

The information below is reproduced with permission of a very knowledgeable gentleman (Turtle-Toad) over at the RV.NET forum. It was originally posted in May of 2006 and is a bit dated, and a couple of points come to mind.

Passports:

For return into the USA will certainly be needed one day sooner than later. From what I've heard that would most likely be January 2008 but another extension could happen. What this really means is that for travel to Mexico this year it makes sense to have passports for everyone.

10 year vehicle permits:

I have talk to many RV'ers in the Chapala area who received 10 Year permits for their 5th wheels, but only 6 months for the tow vehicle. This allowed them to put the RV into storage and drive home. After which future trips could be done by air if they choose. I would presume this would carry forward to travel trailers as well as long as they were self contained. In an over heard conversation at the border the official was ascertaining if the trailer had a stove, fridge, toilet, etc. The type of things that would mean self contained.

We would love to hear from you on anything new or unusual you might find in your travels.

Albert & Ellen

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Thank you Turtle-Toad

DISCLAIMER: Although I believe this information was correct when I wrote it, and may still be correct when you cross the border, you have to watch out for what I call the "Red Clown Nose Contingency" (RCNC). If your situation is the least bit out of the ordinary, you run the risk of allowing the border official to deviate from his normal routine. And no matter what the rules say, the official standing in front of you has the final say. So if he says that you have to be wearing a Red Clown Nose to get across then, unless you have immediate access to someone higher in the food chain, you better start looking for a costume shop!

So beware of the RCNC

And please contact me (or post here) with any errors, omissions, or changes. This FAQ is only as useful as the information it contains.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS:

You will need a valid driver's license; those issued by most other countries are recognized by the Mexican Government. This is all you need to drive in Mexico (besides insurance). Mexican driver's licenses are not issued to people with a FM-T. A FM-3 or better is needed for obtaining a Mexican driver's license.

You will also need proof of citizenship to get back into the U.S. Your driver's license isn't considered proof of citizenship so you will need one of the following;

- Certified Birth Certificate, sometimes titled "Certification of Live Birth" or something along those lines; this is NOT the one with your footprint on it that is handed out by some hospitals. And a picture ID (such as a driver's license or one of the below); or
- Valid Passport (more on this below); Or
- Valid Military ID card; Or
- Certified Certificate of Naturalization.

You will also need a valid registration for all your vehicles. The registration must be in your name.

If there are lien holders on the vehicle(s), you will need a letter from the lien holder authorizing you to take the vehicle across the border. This includes trailers, boats, boat trailers, and ATV's & motorcycles above 500 cc. Each driver is allowed only one vehicle above 500 cc (excluding the new RV sticker; see Temporary Import permits for RV's, below).

You will need insurance; see the Sticky [FAQ: Mexico Insurance](#).

You will need at least 3 copies each of all of the above. You will be required to show for inspection, the original and leave a copy of these at various places. Normally it is one copy for the Migración office and one copy for the Banjercito (bank). In some cases you might have to go to two different windows at the Banjercito, one for the FM-T's and one for the vehicle stickers, and both will ask for copies; hence 3 copies.

You will also need copies of the paperwork you are issued. There are copy centers co-located with the Banjercito's, where, for a nominal fee, you can get these documents (and any that you didn't bring copies of) copied.

Finally, to get vehicle permits, you will need a valid U.S or Canadian credit card. If you don't have one, you will have to post bond on all the vehicles. This is expensive and complicated, and is based on the value of the vehicle. If you're going this route, check with the local Consulate ahead of time.

PASSPORTS

In the next year or so, a passport will be required to get back into the US; birth certificates and driver's licenses will no longer be honored. The exact date has not been set but the US State Department is shooting for December 31, 2006 to take effect one-second after midnight (Jan 1, 2007) but already there is talk that it may be put off until

December 2007. Whenever it takes place, it will probably be phased in; Air travelers first, followed by ground travelers a year later. It will NOT happen in 2006.

NEWS FLASH!! Some offices of various Mexican agencies have apparently been watching the U.S. news and have jumped the gun. They are now requiring passports before issuing papers such as fishing licenses, boat licenses, FM-T's, etc. This appears to be a spotty but growing occurrence, so bring your passport.

