



# Beyond the Border

## *General Information about Mexico*

November 2014

Hello to all adventurous aviators!

Our upcoming flying tour to Mexico is scheduled for February 28<sup>th</sup> through March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

We thought we ought to review some of our guidelines and helpful hints regarding travel to Mexico. Most of it is common sense, but it's always good to refresh yourself on these matters when traveling anywhere beyond the border.

### Safety

We thought we'd address this issue first. If this is a serious concern, you can stop reading now! All travel involves risk (as does staying home!) and travel to Mexico is no exception. The US State Department has issued Travel Warnings for several areas in Mexico due to drug-related violence and crime that is reported in the border region and in areas along major trafficking routes. We will be visiting the Mexican states of San Luis Potosí, Michoacán, Zacatecas, and Sonora; we have picked these destinations carefully to minimize the potential for dangerous situations. We will be travelling during the day to/from major tourist destinations, where violent instances are rare. There is, however, a small potential that we could encounter an unsafe situation. If you are not comfortable with this risk, you should not participate in this tour. You can read the full US Travel Warning for Mexico on their web site at: [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/tw/tw\\_6033.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_6033.html)

### Personal Documentation

Bring a valid passport! All US citizens traveling outside the United States are required to present a valid passport to enter and depart from the United States. If you do not have a current valid passport, there is still time, but you must use the "expedited service." **Apply on-line NOW if you don't have one at <https://pptform.state.gov/>.**

### Language

English is spoken widely throughout Mexico, particularly at the well-touristed hotels where you will be staying. You could survive on English-only at the airports, but having bilingual guides will certainly help streamline the paperwork process at each of the international airports along the tour route.

### Shopping

There will be vendors selling Mexican handicrafts—carved ironwood sculptures, blankets, silver jewelry, gemstone masks, etc. You can also browse some of the smaller commercial shops in the towns and villages for clothing, fabric and shoes.

Avoid any problems with US Customs when we return by declaring all of your purchases in Mexico. There is an \$800 exemption for gifts and personal articles you've purchased in Mexico; anything over that amount will be taxed. Each person is permitted one liter of alcoholic beverage. You cannot bring back steroids; make sure you have a prescription for any other medication you may have purchased.

US Customs prohibits so many fruits, vegetables and meat products that you may as well not bring any back.

Do not attempt to bring back guns of any kind; even ammunition is prohibited. You are allowed to bring back any fish you caught in Mexico, although we doubt you'll have time for that!

### **Health Issues**

Currently, no vaccinations are required.

If you wear prescription glasses, sunglasses or contacts, you might consider bringing an extra pair along. Bring sunscreen, lipscreen, bug repellent and any prescription medications. Additional considerations might be Immodium, Cipro antibiotic or Pepto Bismo tablets. One doctor who specializes in travel medicine says: "Chewing 2 Pepto Bismo tablets, 4 times per day, gives up to 65% protection from travelers' diarrhea."

Also, take a minute to read the following article, "On the Run":

#### **Tips for Coping with Travelers' Most Common Malady**

*More than half of travelers battle the occasional unpleasant gut-wrenching known as traveler's diarrhea, making it the most common affliction on the road, according to Dr. Eric L. Weiss, director of travel medicine at Stanford University. "Traveler's diarrhea is probably not going to kill you," Weiss says. "But if you're on a bus for eight hours with three goats, five chickens, and a handful of other passengers, you may wish that it did." While the old adage—boil it, peel it, cook it, or forget it—still applies to prevention, staying healthy is often the luck of the draw. If bacteria strikes, Weiss recommends two treatments no first-aid kit should be without: an antibiotic like ciprofloxacin or rifaximin (a new drug that minimizes side effects by fighting stomach bacteria only) and an antimotility agent like Imodium AD, affectionately referred to by travel docs as a "cork." Weiss's favorite prevention tip: Drink carbonated water ("con gas"). The carbonation lowers the pH, giving water an acidic edge to help kill bacteria. This argument also applies to other bubbly drinks—like local beer.*

Our personal observations have led us to ponder whether psychology comes into play here. It seems that those people who were most worried about Montezuma's Revenge were the ones most likely to be afflicted! Our personal regimen simply includes common sense and a daily cerveza – just to be on the safe side. ☺

### **Water**

Bottled water is available for purchase almost everywhere, and the hotels will stock your room daily with a complimentary but limited supply. Often, pilots will bring in their own supply and just keep it in the plane. As a general rule, any ice or water served in a restaurant has been made with purified water. Remember to use bottled water for brushing your teeth!

