

# Travel MEXICO

## CHURCHES

Although Mexico is a predominantly Catholic country, there are churches for almost all faiths. You may find the local church of your religion in the telephone books or by asking your hotel clerk.

American clubs have branches in Mexico, and Shiners, Lions, Rotarians and others may visit their Mexican counterparts. Your local chapter may offer guidance in this respect, or you may find the local club or chapter in the telephone book.

There are local versions of

the Young Men's (and Women's) Christian Association and the Salvation Army.

## CLOTHING

Except for those visiting the northern areas in the winter, visitors to Mexico need not carry heavy clothing. If visiting Mexico City during the rainy season (May through early October), it is wise to include a raincoat and perhaps an umbrella. A light overcoat will do for the mid-winter, but it will not be needed when visiting the coast resorts where the weather is always mild. Shorts are the most appropriate clothing for the coast, but a wardrobe should include slacks and blouses or shirts for evening wear. Plan your luggage in accordance with the places you will visit

during your tour, but always try to travel light. Purchasing is bound to make your luggage gain weight on the return flight.

## GEOGRAPHY

With the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean on the east, the Pacific on the west, and the Gulf of California or Sea of Cortez between the peninsula of Baja California and the mainland, Mexico boasts 6,000 miles of shores to thrill all water-sports lovers. The country's neighbors are the United States on the north and Guatemala and Belize on the south.

## TOURISM

Tourists have found their favorite havens in Mexico: Acapulco continues at the head of the country's resorts because of its varied at-

tractions for the sea lover. Among these are beautiful beaches, tropical climate, good water for swimming and sailing, as well as yachting, sailing, deep-sea fishing, and other sports. Some of the world's most luxurious hotels dot the shore at Acapulco, and connoisseurs find their palates flattered by fine food, liquor and wines.

Puerto Vallarta now nearly matches Acapulco as a tourist resort, while the most recent discovery on the Pacific coastline is southern Baja California. New beaches are being discovered along the Pacific. Some, like Manzanillo, Mazatlan, La Paz and others on the Pacific, have long held a reputation as favored areas. The oldest resorts, are those of the Gulf of Mexico, where Tampico, Veracruz, Merida and others retain their prominent place in tourism.

Choose whichever resort you may, on the coast or in interior Mexico—Guadalajara, Puebla, Taxco, Cuernavaca, Valle de Bravo, to name a few. Mexicans like to have visitors and they are always ready to roll out the carpet for those that come from any part of the world. A friendly smile is the first greeting that a Mexican extends to a visitor, followed by the words urging you "to feel at home."

## ECONOMY

Mexico's basic economy depends on agriculture and mining, but a burgeoning manufacturing industry and a



fast-growing commerce are developing into major importance.

Tourism is one of the most important revenue earners and a compensating force in the country's balance of payments. With more resorts being discovered and brought into being by the Mexican Government in Baja California, Cancun and Ixtapa, and other resorts, this industry continues growing. Foreign investors have found a safe climate with good rates of return in Mexico.

The varied climates and attractions of the country, as well as other conveniences, have attracted droves of pensioners from the United States, as well as some from

Canada and Europe. The exchange rate has remained stable at 12.50 pesos for a U.S. dollar since 1953.

## THE MEXICAN CUSTOM

The minute you step on Mexican soil you find the atmosphere changes. You now are in a country where customs are Latin. You will find that people are friendly and well-mannered. At the same time, they are more ceremonious and unhurried even in Mexico City where the stepped-up pace of progress has encroached upon leisurely living.

The friends you make will expect a handshake on meeting and another on departing, even if you saw them a few hours earlier. Save the "abrazo" or embrace for old-time acquaintances whom you have not seen in a long time. Although Mexicans are getting a little more relaxed about the friendly hug—especially in Mexico City—it is best to avoid it in the case of feminine friends unless the girl extends her arms first.

Flag down a taxi from the curb, hailing softly if you think the driver may not see you in time to stop, but don't whistle. Whistling down a cab driver—or anyone else, for that matter—is considered the peak of bad manners.

All cabs in Mexico City, except tourist cabs that park in front of hotels, have taximeters that mark the fare you must pay at the end of your trip. The cabs mark the fare by time and mileage combined. In the provinces, make

arrangements on the fare to be paid before boarding a cab, this will avoid later problems over the charge.

## DINING

Like all other Latins, Mexicans have a different concept of time, especially when it comes to dining. So don't let it upset you if the service is somewhat slower, especially in the better restaurants. A hurried lunch may be had in restaurants from 1 to 2 p.m. for lunchers who must get back to their desks within an hour, but the major establishments cater to diners who enjoy a leisurely meal. Lunch hour is around 2 p.m., cocktails at 7 and dinner at 9 p.m., or so.

## TIPPING

Tipping at the more posh establishments is from 10 to 15 per cent of the bill. When dining at American-plan hotels, inquire about the cost of meals and tip accordingly. Tipping a cab driver is unnecessary, but the boy carrying your luggage should get a tip of about three or five pesos (24 to 40 cents) a bag. Tourist guides should be tipped from five to ten pesos (40 to 80 cents) per person, and tips for any other minor service rendered should never be less than a peso (eight cents).

