



# Mexico INFORMATION SHEET

The following is a general information sheet. It is as accurate as we can make it. However, things sometimes change unexpectedly. Please use this only as a guide.

### Expectations

While group tours are one of the most enjoyable ways to travel, they do require a certain degree of flexibility and understanding on every individual's part. We have carefully planned your itinerary and have done our best to provide you with information about what to expect. However, much of what makes travel interesting is the unexpected. Travel with an open mind and you will get the most and best out of your holiday. Please be assured that our mission is to create and provide you with the most enjoyable and memorable travel experience.

### Currency

The unit of currency is the **peso**, available in various denominations. We recommend that you purchase \$100 - \$200 in local currency, depending on your spending habits. Major banks generally have an international division and can make this conversion for you. When traveling abroad, if you wish to purchase a snack or soft drink, you may be able to use U.S. dollars for your purchase and receive local currency as change. Many shops and restaurants in the cities and tourist resorts accept major credit cards (MasterCard, Visa and American Express) and offer the best exchange rates, but credit cards are less easy to use in the countryside. Check with your credit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services, which may be available; be sure to advise your bank and credit card companies you will be out of the country, to avoid issues. Using a credit card also excludes some purchases from the VAT.

Cash is often preferred but should not be carried in large quantities. Money can be changed at banks in all of the **main tourist areas or exchange offices as well as most hotels and railroad stations**. Banking hours are usually 9:00 am – 2:00 p.m. on weekdays, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm on Saturday and closed on Sundays and holidays.

ATMs are widely available in major cities and will give you your cash in local currency. For many, this is the most convenient way to get money abroad.

There are currency exchange kiosks in most major airports, if you are not able to get it converted prior to departure. Tourists reaching their destination without local currency can obtain local currency through any bank or exchange office at airports.

**PLEASE REFER TO THE ENCLOSED CURRENCY CONVERSION SHEET FOR ACCURATE RATES**

### Weather & Clothing

The weather in Mexico is warm year-round, although sea breezes temper the summer heat. Listed below are the average 24-hour temperatures for the seasons in the various areas of the country. Even though we have noted the usual temperatures, you may experience unusual weather conditions. For that reason, we always suggest that you pack clothes that can be layered. It is also wise to check the newspaper, Weather Channel on TV, or [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) before you pack to verify the most current weather situation.

CITY	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	WINTER
Mexico City	63-77	67 – 75	64 – 72	58 – 70
Guadalajara	66 - 82	74 – 81	71 – 79	61 – 76
Acapulco	79 – 89	84 – 89	83 – 89	81 – 88

While on your trip, you will see temperatures forecast in Celsius. To convert Celsius to Fahrenheit, multiply the Celsius number by 9, then divide your answer by 5, and add 32.

It is advisable to bring a mid-weight coat or jacket. Most natives will dress smartly when dining out. You may wish to pack one outfit that is a little dressier for a special evening: for gentlemen, a sport coat and tie and a dress or fancy pantsuit for the ladies.

Be sure to bring comfortable soft-soled shoes or sneakers for the days you are sightseeing.

A small packable umbrella and sweaters are always handy to have with you.

In general Mexicans are casual about dress, but for visits to churches, long sleeves and long skirts or trousers are required, while theaters and up market restaurants may have specific dress codes.

### Packing Smart

Be sure to pack any prescriptions that you will need for your vacation in your carry-on-bag.

You may wish to bring any special soaps or accessories from home. Foreign hotels do not always have face cloths in the room. It's a good idea to pack your own.

You may wish to pack a pocket calculator (useful in money conversion) and a small multi-language guide with basic phrases.

Wake-up calls will be available from the front desk, but you also might want to bring your own battery-operated alarm clock.

Don't forget your camera.

The availability and quality of hairdryers and irons at hotels vary greatly. For that reason, we strongly recommend that you bring your own with you, if you have a need for them.

Due to heightened security at the airports, remember to pack questionable items in your checked luggage, not your carry-on. Such items include knives, scissors, any cutting implements, as well as some sports items (golf clubs, ski poles, bats, etc.). If in doubt, put it in your checked bag. It will save you time going through the security checkpoint. You can also contact the "TSA Cares Hotline" with specific questions at 855-787-2227.