Tourist Permits (FM-T - Forma Migratoria - Turista)

The Mexican government assesses a permit fee of approximately \$30 U.S. for each visitor entering Mexico. If traveling on business or as a student, contact the nearest Mexican consulate for information on obtaining a business or student visa. The fee must be paid in order to have your tourist permit validated if you plan to remain anywhere in Mexico for more than 72 hours, or stay less than 72 hours and travel beyond the "border zone," defined as an area between 20 to 30 kilometers of the border with the U.S., depending on the Mexican state. See "FM-T Exemptions, below"

A government-issued tourist permit (commonly referred to as a tourist card or an FM-T, but actually a form) is available upon presentation of proof of citizenship from Mexican consulates in the United States and Canada, or Migracion offices at official points of entry. Prepaid permits can also be ordered (on-line) from certain travel clubs; among them are Vagabundos and Discover Baja. If you're entering Mexico by land, it is advisable to obtain your tourist permit prior to leaving the United States; especially if you're driving anything that can't be parked in a passenger car parking spot. Parking any form of RV at the border stations is near impossible. If you're arriving by air, it is distributed on the flight.

ON EDIT 05/14/06: iguania07 has informed me that his attempt to get an FM-T from his local Consulate resulted in him being presented with the blank form and told to fill it out and present it at the border, where he would also pay for it. RCNC strikes again.

If arriving by land, the tourist entry fee is paid at a branch of any bank operating in Mexico or through the bank window at the border, (a list of banks at which the fee can be paid is shown on the back of the tourist permit form). Upon payment, the tourist permit is stamped with an official "Fee Paid" designation. Although the fee may be paid at any time prior to leaving the country, it is recommended that it be paid at the border or a Migración office near the border set up for that purpose. When crossing at Lukeville/Sonoyta the Migración is on Mex-2, about 7 miles east of Sonoyta. At Nogales, the Migración is at KM 21.

Almost all large towns have a Migración office and a bank. All visitors are required to produce verification of payment by showing the "Fee Paid" stamp on their tourist permit upon departing Mexico. If you're crossing at Tecate, you can park in a pay parking lot on the U.S. side, walk across and get your paperwork. Since the town of Tecate is up against the border, you can then walk 2 blocks and be in the town square. There are stores,

restaurants, and a bank around the square. You can try out your ATM card at the bank and get some pesos, have lunch at one of the restaurants, and sit in the square for awhile before walking back across. Tecate is my favorite border town and the only one I would recommend doing this. I sometimes walk across just for a day trip.

The procedure goes something like this; you go to Migración and get the FM-T, you take the permit to a copy office to get copies made. Then you go to the local bank (not always co-located with the Migración) pay for the permit and get the “Fee Paid” stamp. The bank may keep one of the copies. You then take the permit and the other copies back to Migración, where he will check your stamps and take one of the copies. You are now ready to go (or to start all over to get your Temporary Vehicle Permit(s) if you didn’t plan ahead). See the Temporary Vehicle Permits FAQ for the area you’re going to (or through).

If arriving by air, the fee is included in the price of the ticket charged by the airline.

If arriving by cruise ship, the fee is collected upon disembarking in your first Mexican port or is included in the purchase price of a cruise, but only if the stay is longer than 72 hours.

FM-T Exemptions are as follows:

- Visitors traveling by air or sea anywhere in Mexico and staying less than 72 hours
- Visitors traveling by land to destinations within the 20-kilometer (12-mile) border zone, regardless of length of stay
- Those visiting as students (as defined by Mexican Migración laws)
- Visitors traveling by land beyond the border zone and staying more than 72 hours, but limiting their visit to the following destinations/tourist routes:

Tijuana to Ensenada, B.C.;

Mexicali to San Felipe, B.C.;

Sonoyta to Puerto Peñasco (Rocky Point), Son.;

Ciudad Juárez to Paquéeme, Chih.;

Piedras Negras to Santa Rosa, Coah.;

Reynosa to China, N.L.,

Reynosa to Presa Cuchillo, Tamps.

The single-entry tourist permit is valid for up to 180 days and must be returned to Mexican border officials upon leaving Mexico. These are normally what are issued when entering by air or sea.

A multiple-entry permit allows unlimited entry into Mexico within the 180-day period. These are issued when you enter by land.