### **Voltage**

Mexico operates on 110 volts/60 cycles, the same as the US and Canada. The outlets are identical to ours, although many are only "two-pronged."

### **Clothing**

Consider bringing all the standard travel stuff: wide-brimmed hat, comfortable walking shoes, windbreaker, layers, swimming suit, and any clothing for special activities you may have planned. The daytime highs should be in 70's (°F) at all destinations. There are swimming pools at some of the hotels.

## Money

Credit cards are generally accepted at all hotels and “tourist” stores. Please call your credit card company before leaving home to inform them you are traveling to Mexico. A few people have reported having their cards frozen when a charge is attempted from overseas. Calling back to the US may prove difficult, depending where we are, so informing your credit card company in advance will help you avoid this potential problem. Another issue we ran in to last year was the inability of at least one vendor in Mexico to accept a credit card unless it had an embedded microchip. We called our issuing bank and requested a “chip” card which they issued immediately, so you might want to do the same.

As for currency, you could probably make this entire trip on US dollars alone without difficulty, however we always advise having a good supply of both dollars and pesos, in a variety of denominations. This keeps your options open and minimizes the potential for unfavorable exchanges.

You can exchange money and traveler’s checks at the hotel front desk, banks, or money change houses – “Casas de Cambio.” ATMs are available in the cities where we will be staying, and often provide the best exchange rate. You simply put in your bank card as you would any ATM, choose an amount, and the machine will distribute money in pesos. The exchange is handled with the transaction and your bank statement will reflect the amount exchanged in dollars. The current exchange rate is about 13.5 pesos per dollar.

## Telephones

Calling the US from Mexico is relatively easy from a phone booth, especially if you have an AT&T calling card. Other services offer similar, but less prevalent options. You also should be able to make arrangements to make phone calls from the hotels.

Cell phone service is good in Mexico, although we haven’t verified the service in each of our individual destinations for this tour. Your cell phone may work, although it may be expensive to make or receive a call. Also, many cell phone plans limit your ability to use your phone overseas (voice and/or data); if you’d like to use your cell phone there, we suggest you contact your carrier for details before we leave the US.

### Miscellaneous/Optional Items:

- Camera, memory cards or film, and batteries
- Your favorite water bottle for refilling along the way
- Hand towelettes or antibacterial cleanser
- Fold-up bag for purchases
- Binoculars
- Personal snacks (granola bars, dried fruit, nuts, etc.)
- Washcloth (some Mexican hotels do not provide them)

### Mandatory Items:

- Your sense of humor
- Your sense of adventure
- Your ability to be flexible - **This is Mexico, after all!**



## ***Beyond the Border***

### ***Mexico Flight Information***

#### **General**

Please plan to arrive at Laredo International Airport, Laredo, Texas (KLRD) by early afternoon on Saturday, February 28, 2015. Laredo, a Class D airport, is located on the Brownsville sectional in southern Texas. There are several FBOs on the field; we will be using Landmark Aviation, located on the southwest ramp area of the airfield, just south of the tower. Hopefully Landmark will do a better job in Laredo than they did in Santa Fe! Please have your aircraft fueled upon arrival to avoid any departure delays on Monday morning. Also, please bring tie-down anchors, ropes, and a tow bar for your aircraft.

Charts. Parkwest Air Tours will provide the necessary Mexican charts and flight information for this tour. Since many of you have flown with us to Mexico previously, you already have either the Baja Bush Pilots *Airports of Mexico* publication, or Caribbean Sky Tours *Pilot's Guide to Mexico and Central America*, or both. We will not be providing either of those airport directories this year, so please bring your previous copy, which is still valid. If you need one of these airport guides, you can purchase them at many online retailers. We will provide pertinent airport data on the navigation logs, as always. We don't provide US charts, as most of you have transitioned to electronic charts for flight in the US. If you don't have electronic charts, you will need the Phoenix and Brownsville Sectionals for this tour, along with the Southwest and South Central A/FDs.

