

Arriba, arriba los manos! (get on up! hands up!) now you're well on your way... Read and take this Inside Scoop with your travel documents; it's packed with tips to make your trip delightful.

travel: delighting in the spirit of adventure • a vacation from home to explore places that are not your home • knowing life is different, knowing this is a joy of travel • enjoying the journey, not just the destination • a privilege best used with patience, humour and curiosity • fun • coming home with great tales •

Dress Codes

Depending where you're going and what activities you'll be up to, know that locals dress more modestly in cities so cover up beachwear. Besides protecting you from too much sun (you've packed sunscreen and hats?), lightweight pants and long skirts are comfy when it's cooler. Take comfortable shoes for walking around town. Always pack a jacket or sweater for cooler evenings.

Your Counsellor

Our knowledge and experience help turn dreams into first-rate vacations. Ask your counsellor about any details:

- advance seats & upgrades
- booking excursions ahead
- attractions near your site
- confirmation if your airport departure tax is paid.

Maritime Travel
We Know Travel Best.™

Maritime Travel

Inside Scoop: MEXICO

Know before you go: travel isn't just your destination, it's also the journey

It's no wonder we love Mexican margaritas in Canada—lively, refreshing and enticing—the drink is like our countries, in Mexico best enjoyed outside and poolside! Tips:

- Be realistic: we know you want value for money, balancing choices and amenities with your budget, but no matter, aim to relax and enjoy. Special requests are requests only, for an oceanview suite upgrade fees apply.
- Everyone must have a valid passport www.cic.gc.ca/english/passport/index.asp that should be valid for six months upon your arrival. Take pictures of its ID pages. Guard your Tourist Card with the same safe care.
- For cell use, check with your provider about roaming charges. Use TelMex (public/hotel/phone cards) to avoid international charges.
- Internet access is available at hotels and cafés. Electricity service is standard 139 volts/ 60hz; 2-pin flat blade plugs.
- To avoid the odd bug bite, avoid beaches at dusk—and take mosquito repellent.
- We recommend Maritime Travel insurance—cancellation/interruption and medical.

Above all, travel with a positive attitude—patience and a spirit of adventure will carry you through any experience!

Mexican Pesos

Change Canadian cash or take credit cards and debit cards. Check with your bank if there's a reciprocal arrangement with local banks to avoid ATM fees. Even if a business accepts US funds, there are limits to the amount restaurants and shops will accept—avoid exchange fees and take Canadian funds. Don't carry or flaunt large amounts of cash.

Note: A tax of 20 pesos a room per night is being adopted across Mexico by municipalities to maintain and conserve the environment. Since this Environmental Sanitation Fee is charged by each town, city or area, it is payable directly to your hotel (not included in any package or bookings).



Pack Strategically

The world is overrun with black bags: put coloured tape or ribbon on your luggage to spot it quickly. Put your name outside and inside and remove old tags. In carry-on, pack valuables such as jewellery; over-the-counter and prescription drugs in original containers with a list, dosage and doctor's phone number.

Pack liquids/lotions/gels in checked bags (inside plastic bags). Carry-on restrictions, mean the maximum size container is 100ml (3.4oz). All must fit in a clear/resealable plastic bag of no more than 1 litre (often at airport screening). You may take baby formula, food or milk for a child aged 2 and under (0-24 months). In carry-on pack notebook/pen, hand wipes, munchies (no fruit, meat, veg or canned food over borders). Also permitted: cell phones, laptops, canes, nail clippers, disposable razors. Items you can't take on include corkscrews and sports gear such as golf clubs, racquets and baseball bats. Check with your airline and www.catsa.gc.ca/home for restrictions.

What To Do...What To Do...

Whether you want to wind up or down, Mexico offers every gradation of excitement and relaxation. While beaches are a main attraction, also get out of the sun for fun. Get into town—old towns are teeming with life and are terrific for walking tours with sights like whitewashed stucco and wrought iron, craft markets, intimate restaurants and boutiques. If your resort has a spa, try a hot stone massage to press out knots and cares. Or, have a beach massage and listen to waves (no, going once a day isn't excessive...). **Xcaret Eco-park's** performance of Ancient Mayan sports includes Uarhukua, balls lit on fire then bowled at participants (did we mention health insurance?). Jacques Cousteau loved **Cozumel's** underwater world: **Palancar Reef** teeters on a 3,000ft drop-off. Golf on groomed courses and explore the archaeological sites of **Chichen Itza** and **Coba**.

Your Airline

Sign up online for your airline's email or text flight notifications as your flight could be delayed (the plane might be flying in). Transport Canada can prohibit items as security risks, "Travellers should arrive at the airport earlier than usual, exercise patience and **contact their airline for further information on their flight(s).**" Airline staff are on duty some 3hrs prior: due to staffing and security, check-in closes 1hr before departure. If you're late, you're not entitled to board (or a refund). Unless booked ahead, seats are first-come first-served. **Check-in and carry-on baggage:** check with your airline as size/weight restrictions vary. **Entry & Departure:** Most packages include the departure tax when you paid for your trip—ask your counsellor. Otherwise, pay that in cash.