If a tourist permit is not used (stamped) within 90 days of issuance, it becomes void. Carry your FM-T with you at all times while in Mexico. If you lose it, a duplicate can be obtained from local Migración officials.

Make sure you turn in the FM-T when you leave Mexico or shortly thereafter. You can also turn it in at most Mexico Consulates. This wasn't a big deal until lately when they computerized the system. Now you run the chance of having a problem on your next trip.

TEMPORARY VEHICLE PERMITS

GENERAL: Temporary Vehicle Permits are issued by the Banjercito, not the Migración office. To get a permit you must have a FM-T (and copies) so go to the Migración office first. You will also need the following;

- Proof of Citizenship (and copies)
- Drivers license (and copies)
- Registration (and copies)
- Letter from lien holder (and copies)
- Insurance (and copies)*
- Credit Card (MasterCard, Visa, AmEx, & Diners Club are the only ones currently accepted)**.

**There is no federal regulation requiring you to show proof of insurance, but there are big signs in the Banjercito office stating that it is required. Even so, I've never been asked to show proof of insurance but I always have it available, just in case.*

***If you don't have a credit card, you will be required to post a bond. This bond is based on the model year of the car and can be quite expensive. Check with the local consul for the latest costs.*

MAINLAND MEXICO; Federal Temporary Vehicle Permits (not the "Sonora Only" permit discussed below) are required everywhere in Mexico except where listed below.

BAJA AND NORTHERN SONORA; Temporary Vehicle Permits are not required anywhere on the Baja peninsula and the northern part of Sonora over to and including Puerto Peñasco (Rocky Point). This is the "exclusion zone".

SONORA; Here is where the confusion starts! Besides the exclusion zone (see above), there are two other exception areas in Sonora. They are known as the "Sonora Free Zone" and the "Sonora Only Zone". The names aren't the only confusion factors as will be pointed out below

SONORA FREE ZONE; This zone extends down to Empalme, not counting the exclusion zone. Inside this zone, you are supposed to be able to travel freely with just your FMT. No vehicle permits are required. However, there is one catch; you have to enter through Nogales. Coming from anywhere else you will be required to get Federal Temporary Vehicle Permits and, if applicable, RV permits. This is not only true for the other border crossings but also anyone coming in from the northern exclusion zone (Baja), either by land or by ferry.

SONORA ONLY ZONE; This covers all of Sonora not covered by the above. This Temporary Vehicle Permit is issued by the State of Sonora and not the Federal

Government. Another little glitch here is that you can't get this sticker at the border crossings; you have to get it at Empalmé (although I've heard rumors that they are also available at the KM 21 checkpoint). Of course if you came in from somewhere other than Nogales, you already have the Federal Sticker, so don't need this one.

10 YEAR RV PERMITS:

Something introduced in December 2005 is the 10-year RV permit. To qualify for this permit, your RV must have an integral motor. This means that only Class A, B, and C RV's can get one of these. Truck campers, travel trailers, and 5th wheelers don't qualify. As stated, these are good for 10 years and, for the qualified RV, this is the only thing offered. The 6 month Temporary Vehicle Permit is no longer available for these RV's.

If you sell or trade your RV, you must scrape the holograph off and return the certificate to the Banjercito (I've found that a hair dryer, applied to the outside of the window, will allow you to pull the sticker off in one or two pieces). If you've traded it in, or need to replace the windshield, you will be issued a new hologram and certificate. You can either take the hologram pieces and your paperwork with you on the next trip or contact the local consulate.

BRINGING YOUR KIDS:

Mexico is a great place for kids! Mexicans love them! I recommend that, if you don't have any of your own, rent a couple, they are great icebreakers (just kidding).

You will need the birth certificates for all of your children. These are also needed to get back across into the U.S.

If both parents aren't traveling together, a notarized letter from the missing parent granting permission for you to take the kids into Mexico is required. A form for this is available at Parental Affidavit. Make sure you get it notarized!

BRINGING YOUR PETS:

If you are bringing a dog or cat, make sure you have a current rabies/shot record and Vets Certificate of Health or you might have to leave fluffy behind when you come back to the states. Don't even think about bringing your pet gerbil, hamster, pot-bellied pig, or goldfish (or any other unusual pet) unless you are willing to put them in quarantine for a couple of months and have something higher than an FM-T. Do NOT let your pet associate with the local street dogs or they might come up with a couple of diseases that don't exist in the U.S.