GPS Route Definition. A GPS receiver is required for this trip! We will be posting the GPS coordinates for the trip on our web site by early January so you may begin the task of programming the routes. We can assist your programming of a Garmin x96 series handheld GPS by using the MapSource software to download the waypoints and routes from our computer directly to your GPS. We can do this in Laredo before we depart for Mexico. We will also provide route definition data specifically for ForeFlight Mobile.

Fuel and Fees. You will be required to pay for aircraft fuel, tie-down fees, Mexican aircraft insurance, and all miscellaneous aircraft registration fees, landing fees, and other taxes imposed by Mexican aviation authorities. As of our most recent trip, tie-down, taxes, licensing, and miscellaneous Mexican fees for a trip of this type were around \$150 for a Cessna 210. Fuel should be estimated based on the fuel burn of your aircraft; current cost of avgas and jet fuel in Mexico is about the same as in the US, between US\$5.00 and US\$7.00 per gallon. PLEASE NOTE: Some aircraft fees in Mexico must be paid for in cash (dollars or pesos), however credit card usage is becoming more common. We have been able to pay for fuel with credit cards at most Mexican airports, although sometimes there is an additional fee to do so (a few percent.)

Insurance. Mexican aircraft insurance must also be obtained before the tour. You can purchase a specific Mexican third-party liability insurance policy **OR** your current (US) aircraft insurance policy may be valid in Mexico. If so, it should include liability coverage for a minimum of US\$300,000 and

you should get a letter (in Spanish) from your insurance carrier verifying your Mexican liability coverage and validity in Mexico. Either way, please ensure that your US policy also covers you for aircraft damage/loss in Mexico. We have run up against Mexican exclusions before, but were able to easily get authorization from the underwriter to provide a one-time waiver (at no additional fee) for the specific (guided) trip during the specific dates to/from the specific airports we used. Please let us know if you have any insurance questions and/or concerns. If you need the separate Mexican third-party liability policy, we can get that for you if you provide the information requested on the last page of this document.

Emergency Locator Beacons. Mexico has delayed its requirements for a 406 ELTs until mid-2015 for small (less than 12,500 lbs MTOW) piston-engine general aviation aircraft. However, if you don't already have one, it might be time to start thinking about installing a 406 MHz ELT. We installed ours in the 210 several years ago; it is comforting to know that if we have a problem, NOAA will get the signal, know who we are, and have the coordinates for where to send help.

### **Flying in Mexico**

Flying in Mexico is really no different than flying in the United States. The Mexican officials do, however, have some strict requirements regarding aircraft, pilots, and their passengers when crossing from the US to Mexico. The US officials have similar requirements when crossing back in to the United States. Flying to and from Mexico involves crossing the Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ); therefore we must comply with the appropriate Federal Aviation Regulations. Any aircraft penetrating the ADIZ must display 12-inch-high nationality and registration marks on the airplane (These can be temporary, e.g. tape, but be sure the N numbers are a full 12 inches high and 2 inches wide and the color contrasts.)

As mentioned, each pilot and passenger will need a passport; everyone will also get a tourist visa upon landing in San Luis Potosi. This will cost about \$30 per person.

### **Airports**

We plan to use airports at San Luis Potosi, Morelia, Zacatecas, Culiacán, Alamos, and Ciudad Obregón in Mexico. With the exception of Alamos, they are all towered, international airports with long, paved runways, fuel services and 24-hour military presence. Alamos, while not a towered international airport, does have a military presence at the airport. Plus the Hacienda de los Santos will secure our aircraft in their hangar while we staying in Alamos.

### **Aircraft Security**

The question of aircraft security comes up often. We have picked our airports in Mexico carefully, with a high regard for security on the field. We do, however, recommend reasonable theft deterrents, such as propeller locks and/or throttle locks, and a good dose of common sense. Use your window and aircraft covers, if you have them, and remove any portable electronics such as hand-held GPS units. As with automobiles, anything that makes your aircraft look less desirable to a potential thief is advisable.

