will almost certainly end up in a Mexican jail. Permits can be issued, in advance, for foreigners to bring certain types of guns into the country for what the law considers legitimate use, such as hunting (usually on an organized hunting trip) or participating in shooting sports. If you are thinking of bringing a gun into Mexico, be sure to carefully research the current legal requirements for permitting and documentation, and for transport and storage of the gun while in Mexico. Even if you obtain the necessary permit for a firearm, there are strict laws regarding ammunition.

## Stay healthy

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Some parts of Mexico are known for travelers' diarrhea, often called "Montezuma's Revenge" (Venganza de Moctezuma). The reason for this is not so much the spicy food but the contamination of the water supply in some of the poorer zones in Mexico. In most of the small towns that are less industrialized, only

the poorest Mexicans will drink tap water. The best policy is to only drink bottled or purified water, both of which are readily available. Be sure to specify *bottled* water in restaurants and avoid ice (which is often not made from purified water). Just like in the USA, in most major Mexican cities the water is purified at the cities' water company. In most restaurants in these poor zones, the only water served comes from large jugs of purified water. If you get sick, visit your local clinic as soon as possible. There is medicine available that will counter the bacteria.

Medicine in urban areas is highly developed, public hospitals are just as good as public hospitals in US, and just as the American public hospitals, they are always full. It's recommended going to private hospitals for faster service.

Before traveling to rural areas of Mexico, it might be a good idea to obtain **anti-malarial medications** from your health care provider.

It is strongly advised that the traveler be sure that any meats they are consuming have been thoroughly cooked due to an increasing rate of **roundworm** infections, particularly in the Acapulco area.

Along with the risk for malaria, mosquitoes have also been known to carry the **West Nile virus**. Be sure to bring an effective insect repellent, preferably one that contains the ingredient DEET.

The rate of **AIDS/HIV** infection in Mexico is lower than in the US, France and most Latin American nations. However, if you plan on having sex, be sure that you use a latex condom to reduce your risk of contracting or spreading the virus.

As with any western location, cases of **hantavirus pulmonary syndrome** have been reported throughout Mexico. This is an acute, rare (but often fatal) illness for which there is no known cure. The virus is believed to be present in animal feces, particularly feces from members of the rodent family. Therefore, do not wander into animal dens and be especially careful when entering enclosed spaces that are not well ventilated and lack sunlight.

Vaccination against **Hepatitis A & B** and **Typhoid fever** is recommended.

If you are bitten by an animal, assume that the animal was carrying **rabies** and seek medical attention immediately for treatment.

In remote areas, carry a first aid kit, aspirin, and other related items that are sold without medical prescription.

## Respect

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Mexicans have a somewhat relaxed sense of time so it's vital to be patient. Arriving half an hour late is common and should not be taken in a negative light.

When anyone, even a total stranger, sneezes, you always say "¡salud!" ("bless you!" or more literally, "your health!"): otherwise, it is considered rude. In rural areas, particularly in the Mexican heartland (Jalisco, Zacatecas, Aguascalientes, etc.), the even more pious "Jesús te bendiga" (May Jesus bless you) will follow a sneeze.

Attitudes towards LGBT travellers can be hostile. By court order, all states in Mexico either allow the performance of same-sex marriages, or recognize such marriages when performed in other states. Same-sex marriage is performed in Mexico City and in the states of Aguascalientes, Baja California, Baja California Sur, Campeche, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Colima, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Michoacán, Morelos, Nayarit,



Nuevo León, Oaxaca, Puebla, Quintana Roo, San Luis Potosí, Sinaloa, Sonora and Tlaxcala as well as in certain municipalities in Guerrero and Zacatecas. It is pending publication in Querétaro, and being prepared for legislation in Yucatán. Southern Mexico City is the best place in terms of tolerance.

When entering churches, always take off any sunglasses, caps or hats. Wearing shorts is rarely a problem, but still wear a sweatshirt or sweater to your waist to avoid showing too much skin, which could be disrespectful in such places. However, away from the beaches, or northern areas, shorts are very rarely worn by Mexicans on the street and thus will attract more attention to you and make you stand out as a foreigner.

## Sensitive issues

**Show respect to Mexico's laws.** Although corruption and bribery are heartbreaking problems, a visitor behaving in a way that implies that Mexico is a lawless country is considered *extremely rude* manners. Offering a bribe to an official may get you into trouble.

**You are unlikely to cause offence by having a discussion about local politics, economics and history;** Mexicans consider them good conversational topics and are more than happy to delight you with such discussions. This said, sensitive subjects like illegal immigration to the US, crime, or the drug war are likely to arouse strong emotions. Mexicans are well aware of their country's problems and would like to forget about them once in a while.

Also, you might be surprised at how much Mexicans know about the politics of your country – especially the times in its history when they feel your country has screwed Mexico over (which applies especially for Spain, France and the U.S.). That said, Mexican history tends to be viewed as a series of shades of grey — there are those who feel the need to extol economic growth under Porfirio Diaz, just like there are those who point out anti-democratic tendencies under Benito Juarez.