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## FOOD AND BEVERAGES

Mexico City restaurants can be an experience and an education for the traveller, with establishments serving American, Chinese, German, Hungarian, Japanese, Spanish, French, Kosher and other cuisines. Consult your hotel clerk on where to dine. Breakfast is generally served between 7 and 10 a.m. lunch, between 2 and 4 p.m.; and dinner, between 8 and 10 p.m. Not all Mexican food is hot and spicy. Some of the food, like tortillas, tamales, jaco, and enchiladas has been with us since the pre-Columbian era. Mexican dishes are the product of mixing the native and the Spanish cuisine brought by the conquerors, while other tasty dishes have been introduced by later travellers who made Mexico their home.

## Geography and climate have a definite influence on food.

In the northern states where dry, desert hills once made it impossible to raise any livestock other than goats, the most favored dish is kid goat, "cabrito," prepared in various delicious ways. The mainstay of Yucatan and Campeche, in the southeast, is pork, with deer and owl prepared in unique versions. Both coasts are famous for seafood, and the coast people have a way with it. Try shrimp and oyster cocktails, fish soup, turtle soup and the many kinds of fish. "Ceviche" is a favorite of both Mexicans and visitors. It is fish marinated in lime juice and seasoned with tomatoes, herbs, onions, and a little chili, plus slices of avocado. And speaking of avocado, the wide variety of this delicious fruit-vegetable has no end. There are some as large as

CURRENCY	Dollars to Pesos (12.50)	Pesos to Dollars (0.08)
12.50	0.08	
25.00	0.16	
37.50	0.24	
50.00	0.32	
62.50	0.40	
75.00	0.48	
87.50	0.56	
100.00	0.64	
112.50	0.72	
125.00	0.80	
137.50	0.88	
150.00	0.96	
162.50	1.04	
175.00	1.12	
187.50	1.20	
200.00	1.28	
212.50	1.36	
225.00	1.44	
237.50	1.52	
250.00	1.60	
262.50	1.68	
275.00	1.76	
287.50	1.84	
300.00	1.92	
312.50	2.00	
325.00	2.08	
337.50	2.16	
350.00	2.24	
362.50	2.32	
375.00	2.40	
387.50	2.48	
400.00	2.56	
412.50	2.64	
425.00	2.72	
437.50	2.80	
450.00	2.88	
462.50	2.96	
475.00	3.04	
487.50	3.12	
500.00	3.20	

cantaloupes in Yucatan, while others in different states may be the size of a chicken egg. All are tasty, but each has a flavor of its own.

The delicate white fish of Lake Jantzio in Patzcuaro ("blanco de Patzcuaro") is food fit for a king. Try the numerous deserts of Puebla, originally prepared by nuns for the old Spanish clergy. Try the famous "mole poblano", a rich seasoned sauce served with chicken or turkey. Mole recipes change around the country, and the one from Puebla is entirely different from that of Guadalajara, Queretaro or Oaxaca.

Tequila is the most famous Mexican alcoholic beverage. There are at least 20 regional liquors, many unknown outside their areas. Take it with salt and lime, or with "sangrita", a chaser prepared with lime, lemon, sweet and sour orange, pepper, salt and a dash of chili.

The "charrería" has a special place on the Mexican scene. Today the "charro", a gentleman cowboy, is usually a professional man who by avocation has become the epitome of excellent horsemanship. The charro adheres to the strict code of conduct in all his activities. The superb equestrian show that one can witness at a "lienzo charro" (arena) can only be surpassed by the colorful costumes and atmosphere. Be sure to ask where you can see this uniquely Mexican fiesta. There are Charro Associations all over the country. Horse racing, Jai Alai, and other sports attract their own share of fans in Mexico City.

Bars open around 10 a.m. Those catering to the tourist trade may remain open till 2 or 3 a.m. Most hotel bars have entertainment ranging from local musicians and singers to shows with internationally famous artists. Cozy bars in major hotels, with good background music, are fine for socializing. Prices are reasonable and controlled by the Secretary of Tourism.

TELEPHONE AND POSTAL SERVICE: modern long-distance service lets you dial person to person from more than 60 cities in Mexico to the United States or Canada. If calling from your hotel, ask your switchboard operator to place the call. Collect calls may be made by dialing 09 for international service. International operators speak English. Coin phones are now in use in most major cities. There are three classes of telegrams, and the low domestic rates make it economical and wise to use the "Urgente" or "Extra Urgente" service. For fast service on cables, preface the



may be scarce. Good night clubs have excellent orchestras and dance floors. The best ones for dining and dancing usually are in hotels, but there are fine establishments for this in almost every large city and resort.

message "rush". Air mail letters carry stamps of 1.60 pesos (12.8 cents) for every ten grams to the U.S. and Canada, 4.30 pesos (34.4 cents) to Europe.

Good movie theaters abound throughout the country, often showing the latest films from the United States and Europe. Baseball is a popular sport along the coast and northern Mexico, while soccer is the king of sports in central Mexico, including Mexico City. The capital has one of the world's largest soccer stadiums, with a baseball park that is almost as large, and fills to capacity when top teams play. Fans of both sports have a common meeting ground in

Hotels: There is every type of hotel in Mexico, from ultra modern glass-and-aluminum buildings to charming colonial inns and former haciendas. Motels are located along the roads and in cities. Rooming houses are called "pensionones". All lodging rates are authorized by the Secretary of Tourism and must be prominently displayed in every room or suite. Visitors wishing to set up housekeeping can find furnished apartments in major cities and resorts by checking with real-estate agents or through the classified sections of newspapers.

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