

# U.S.–Mexico Border Information

## FOR U.S. AND CANADIAN RESIDENTS Traveling to Mexico

Passports for air travel are now required for travel to Mexico. As early as January 1, 2008, citizens traveling between the United States and Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Bermuda by land or sea (including ferries), could be required to present a valid passport. Please refer to the U.S. Department of State's Web site [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) for the most current information on these requirements.

**Proof of Citizenship:** U.S. and Canadian tourists must carry proof of citizenship.

**Yes:** Valid passport, certified government agency issued birth certificate

**No:** Driver's license, baptismal certificate, voter registration card

### Automobile Insurance:

**Yes:** Full coverage, including property damage and public liability, from a reliable Mexican insurance company. AAA offices in border states can provide Mexican automobile insurance to members.

**No:** U.S. automobile insurance is not valid in Mexico.

**Tourist Permits:** When traveling to Mexico as a tourist, you must obtain an FMT tourist permit. You must show proof of citizenship (a valid passport or birth certificate) to obtain a permit. Permits issued at:

- Mexican consulates in the United States and Canada
- Immigration offices at official points of entry

You must have a valid tourist permit if you:

- Remain anywhere in Mexico for more than 72 hours **or**
- Stay less than 72 hours and travel beyond the "border zone" (area within 20 to 30 kilometers (12 miles) of the U.S. border, depending on the Mexican state)

Cost for a tourist permit is approximately \$20 (U.S.) which must be paid at a Mexican bank (see list on back of tourist permit form) or through the bank window at the border. You are required to show the "Fee Paid" stamp on your tourist permit when leaving Mexico. Recommendation: obtain your tourist permit before leaving the United States and pay the fee at the border.

If traveling by air, the permit is distributed on the flight and the fee is included in the airline ticket price. If arriving by cruise ship, the fee is collected when disembarking or is included in the cruise fare if the stay is longer than 72 hours.

### Exemptions

- Visitors traveling by land or sea anywhere in Mexico and staying less than 72 hours
- Visitors traveling by land to destinations within the 20- to 30-kilometer (12-mile) border zone, regardless of length of stay
- Visitors traveling by land beyond the border zone and staying more than 72 hours, but limiting their visit to the following destinations/tourist routes: Tijuana to Ensenada, B.C.; Mexicali to San Felipe, B.C.; Sonoyta to Puerto Peñasco, Son.; Ciudad Juárez to Paquime, Chih.; Piedras Negras to Santa Rosa, Coah.; or Reynosa to China, N.L., and Reynosa to Presa Cuchillo, Tamps.

- Business travelers with a business visa; students (as defined by Mexican immigration laws) with a student visa (contact Mexican consulate for business/student visa information)

### Permit Validity

- The single-entry tourist permit is valid for up to 180 days
- A multiple-entry permit allows unlimited entry into Mexico within the 180-day period
- Permits must be returned to Mexican border officials when leaving Mexico
- A tourist permit not used within 90 days of issue becomes void
- Visitors should carry their tourist permit with them at all times while in Mexico
- If a permit is lost, obtain a duplicate from local immigration officials
- Visitors must be out of the country by the end of the validity period, or be subject to a fine
- Mexican immigration officials can issue an extension of up to 90 days only when a physician verifies that a visitor is too ill to travel

**Vehicle Regulations:** At point of entry, visitors must present:

- Temporary vehicle importation permit
- Promise to return vehicle form
- Proof of citizenship
- Valid driver's license
- Tourist permit
- Current vehicle license/registration receipt (carry a copy at all times – not the original)

Vehicle travel beyond the 20- to 30-kilometer border zone requires:

- Temporary vehicle importation permit
- Promise to return vehicle form

Permits not required in the Baja California peninsula (the states of Baja California and Baja California Sur) unless the vehicle is put on a ferry bound for the mainland.

In the state of Sonora, obtain a free "Sonora Only" vehicle permit (good for up to 180 days) at the 21-kilometer (13-mile) immigration checkpoint booth on Mex. 15 south of Nogales.

- To obtain, present valid proof of citizenship, a tourist permit\* and vehicle's current registration
- Fill out a form and place the issued sticker on the vehicle (both must be returned when departing Sonora)
- Obtain a temporary vehicle importation permit and windshield sticker if planning to drive beyond the Sonora state border

\*Visitors entering Mexico by way of Nogales may obtain tourist permit at checkpoint booth.

To obtain these documents from a Mexican consulate or an immigration office at an official point of entry, the vehicle owner must:

- Be 18 years of age or older
- Have a valid U.S. or Canadian driver's license
- Present proof of citizenship

- Provide proof of ownership (current registration) for each vehicle being taken into Mexico

Information on the application for temporary vehicle importation must match the information on the promise to return vehicle form; the same requirements apply to both.

