Border Crossing Check List

Crossing the Border

Guidebook V1 provides directions for each entrance to Baja: Tijuana, Otay, Tecate, and Mexicali. These routes can be found under the Border Crossings TAB in this guide. For a safer trip, have a co-pilot read and navigate directions to the driver.

These are MUST HAVE ITEMS in order to cross the border successfully:

Proof of Citizenship:

Passports are required as of January 2008. Also, carry a picture ID (Drivers license, Military ID, or pictured Social Security ID). Minors require a notarized consent from parent(s) if traveling alone, with only one parent, or in the custody of someone else.

Vehicle Registration

Every Vehicle you have must have proper registration identification including your car, truck, trailer, and motorcycles or other recreational motor vehicles. Off-road vehicles to not require a license plate, but must be accompanied by official documentation with a VIN number that matches the VIN on the vehicle (if you are pulled over to be checked, they will verify the VIN typically).

Tourist Card Visa

New rules come and go in Baja; be prepared for the unexpected. An FMT Visa (better known as a Tourist Card) is required in Baja for U.S. and Canadian visitors staying over 72 hours (that's 3 days) or traveling beyond the Tijuana, Ensenada, Tecate parameters (basically anywhere further than 16 miles from the border). The last checkpoints looking for the tourist card were at Maneadero and Guerro Negro. As of February 2007, there are no longer check-points at Maneadero and they were only checking heading northbound on Hwy 1 at Guerro Negro; this all remains true as of March 2010, however, this could change. I suggest having a tourist card if you plan to go further south than Guerro Negro unless you prefer to dodge the checkpoint.

Under the "Border Crossings" TAB in V1, see "Banks and Tourist Cards" for purchase details. Although prices change, the tourist card costs about $18.00 dollars as of February 2000. Mexican government officials are not permitted to collect fees directly, so the fee must be paid to a bank in Baja. The tourist card is valid for multiple entries over the next six months. If you are a citizen of a country other than the U.S. and Canada, check with a Mexican consulate for regulations applying to your country.Â This card can be purchased at the border (parking just after crossing is very painful, but the only way to get a visa).

Automobile Insurance

If you plan to take your car into Baja, Mexican law requires Mexican Insurance. If your U.S. auto insurance company has coverage for you in Baja, let them know they are "off their rockers", as Mexico does not accept U.S. insurance. If you are in an accident (even if you are found not guilty) without proper Mexican Insurance, you will most likely be arrested. To get Mexican Insurance, provide a driver license and an U.S. insurance card and registration for each vehicle being insured.

Insurance prices are higher for a daily rateÂ verses other longer-term programs. If you travel Baja or Mainland Mexico frequently or plan to be south more than 10 days,Â check the annual insurance plans to save money. CLICK HERE for the insurance company we use (reliable with reasonable rates and good coverage).

Money Exchange

Exchange at least half of your cash money into pesos. Having pesos will always get you a better price and will help those with handicapped mathematical skills pay the appropriate prices. Bank and hotel establishments near border cities, San Felipe, and Mikes Sky Rancho accept credit cards; ask when making reservations. I highly recommend taking credit cards, but do not rely on them. Most businesses do not accept credit cards in Baja.

Carry your money in several different places as you travel. I make it a habit to carry half of my money in the bottom of my Tech 8 boot, enough money in my course description holder for the day (easily reached), and the rest in my backpack. In case of theft (which I have yet to encounter), I have the choice of giving up only a portion of my cash rations for the trip. If you copycat this smart Lizard, you will prosper; unless I'm your thief!

Exchange money at any "Casa De Cambio" (which means "Change house") located on both the U.S. and Baja side of the border. They are typically found close to gas stations on the last exit before the border or just after crossing into Baja. Bargain with the exchange rate; they are not fixed and are to your benefit if exchanging over a few hundred dollars. Also, if you are in a location away from the border use any bank or ask a Pemex Station attendant (they are typically a reliable source for exchanging dollars at the same or slightlyÂ better rates).

Negra Modelo (optional)

You have several options in choosing a Mexican beer. I highly recommend Negra Modelo; expect to see references to this rich smooth yummy dark beer throughout both of our guidebooks, but please never drink and ride or drive! Those gifted withÂ serious intolerance should be tied down after 1 Negra.

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