

Mexico

PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION



GETTING READY FOR YOUR TRIP

Passports

- ❖ Passports are required of U.S. Citizens to enter Mexico
- ❖ Must be valid for at least 6 months after your trip – if not, apply or renew immediately
- ❖ Keep a copy of the picture page of your passport in a separate place while traveling
- ❖ Carry an extra passport photo in case you need to apply for a quick replacement

Visas

- ❖ No visas required for US citizens
- ❖ Nationalities of other countries please inquire regarding visas

Health, Immunizations

- ❖ Some immunizations are highly recommended, but none are required for entry
- ❖ Recommended standard immunizations include: polio, tetanus, MMR, hepatitis A & B
- ❖ Altitudes can reach 7,000 feet
- ❖ SEEK INDEPENDENT MEDICAL ADVICE from your physician or local travelers health service
- ❖ For the latest recommendations for immunizations or malaria prevention contact the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia: 800-311-3435, or visit their website: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>
- ❖ Many universities have immunization clinics that can assist you

Time Difference

- ❖ Mexico uses three time zones.
- ❖ Most of the country uses Central Standard Time (-6 GMT), including Oaxaca and Michoacan.
- ❖ The western Mexico states of Chihuahua, Nayarit, Sonora, Sinaloa and Baja California Sur use Mountain Standard Time and Baja California Norte uses Pacific Standard Time.
- ❖ Daylight Savings Time is observed.
- ❖ Clocks will “fall back” 1 hour on the last Sunday of October for Daylight Savings Time.

Electricity

- ❖ 110/AC 60 cycle
- ❖ Plug outlets are generally the same as found in the U.S., no adapter is needed

ARRIVAL

Entry

- ❖ You will be met upon arrival at the airport and transferred to your hotel.
- ❖ Contact information will be sent with your Last Minute Reminders from JOURNEYS.

Customs

- ❖ Anything you are bringing into the country for personal use - camera gear, snorkeling equipment, binoculars, etc. - will be readily allowed.
- ❖ A list of items that are allowed into Mexico can be found at: www.bajabound.com/before/permits/customs.asp.



GETTING ALONG AS A VISITOR

Food & Restaurants

- ❖ Eat only foods that are thoroughly cooked, and raw fruits and vegetables that you have peeled yourself
- ❖ Drink only bottled drinks, and avoid tap water, fountain drinks and ice cubes
- ❖ Don't buy food from street vendors or stalls
- ❖ Avoid fresh salads unless the vegetables are washed with purified water, and avoid dairy products that are un-pasteurized or may not have been refrigerated properly
- ❖ Look for a restaurant where lots of locals are eating - chances are the food will be delicious and reasonable.
- ❖ Look for quesilla la plancha, Oaxaca's famous white cheese served melted with guacamole and black beans for an appetizer. Try the many varieties of sopas (soups) and moles (MOH-lays) which are the most Oaxacan of all dishes.
- ❖ In Michoacan, market "antojitos" (snacks) can be an integral part of the culture experience, but use your judgment. You will find market quesadillas made with delicious tortillas, local cheese, and sometimes an added ingredient such as squash flower blossoms. To be careful, skip market salsas in open containers.

Money and Currency Exchange

- ❖ Mexico's currency is the Peso
- ❖ US dollars are often accepted (bring newer bills, no marks, tears or folds) and \$1 bills can be very useful.
- ❖ In villages, smaller Peso amounts are preferred
- ❖ Plan on bringing at least \$300-\$500 cash as well as a credit card (or two)
- ❖ Travelers Checks are not recommended
- ❖ Get Mexican Peso/currency upon arrival at airport/bank ATM machine. It's a good idea to exchange at least \$100 on arrival
- ❖ Mastercard and Visa are accepted. Your credit card company may be charging a 3%+ surcharge on all foreign currency purchases (purchases of goods made outside of the US). Check with your credit card company before you travel as the charges change frequently without notice and vary with card and destination.
- ❖ Several banks with ATM's dot the downtown areas (Remove your card immediately after getting your cash or your card will be taken by the machine within fifteen seconds) We often find that travelers have difficulties with ATM machines. You are well advised to be prepared for this eventuality. You may want to have a 2nd card option.

Tipping

- ❖ It is customary to tip service people such as waiter, bartenders, washers, hotel help.
- ❖ Expect to tip anywhere from 15-20% of your bill at restaurants; 10% tip is more appropriate in less touristy areas.
- ❖ Recommended tips for guides are \$3-5 per person/per day of service, and \$1-3 pp/per day for drivers
- ❖ Guides, drivers, and hotel staff can be tipped on the final day of services. Group members may want to pool tips.
- ❖ Be sure to carry enough small bills and coins for tips.
- ❖ Anytime you especially appreciate someone particularly informative or helpful, an extra tip is always gratefully accepted.

Emergency Services

- ❖ Prevention of injury is always the best policy.
- ❖ Emergency services and care for major medical illnesses may be limited
- ❖ Your guide will advise you in the case of urgent medical need during your tour



SPECIAL REMARKS

People

- ❖ You will find the people very friendly and welcoming
- ❖ It is best to ask permission before taking portrait photos. If in doubt, ask your guide

Time

- ❖ Relax and enjoy the easy-going rhythm of Latin America
- ❖ Do not expect everything to happen on time; remember that in some places time is not as important as it is back home, and there is often little concern for punctuality
- ❖ Despite best efforts, departures and arrivals could be a little before or after the time given. This applies particularly to aircraft movements. Operating requirements, weather and terrain sometimes present problems, and on these occasions, to ensure your safety, flight times may vary

Restroom Facilities

- ❖ It is a very good idea to carry your own small supply of toilet paper. In cities where there are flush toilets you will usually find a wastebasket next to the toilet - most sewage systems can't handle paper. Most bathrooms will neither look nor smell as sanitary as those you are used to.

