

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- ❑ Driving is on the right.
- ❑ Drivers are required to carry a valid driving license. US licenses are allowed. Only vehicle owners are allowed to drive.
- ❑ Mexican liability insurance is required for all vehicles, including rental vehicles. Valid license plates and registration stickers are mandatory for vehicles passing into Mexico.
- ❑ Avoid travel at night due to safety issues and road conditions. Travel with a mobile phone that can make calls in Mexico. Phone coverage may be unreliable in many rural areas.
- ❑ Drive with windows up and doors locked; remain alert at traffic lights. Violent carjackings occur, particularly along the Pacific Highway. Criminals often target sports utility vehicles (SUVs) and large camper vans. Avoid rental vehicles with stickers that identify the car as a rental.
- ❑ Pedestrians account for 21 percent of all road fatalities.
- ❑ Drivers and passengers of motorized two-wheeled vehicles make up 14 percent of all road traffic deaths.
- ❑ Legal blood alcohol limit is below .08 g/dl for general population and below .03 g/dl for professional drivers. Despite legal limits, an estimated 7.8 percent of reported road fatalities involve the use of alcohol, and 18 percent of emergency patients involved in traffic crashes have consumed alcohol within the previous six hours.
- ❑ There are 11.6 road deaths per 100,000 people in Mexico, compared to 2.8 in Sweden and 3.1 in the UK.



Source: CIA Factbook

ROAD CULTURE

- **Speeding** and aggressive road conduct is common.
- **Lane separations** are frequently ignored; drivers may not use headlights at night, even on major roadways.
- **Motorists** may stop suddenly and without warning, even on busy roads.
- **Drivers typically** overtake or make turns without indicating, or randomly use turn signals to express intention for a large number of traffic maneuvers.
- **Drivers may** ignore pedestrian crossings and lights.
- **Distracted drivers** are a contributing factor in road crashes. Many drivers operate motorized vehicles while drowsy or sleep-deprived.
- **Drivers often** do not comply with seat belt laws; only an estimated 11 percent of children under the age of 12 are seated in dedicated child restraints.
- **Many drivers** operate vehicles without insurance.
- **Private drivers** and drivers operating taxis and buses frequently ignore stop signs and red lights.
- **Drivers rarely** move into the right lane when not passing, contributing to traffic jams.
- **Street vendors** typically step into traffic in and around urban areas to offer wares for sale.

ROAD CONDITIONS

- **There are** an estimated 794,524 km (493,694 miles) of roads; 9.5 percent are urban roads, 89.2 percent are rural roads and 1.3 percent are motorways.
- **Road lanes** may be indicated by indentations carved into surfaces instead of painted lane markings.
- **Road conditions** and maintenance vary widely. Roads in many rural areas are in need of repair.
- **Deep potholes** are present on many roads.
- **In coastal areas**, sand blowing onto roadways may create slick conditions.
- **Many roads** and highways are narrow and lack shoulders. Drop-offs between pavement and road edges are common.