**A lot of Mexicans do not have a favourable opinion of the Spanish Empire** and the things they've done in the past. They feel that many of Mexico's problems are rooted in what the Spanish brought over. This said, there are no feelings of resentment towards Spanish people.

Try not to assume the worst in people; it's considered rude and disrespectful. Mexico may have a lot of social and political problems, but that does not mean that everyone is alike. By being open-minded, you'll find that not everyone has an ulterior motive or has something to hide.

**The great majority of the population is and traditionally has been Roman Catholic**, and there is still a strong following of this faith among Mexicans from all socioeconomic backgrounds. However, there are sizeable Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal communities (in part due to US missionary activity) and the country also has one of the largest Jehovah's Witnesses communities. The irreligious are a small minority and they are found mostly among college-educated urban dwellers of the middle and upper middle class.



Festival in San Miguel de Allende

Saying anything that hints at atheism or agnosticism may simply be shrugged off, or could incite lengthy discussions or at worst, attempts at proselytizing. As a general rule of thumb, try not to have religious discussions with people you're not well acquainted with.

## Cultural notes

While overt racism may not be apparent, as a general rule, wealth and social status are historically tied to European ancestry and skin color. Mexican society is sharply divided by social class, with the rich, middle class, and poor often living very separate lives, and can have very distinct cultures. Social practices or tastes of one social group may not be shared by all classes. Clubs, bars, and restaurants may cater largely to one crowd or another, and a wealthier person or tourist may feel out of place or received unwanted attention in a working class cantina; a poor looking person may be blatantly refused service or get unfriendly stares at an exclusive establishment.

There are many words in the country according to ethnic background:

- Do not be offended to be called a "güero(a)" (blonde) and its diminutive form "güerito(a)" (blondie), as its a common way for the average Mexican citizen to refer mostly to Caucasian people, including white Mexicans. The words "gringo" and its synonym "gabacho" are used regardless of the actual nationality of the tourists and they are not meant as offensive. Actually, they are often used as terms of endearment.
- If you are East Asian, you will be referred to as "Chino(a)" (Chinese) and its diminutive form "chinito(a)" regardless of whether you are Japanese, Vietnamese, Korean, etc. Exceptions are in the capital, Mexicali, and in Monterrey, where a decent-sized Korean community does exist.
- If you are black, "negro(a)" or "negrito(a)" may seem harsh, especially if you are from the US, but it is not a swear word. Although there are few black people in Mexico in many regions of the country (except in on the east and west coasts in the south), Mexicans, especially the younger generations, are not hateful. In fact, a revolutionary who later became the second president was a man of mixed European and African descent, Vicente Guerrero.
- Historically, all Middle Easterners were referred to as "turcos" (even if they were from Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, etc.)

## Other things to watch out for

If you try to use Spanish to address people, be careful about the use of "tú" (informal, friendly, and called tutear; which is a verb, to call someone "tú") and "usted" (formal, respectful) forms. Using "tú" can be demeaning to people, since this is the form normally used for addressing children or close friends. For foreigners, the best way to deal with the "tú" and "usted" problem is to address people using "usted" until invited to say "tú", or until addressed by the first name. Doing so will look perhaps a shade old-fashioned but always respectful, while doing otherwise can be pretty rude and embarrassing in some situations. Always use the "usted" form to a law enforcement officer (or other person of authority), even if they may use the "tú" form to talk to you.

Use "usted" unless the person is genuinely your friend, the person is under 16, or the person tells you explicitly to use "tú".



Guadalajara cathedral

People address each other depending on their social status, age and friendship. To refer to a woman, always call her "señorita" (Miss) unless you are sure that she is married, then you call her "señora" (Mrs). When talking to an older man, use "señor" irrespective of his marital status. If you want to call a waiter, address him as "joven" which means "young man". You may call someone by his professional title ("ingeniero", "arquitecto", "doctor", "oficial", etc.). Actually, Mexican people will use the "tú" and "usted", "first name" or "surname" depending on their relationship, and the code is not easy to learn.

While the word "güey" is equivalent to "dude" or "mate" among young people, it is still considered extremely vulgar among people older than you. This abrasive term of endearment is used only between people who have achieved a certain level of trust, so avoid using it.

In Mexico "estúpido" means far, far worse than "stupid" in English.

Due to the highly matriarchal nature of Mexican culture, the combination of words "tu madre" (your mother) is cacophonous and taken offensively by residents, regardless of age or gender. If you must use it, remember to replace it with "su señora madre" (roughly "your respected mother") in formal situations or the sweeter "tu mamá" in informal ones. Never, ever use strong language when talking to a woman.