### **Documentation Requirements**

We will assist everyone in obtaining the appropriate forms and documents in order to enter Mexico and return to the United States. We will also guide you in filing the appropriate flight plans and communicating with the appropriate agencies prior to crossing the border.

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) requires private aircraft pilots arriving or departing the United States to transmit passenger manifest information for everyone onboard their aircraft. This

must be done electronically via the Electronic Advance Passenger Information System (eAPIS) administered via the internet. CBP has developed a tutorial on the use of eAPIS which is available at <http://apps.cbp.gov/eAPIS-pa/> Once you have completed the tutorial you can register to use eAPIS at <https://eapis.cbp.dhs.gov/> The use of this system is mandatory for this trip.

As of this writing, Mexico has also implemented eAPIS requirements which involve e-mailing a passenger manifest to the appropriate authorities prior to a flight in to our out of Mexico. Details are shown on the [AOPA web site](#). We will discuss both the Mexican and U.S. eAPIS requirements and ensure everyone abides by them as we fly Beyond the Border (and back!)

Your aircraft will also need a U.S. Customs decal which you can obtain by registering at <https://dtops.cbp.dhs.gov/>

The FCC Licenses for both the pilot and aircraft can be obtained online on [their web site](#). This is a somewhat daunting process with the FCC; as with some other US government web sites, it is not very user-friendly. We've worked our way through it, so if you would like us to obtain these for you, we'd be happy to. Remember, the Aircraft Radio Station License is good for 10 years, and the Radiotelephone Operator Permit is good for life, so may not need to get either of these if yours is still valid.

We will provide a travel binder for you which will include copies of all documentation required for international flight. We will also keep copies so we will have a backup if needed.

**Please provide us with copies of the following for your binder:**

For each person:

- Passport page showing passport number

For the pilot:

- Pilot certificate
- Current medical
- Last flight review endorsement
- Radiotelephone Operator Permit
- U.S. eAPIS registration information

For the aircraft:

- Aircraft Registration
- Standard Aircraft Airworthiness Certificate
- Aircraft Radio Station License
- Aircraft Operating Limitations (This is just your POH – we want to make sure you have it in the plane. Please make a copy of the front cover for your binder.)
- Weight and balance information
- Mexican third-party liability insurance certificate
- Letter of Authorization from the owner, if you are borrowing or renting the aircraft
- Customs User Fee Decal

If you would like us to obtain the radio station license, radio operator's license, Mexican insurance, and/or Custom's decal for you, **please fill out the form on the last page of this document and mail (or e-mail) it to us by January 15<sup>th</sup>**. Also, a sample "Letter of Authorization" is attached on the next page. Again, if your aircraft is not registered to you personally (and you alone), you will need a letter like this. While not required, it looks more "official" if it is notarized.

Give us a call if you have any questions. Otherwise, we'll look forward to getting copies of your documentation from you, and we'll see you in Laredo!



***Information for Radio Licenses, Mexican Insurance, & Customs Sticker***

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Please indicate the documents that you would like us to obtain for you and/or your aircraft:

- Radio Station License (\$110)
- Mexican Liability Insurance (price is aircraft dependent)
- Radio Operator's License (\$60)
- Customs User Fee Decal (\$27.50)

Note: Prices subject to change, at the whim of the US Government!

Please fill out the following and mail (PO Box 81527, Fairbanks, AK 99708) or e-mail (crfay@parkwestair.com) this page back to us **by January 15<sup>th</sup>**.

**Pilot's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Pilot Certificate (circle one):    Private    Commercial    ATP    Number: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Aircraft:**    Make: \_\_\_\_\_    Model: \_\_\_\_\_    Registration No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Registered to: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Owner's Representative: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Maximum Gross Weight (lbs): \_\_\_\_\_ Serial Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Engine Manufacturer & Horsepower: \_\_\_\_\_

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Credit Card Info: (circle one)                  Visa                  Master Card

Credit Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Security Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Billing Address (if different from above): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_