Road Conditions, continued

- **Most expressways** are toll roads (autopistas de cuota/cuotas).
- **Toll roads** (cuota) are generally wider and in better condition than free “libre” roads. Non-toll expressways (carreteras libres) may be in poor condition.
- **Cuota roads** are generally regarded as safer than carreteras libres roads.
- **Many roads** are poorly marked or lack signs.
- **There are many** winding, twisting roads; roundabouts are common in rural areas and small towns.
- **Large unmarked** speed bumps (“topes”) are common.
- **Where present**, one-way street signs are often painted on or affixed to the sides of buildings ten or more feet above street level and may be difficult to see.
- **There are many** motor scooters on roads, particularly in tourist areas. Scooters are frequently involved in crashes.
- **There are** large numbers of pedestrians, bicycles and handcarts on roadways, especially in rural areas.
- **Pedestrian infrastructure** is underdeveloped. Many drivers ignore established crossings and persons on foot.
- **Loose livestock** is typical on and along roadways.
- **Slow-moving** and abandoned vehicles pose hazards on many roads.
- **There are frequent** public demonstrations. Avoid all public gatherings. Even peaceful demonstrations may turn violent and obstruct road travel and transportation.
- **Public protests** and demonstrations have increased in the states of Guerrero and Mexico City.
- **Government checkpoints** are common. Checkpoints may be operated by military personnel. Drivers may encounter additional checkpoints run by state and local police in and around cities and along highways.
- **Criminal organizations** and other non-governmental individuals or groups may erect unauthorized checkpoints. Those who refuse to pay “tolls” at these unofficial checkpoints may be subject to abduction or violence. When approaching any checkpoint, whether official or not, cooperate fully and avoid actions that may appear aggressive.
- **The presence of** illegal roadblocks has increased in the states of Guerrero, Michoacán, Oaxaca and Chiapas.
- **When crossing** an international land border, motorists should remain vigilant, use only official border crossings and avoid travelling at night.
- **Kidnappings and robberies** are common. Avoid non-essential travel to the following areas due to high levels of violence and organized crime, including attacks targeting motorists:
 - » Chihuahua, Colima (except the city of Manzanillo), Coahuila (except the southern part of the state at and below the Saltillo-Torreon highway corridor).
 - » Durango (except Durango City), Guerrero (except the cities of Ixtapa/ Zihuatanejo and Taxco).
 - » Highway 45 between León and Irapuato in Guanajuato, and the area south of and including Highway 45D between Irapuato and Celaya.
 - » Michoacán (except the city of Morelia).
 - » The Lagunas de Zempoala National Park and surrounding areas in Morelos.
 - » Tepic city and areas within 20 km (12.4 miles) of the border with Sinaloa and Durango in Nayarit.

Maximum Speed Limits

Type of road	Maximum speed
Urban areas	30 to 80 kph (18 to 49 mph)
School zones	20 kph (12 mph)
Rural roads	60 to 110 kph (37 to 68 mph)
Highways	110 to 120 kph (68 to 74 mph)

Always adjust speed according to signage, hazards and weather conditions.

Signs are generally pictorial and may not follow European Union conventions.

								
Stop	Unpaved road ahead	Motorized vehicles prohibited	Railroad crossing	No stopping	Ford across road required	Yield	Junction ahead	Right turn only

Road Conditions, continued

- » Nuevo León (except the city of Monterrey), Sinaloa (except the city of Mazatlán), Sonora (except the cities of Hermosillo and Guaymas/San Carlos and Puerto Peñasco); Tamaulipas and Zacatecas.
- **The following roads** may present particular challenges:
 - » **Carretera Federal 1 Highway** (Carretera Transpeninsular/Transpeninsular Highway) is considered one of the most dangerous roads in the world. It follows the Baja California Peninsula from Cabo San Lucas in the south to Tijuana in the north. The road lacks hard shoulders and has poor surface conditions and numerous blind turns. Guardrails are inadequate. Most of the length is comprised of two lanes. Dangerous overtaking is common.
 - » **Mexican Federal Highway 101** is the frequent location of cartel activity including gun battles, kidnappings and carjackings. Avoid this road.
 - » **Cumbres de Maltrata** links Mexico City to the Gulf of Mexico and is regarded as Mexico's most dangerous highway due to steep grades, multiple curves and heavy traffic. The road is subject to snow in winter months and heavy fog year round.
 - » **Ruta Tepehuana** (Camino a Huzamota) in Durango state is narrow with sharp turns, broken surfaces and deep potholes. Rock falls occur on mountainous sections. The road lacks guardrails and lane markings. Night driving is especially dangerous due to pedestrians in roadways. The road is a high risk area for drug trafficking, extortion and kidnapping.

REGIONAL AND SEASONAL CONDITIONS

- **Mexico is subject to** tropical storms, landslides, hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, flooding and heavy fog.
- **Storms may** disrupt transportation networks including the ability of emergency services to respond. Roads and bridges may be damaged or become impassable.
- **Standing water** following heavy rains may obscure deep potholes and other road hazards.
- **Hurricane season** is generally from June to November along both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts. Landslides may occur following storms and heavy rain.
- **The country** is subject to earthquakes. Tremors regularly occur in the states of Oaxaca and Guerrero. Tsunamis may follow earthquake activity.
- **Areas around** the active Popocatepetl and Colima volcanoes may be closed without warning depending upon seismic activity levels.
- **Coastal roads** are prone to heavy fog conditions.
- **Be familiar with emergency procedures.** The Red

Cross provides a website and free, downloadable emergency app: <http://www.redcross.org/get-help/prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies>