### Enjoying the trip

Your trip will probably include an intermediate destination, where you will change planes, but your luggage will be checked all the way to your final destination. Since the airplane is dry, and you will have a long international flight, it helps to drink a lot of non-alcoholic liquids while flying. Alcohol contributes to jetlag, as does eating heavy meals on board. Feet swell at high altitudes, so it is a good idea to remove your shoes while in flight. You will probably want to bring a small book or magazine in your carry-on luggage.

A valid U.S. passport is required. We recommend that it be **valid for at least 3-6 months past the time your tour ends**. If you are not a U.S. citizen, you may need further identification. Contact National Passport Information at 1 888-362-8668 (toll call) or the Mexican Consulate for further information. No visa is necessary for this tour for U.S. citizens. No vaccinations are necessary for U.S. citizens. Remember that you are responsible for having all valid documentation needed for this tour.

### Electrical Current

Electric current throughout Mexico is 110 volts, 60 cycles. Same as USA and Canada.

### Food, Drink & Entertainment

Since water away from home can often be upsetting to the digestive tract, we recommend that you drink bottled water, which is not usually complimentary. This will usually be offered in restaurants. If in doubt, ask the locals. Water supplies marked "non potable" should not be used for drinking or brushing your teeth.

If you have special dietary requests, either let your tour escort or the dining room staffs know and they will try to accommodate your needs. If you have a very limited diet, we suggest that you bring what you might need.

Since the coffee may be stronger than American coffee, you may wish to bring tea bags or instant coffee.

Breakfast at most hotels is a continental buffet, though cereal is not always provided, so you may wish to bring your own.

### Optional Side Trips

At most destinations, optional side trips to nearby attractions are available. The tour host at your destination can help you arrange these trips during your free time. A few operators on these side trips will not take credit cards. You may want to carry more in traveler's checks if you think that you may be interested in taking these trips. The prices on the excursions vary greatly depending on the length of the tour and the places visited.

### Safety and Health Services

We recommend that you leave a copy of your itinerary with friends or family, in case of emergencies.

In order to have a trouble-free holiday as a traveler, you should avoid flaunting jewelry, and wear your handbag securely strapped across your chest. Many stores (as well as Durgan Travel) also sell security wallets that are worn inside your clothing. They are large enough to hold your passport, money, etc., and offer a secure option if you prefer to carry them with you.

You should keep a record of your credit card and Traveler's check numbers separate from your purse or wallet. It is also a good idea to carry a photocopy of the picture page of your passport and leave your passport (remember that you may need to have your passport with you to cash traveler's checks), and any valuables locked in the hotel safe, unless you have a security wallet. Losing your passport can be very expensive and inconvenient. Avoid going off on your own, unless you are familiar with the area. Be alert for suspicious people or circumstances.

**There is no reciprocal health agreement with the U.S. and treatment is very expensive.** If you have health issues, be sure to check with your healthcare provider before leaving home to verify what procedures they want you to follow, should the need arise. Should an injury or accident occur, you would be responsible for any costs involved, medical and/or travel related. For this reason, we **strongly urge** you to take out some form of traveler's insurance before your departure.

### Accommodations

Hotel rooms abroad are most always smaller than those in the United States, and it is not unusual for one room to differ from the next. Hotel rooms in major cities tend to be smaller than hotel rooms throughout the rest of the country – but what you don't get in spacious accommodations is more than compensated by the wealth of attractions surrounding you.

It is the custom for a twin room to be two single beds made up separately and placed side by side. A double room will usually have one double bed. A single room will have one twin-size bed. A triple is generally a twin room with a cot or small bed added. Also, please be aware that single rooms are almost always smaller than twin rooms.

**Unfortunately, we can only request room types and locations. Room assignments are made at the discretion of the hotel.**

### Telephones

To call Mexico from the U.S. dial 011 and the country code (52) followed by the city code and then the phone number. It is very expensive to call the United States from your hotel room. We suggest that you use a phone card from a public phone booth. Coins are often not accepted in public phones, but phone cards can be purchased at many newspaper stands and pharmacies. If you are using your own telephone credit card, you can secure the access codes to call the United States from your long distance telephone service provider. To call the U.S. from abroad, once you get a local line, dial your access code, followed by the area code and number. No need to dial 1.