Safety

- ❖ Observe the same precautions taken at home
- ❖ Do not flaunt a bulging wallet, lock unattended vehicles, do not leave baggage unattended in public
- ❖ Make use of security facilities provided for valuables in your accommodation
- ❖ In towns, the best place to carry your passport and money is in a pouch worn around the neck inside of the shirt or in a money belt around the waist
- ❖ It is highly recommended that you buy travel insurance that covers your baggage before you leave
- ❖ Don't take anything you can't afford to lose or can't replace

Shopping

- ❖ In many shops prices are fixed
- ❖ Bartering is the norm at street markets. The actual price you can expect to pay may be closer to 50% of the original price. But don't push too hard - remember that what is only a few dollars to you may mean a great deal to the average seller or artisan. Never barter unless you intend to buy.
- ❖ It is a good idea to learn a few "bargaining" phrases in Spanish

Equipment & Packing

- ❖ A good goal is to fit everything into a single piece of checked luggage and a carry-on daypack
- ❖ We recommend a durable, water-resistant, soft duffel bag or lightweight soft-sided suitcase as your checked luggage. Hard suitcases are not practical due to space limitations.
- ❖ A small backpack or hip-pack is ideal for carrying bottled water, camera, extra sunblock, etc, while on excursions where the terrain requires your hands to be free.
- ❖ Choose a distinctive, easily identified bag, and use a JOURNEYS luggage tag for bag identification by staff, and your name and address should be also indelibly affixed inside the luggage.
- ❖ Lightweight & light colored clothes will help keep you cooler. Also keep in mind that synthetic fabrics dry faster than natural fibers like cotton, especially in humid areas, so you can pack less if you are able to wash and dry your clothes easily.
- ❖ Casual clothing is appropriate at all times
- ❖ Prepare for a wide temperature range by bringing clothes which are easily layered.
- ❖ Some hotels may have laundry services, but you will probably need to wash out some clothes en route
- ❖ Be aware of weight limits on checked luggage and pack accordingly
- ❖ You may want to bring an extra smaller, collapsible (lockable) duffel, to leave items in a city hotel while you are on an excursion or to use on your return for souvenirs



CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT SUGGESTIONS CHECKLIST

Pre-Departure Tasks

- Obtain or renew passport
- Evaluate and obtain trip cancellation, baggage and medical insurance
- Consult with physician for immunizations and prescription medicine recommendations
- Break-in primary footwear
- Make final payment to JOURNEYS at least 60 days before trip departure

Clothing

- Comfortable walking shoes
- Extra shoes or sandals
- Shorts (knee-length)
- Comfortable, lightweight pants
- Nicer pants or skirt (optional)
- Lightweight long-sleeve shirt, for warmth and/or protection from sun or mosquitoes
- T-shirts/short sleeve shirts
- Sweater/Jacket or windbreaker (cool evenings)
- Rain gear - poncho or jacket and pants
- Sun hat or cap with wide brim
- Bandana
- Swim suits
- Socks
- Sleepwear
- Under clothes

Personal Items

- Sunblock (waterproof, high SPF)
- Lipbalm with SPF
- Insect repellent with DEET content
- 2 spare passport photos (in case of lost passport)
- Wrist watch and/or travel clock
- Sunglasses (with strap, case)
- Extra eyeglasses/contacts
- Money belt or pouch for valuables
- Small flashlight with extra batteries
- Copies of all important documents
- Day pack (can also serve as an airline carry-on bag)
- Camera, memory cards, film, batteries, charger
- Underwater camera (disposable kind is very handy)
- Lead bag/containers to protect film in X-ray machines
- Lightweight binoculars
- Plug adapter (if needed)
- Soft duffel with shoulder strap or durable suitcase
- Luggage tags
- Ziploc-type bags for packing shampoo or other liquids
- Stuff sacks or plastic bags for organizing inside luggage (also useful for dirty laundry)
- Thread, needles, safety pins for minor repairs
- Small packable umbrella



Personal First Aid Kit

- Aspirin or other pain killer
- Cold relief tablets, antihistamine, cough drops
- Band-aids, gauze pads
- Antibiotics
- Prescription medicines
- Aloe gel or lotion in case of sunburn
- Anti-diarrhea medicine
- Antibiotic cream/ointment
- Supply of feminine hygiene items
- Motion sickness tablets
- Earplugs

Essential Items For Your Carry-On Bag

- Passport
- Domestic and international air tickets
- Travelers checks, money and credit cards
- Insurance certificates
- Address and telephone number of emergency contact
- Prescription medicines
- Extra set of underclothes
- Toiletries in small leak-proof bottles
- Camera gear, film and other valuables

Optional Items

- Binoculars
- Address book, writing paper, or journal, pen/pencil
- Small washcloth
- Wet wipes/moist towelettes and Kleenex
- Favorite snack foods (pre-packaged)
- Pictures of your house and family
- Mask, snorkel, fins, wetsuit (if applicable)
- Map
- Silica bags for moisture (protect camera equipment)
- Video camera
- Phrase book