BOAT PERMITS:

All Fishing Licenses and Boat Permits are Personal and Non-transferable. Any alteration, mutilation or transfer of these documents will render them void and may result in fines or temporary seizure of your boat. HANDLE THEM WITH CARE!

Both boat and fishing permits are issued by the "Department of Environment, Natural Resources and Fisheries". I recommend that you get these before reaching the border.

These licenses are good for 1 year from the time of issue. They are available on the U.S. side from many sporting goods stores in the border cities and from the various travel clubs.

A Boat Permit is required in Mexican waters for all inflatable, car-top, trailerable, or non-trailerable boats, as well as any dinghy or additional boat aboard the vessel, regardless of size or construction, that will be used for sport fishing and that are registered as Pleasure Boat permits. They will not be issued to any boat which has a commercial registration or which will be used in a commercial capacity as a sport fishing charter, commercial fishing, or sightseeing where passengers pay a fee. Do not apply for a Boat Permit if you are engaged in a commercial activity or if your boat is registered as a commercial vessel.

If a boat such as a kayak or inflatable is used only for sightseeing purposes, it is not required to have a boat permit. However, you are not allowed to have any fishing gear on-board. If so much as a stray sinker or hook is found on the boat, you will be fined for not having a boat permit and possibly have the boat confiscated.

Trailer boats over 14 ft. are subject to the same Temporary Vehicle Permit process as other vehicles. I've been told that there is a 10 year permit available, similar to the RV permit, but haven't been able to confirm that. If anyone has info on this please drop me a line.

HARBOR PERMITS

If you're entering by sea, or are going to moor your boat in a port, you must also have a "Harbor Permit" issued by the local Captain of the Port. This permit is not transportable, and must be obtained for every port you enter.

A copy of the current registration and your FM-T must be submitted with your application for a permit.

FISHING LICENSE:

A Fishing License is required for any individual, regardless of age, who wishes to fish in fresh or salt water in Mexico. This rule applies to all people fishing out of boats or fishing underwater while skin/scuba diving. A Fishing License is not needed when fishing from land or fixed structures attached to land.

All passengers, regardless of age aboard a boat in Mexican waters that is engaged in fishing must have a Mexican Fishing License in their possession, regardless if they are fishing or not.

There ARE fishing limits! The following was taken from the flyer that is handed out with the boat and fishing licenses;

MEXICAN SPORTFISHING REGULATIONS

- In order to operate a boat that carries fishing equipment in Mexican waters, it is necessary to hold a valid boat permit and personal fishing license for everybody aboard the boat, regardless of age and whether fishing or not. A Fishing License is not required

when fishing from land.

- Only one rod or line with hook is permitted in the water, per person, but there is no restriction regarding the number of replacement items.
- This fishing license allows the capture only fin fish. It does not allow the capture any mollusks or crustaceans, and their capture by anyone is strictly prohibited.
- Totuava, turtles, and marine mammals are under protection of the Ministry and may not be captured at any time.
- To capture bottom fish, up to four hooks on a vertical line may be used.
- The use of electric reels is restricted to disabled fishermen only, after written authorization for the Ministry before use.

BAG AND POSSESSION LIMITS:

In ocean waters and estuaries the limit is a total of ten fish per day, with no more than 5 catches of a single specie, except of the species of Marlin, Sailfish and Sword fish and Shark, of which only one specimen of either is allowed, and which counts as five toward the overall 10 fish limit, or Dorado, Rooster fish, Shad, or Tarpon, of which only two samples of each specie are allowed, and which count as five toward the overall 10 fish limit.

Limit on in inland bodies of water (rivers, lakes, dams, etc.) is five fish per day, whether of a single specie or in combination.

Underwater fishing is limited to five fish per day, using rubber band or spring type harpoons, and only while skin-diving.

There is no limit to the practice of "catch and release", as long as the fish that exceed the bag limit be returned its their environment in good survival condition.

Where sport fishing is conducted from boats out at sea for longer than three days, the bag limit will be the equivalent of three times the amounts mentioned above.