TRANSPORTATION

- **Public and private** transportation includes cars, motor scooters, motorcycles, buses, minibuses (sometimes called "peseros"), taxis, metro, light rail, trains, rideshare services and boats.
- **Bus networks** are extensive. Public buses include local buses and minibuses. All types of buses are typically overcrowded.
- **Multiple private companies** operate a variety of bus services ranging from modern luxury coaches to local microbus service.
- **Safety standards** and features vary widely among bus operators and individual buses.
- **Most** first-class bus companies conduct security checks of passengers who are boarding.
- **Long distance** bus drivers often work multiple shifts without rest. Fatigue adds to road dangers.
- **Use only** first-class buses operating during daylight hours along routes using toll roads.
- **Second and third** class buses using free "libre" routes are more susceptible to hijackings and attacks.
- **Taxis** should be used only if arranged in advance; radio taxis can be contacted at regulated taxi stands or booked through hotels.
- **"Sitio" taxis** found at authorized taxi ranks in Mexico City are generally better regulated than other taxis.
- **When booking** taxi services, request driver's name and license plate number from dispatcher.
- **Use only** official pre-paid taxis at airports.
- **Taxi and bus** drivers often ignore traffic rules and engage in dangerous behaviors including speeding and passing on unstable road verges, especially in city traffic or during highway traffic jams.
- **Metro** and light rail systems operate within Mexico City, Monterrey and Guadalajara.
- **Metro cars** restricted to women and children during rush hours are located at the front of trains.
- **Passenger** rail service is limited.
- **Specialty** trains servicing tourist destinations include Ferromex Chepe between Chihuahua and Los Mochis; Ferromex Tequila Express between Guadalajara and Amatitán in Jalisco state; and Ferromex Cañitas de Felipe Pescador between Cañitas de Felipe Pescador and Torreón.
- **The Sierra Madre Express** is a private train from the Sierra Madre mountains to Copper Canyon.



Transportation, continued

- **Women traveling alone** on public transport may be subject to harassment, verbal abuse and inappropriate physical contact.
- **Use only** rideshare services that have a dispatch app providing vehicle description, license plate number and driver's name. Verify all information before entering vehicle.
- **Boats** used for excursions may not be covered by insurance and sometimes lack adequate life jackets, radios and tools to make repairs. If traveling by boat, bring your own life preserver.
- **Seat belt use** is compulsory for drivers and passengers in front and rear seats.
- **Laws** do not mandate the use of child safety seats or restraints. For safety, children should be placed in safety seats appropriate to height, age and weight. Child seats may not be available from rental agencies; bring your own child seat with you.
- **Motorcyclists** and users of two-wheeled motorized vehicles are required to wear helmets. For safety, helmets should be fastened.
- **There are no** laws requiring bicyclists to wear helmets. For personal safety, use of a fastened helmet is recommended.

TRAFFIC REGULATIONS

- **Minimum age** to drive is 18 years of age. Drivers must be at least 23 years old to rent a vehicle. Some rental agencies may have other restrictions.
- **Drivers** planning to travel more than 19 km (12 miles) into Mexico are required to stop at a National Migration Institute (INM) office to obtain an entry permit (Forma Migratoria Multiple or FMM), even if not directed to do so by Mexican officials.
- **A temporary** vehicle import permit is required to bring US-registered vehicles past the border zone. Permits are processed through Banjercito and require a deposit that will be refunded once the vehicle leaves Mexico. Failure to apply may result in vehicle impoundment and a fine that equals the value of the vehicle.
- **A "hassle-free" zone** in northern Sonora allows drivers to enter this zone without an entry permit.
- **Children** are not restricted from being passengers on motorcycles. If possible, children should not be motorcycle passengers.
- **It is illegal** to drive through a yellow light; drivers must come to a full stop.
- **Right turns** on red are prohibited.
- **When approaching** one-way streets, green arrows generally indicate right-of-way; red arrows indicate that motorists must yield.
- **Highways** are not regularly patrolled by traffic police.
- **On-the-spot** fines are illegal, but may be demanded by police in rural areas. For safety, compliance is recommended.
- **Police** carry out random breath tests.
- **Beyond** urban areas, parking is largely unregulated.