**A \$25 administrative fee plus tax** must be paid at the point of entry (mainland border crossing or ferry crossing from Baja California to the mainland) to receive a temporary importation permit windshield sticker.

**Yes:** Use major credit card (American Express, MasterCard or VISA), which must be in the registered vehicle owner's name and issued by a U.S. or Canadian bank or lending institution. Vehicle owners without a major credit card may post a bond (\$200 to \$400 based on vehicle value) with a Mexican bonding firm (Afianzadora) at the point of entry.

**No:** Cash, checks, money orders or credit cards issued by a Mexican bank are not accepted.

### More About Temporary Importation Permits

- Generally issued for 90 days
- Obtain extensions of up to 90 days from Mexican immigration officials
- Only 1 permit will be issued per person, for 1 motorized vehicle at a time
- Carry permit with you – do not leave it in the vehicle
- Return permit, promise to return vehicle form and windshield sticker to Mexican customs officials at the border before or on the expiration date shown on the promise to return vehicle form, or be subject to a fine
- If permit or promise to return vehicle form is lost or stolen, Mexican customs offices can issue replacement documentation provided you obtain a certified document attesting to the loss from your homeland (U.S. or Canada) embassy or consulate
- Permit must be cancelled at customs when you leave Mexico
- If you are found in Mexico beyond the authorized time or without proper documentation, your car will be immediately confiscated

**Pets:** U.S. visitors may bring a dog, cat or up to four canaries into Mexico. A pet health certificate signed not more than 72 hours before the animal enters Mexico and a pet vaccination certificate showing that the animal has been treated for rabies, hepatitis, pip and leptospirosis are required at the border for each pet. A pet permit fee will be charged at the time of entry.

## For U.S. and Canadian Residents Leaving Mexico

### When Leaving the Country:

- Temporary vehicle importation permits, promise to return vehicle forms and windshield stickers must be returned to

Mexican immigration and customs officials at the border (or at an interior inspection point)

- Those entering Mexico with a motor vehicle must leave the country with the vehicle
- At stations along the highways, Mexican agricultural officials will inspect those traveling north to the U.S. border
- Officials will inspect all fruits, vegetables, houseplants and other plant matter

**Yes:** You must have an export certificate to take cultural artifacts or property items (e.g., pre-Columbian monumental and architectural sculpture or murals, clay figurines, original paintings or other works of art excluding handicrafts) out of the country.

**No:** You may not take valuable religious or archeological relics out of the country.

**Returning to the United States:** Everyone who seeks entry into the United States – whether foreign visitors, U.S. citizens, or U.S. lawful permanent residents – must be inspected at the point of entry. Random searches may be conducted by U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents.

Returning U.S. citizens must present proof of citizenship. Once customs officials are satisfied that U.S. or Canadian residents have the right to be admitted to the United States, they may examine baggage thoroughly. To expedite the trip through customs, keep sales slips handy and have all purchases in 1 bag, if possible.

#### U.S. Exemptions:

- You may bring back duty-free articles not exceeding \$800 in retail value from a stay abroad of at least 48 hours
- The exemption is allowed once every 30 days
- A family (related persons living in the same household) may combine its exemptions (a family of 6 is entitled to \$4,800 worth of goods duty-free on 1 declaration, even if the articles claimed by 1 member exceed that individual's \$800 amount)
- Duty must be paid on all items in excess of the exemption amount
- Payment of duty is required upon arrival
- Gifts taken across the U.S./Mexico border are considered to be for personal use and are included in the \$800 exemption
- Articles purchased and left for alterations or other reasons do not qualify for the \$800 exemption when shipped at a later date
- The \$800 exemption may include no more than 1 liter of alcoholic beverages and no more than 200 cigarettes and 100 cigars

**Restricted or Prohibited Articles:** To prevent the introduction of plant and animal pests and diseases into the United States, the agricultural quarantine bans the importation of certain fruits, vegetables, plants, livestock, poultry and meats. All food products brought into the United States must be declared. The U.S. Department of Agriculture also prohibits the importation of any kind of pet obtained in Mexico. Write to APHIS, Dept. of Agriculture, 6505 Belcrest Rd., Hyattsville, MD 20782, for a free copy of *Traveler's Tips*. Write to U.S. Customs, P.O. Box 7407, Washington, D.C. 20044 for other helpful leaflets: *Visiting the U.S.: Requirements for Non-Residents, Know Before You Go, Importing*

*a Car, and Pets, Wildlife and U.S. Customs.*

**Yes:** One foreign-made article carrying a protected U.S. trademark (e.g., camera, binoculars, musical instrument, jewelry or watch) may usually be brought into the United States under your personal exemption, provided it's for your private use and not sold within 1 year of importation. Some perfumes are limited to 1 bottle and others are prohibited. If you intend to purchase perfume, inquire about trademark restrictions beforehand.

