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TIPS FOR TRAVELERS TO MEXICO

October 2006

General Information Between 15 and 16 million U.S. citizens visit Mexico each year, while more than 385,000 Americans reside there year round. Although most visitors thoroughly enjoy their stay, a small number experience difficulties and serious inconveniences.

Travel conditions in Mexico can contrast sharply with those in the United States. This brochure offers advice to help you avoid problems while you travel. The Department of State, the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. consulates in Mexico offer a range of services to assist U.S. citizens in distress. U.S. consular officials meet regularly with Mexican authorities to promote the safety of U.S. citizens in Mexico.

Before you go, learn as much as you can about Mexico. Keep up on news coverage. Your travel agent, local bookstore, public library, the Internet and the embassy of the country or countries you plan to visit are all useful sources of information.

Have a Safe and Healthy Trip

Before You Go

Registration at U.S. Embassies or Consulates Before you travel abroad, register with the Embassy or Consulate. This can be done on the web at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. You need to provide your itinerary, passport information and the name, address and phone number of an emergency contact.

After you arrive at your destination, you can either use the web site to register or register in person at the nearest Embassy or Consulate. In accordance with the Privacy Act, information on your welfare or whereabouts may not be released to inquirers without your expressed written authorization. If you register in person, you should bring your U.S. passport with you. Your passport data will be recorded, thereby making it easier for you to apply for a replacement passport should it be lost or stolen.

Registration will make your presence and location known in case it is necessary to contact you in an emergency. Also, remember to leave a detailed itinerary and photocopies of your passport data page or other citizenship documents with a friend or relative in the United States.

Other useful precautions:

Leave a detailed itinerary and the numbers of your passport or other citizenship documents with a friend or relative in the United States.

Carry your photo identification and the name of a person to contact with you in the event of serious illness or other emergency.

Keep photocopies of your airline or other tickets and your list of traveler's checks with you in a separate location from the originals and leave copies with someone at home.

Leave things like unnecessary credit cards and expensive jewelry at home.

Take travelers checks, not cash.

Use a money belt or concealed pouch for passport, cash and other valuables.

Do not bring firearms or ammunition into Mexico without written permission from the

Mexican government.

Travel Safety Information

Consular Information Sheets are available for every country of the world. They describe entry requirements, currency regulations, unusual health conditions, the crime and security situation, political disturbances, areas of instability, and special information about driving and road conditions. They also provide addresses and emergency telephone numbers for U.S. embassies and consulates. In general, the sheets do not give advice. Instead, they describe conditions so travelers can make informed decisions about their trips.

In some dangerous situations, however, the Department of State recommends that Americans defer travel to a country. In such a case, a Travel Warning is issued for the country in addition to its Consular Information Sheet.

Public Announcements are a means to disseminate information about relatively short-term and/or trans-national conditions posing significant risks to the security of American travelers. They are issued when there is a perceived threat, even if it does not involve Americans as a particular target group. In the past, Public Announcements have been issued to deal with short-term coups, pre-election disturbances, terrorist violence and anniversary dates of specific terrorist events.

You can obtain Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings and Public Announcements in several ways.

Internet

The most convenient source of information about travel and consular services is the Consular Affairs home page. The web site address is <http://travel.state.gov>.

Telephone

The Overseas Citizens Services call center can be reached at 1-888-407-4747 from a touchtone phone, from overseas the number is 202-501-4444.

From U.S. Passport Agencies & U.S. Embassies

Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings and Public Announcements are available at any of the regional passport agencies and U.S. embassies and consulates abroad.

Visas and Travel Documents

Getting Into Mexico

Current Requirements for Getting Into Mexico: The Government of Mexico requires all U.S. citizens to present proof of citizenship and photo identification for entry into Mexico. However, U.S. citizens have encountered difficulty in boarding flights in Mexico without a passport. The U.S. Embassy recommends traveling with a valid U.S. passport to avoid delays or misunderstandings. However, U.S. citizenship documents such as a certified copy (not a simple photocopy) of a U.S. birth certificate, a Naturalization Certificate, a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, or a Certificate of Citizenship are acceptable. U.S. citizens boarding flights to Mexico should be prepared to present one of these documents as proof of U.S. citizenship, along with photo identification. Driver's permits, voter registration cards, affidavits and similar documents are not sufficient to prove citizenship for readmission into the United States.