Mexico City (Capital)

- » Public and private transportation includes cars, motor scooters, motorcycles, city government operated RTP buses, minibuses, taxis, metro, electric trolley/light rail, trains and rideshare services.
- » Driving is not recommended. Traffic is chaotic; drivers typically ignore traffic rules.
- » The city ranks ninth worldwide in traffic congestion. Large traffic jams may last many hours.
- » Mexico 57D (Mexico City to Queretaro highway) is the busiest highway in the country. Heavy traffic includes transnational commercial traffic.
- » Traffic into the city is restricted daily according to license plate number.
- » Vehicles without registration plates from the State of Mexico (Estado de Mexico) or Mexico City are not allowed to enter the city from Monday to Friday between 5 am and 11 am, and Saturday between 5 am and 10 pm.
- » City buses are full-sized; city minibuses are generally small green-and-white vehicles.
- » All types of city buses regularly fail to adhere to official stops or posted routes.
- » City buses and minibuses are typically overcrowded.
- » Multiple private companies also operate minibuses; many are franchised.
- » Metrobús service operates in dedicated lanes next to Avenida Insurgentes.
- » Pink placards in the front of some minibuses designate that only women passengers may board.
- » Driving standards for buses and taxis may be poor.
- » Official city taxis have white license plates with a capital letter followed by five numerals.

**Mexico City, continued**

- » Be sure that the taxi driver's license card is visible: license cards are white, laminated documents with official stamps, a hologram and a photograph of the taxi driver. Cards should be full-color originals and not photocopied. The license card number should match vehicle license plates.
- » Official taxis are metered. Drivers may not run meter unless specifically requested.
- » "Sitio" radio taxis may be ordered by phone or through your hotel. Radio taxis have a slightly better safety record than other taxis.
- » "Turismo" taxis are usually unmarked luxury vehicles assigned to specific hotels. Many come with the option of an English-speaking guide.
- » Avoid unlicensed taxis operated by independent drivers.
- » The city is divided into districts called colonias; familiarity with your destination district is recommended before hiring a taxi or using the metro system.
- » The El Metro metro system is one of the largest in the world. Trains are often overcrowded. There are 12 lines.
- » Metro signs are in Spanish. Not all metro stations have route maps.
- » Battery-powered trolleybuses ("Trolebuses") operate multiple routes throughout the city. Many vehicles are new.
- » There is one light rail (Xochimilco Ligh Rail or "Tren Ligero") line running south of the city. The line connects to the metro system.
- » Pedestrian infrastructure is underdeveloped. Many drivers ignore established crossings and persons on foot.
- » A public bike system ("Ecobici") operates in the city. Helmets are not supplied; if planning to rent a bicycle, bring your own helmet.
- » There are few dedicated bicycle lanes. Drivers typically disregard cyclists.
- » Use only rideshare services that have a dispatch app providing vehicle description, license plate number and driver's name. Verify all information before entering vehicle.
- » Mexico City International Airport (Benito Juárez International Airport) is located 5 km (3.1 mi) east of the city.
- » Buses to city center depart from outside both terminals 24 hours a day.
- » Long distance bus service is available from the airport to multiple locations.
- » Metrobus Line 4 service operated by Mexico City government provides direct service between the airport and city. Metro Line 5 connects the airport to the city's Politécnico to Pantitlán stations. The metro station is located a short walk from Terminal 1.
- » Taxi ranks can be found outside both terminals.
- » Use only authorized airport taxis operated by SCT Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes. Fares are regulated, but taxi passengers must purchase tickets for travel. Ticket booths can be found near the arrivals hall in the walkway area.
- » Most major car rental agencies can be found at the airport in the arrivals area.

Cancun

- » Transportation options include cars, buses, minibuses, motor scooters, taxis, rideshare services and boats.
- » Driving is not recommended. Large numbers of tourists year round add to traffic confusion.
- » Rental cars may not be in good working order; check all safety features before signing rental agreement.
- » Traffic police may expect bribes from tourists for alleged infractions.
- » Pedestrian infrastructure is underdeveloped.
- » Pedestrians should remain alert. Drivers may not yield to pedestrians, even at crosswalks.
- » Pedestrians should exercise caution in tourist zones and in areas with bars and restaurants. Drivers may be impaired or distracted.
- » Multiple companies operate buses within the city and to surrounding tourist areas.
- » Many buses run on continuous routes up and down the main thoroughfare, Blvd. Kukulcan.
- » Buses are often overcrowded.



