

# Missions to Mexico

## *Crossing the Border/Tourist Cards*

There has been quite a bit of confusion regarding when Passports will be needed for re-entry into the U.S.A. Passports are needed at this time. Here's the U.S. Department of State website that confirms these findings for your info as well: [http://travel.stat.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc\\_2223.html](http://travel.stat.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html)

For detailed driving instructions for how to get from the border to our area click the following link: <http://www.gomissionstomexico.com/manualdriving.html>

### **Entering Mexico**

When entering Mexico, or at a different checkpoints along the way, you might be asked some questions (rarely happens). It's possible they might ask you what your purpose is in Mexico.

**Remember that you're coming as a tourist.** Your time here in Mexico will be under the recognized category of tourist. It is best that just the leader speak and the others remain silent unless asked a question. Your group should be briefed that they as well are coming as tourist.

Also, in the event you have a problem crossing the border at the main Tijuana crossing (for some strange reason they're in a bad mood and create some "New Law", you can go to the Otay Mesa crossing which is just a few miles east of the main crossing. It's where the trucks and larger vehicles cross. Just go back up the 805 freeway and grab the 905 freeway east. This will take you directly to the Otay Mesa Border crossing.

### **Are Tourist Cards Needed?**

Mexico has a suggested tourist fee they charge visitors. If you are either staying in Mexico longer than 72 hours or traveling past the Border Zone you will need to pay the 260 peso Tourist Card fee (roughly \$25 US dollars). The card, known as the Migratory Tourist Form (FMT) is valid for up to six months (180 days) with multiple entries.

In Baja California, the border zone has been extended to San Quintin (includes our area), on the Pacific side and San Felipe, on the Sea of Cortez. Sonora state is in the process of extending it's border zone too. In mainland states along the border, this includes a 16-20 mile zone south of the border.

Whether or not you need tourist cards is a good question. The technical answer seems to be, "yes", if your stay will be over three days, however, several years ago the Mexican government made the Northern State of Baja, a "Free Zone". This means you can travel in the Northern State for up to three days without a tourist card. Yet, when they established this law, they didn't put a check system in place to verify the time factor. Some say this was on purpose because the most important thing the government wants is tourism and money. In the years since they started this, no one to our knowledge has ever been asked for their tourist card. It appears they put it in place to glean some extra funds if possible. They would rather have you here without a tourist card than not at all.

We leave the decision up to groups on whether or not they obtain tourist cards and we remain neutral on the issue. If you choose to obtain them, they cost about \$25.00 per person and need to be obtained at the border crossing in Tijuana. You'll need a passport or a birth-certificate and current ID.

For more go to: [www.mexonline.com/visamex.htm](http://www.mexonline.com/visamex.htm)

### **Vehicle Insurance**

Although vehicle insurance is not required in Mexico, you might want to have it just in case. We strongly recommend that you purchase insurance prior to your trip. Purchasing insurance at the border can be costly and time consuming. Click the following link for more help:

<http://www.gomissionstomexico.com/manualautoinsurance.html>

### **Is it safe to travel in Mexico?**

Traveling in Mexico carries no more inherent risk than in the U.S. There are many policeman and military personnel that patrol the highways to make sure travel is safe. There are also "Green Angels" who are government vehicles who provide help to vehicles who might be broke down or need help.

A custom that is used in Mexico which is helpful, and at the same time confusing, is the way they use their left blinkers. If you are on an open stretch of highway, and following a slow vehicle, they will often put on their left turn signal. This tells you that no one is coming and you can pass them. (But be careful here, they might actually be going to turn left!) A valid driver's license from the U.S. is valid in Mexico. Thievery is also common in Mexico, so leave your valuables locked up, or out of sight. For addition info on travel and safety issues in Mexico, consult our website at:

[www.missionstomexico.org/manualcrossingborderturistcards.html](http://www.missionstomexico.org/manualcrossingborderturistcards.html)