Get Packing Checklist and General Planning & Packing Tips

at www.maritimetravel.ca/inside-scoops

- ☐ Your sense of adventure & humour!

Before You Leave

Do room sweeps for belongings. Although a noon check-out is usual, if you have a later flight, you may be able to pay a late fee or just keep what you need for those hours and check bags with the hotel. Before buying wooden items, ensure there are no worm holes: if so, the items will be confiscated at customs. Don't buy or accept anything suspect or that may be taken from you such as drugs, plants, meat/animal products or endangered species parts. Know your limits and exemptions, particularly for alcohol and tobacco, www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/travel-voyage/bgb-rmf-eng.html.



Websites and emails in blue are hyperlinked; just click!

Canadians: Emergency? The Embassy of Canada is in **Mexico City**, 55-5724-7900. Consulates are in **Monterrey** 81-2088-3200 and **Guadalajara** 33-1818-4200, with agencies/Honourary Consuls in other areas: www.canadainternational.gc.ca/mexico-mexique/offices-bureaux/index.aspx. Or contact Global Affairs (collect if needed) 613-996-8885, sos@international.gc.ca.

When You Arrive

After clearing customs, if on a charter, a rep will meet you outside the baggage area to show you to the bus to your hotel. Others might say they can drive you and you'll be reimbursed—this is not true! If you don't want help, say "no gracias." Check luggage to ensure it's secure and loaded on your bus. The bus may drop travellers at other resorts—it's a great way to see other properties.

You'll be advised of the time and place for your orientation meeting—don't miss it. The tour rep works part-time at your hotel (and other resorts) during posted hours. Since others are leaving, rooms are often not ready when you arrive, but start on the fun. With a swimsuit in your carry-on, head to the pool or beach; your hotel's front desk will hold your luggage.

Note: Canadians must carry a Tourist Card (FMM card) provided by the airline or immigration; it must be stamped on arrival. DO NOT lose it, otherwise you'll spend your vacation and money replacing it. Authorities can demand to see your card any time so always carry a copy or the card before returning the card when leaving Mexico.

Tip: In 3 time zones (Pacific, Mountain, Central), Mexico observes Daylight Saving Time. For weather and events see www.visitmexico.com.

Bringing the Lucky Kids?

Surf to a website with photos and fun facts: <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/countries/mexico>. Since some kids live in their swimsuits, some families find it best to bring two swimsuits for each kid: they don't take much room in baggage and there's a dry suit when needed.

Tip: book tours and excursions through your counsellor. Besides needing less cash when you're there, you'll be guaranteed a spot and can be assured they've been checked out.

When You're There

Enjoy local food and drink in moderation: sun and alcohol don't mix. Avoid uncooked food, food from street vendors and street animals (possible rabies). Don't drink from a tap; drink bottled/purified water and wash hands often.

Most hotels provide hair dryers so save space in your luggage for souvenirs. If you snorkel, bring gear as some resorts limit equipment time (and gear might not be as clean or new as you like).

Many go to the beach early to "reserve" beach chairs with towels: don't leave valuables or swap chairs already taken. Beach towels are at hotels; to reduce loss, a deposit is sometimes charged then returned on your departure.

Avoid timeshare sales: there's no "free" lunch. If you book tours, ensure you can handle the level: don't book the Advanced Scuba diving if you can't swim. If you go to experience the local nightlife, go with others, take and pre-book taxis and *always* return to your resort.

Music & Shopping

Stroll through any town square and you're bound to hear a Mexican jam session. Best of all? Sitting poolside, hearing gorgeous melodies. Any song sounds romantic in Spanish—even La Cucaracha (Cockroach). For a memorable souvenir, buy a CD of Mexican music to remind you of your trip. There are good buys in woven clothes, baskets, jewellery and crafts. If asked to buy something (often at a beach) and not interested, just be politely firm, say "no gracias."

Tips: for great bargains and gifts, shop at supermarkets for non-perishables and good buys on real vanilla extract, tequila and cajeta/dulce de leche (an addictive caramel confection). Although silver is a great buy, look for the hallmark (indicates purity) of "925" or higher.

The International Language of Courtesy

Delays and cancellations are all part of adventure. Indeed, a more relaxed way of life is guaranteed: enjoy the slower pace! All countries have customs and although paying, you're a guest—don't expect everyone speaks English. Just as visitors to Canada don't expect you to be fluent in their language, learn a few words in Spanish.

Our 24/7 Emergency Service

We constantly survey airlines, local tour companies and hotels to ensure they meet our customer service standards, so don't let a problem ruin your holiday. Nearly all issues can be handled quickly on site—first seek help from the venue's local staff. Otherwise, call our Emergency Travel Service at **1-888-551-1181**. Deposits are non-refundable and non-transferable. Schedule changes can occur and airlines and tour operators have the right to change flight and/or tour times, alter, combine services or substitute accommodations. Your counsellor will work with you to ensure you receive information as soon as possible and ensure satisfaction. See your brochure and ticket terms and conditions.

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