
Visiting Mexico – Important Info & Safety Tips

USD's proximity to Mexico offers students many wonderful cross-cultural opportunities. It also presents potential risks for individuals who are unfamiliar with Mexican laws and culture. We strongly encourage you to consider the safety risks related to drinking in Mexico. USD does not sponsor or support private companies which provide "party buses" or group transportation for the purpose of drinking in Mexico. If you are planning a trip south of the border, please read this section carefully. It contains information to help make your trip both safe and enjoyable.

Mexican Law

- Mexican law allows a person to be held in jail for 72 hours without a charge being filed. The Mexican judicial system does not presume the person accused of a crime as innocent until proven guilty. Bail exists but is often granted to Mexican citizens only.
- No one age 17 or younger can legally enter Mexico unless accompanied by a parent or guardian. Using falsified identification can result in jail time. Unaccompanied minors under the age of 18 are prohibited from loitering in the public areas of Ciudad Juarez (location of the U.S. Consulate) from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. U.S. citizens under the age of 18 will be taken to the international bridge.
- Many people have been arrested and have had to pay hefty fines for urinating or spitting in public, which are both illegal in Mexico. Avoid making public disturbances. Loud cursing, throwing bottles, fighting, littering, and nudity are not appreciated in Mexico and can lead to your arrest.

Alcohol and Other Drugs

- The legal drinking age in Mexico is 18. It is illegal for minors to drink or enter bars and night clubs.
- Underage drinking laws are enforced in the United States, regardless of where the alcohol is consumed.
- Pharmaceutical medications purchased in Mexico require a valid prescription for legal transport and possession in the United States.
- There is no difference between possession of drugs and drug trafficking according to Mexican law. The penalty for this offense may be 5 to 15 years in prison.
- The possession of an open alcohol container in public is illegal in Mexico and in San Diego. You may face a fine or jail time.
- Drunk driving is considered a major violation in Mexico; avoid it by all means. Designate a driver who will not drink alcohol AT ALL. This person should also be responsible for making sure your party is altogether before you leave your location to reenter the U.S.

Automobile Safety

- When a car accident takes place, the driver at fault must pay damages before being released from custody. An accident in Mexico is a felony. It is essential to obtain auto insurance which is valid in Mexico before crossing the border in a vehicle. Many San Diego county agencies offer auto insurance to motorists who will be driving in Mexico. Check your domestic auto insurance broker for the extent and type of coverage that your current policy offers.
 - In Mexico, it is illegal to make a right turn on a red light. Speed limits are posted in kilometers, not in miles per hour. Drive slowly and obey posted signs.
 - The main roads in Baja operate on a toll system. Make sure you have enough money to pay the tolls on your return trip.
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Things to Remember

- When re-entering the United States, as of January 31, 2008, adult U.S. citizens traveling by **land or sea** must present both (1) proof of citizenship and (2) proof of identity in order to be admitted back into the United States. Examples of acceptable proof of citizenship include a U.S. birth certificate, Certificate of Naturalization, or U.S. passport. Examples of proof of identity include a passport, state-issued driver's license or identification, or a SENTRI/NEXUS/FAST card.
- Telephone services are different in Mexico. Your cell phone may not work in Mexico; be sure to check with your U.S. cellular phone service provider for more information.
- You can be fined for jaywalking.
- Watch your drink at all times and do not accept drinks from other people.
- Go with a large co-ed group of people (6-10) and remain in that group. Make sure everyone is together when you leave. .
- Park on the American side of the border and walk into Mexico. There is plenty of parking on the U.S. side within walking distance of the border.
- It is safer to stay in the main tourist district of Tijuana. This is located in the vicinity of Avenida Revolucion. There are plenty of taxicabs waiting at the border that can drive you to this area.
- Obtain a tourist permit card (at Mexican immigration) if you plan to stay in Mexico for more than 72 hours or if you plan to travel more than 150 miles south of the border.
- Carry your health insurance policy name and number with you at all times while traveling. Know what to do in case of a medical emergency.
- Most importantly, be respectful and don't draw unnecessary attention to yourself.

International Students

- International students should consult the campus International Center prior to visiting Mexico. They will be able to advise you on the appropriate documentation needed to travel abroad. If you have additional questions, call the Mexican Consulate before you go.

If You Need Help

- The American Consulate in Tijuana can provide you with limited assistance in serious emergencies. If you find yourself in medical, legal or financial difficulty while in Mexico, call the Consulate.
- If you are arrested, state your citizenship and ask to speak to the American Consul. Remember to keep identification with you at all times.
- Ask to speak to the chief of police if you have any questions about the propriety of your contact with a law officer. Note the badge number, uniform color, and the police patrol car number at the time of your encounter with the authorities.
- Pay any fines at the police station. Do not pay, or attempt to pay, an officer directly. Bribery is illegal and law enforcement officials are not authorized to take money to clear infractions.

Important Telephone Numbers to Know & Have With You In Mexico

- U.S. Consulate - Tijuana (Baja)- 011 52 (656) 613-1655 (day)**
 - U.S. Consulate - Tijuana (Baja)- 011 52 (656) 265-8484 (night)**
 - Mexican Consulate – San Diego (619) 231-8414**
 - Mexican Emergency Number (equivalent of U.S. “911”) - 060 or 080**
 - U.S. Consulate - From U.S. (656) 613-1655 (day) or (656) 265-8484 (night)**
 - San Diego Trolley (619) 595-0111**
 - USD Public Safety (619) 260-7777 (non-emergency) or (619)260-2222(emergency)**
 - ALWAYS have your own personal emergency contact list with you (friends/family)**
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