VIOLATIONS

- It is illegal to capture and maintain alive any fish for ornamental purposes.
- It is prohibited to receive any financial gain from the product obtained through sport fishing.
- It is prohibited to dump trash, litter or substances that harm the aquatic flora or fauna, whether on lakes, river banks, shores or oceanic waters.
- It is prohibited to collect shells, corals, sea anemones and snails, or to disturb the original ecosystem environment.
- It is prohibited to practice sportfishing 250 meters or less from swimmers.
- It is prohibited to use artificial lighting to attract large quantities of fish.
- It is prohibited to discharge firearms in Mexican waters.
- Fish caught under a sport fishing license may not be filleted aboard the vessel from which it was caught
- It is requested that all unusual activities, occurrences or record catches be reported to the nearest office of the Oficina de Pesca, or to its representation in San Diego, CA. in order to ensure the preservation of natural resources for the continued enjoyment of all fishermen.

WE INVITE YOU TO PRACTICE RESPONSIBLE SPORTFISHING!

Oficina de Pesca 2550 Fifth Avenue # 15 San Diego, CA. 92103 Ph:

(619)

233-4324 Fax: (619) 233-0344

CROSSING BACK INTO THE U.S.

I cannot be held responsible for anything listed below; due to the various pests and diseases (including terrorist) the rules change rapidly at the borders. The below was current when I wrote this.

Documentation for Reentry into the U.S.

(Taken from the US Customs website)

To gain reentry into the U.S. it is important to have an acceptable form of photo identification and proof of citizenship. A passport fulfills both of these and is the most recommended form of ID to have due to heightened security at our borders. See "Passports", above.

If you do not have a passport, be sure to bring a certified copy of your birth certificate or baptismal record AND a photo ID. Acceptable forms of photo ID are military ID, driver's license or state ID card. If you do not have a certified copy of your birth certificate, a U.S. state or federal government issued birth record or a Certificate of Citizenship (not an affidavit of citizenship) or Certificate of Naturalization are acceptable along with acceptable photo ID.

Laminated birth certificates and voter registration cards are not acceptable.

Tobacco Products: Within the duty-free personal exemption limits, you are allowed to return to the U.S. with 200 cigarettes or 100 cigars (excluding Cuban products) that were previously exported (usually found in duty-free shops in the foreign country).

U.S. Agricultural Quarantine Information

(Taken from the US Department of Agriculture pamphlet)

Notice to Travelers

- Declare all agricultural items you bring from Mexico. Failure to do so can result in delays and fines of \$10,000 or more. Fruits, vegetables, mats, and birds taken from the U.S. to Mexico may not be allowed to reenter. Consult in advance with inspectors of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. All agricultural products are subject to inspection.

Prohibited Items

Agricultural items are prohibited if they can carry plant pests or animal diseases.

Fruits and Vegetables: All fruit not on the PERMITTED ITEMS list below are prohibited. Potatoes, including Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, and yams, are prohibited. [Exception: Cooked potatoes are permitted. Avocados without seeds are permitted, except in California. Fresh squeezed Grapefruit and Orange juice is permitted]

Plants and Seeds: Special permits are required. Some plants are prohibited. Check in advance with agricultural inspectors. [Exception: Dried plant parts, such as for medicinal purposes, are permitted]

Meat and Game: Raw and cooked pork, including sausages, cold cuts, skins, and pork tacos are prohibited. [Exception: Shelf-stable, canned pork and hard cooked pork skins – cracklings- are permitted] Poultry – raw meat from both domesticated and game fowl is prohibited. [Exception: Thoroughly cooked poultry is permitted] Game – Check with agricultural inspectors in advance.

Eggs: Prohibited, [Exception: Hard boiled and cooked eggs are permitted]

Live Birds: Wild and domesticated birds, including poultry, are prohibited. To import personally owned pet birds, contact agricultural inspectors in advance.

Straw: Generally prohibited. This includes wheat straw, seeds, and all articles made from this material, including animal feed.

Permitted Items

In addition to the excepted items listed above, many agricultural items are permitted if they pass inspection to be certain they are free of pests, soil, sand, and earth.