### Transportation & Shopping

Taxis are available from the hotel. Ask the front desk for help in summoning a taxi. Secure a fixed price from the driver before you depart. Public transportation is available in many cities.

Most shops open from 10:00 am to 10:00 pm Monday through Sunday in the big towns and cities. In the rest of the country, shops are open between the hours of 9:00 am to 2-4:00 pm Monday through Friday.

The best buys in Mexico are ceramics and pottery – particularly black clay dishes from the Oaxaca region. For larger purchases, many countries impose a Value Added Tax (VAT). If the purchase is over a certain amount, you can get it partially refunded. Ask for a form where you purchase the item or at the airport. You must submit the form at the airport before you depart. Your refund will be mailed to you. For more information call 1 800 566-9828.

### Time

Most of Mexico is 1 hour behind us and practices Daylight Savings Time. The country has three time zones; most of the country is in what we call the Central Time Zone, but their west coast is on Mountain Time and Baja California is on Pacific Time.

### Gratuities

Tipping in Mexico is very common and expected; we hope the following information will be of assistance. **Gratuities to your tour director, driver, local guides, and dining room staff are not included in the tour price.** While the amount of these gratuities will depend upon your degree of satisfaction for services received, many of our clients have asked us for general tipping guidelines. For a good job, we suggest \$3.00-\$5.00 per person per day for your full-time tour director and \$3.00-\$5.00 per person per day for your driver. In restaurants a 15% - 20% tip is expected to show appreciation. **Taxis** - Depends upon the city, type of taxi (meter or negotiated price). If a metered cab, a tip around 10% of the total would be expected. If the taxi is a negotiated price, no tip would be expected. If a fixed rate to destination cab (for example, airport cabs) a \$10 - \$20 tip would be appreciated. In **bars and restaurants** - 10% of the total bill.

### Custom Regulations

Luggage may be examined upon entering and leaving countries. U.S. citizens bringing gifts to friends and relatives in Mexico should be prepared to demonstrate to Mexican customs officials the origin and the value of the gifts. U.S. citizens entering Mexico by the land border can bring in gifts with a value of up to \$50.00 duty-free, except for alcohol and tobacco products. U.S. citizens entering Mexico by air or sea can bring in gifts with a value of up to \$300.00 duty-free.

### Personal Effects:

Tourists are allowed to bring in their personal effects duty-free. According to customs regulations, in addition to clothing, personal effects may include one camera, one laptop, one CD/MP3 player, and one cellular phone. Any tourist carrying such items, even if duty-free, should enter the "Merchandise to Declare" lane at the first customs checkpoint. The tourist should be prepared to pay any assessed duty. Failure to declare personal effects routinely results in the seizure of the goods as contraband, plus the seizure of the vehicle in which the goods are traveling for attempted smuggling. The recovery of the seized vehicle involves the payment of substantial fines and attorney's fees.

### Language & Customs

The official language is Spanish. English is spoken at many hotels and shops and on most planes, trains, and tour buses. However, Mexicans are pleased when a foreigner attempts to speak their language. Even if only a few words are exchanged, an instant feeling of friendship is created when two strangers can converse in the same language. For this reason, you might consider bringing a multi-language pocket phrase book. Handshaking is the most common form of greeting. Mexicans regard relationships and friendships as the most important thing in life next to religion, and they are not afraid to show their emotions. A large Mexican family always seems to find room for one more, and a visitor who becomes friends with a Mexican will invariably be made part of the family. Visitors should always remember that local customs and traditions are important.

### Common Phrases

<b>Good morning/day</b>	Buenos dias	<b>Good evening</b>	Buenas noches	<b>Coffee/tea</b>	café / te
<b>Hello</b>	Hola	<b>Good-bye</b>	Adios	<b>Where is the bathroom?</b>	Donde esta el bano?
<b>Please</b>	Por favor	<b>Thank you</b>	Gracias	<b>Bottled water</b>	Agua mineral
<b>How much?</b>	Cuanto cuesta esto	<b>Yes</b>	Si	<b>Do you speak English?</b>	Habla usted ingles?