New Requirements for Travelers Between the United States and Mexico: Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) effective **January 23, 2007**, all U.S. citizens traveling by **air** to and from Mexico are required to have a valid passport to enter the United States. As early as January 1, 2008,

U.S. citizens traveling between the United States and Mexico by **land** or **sea** (including ferries), may be required to present a valid U.S. passport or other documents as determined by the Department of Homeland Security. Ample advance notice will be provided to enable the public to obtain passports or passport cards for land/sea entries. American citizen travelers are encouraged to apply for a U.S. passport or the passport card when it becomes available, well in advance of anticipated travel. American citizens can visit travel.state.gov or call 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778) for information on applying for a passport.

Tourist Cards

U.S. citizens do not require a visa or a tourist card for tourist stays of 72 hours or less within "the border zone," defined as an area between 20 to 30 kilometers of the border with the U.S., depending on the location. U.S. citizen tourists traveling beyond the border zone or entering Mexico by air must pay a fee to obtain a tourist card, also known as an FM-T, available from Mexican consulates, Mexican border crossing points, Mexican tourism offices, airports within the border zone and most airlines serving Mexico. The fee for the tourist card is generally included in the price of a plane ticket for travelers arriving by air.

The tourist card is issued upon presentation of proof of citizenship, such as a U.S. passport or a U.S. birth certificate, plus photo ID, such as a driver's license. Tourist cards are issued for up to 90 days with a single entry, or if you present proof of sufficient funds, for 180 days with multiple entries.

Upon entering Mexico, retain and safeguard the traveler's copy of your tourist card so you may surrender it to Mexican immigration when you depart. You must leave Mexico before your tourist card expires or you are subject to a fine. A tourist card for less than 180 days may be revalidated in Mexico by the Mexican immigration service (Instituto Nacional de Migración.)

Tourists wishing to travel beyond the border zone with their car must obtain a temporary import permit or risk having their car confiscated by Mexican customs officials. To acquire a permit, one must submit evidence of citizenship, title for the car, a car registration certificate, a driver's license, and a processing fee to either a Banjercito branch located at a Mexican Customs office at the port of entry, or at one of the Mexican Consulates located in Austin, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Bernardino, or San Francisco. Mexican law also requires the posting of a bond at a Banjercito (Mexican Army Bank) office to guarantee the departure of the car from Mexico within a time period determined at the time of the application. For this purpose, American Express, Visa or MasterCard credit card holders will be asked to provide credit card information; others will need to make a cash deposit of between \$200 and \$400, depending on the age of the car. In order to recover this bond or avoid credit card charges, travelers must go to any Mexican Customs office immediately prior to departing Mexico. Disregard any advice, official or unofficial, that vehicle permits can be obtained at checkpoints in the interior of Mexico. Avoid individuals outside vehicle permit offices offering to obtain the permits without waiting in line. If the proper permit cannot be obtained at the Banjercito branch at the port of entry, do not proceed to the interior where travelers may be incarcerated, fined and/or have their vehicle seized at immigration/customs checkpoints. For further information, contact Mexican Customs about appropriate vehicle permits.

Upon arrival in Mexico, business travelers must complete and submit a form (Form FM-N 30 days) authorizing the conduct of business, but not employment, for a 30-day period. Travelers entering Mexico for purposes other than tourism or business, or for stays of longer than 180 days, require a visa and must carry a valid U.S. passport. U.S. citizens planning to work or live in Mexico should apply for the appropriate Mexican visa at the Mexican Embassy in Washington, DC or nearest Mexican consulate in the United States.

Mexican law requires that any non-Mexican under the age of 18 departing Mexico must carry

notarized written permission from any parent or guardian not traveling with the child. This permission must include the name of the parent, the name of the child, the name of anyone traveling with the child, and the notarized signature(s) of the absent parent(s). The child must be carrying the original letter – not a faxed or scanned copy – as well as proof of the parent/child relationship (usually a birth certificate) – and an original custody decree, if applicable.

