

# Go Missions to Mexico

## Safety Questions About Mexico

Some of you might be wondering whether or not it's safe to come to Mexico. You could be a concerned parent, a prospective leader considering a mission trip, or a church leader weighing whether or not to endorse your church's mission trip. The following info is factually based and designed to help you assess the situation from a factual standpoint. It also provides a perspective from us as Long Term Missionaries who live here year around with our families.

### Safety Facts about Mexico

- Our area of ministry is in a rural, agricultural setting with no little or no safety issues whatsoever. We are not in a large city, but a farming valley made up of smaller communities.
- Your church group will be staying in a very safe, gated and fenced Mission Base where we as missionaries live. Your mission team will be well taken care of.
- Most of the issues in Mexico have occurred over 800 miles from our area and involve infighting among drug traffickers. They do not involve tourist or the common people.
- Mexico's murder rate has fallen sharply from a decade ago. The National Public Security System reports that in 2008, the most recent year with available data, 12 people per 100,000 were the victims of murder. In 1997, the number was 17. In the late 1980s, the murder rate hovered near 20, according to the National Statistics and Geographic Institute. From a factual standpoint, Mexico is really safer than ever.
- When comparing the murder rate per 100,000 in the larger cities in the U.S, you might be surprised to know what they are verses the larger cities of Mexico. New Orleans is highest with around 60 murders per 100,000, and the average, per other larger cities, is around 30 per 100,000. The border city of Tijuana (which you don't drive through when coming to our area, but use a bypass freeway to go around it) is just 13 per 100,000. It's actually 3 times more dangerous to visit Washington DC than Mexico.
- According to Peter Greenburg (a CBS International Reporter) there have been less than 20 occurrences of Americans being involved in any violence over the last 3 years. And these Americans were actually Mexicans who are also U.S. Citizens and involved in drug related issues. There have virtually been no incidents regarding tourist.
- The point of view from most of us who live in Mexico year around is that things have improved over the past several decades. Unfortunately, only the bad news gets out and the good news is unreported. Here's the good news: the current president (Calderon) is working very hard to clean up Mexico. His administration has changed all the border officials and hired new, young, college educated people to take their place. As a result, there is now virtually no corruption and bribes accepted or allowed at the border crossings. You are treated professionally and with courtesy. There has also been a serious change among the police and as a result, there are also no bribes or abuses taking place in this area as well. The military is also patrolling the highways and providing security with checkpoints to help with this as well. In addition, there is a branch of the government called, "The Green Angels" who patrol the highways offering help to travelers who

break down or need help. Things are really much safer than in past history. We who live here have seen big changes and feel better than ever about safety and travel in Mexico.

- Most of the incidents mentioned in the media are isolated and mainly take place at night or in questionable areas. The newest U.S. Travel Update for Mexico says to use caution when going to Red Light Districts. It also recommends going to recognized tourist areas. Other than that, it is not telling folks to stay away from Mexico, but to just use reasonable caution as with travel anywhere, even in the U.S.
- Contrary to what some might think, and the media portray, there are not people with guns randomly shooting at vehicles as they drive by. Virtually every incident is drug related and involves drug traffic infighting.
- The main highway you'll be using on your drive down is the major (and only) highway of the Baja Peninsula. Every day there are about 10,000 cars that use this highway and there have been virtually no incidents whatsoever on this road.
- If Tijuana presents a problem, know that you **will not enter** Tijuana and will bypass the city altogether on a major freeway when driving south to our area. We use this freeway all the time and feel very safe. And once again, this freeway bypasses Tijuana so there's really nothing to worry about.
- If even getting close to Tijuana is a problem, you can enter Mexico east of San Diego via Tecate. The highway is #3 and connects in Ensenada. Tecate is a small border town and the road is quiet and peaceful.
- Mexico is very concerned about its tourism and is patrolling all its highways with additional police and soldiers to ensure maximum safety. The area is also patrolled by Green Angels who help tourist whose vehicles might break down and keep watch as well.
- It's also pertinent to say that some of the media attention has been made a little sensational (as the media tends to do) and blown out of proportion. The murder rates in Mexico have actually fallen over the past 25 years and are better than ever. However, because the type of murders is high profile, they are reported. In the past this wasn't the case, so what was not reported was not thought about.
- A good case could be put together from things that happen in Southern California (or other places in the U.S.) that it's not safe to travel there as well. We are all accustomed to small risk in life and coming to our area of Mexico is not a large risk.
- A number of years ago my folks visited us and brought their camper trailer. They were pulled over at one of the soldier checkpoints and thought they were going to have big problems. However, the soldiers recognized they had some loose lug nuts on one of their trailer tires. They quickly jacked up the trailer, tightened the lug nuts and sent them on their way. Most people are very friendly and helpful in Mexico, even officials of the government.
- We've been hosting mission teams for 13 years (well over 250 total mission teams hosted) and have had no issues whatsoever. We are on schedule to host another 25 teams this year and foresee no problems whatsoever.
- We are Long Term Missionaries who are in our 14th year living here. You will be well taken care of by us. If we thought your lives were in any way in danger, or things were even remotely out of hand, we'd let you know.

- We can also provide references of recent team leaders who have currently been here if you'd like to talk with someone other than us.
- During your time with us in Mexico, someone from our ministry will be with your team at all times and act as your host.

### **And Most Importantly - We have God's Promises to Protect Us As We Serve Him**

- We serve a big God who has our days numbered! We're not going to die one minute earlier or later than He has determined for us. There's no safer place to be than in His will doing His work!
- We can be in the safest place on earth, but if God plans to take us home, we won't escape God and avoid death. In the same way, we can be in the most unsafe place on earth and if it's not our time to go, no force on earth will over ride God's perfect plan for us.
- We have the promises of Psalm 121, which talks about God's promise to protect and watch over us.
- We have the examples of Saul, with the whole Israelite army, who tried to kill King David but was unable to do so because of God's protection over him.
- We have the examples of how God protected the Apostle Paul as he shared the Gospel everywhere and many tried to kill him, but were unable to do so because of God's protection.
- Scripture is full of how God watches over His own and protects them. It's a fundamental truth of the Bible.
- God actually is greatly displeased when we don't trust Him and give way to fear. Fear is Satan's greatest tool in stopping the spreading of the Gospel. Our lack of trust deeply displeased God and makes Him out to be a tiny God who is unable to protect us.
- God delights in our faith and we grow in the Lord as we exercise it. On the contrary, we stay small and our faith shrinks when we don't trust.
- Lastly, God says in 1 Timothy 1:7, that, "He hasn't given us a spirit of fear (or of timidity), but of power, love and self-discipline. It's Satan who fills us with fear and scares us away from serving God. It's Satan's favorite tool because it works so well. Fear has stopped more people from sharing their faith and serving God than any other thing. God promises to be with us until the end of the age as we share the Gospel (Matt. 28:20). What a precious promise! God also says, "That if He is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31) Not one hair of our head will fall to the ground without God knowing it. And if He watches over the birds of the air, how much more will He watch over us who are involved in a mission trip fulfilling the Great Commission of sharing the Gospel.