

Travel Warning

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Bureau of Consular Affairs

Mexico

February 08, 2012

The Department of State has issued this Travel Warning to inform U.S. citizens about the security situation in Mexico. General information on the overall security situation is provided immediately below. For information on security conditions in specific regions of Mexico, which can vary, travelers should reference the state-by-state assessments further below.

This Travel Warning supersedes the Travel Warning for Mexico dated April 22, 2011 to consolidate and update information about the security situation and to advise the public of additional restrictions on the travel of U.S. government (USG) personnel.

General Conditions:

Millions of U.S. citizens safely visit Mexico each year for study, tourism, and business, including more than 150,000 who cross the border every day. The Mexican government makes a considerable effort to protect U.S. citizens and other visitors to major tourist destinations, and there is no evidence that Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) have targeted U.S. visitors and residents based on their nationality. Resort areas and tourist destinations in Mexico generally do not see the levels of drug-related violence and crime reported in the border region and in areas along major trafficking routes.

Nevertheless, U.S. travelers should be aware that the Mexican government has been engaged in an extensive effort to counter TCOs which engage in narcotics trafficking and other unlawful activities throughout Mexico. The TCOs themselves are engaged in a violent struggle to control drug trafficking routes and other criminal activity. As a result, crime and violence are serious problems throughout the country and can occur anywhere. U.S. citizens have fallen victim to TCO activity, including homicide, gun battles, kidnapping, carjacking and highway robbery.

According to the most recent homicide figures published by the Mexican government, 47,515 people were killed in narcotics-related violence in Mexico between December 1, 2006 and September 30, 2011, with 12,903 narcotics-related homicides in the first nine months of 2011 alone. While most of those killed in narcotics-related violence have been members of TCOs, innocent persons have also been killed. The number of U.S. citizens reported to the Department of State as murdered in Mexico increased from 35 in 2007 to 120 in 2011.

Gun battles between rival TCOs or with Mexican authorities have taken place in towns and cities in many parts of Mexico, especially in the border region. Gun battles have occurred in broad daylight on streets and in other public venues, such as restaurants and clubs. During some of these incidents, U.S. citizens have been trapped and temporarily prevented from leaving the area. TCOs use stolen cars and trucks to create roadblocks on major thoroughfares, preventing the military

and police from responding to criminal activity. The location and timing of future armed engagements is unpredictable. We recommend that you defer travel to the areas indicated in this Travel Warning and to exercise extreme caution when traveling throughout the northern border region.

The rising number of kidnappings and disappearances throughout Mexico is of particular concern. Both local and expatriate communities have been victimized. In addition, local police have been implicated in some of these incidents. We strongly advise you to lower your profile and avoid displaying any evidence of wealth that might draw attention.

Carjacking and highway robbery are serious problems in many parts of the border region and U.S. citizens have been murdered in such incidents. Most victims who complied with carjackers at these checkpoints have reported that they were not physically harmed. Incidents have occurred during the day and at night, and carjackers have used a variety of techniques, including bumping/moving vehicles to force them to stop and running vehicles off the road at high speeds. There are some indications that criminals have particularly targeted newer and larger vehicles, especially dark-colored SUVs. However, victims driving a variety of vehicles, from late model SUVs to old sedans have also been targeted. While violent incidents have occurred at all hours of the day and night on both modern toll ("cuotas") highways and on secondary roads, they have occurred most frequently at night and on isolated roads. To reduce risk, we strongly urge you to travel between cities throughout Mexico only during daylight hours, to avoid isolated roads, and to use toll roads whenever possible. The Mexican government has deployed federal police and military personnel throughout the country as part of its efforts to combat the TCOs. U.S. citizens traveling on Mexican roads and highways may encounter government checkpoints, which are often staffed by military personnel or law enforcement personnel. TCOs have erected their own unauthorized checkpoints, and killed or abducted motorists who have failed to stop at them. You should cooperate at all checkpoints.

Effective July 15, 2010, the U.S. Mission in Mexico imposed restrictions on U.S. government employees' travel. U.S. government employees and their families are not permitted to drive for personal reasons from the U.S.-Mexico border to or from the interior of Mexico or Central America. Personal travel by vehicle is permitted between Hermosillo and Nogales but is restricted to daylight hours and the Highway 15 toll road (cuota).

U.S. government personnel and their families are prohibited from personal travel to all areas described as "defer non-essential travel" and when travel for official purposes is essential it is conducted with extensive security precautions. USG personnel and their families are allowed to travel for personal reasons to the areas where no advisory is in effect or where the advisory is to exercise caution.

For more information on road safety and crime along Mexico's roadways, see the Department of State's Country Specific Information.