Travelers should contact the Mexican Embassy or closest Mexican Consulate for the most current information. You can visit the Embassy of Mexico web site at <http://portal.sre.gob.mx/usa/> or call the Embassy of Mexico at 202-736-1000. You can also call the closest Mexican consulate in the United States for assistance. (A list of Mexican consulates in the U.S. can be found on the Mexican Embassy web site.)

Dual Nationality

Mexican law recognizes dual nationality for Mexicans by birth, meaning those born in Mexico or born abroad to Mexican parents. U.S. citizens who are also Mexican nationals are considered to be Mexican by local authorities. Dual-nationality status could hamper U.S. Government efforts to provide consular protection. Dual nationals are not subject to compulsory military service in Mexico. Travelers possessing both U.S. and Mexican nationalities must carry with them proof of their citizenship of both countries. Under Mexican law, dual nationals entering or departing Mexico must identify themselves as Mexican. Under U.S. law, U.S. citizens must enter U.S. territory with documents proving U.S. citizenship.

Residing or Retiring in Mexico

If you plan to live or retire in Mexico, consult a Mexican consulate on the type of long-term visa required. As soon as possible after you arrive in the place you will live, register with the U.S. Embassy or the nearest U.S. consulate or consular agent. You can register on line at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>.

If you wish to register in person, bring your passport or other identification with you. Registration makes it easier to contact you in an emergency. Again, information on your welfare or location may not be released to anyone without your expressed written authorization.

For further information, travelers may contact the Embassy of Mexico at (202) 736-1000, or see the web site at <http://portal.sre.gob.mx/usa/>.

Returning to the United States – Caution!

Make sure that you can return to the United States with the proof of citizenship that you take with you. Although you may be allowed to enter Mexico with only a birth certificate, U.S. law requires that you document both your U.S. citizenship and identity when you re-enter the United States.

The most authoritative document to prove your U.S. citizenship is a valid U.S. passport. Other documents that establish U.S. citizenship include an expired U.S. passport, a certified copy of your birth certificate, a Certificate of Naturalization, a Certificate of Citizenship, or a Report of Birth Abroad of a U.S. citizen. To prove your identity, either a valid driver's license or government identification with a photo is acceptable.

The following documents are NOT sufficient proof to enter the United States: U.S. driver's license alone, Social Security Card, U.S. military ID, a photocopy of a U.S. birth certificate, a notarized Affidavit of Citizenship signed at the airport in the U.S., or a voter's registration card. Travelers with these documents may not be able to get back into the U.S.

Without proof of both identity and citizenship, you will not be allowed to board an airplane to the U.S. The airline faces a fine of \$3,300 if a passenger that the airline boarded is not admitted to the U.S., and in addition the airline must bear the cost of flying the passenger back to the point of departure. Because of these penalties, most airlines will not board anyone – including probable U.S. citizens – without proof of citizenship and identity.

Health

Health problems sometimes affect visitors to Mexico. Detailed information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747), or via the CDC's Internet site at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization web site at <http://www.who.int/en>. Further health information for travelers is available at <http://www.who.int/ith>.

Immunizations

Immunizations are recommended against hepatitis A, hepatitis B and typhoid. Booster shots for tetanus-diphtheria and measles are also recommended. For visitors coming directly from the United States, no immunization certification is required to enter Mexico. If you are traveling from a part of the world infected with yellow fever, a vaccination certificate is required. If you will participate in outdoor activities in rural areas, such as camping, hiking, or bicycling where you might come into contact with animals, you may want to consider a rabies vaccine.

Malaria

Malaria is always a serious disease and can be a deadly illness. Malaria is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected female Anopheles mosquito. Symptoms may include fever and flu-like illness, including chills, headache, muscle aches and fatigue. Malaria can cause anemia and jaundice, and, if not immediately treated, can cause kidney failure, coma, and death. If you become ill with a fever or flu-like illness either while traveling in a malaria-risk area or after you return home (for up to 1 year), you should seek immediate medical attention and inform your physician of your travel history.