Fruits and Vegetables: Permitted fruits are; Bananas, blackberries, cactus fruit, dates, dewberries, grapes, lychees, melons, papayas, pineapples, and strawberries. Most vegetables are permitted except for those in the prohibited list above. Okra, however, is subject to certain restrictions. Those little sour limones are now permitted.

Nuts: Permitted items are; Acorns, almonds, cocoa beans, chestnuts, coconuts (without husks or without milk), peanuts, pecans, pinions (pine nuts), tamarind beans, walnuts and waternuts.

Alcohol, Drugs, and Firearms:

(Taken from the U.S. Customs website)

- There is a \$800 exemption for gifts and personal articles you've purchased in Mexico; anything over that amount will be taxed.
- One liter of alcoholic beverage per person over 21 is okay - more will be taxed; note that the state of Texas taxes all alcohol brought back from Mexico. (there is a higher limit for beer brought back through the California border crossings, if you're NOT a resident of California, but I've been unable to find that limit)
- No steroids, period; make sure you have a prescription for any other medication. (Some medications, even though they are legal in Mexico, have not been approved for use in the U.S. These will be confiscated, prescription or not.)
- No illegal drugs; if you have the slightest amount, you can be fined and sent to jail -- your car may even be confiscated.
- No switchblade knives.
- So many fruits from Mexico are prohibited in the US that you may as well not bring any back (see above).
- No guns of any kind; even ammo is a no-no. You can get documentation showing that you legally purchased a firearm you're carrying in the U.S., but why bother taking a gun to Mexico?

- Fish you caught in Mexico are okay.

(While doing this research, I stumbled across a (probably) little known prohibition: no clothing, purses, wallets or shoes/boots made of endangered species, like sea turtles. I hadn't known there was a market for sea turtle boots!)

NEWS FLASH!! BANJERCITO HAS A WEBSITE FOR GETTING TIP'S:

<http://www.banjercito.com.mx/site/imagenes/iitv/instruccionesIITV.html> is a Banjercito website for getting your TIP's (Temporary Import Permit). You can get TIP's for your vehicle, motorhome, or boat. The site allows you to select your language (Spanish or English) and then proceed to the selected TIP. Right now , to be polite, I'll call it a Work in Progress, but in it's present form it's pretty useless except for cars and some boats. The first hint that things weren't going right was when I noticed that they couldn't decide whether to use a single or double click on action icons.

This site utilizes pop-up screens, so if you don't see a response from clicking on a selection, try it again but hold down the CTRL (control) key while clicking.

You can use this site to either "pre-register" (read about what you'll need and what the rules are) or actually get your TIP. However, some restrictions apply.

To get the TIP you have to complete the application procedure up to 60 days prior to your trip, and a minimum of 1 month. This is to allow time for processing and mailing. The cost is \$45 U.S. and you can pay with most major credit cards.

It is recommended that you visit the site before you want to actually use it, and read the "pre-register" pages, especially the "Required Documents" page so you can gather everything you need ahead of time. Even if you don't use the site to get the TIP, this information is also what you need to get it at the border.

This site starts with a "computer configuration". Basically, they are asking you to clean out your internet Temp files and cookies, including the offline pages. For XP users, they also ask you to enter their URL into the pop-up blocker. I tried it both ways, with and without cleaning out. The results were the same.

The "Pre-register" section is just instructions and lists of required documents, so feel free to browse through it. In fact, you should read every screen for the TIP you're going for prior to actually starting the procedure (or heading for the border).

The site has many bugs and flaws, and barely usable. For example, I couldn't get any instructions for a RV TIP. Every time I tried, I got the instructions for the boat TIP. And that's after clearing out my Temp files. You also can't use the 'ctrl/F5" trick to refresh a page. All that results in is an error message (in Spanish)

For you non-geek types out there, NO site should have to ask you to clean out your

cookies and temp files. This is a dead give-away that the author is a complete novice in writing code. Another give-away is the disabling the "refresh page" shortcut (ctrl/F5).

Another problem is when you are actually trying to fill out the form; you are limited to drop-down menus. The RV form is totally useless because all it lists under "Maker" is auto and truck manufacturers. I couldn't find a single US or Canada RV manufacturer listed. The boat form has a similar problem but at least there are a couple of recognizable boat manufacturers listed.

At least they are trying, and maybe it'll become a usable tool in the future

Grade: "D" for effort, "F" for usability!