You may see displays of male chauvinism. It is falling out of favor, but it is still seen and mostly tolerated in small towns, as well as cities that receive considerable amounts of rural migrants. It can be defined as a male's strong desire for and skill of the domination and imposition of will, on a wife, sister, or any close female. It can also be identified by a strong desire to prove courage through showy bravado and status through a following of yes-men and henchmen. While it is usually not directed towards visitors, it can be in a variety of strengths. It is best to pretend not to notice it and move on.

Another type of *machismo*, which perhaps stems out of the same desires but does not carry any of the antisocial connotations, is male courteousness towards women. This is manifested in standing up when a lady enters a room, opening or holding a door, conceding preference or rights of way, giving up a seat, offering a hand when stepping down from a steep step, etc. It is generally reserved for older women, or women of great power, merit, and social stature. Rejecting these types of friendly gestures is considered arrogant or rude.

## Connect

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Cell phones are the most convenient, and usually most inexpensive, way to talk. Before going to Mexico, call your cell phone provider and verify that you have international roaming enabled (and make sure you know what charges you should expect, for domestic and international voice calls and for data (you will want to use your maps and Uber apps).

You can make international calls free if you have an app like Whatsapp or Telegram and connect to Wi-fi before using it. Data rates can be high for cell phone users, but you can manage them by turning off data in your phone's settings except for when you actively want to use an app.

If you're going to be in Mexico for an extended period of time, it might be cheaper to use Mexican carriers, either by buying a SIM card or a cheap throwaway phone. If you have an unlocked GSM phone, you can buy a prepaid SIM card in Mexico. The most expensive provider Telcel provides good coverage throughout the country. A SIM card for the Telcel brand amigo express is for M\$29 (Nov 2021) e.g., in an Oxxo store. The first recharge must be at least M\$50 (Nov 2021). The offers are amongst others:

- M\$50: 400MB for 7 days (Nov 2021)
- M\$100: 1,3GB for 15 days (Nov 2021)

You can see all rates and recharge [here](https://www.telcel.com/personas/telefonía/amigo/paquetes-end/paquetes-amigo-sin-limite) (https://www.telcel.com/personas/telefonía/amigo/paquetes-end/paquetes-amigo-sin-limite). Recharging Telcel can be also done in an Oxxo.

Cheaper providers unfortunately may not be worth the hassle due to slow internet and unreliable connection.

Using a Mexican SIM card is often far cheaper than what hotels will charge you for outgoing calls and incoming calls may be free under certain schemes. Mexico operates on the same GSM frequency as the United States, 1900 MHz. There's also 4G LTE, with 5G expected to be deployed in the future. Many of which are the same frequencies as in the US. There is an wireless internet connection in almost every restaurant in the big cities.

If you're staying for over a week and don't have an unlocked phone, it might be a good idea to buy a cheap handset and a prepaid card.

Some areas have only a few internet cafes; in others, they are plentiful. Most of the internet cafes offer calls to the US for a better rate than a payphone, usually via VoIP.

You can call from public phones using prepaid telephone cards *tarjetas ladatel*, bought at magazine stalls. Cards can be purchased in M\$30, 50 or 100 denominations. The rate to call the US is roughly equivalent to US\$0.50 per minute. Beware these are different than tarjetas *amigo*, *viva*, or *unefon* (these are only for cellphones). Ladatel cards are becoming increasingly difficult to find and use because public pay phones are an endangered species. While they worked great in 2002, they're seldom useful in 2022. Cell phones are the way to go today.

## Go next

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### To Belize

There are bus services available from [Chetumal](#) to [Belmopan](#).

### To Guatemala

This route is not used by many and still has a touch of adventure: Over Tenosique, La Palma (near Tenosique), by boat on the river Rio San Pedro to [El Naranjo](#) in [Guatemala](#). Stay firm when negotiating over the price. Absolutely important: Make sure you get your passport stamped before you leave El Naranjo, or you might catch one of the rare buses back and take a walk through the jungle, as the emigration office is partway up the river between the Mexican border and the village.

### To the United States

The U.S. generally requires a passport for entry. A few express ID cards and trusted traveler cards are also acceptable. U.S. and Canadian citizens seeking entry or reentry by land or sea may use an Enhanced Driver License in place of a passport. U.S. permanent residents need their permanent resident card and may need the passport from their home country.

Foreign nationals entering the United States without a permanent resident stamp, including those on the Visa Waiver Program, typically receive an I-94 Arrival-Departure Record or I-94W Visa Waiver Arrival-Departure Record upon arrival in the United States. So long as the I-94 has not expired, you can use it to re-enter the United States with your passport; however, if you hand it in upon exit, you will need to obtain a new card if your visa allows another entry or, if on the Visa Waiver Program, pay a fee of about US\$6 to reenter the United States.

Unless you are not going to return to the United States, **keep your I-94 when leaving the United States** or you will have a difficult time getting back in, and if your visa is limited to a certain number of entries, you may need to use another entry.

Visa Waiver participants cannot reset the 90-day counter unless they leave North America, so ducking into Mexico will not allow you another 90 days. However, it can be reset by travelling, for example, to any Central American country or to Colombia.

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