- » Bus drivers frequently speed and drive recklessly.
- » Bus tickets may be purchased on board.
- » Taxis are regulated by a local union.
- » Not all taxis are metered; taxi drivers may not turn on meters unless requested.
- » Many routes have fixed fares. Agree on fare prior to entering taxi.
- » Many taxis act as shared rides. Request that driver not pick up other passengers.
- » Mopeds and motorscooters are popular; business operators typically do not carry insurance. Many rental vehicles may be in poor mechanical condition.
- » If planning to rent a moped or motorbike, check equipment for working safety features including lights, adequate tires, signals and brakes.
- » Many moped/motorbike users do not wear helmets; rental companies may not provide them. Bring a helmet.
- » Use only rideshare services that have a dispatch app providing vehicle description, license plate number and driver's name. Verify all information before entering vehicle.
- » Cancun International Airport is located 18.7 km (11.6 miles) from city center.
- » City taxis are not allowed to provide transportation between the airport and the city or hotels. Avoid drivers soliciting for fares.
- » Transportation options to and from the airport include rental car and authorized transportation companies including tour companies, hotel shuttles, airport transfer companies and official airport taxis. Advance reservations are required.
- » One-way bus service can be reserved for transportation from the airport to the central city bus station, or from the airport to multiple destinations in Cancun and nearby towns.
- » Most major car rental agencies are represented at the airport.

ACCOMMODATIONS AND INCLUSIONS FOR MOBILITY CHALLENGED

- **Mexican law** prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in transportation and other services, but services are lacking in many areas.
- **Sidewalks** may nonexistent in some areas, or be in poor repair with broken surfaces.
- **Persons with mobility challenges** should consult individual hotels and facilities in advance of travel to ensure accessibility.
- **Seven multilingual** Centers for the Care and Protection of Tourists (CAPTA) and Tourist Assistance Centers (CATTAC) are located in Los Cabos, La Paz, Acapulco, Playa del Carmen, Mazatlan, Ciudad Madero, and Queretaro. These offices may prove helpful assisting visitors in securing needed services and locating special needs accommodations.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

- **Responders** to emergency numbers in remote areas may not speak English. Even where English-speaking operators are available, it is recommended to have a Spanish-speaking person available to assist with the call.
- **Police responses** to emergency situations may be slow, particularly in remote areas.
- **Pre-program** emergency numbers into your phone before departure.
 - » Police, ambulance and fire: 911
- **In Mexico City**, emergency buttons are located on CCTV cameras throughout the city; pushing the button will immediately connect you to local emergency services.
- **High-standard** health facilities are generally available in Mexico City and major urban areas. In small towns and rural areas, standards of care vary.
- **Ambulance services** are widely available. Training of emergency responders may be below western standards. In the event of serious illness or injury, taxis may provide faster service to a medical facility.
- **Many hospitals**, clinics and medical providers require payment before administering care. Most hospitals do not accept US health insurance.

Emergency Information, continued

- **Private clinics** and doctors may practice questionable billing and collection procedures. Some resorts have exclusive agreements with certain ambulance services or medical providers.
- **Green Angels** (Ángeles Verdes) provide tourist assistance on all main highways during daylight hours. The service is complimentary; bilingual staff members are trained in first aid and mechanics. Green Angels may be reached at 01-800-987-8224 or 078. Be prepared to provide direction of travel, highway number and kilometer marker.
- **If involved in a crash:**
 - » Call police and emergency services.
 - » Do not move vehicle unless necessary to prevent danger to other road users.
 - » If possible, photograph scene.
 - » Collect contact details from other drivers and witnesses.
 - » Foreign drivers may be assumed liable for damages and injuries. Drivers may be imprisoned or detained until incident is resolved.
 - » Drivers who do not have Mexican liability insurance may be prevented from leaving the country, even if they require life-saving care.
 - » Mobs frequently gather at crash scenes in tourist areas. If involved in a crash, remain in vehicle until police or emergency responders arrive.

**ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION FOR SAFE INTERNATIONAL ROAD TRAVEL (ASIRT)**

ASIRT is a non-profit humanitarian organization established in memory of Aron Sobel, age 25, who was killed along with 22 other passengers in a Pamukkale Bus Company crash on the roads of Turkey.

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