**No:** Articles considered detrimental to the general welfare of the United States are prohibited entry: narcotics and dangerous drugs, drug paraphernalia, obscene articles and publications, seditious or treasonable matter, lottery tickets, hazardous items (fireworks, dangerous toys, toxic or poisonous substances) and switchblade knives. Any goods originating in the following countries are prohibited: Balkans, Burma, Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Liberia, Libya, North Korea, Sudan, Syria and Zimbabwe. Please note embargoes are not limited to these countries.

**Yes:** Live birds, such as parrots, parakeets or birds of prey, widely available on the market in Mexico, can be brought into the United States subject to inspection by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Birds must be quarantined upon arrival for at least 30 days in a USDA-operated facility at the owner's expense. Quarantine space must be reserved in advance. Contact a USDA office.

**No:** Endangered wildlife species or products made of any part of these species are prohibited including ivory and products made from elephant or marine mammal ivory or sea turtles.

If you plan to return to the United States with any purchased articles made of fur, any animal skin other than cowhide leather, whalebone or any product manufactured wholly or in part from any type of wildlife, contact: Office of Law Enforcement, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 N. Fairfax Dr., MS-LE-3000, Arlington, VA 22203, (703) 358-1949 for regulations.

**Alcoholic Beverages:** Both federal and state laws govern the importation of alcoholic beverages. When regulations conflict state laws supersede, so it's important to know the import limits of your state of residence and the state of entry.

U.S. residents 21 years of age or older may bring into the United States 1 liter of alcohol duty-free once every 30 days. However, if you arrive in a state that permits a lesser amount than what you have legally brought into the United States, state law prevails.

#### Gifts

- Gifts in packages with a total retail value not exceeding \$100 may be sent to friends or relatives in the United States free of U.S. customs duty or tax, provided no recipient receives more than 1 gift shipment per day
- Gifts may be sent to more than 1 person in the same package if they are individually wrapped and labeled with each recipient's name
- Perfumes valued at more than \$5 retail, tobacco products or alcoholic beverages may not be included in gift packages
- Clearly mark on the package the designation "Unsolicited Gift," the donor's name and the contents' retail value

#### Duties

- A flat rate duty of 10 percent is applied to the first \$1,000 (fair retail value) worth of merchandise in excess of the \$400 customs exemption
- Sales receipt functions as proof of value
- Family members residing in 1 household and traveling together may group articles for application of the flat-duty rate
- Flat-duty rate may be taken once every 30 days
- Articles must accompany you to the U.S. border

#### Canadian Exemptions

- Citizens who have been outside Canada at least 48 hours may bring back duty- and tax-free goods not exceeding \$200 (Canadian) in retail value. The exemption can be claimed any number of times a year.
- Citizens who have been outside Canada 7 days or more may bring back duty- and tax-free goods not exceeding \$750 in retail value. The \$750 exemption can be claimed regardless of any \$200 exemption taken on a previous trip and requires a written declaration. The 2 exemptions may not be combined.
- Citizens may claim duty- and tax-free entry for articles (excluding tobacco products or alcoholic beverages) not exceeding \$50 in retail value when returning from a trip abroad of at least 24 hours. Items brought into Canada under a personal exemption must be for personal or household use, souvenirs or gifts.

**Limitations (on either \$200 or \$750 exemption):** 50 cigars, 200 cigarettes, 200 tobacco sticks and 200 grams (6.4 ounces) of tobacco, and 40 ounces (1.1 liters) of wine or liquor or 300 ounces (8.5 liters) of beer or ale (equivalent to 24 12-ounce bottles/cans). All exemptions are individual and may not be combined with that of another person to cover an article valued at more than the maximum exemption. You may be asked to prove the length of your visit outside Canada. Keep dated sales receipts for goods or services as they constitute valid proof.

- All declared goods associated with the \$200 personal exemption must accompany the purchaser to the Canadian border.
- Declared goods associated with the \$750 personal exemption may follow the purchaser by mail.
- Gifts sent to friends or relatives from Mexico do not count against a resident's personal exemption if valued at no more than \$60 Canadian and not consisting of alcoholic beverages, tobacco products or advertising matter. Enclose a gift card to avoid misunderstanding. Mexican government customs officials must examine parcels before they ship so consider having a customs broker or forwarding agent handle the details before you leave Mexico.

When you exceed your \$200 or \$750 exemption, a special GST rate of 7 percent is applied to the next \$300 value in goods (except tobacco and/or alcohol) in excess of the maximum exemption, provided the goods are of Mexican origin. Regular duties apply on any additional amount.

While AAA makes every effort to provide accurate and complete information, AAA makes no warranty, express or implied, and assumes no legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of any information contained herein.