

Automobile Information: Mexico

Driving a car into Mexico:

Mexico has very strict rules regarding the entry of foreign motor vehicles. Travelers are allowed to bring only one vehicle into the country at a time. Those travelling with a recreational vehicle are not entitled to tow a second vehicle, unless it is registered in the name of an accompanying traveler.

It is the owner's responsibility to obtain a Temporary Vehicle Importation Permit ("solicitud de importación temporal de vehículos") at the customs office at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Do not proceed to the interior of Mexico without having obtained the proper permit. Be aware that travelers without a vehicle importation permit will have their vehicles seized and may be fined and/or incarcerated,.

Travelers should ensure that they obtain a permit upon entry and cancel this permit before exiting Mexico. At the border, check for signs indicating customs checkpoints and Banjercito Bank locations (where permits can be issued and cancelled).

The following documentation (original and copies; originals will be returned) is required:

- Valid immigration document (passport, tourist card, FM3 etc.)
- Valid driver's license (not legally required)
- Documents to prove legal ownership of the vehicle.

Mexican Insurance Is Required To Drive In Mexico:

U.S. and Canadian automobile insurance is not valid in Mexico. You must obtain Mexican issued auto insurance (on-line or at the Mexican border) before crossing into Mexico. Full coverage is recommended, including coverage for legal assistance. This also applies to rented vehicles.

Be aware that many local drivers in Mexico do not have any form of car insurance. Foreigners involved in traffic accidents may face serious legal problems, including imprisonment. They will be taken into custody until it can be determined who is responsible for the accident and until all penalties are paid. Depending on the extent of injuries or damages, drivers may face criminal charges. Motor vehicle insurance is considered invalid in Mexico if the driver is found to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or if the driver has no valid driver's license.

Remember that it is illegal to sell your vehicle in Mexico. If you do, or if you stay beyond the date indicated on the Temporary Importation Permit, the vehicle may be impounded and become the property of the Mexican Ministry of Revenue. You could be subject to a fine and deportation.

If you are you are involved in an auto accident in Mexico, you must immediately prove financial responsibility. This may be done in either of two ways:

1. Cash immediately to cover all damages
2. An approved Mexican insurance policy

Some U.S. and Canadian policies may cover your vehicle for physical damage. However, the Mexican government, does not recognize U.S. or Canadian policies as valid insurance in Mexico. All persons driving in Mexico are subject to the same laws as Mexican citizens. A U.S. liability policy, even if it bears a limited Mexican endorsement, is not recognized by Mexican authorities.

Where to purchase on-line Insurance:

Some examples; you will find many more with Google

- <http://www.sanbornsinsurance.com/>
- <http://www.mexinsure.com/>
- <http://www.mexpro.com/>

Environmental Driving Restrictions:

There are time restrictions on driving in Mexico City and in parts of the state of Mexico in order to reduce air pollution. Cars with “00” and”0” stickers are not restricted. (see below “Exemptions from Circulation Restrictions” for instructions on obtaining “0” and “00” stickers).

Based on the last digit of your license plate number, there will be at least one day each week when you are not allowed to drive. This applies equally to permanent, temporary, and foreign plates. There is no specific provision regarding plates with letters only. These regulations are strictly enforced. Offenders face heavy fines and temporary confiscation of their vehicle.

The following table indicates the days on which specific license plate numbers are not allowed to circulate:

Weekday	Plate's last digit	Sticker color
Monday	5 or 6	yellow
Tuesday	7 or 8	pink
Wednesday	3 or 4	red
Thursday	1 or 2	green
Friday	9 or 0 & letters only or temporary plates	blue

Foreign-plated vehicles (mostly affecting those from Canada and the United States) and those from Mexican states that do not have a reciprocal agreement with Mexico City and Mexico State are not exempt from the license plate restrictions.

Exemption from Circulation Restrictions for Foreign Plated Vehicles:

In order to be exempt, from circulation restrictions, foreign plated vehicles must be submitted for voluntary emissions testing in Mexico City.

The vehicle must not be older than 8 years old. The emissions testing is done every 6 months. Should they pass and receive a “0” or “00” sticker, they will be allowed to travel freely though Mexico City and Mexico State, even in the case of an “environmental contingency” (see below). Like locally plated vehicles, they must continue to test every 6 months until their vehicle turns 9 years old after which they must follow the rules below. If a vehicle owner chooses not to test voluntarily or is no longer eligible for a “0” or “00” sticker, they are subject to a set of rules separate from locally plated vehicles.

NEW Saturday Environmental Restrictions:

A new restriction that began on July 5, 2008 applies to locally plated vehicles AND to non-local vehicles (including foreign plated cars) **that do not have a “0” or “00” sticker**, effective September 1, 2008.

Weekday	Plate's last digit	Sticker color
First Saturday of the month	5 or 6	yellow
Second Saturday of the month	7 or 8	pink
Third Saturday of the month	3 or 4	red
Fourth Saturday of the month	1 or 2	green
Fifth Saturday of the month (if it exists)	9 or 0 & those with letters only or temporary plates	blue

Depending on the last digit of one's license plate, vehicles are not permitted to circulate in Mexico City or Mexico State on Saturday between the hours of 5 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Example: A foreign plated vehicle has a “3” as the last digit on the license plate. Under the Monday to Friday rules, they cannot drive between 5 a.m. to 11 a.m. In addition, on Wednesday, it cannot be driven between 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. And on the third Saturday of the month it cannot circulate between 5 a.m. to 10 p.m.

The only way they can get around these restrictions is to qualify for and obtain a “0” or “00” sticker.

Environmental Contingency:

Under certain conditions, an environmental contingency is declared. This affects vehicles that do not have a 0 or 00 sticker or are subject to some other exemption. Although rarer in previous years, it is important to check with local authorities and pay attention to local news outlets to understand what restrictions (hours) and to whom it affects. Such restrictions are often changed every 6 months and are related to the levels of ozone and particulate matter in the air, which is measured hourly.

On certain holidays, the local authorities will permit, depending on environmental conditions, for any vehicle to circulate without restriction. This is usually noted through local media.

Property Tax (not applicable to foreign plated vehicle):

If a Mexico's vehicle property tax (known in Spanish as *tenencia*) is not paid, or lapses, the vehicle will not be permitted to have the obligatory emissions testing performed. Such vehicles are then not allowed on the road at all.

Foreign-plated vehicles that test in a voluntary manner are not subject to this requirement.