Malaria is found in Mexico in certain rural areas, including resorts, in the following states: Campeche, Chiapas, Guerrero, Michoacán, Nayarit, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo, Sinaloa and Tabasco. In addition, risk exists in the mountainous northern area of Jalisco State. Risk also exists in an area between 24° north and 28° north latitude and 106° west and 110° west longitude that lies in parts of the states of Sonora, Chihuahua, and Durango.

There is no malaria risk along the U.S.-Mexico border. There is no malaria risk in the major resorts (that is, resorts located in urban areas) along the Pacific and Gulf coasts, although tourists should use insect repellent and other anti-mosquito measures.

Travelers to malarial areas should consult their physician. The recommended anti-malarial drug for Mexico is chloroquine. Although this preventative drug is not considered necessary for travelers to the major resort areas on the Pacific and Gulf coasts, travelers to those areas should use insect repellent and take other personal protection measures to reduce contact with mosquitoes, particularly from dusk to dawn when mosquitoes are active. To avoid being bitten, remain indoors in a screened or air-conditioned area during the peak biting period. If you go outdoors, wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and hats, and, use insect repellents containing DEET. Use a flying insect spray to help clear rooms of mosquitoes. The product should contain a pyrethroid insecticide; these insecticides quickly kill flying insects, including mosquitoes. Travelers not staying in well-screened or air-

conditioned rooms should sleep under bed nets (mosquito nets), preferably nets treated with the insecticide permethrin. Permethrin both repels and kills mosquitoes as well as other biting insects and ticks. In the United States, permethrin is available as a spray or a liquid (e.g. Permanone™). Pretreated nets, permethrin or another insecticide deltamethrin, are available overseas. Clothing, shoes, and camping gear, can also be treated with permethrin. Treated clothing can be repeatedly washed and still repel insects. Some clothing is now available in the United States that has been pretreated with permethrin. Protect infants (especially infants under 2 months of age not wearing insect repellent) by using a carrier draped with mosquito netting with an elastic edge for a tight fit.

Air Pollution

Air pollution in Mexico City and Guadalajara is severe, especially from December to May, and combined with high altitude could affect travelers with underlying respiratory problems.

Altitude Sickness

In high altitude areas such as Mexico City (elevation 7,600 feet or about 1/2 mile higher than Denver), most people need a short adjustment period. Signs to look for include a lack of energy, shortness of breath, dizziness, headache and insomnia. Those with heart problems should consult their doctor before traveling.

Food and Drink

Select food with care. All raw food is subject to contamination. Avoid salads, uncooked vegetables and unpasteurized milk and milk products such as cheese. Eat only food that has been cooked and is still hot. Fruits and vegetables should be washed in a purifying solution and peeled by the traveler personally. Undercooked and raw meat, fish, and shellfish can carry various intestinal pathogens. Cooked food that has been allowed to stand for several hours at room temperature can provide a fertile medium for bacterial growth. Consumption of food and beverages obtained from street vendors has been associated with an increased risk of illness. Diarrhea sufferers may benefit from anti-microbial treatment that may be prescribed or purchased over the counter. Travelers should consult a physician, rather than attempt self-medication, if the diarrhea is severe or persists several days.

If you can't peel it or cook it, DON'T eat it!

Only the following are safe to drink:

Beverages made with boiled water, such as tea and coffee

Canned or bottled beverages, including water, carbonated mineral water, and soft drinks

Beer and wine

It is safer to drink a beverage directly from the can or bottle than from a questionable container. However, water on the outside of beverage cans or bottles may also be contaminated. Therefore, dry off wet cans or bottles before they are opened and wipe clean surfaces with which your mouth will have direct contact. Where water may be contaminated, avoid brushing your teeth with tap water. Beware of ice cubes, as they may not have been made with purified water.

Swimming

A variety of infections have been linked to wading or swimming in the ocean, freshwater lakes and rivers, and swimming pools, particularly if the swimmer's head is submerged. Water may be contaminated by other people and from sewage, animal wastes, and wastewater run-off. Diarrhea and other serious waterborne infections can be spread when disease-causing organisms from human or