State-by-State Assessment:

Below is a state-by-state assessment of security conditions throughout Mexico divided into northern and southern regions. The accompanying map will help in identifying individual locations.

Travelers should be mindful that even if no advisories are in effect for a given state, crime and violence can occur anywhere. For general information about travel conditions in Mexico, see our [Country Specific Information](#).

Northern Mexico

Baja California (north): Tijuana is a major city/travel destination in the Northern portion of Baja California -see attached map to identify its exact location:

You should exercise caution in the northern state of Baja California, particularly at night. Targeted TCO assassinations continue to take place in Baja California. Turf battles between criminal groups proliferated and resulted in numerous assassinations in areas of Tijuana frequented by U.S. citizens. Shooting incidents, in which innocent bystanders have been injured, have occurred during daylight hours throughout the city. In one such incident, an U.S. citizen was shot and seriously wounded. According to the Government of Mexico, as of August 2011, the city's murder rate was approximately 20 per 100,000. During 2011, 34 U.S. citizens were the victims of homicide in the state. In the majority of these cases, the killings appeared to be related to narcotics trafficking.

Baja California (South): Cabo San Lucas is a major city/travel destination in the Southern portion of Baja California -see map (PDF, 286 kb) to identify its exact location:

No advisory is in effect.

15. Chihuahua: Juarez and Chihuahua are the major cities/travel destinations in

Chihuahua -see map (PDF, 286 kb) to identify their exact locations: You should defer non-essential travel to the state of Chihuahua. The situation in the state of Chihuahua, specifically Ciudad Juarez, is of special concern. Ciudad Juarez has one of the highest murder rates in Mexico. The Mexican government reports that more than 3,100 people were killed in Ciudad Juarez in 2010 and 1,933 were killed in 2011. Three persons associated with the Consulate General were murdered in March 2010. The state of Chihuahua is normally entered through Columbus, NM, and the El Paso, Fabens and Fort Hancock, TX, ports-of-entry. There have been incidents of narcotics-related violence in the vicinity of the Copper Canyon in Chihuahua.

Coahuila: You should defer non-essential travel to the state of Coahuila. The State of Coahuila continues to experience high rates of violent crimes and narcotics-related murders. TCOs continue to compete for territory and coveted border crossings to the United States. In August 2011, suspected members of TCOs and police exchange fire near a crowded soccer stadium in Torreón causing panic. The city of Torreón had a murder rate of more than 40 per 100,000 population between January and August of 2011. USG personnel may not frequent casinos, sport books, or other gambling establishments and adult entertainment establishments.

Durango: You should defer non-essential travel to the state of Durango. Between 2006 and 2010, the number of narcotics-related murders in the State of Durango increased dramatically. In 2011 several areas in the state continue to experience high rates of violence and remained volatile and unpredictable. USG personnel may not frequent casinos, sport books, or other gambling establishments and adult entertainment establishments.

Nuevo Leon: Monterrey is a major city/travel destination in Nuevo Leon -see map (PDF, 286 kb) to identify its exact location:

You should defer non-essential travel to the state of Nuevo Leon, except the metropolitan area of Monterrey where you should exercise caution. The level of violence and insecurity in Monterrey has increased, illustrated by an attack on a popular local casino in August that resulted in 52 deaths. One U.S. citizen was injured in that incident. Local police and private patrols do not have the capacity to deter criminal elements or respond effectively to security incidents. As a result of a Department of State assessment of the overall security situation, on September 10, 2010, the Consulate General in Monterrey became a partially unaccompanied post with no minor dependents of USG personnel permitted. USG personnel

serving at the U.S. Consulate General in Monterrey may not frequent casinos, sport books, or other gambling establishments and may not travel outside the San Pedro municipal boundaries between midnight and 6 a.m. Although there have been no such incidents in 2011, in 2010 TCOs kidnapped guests out of reputable hotels in the downtown Monterrey area, blocking off adjoining streets to prevent law enforcement response. TCOs have also regularly attacked local government facilities, prisons and police stations, and engaged in public shootouts with the military and between themselves. TCOs have used vehicle born improvised explosive devices against military and law enforcement units. Pedestrians and innocent bystanders have been killed in these incidents.

San Luis Potosi: You should defer non-essential travel to the state of San Luis Potosi, except the city of San Luis Potosi where you should exercise caution. The entire stretch of highway 57D in San Luis Potosi and portions of the state east of highway 57D towards Tamaulipas are particularly dangerous. In February 2011, one U.S. government employee was killed and another wounded when they were attacked in their U.S. government vehicle on Highway 57 near Santa Maria del Rio. Cartel violence and highway lawlessness are a continuing security concern. USG personnel may not frequent casinos, sport books, or other gambling establishments and adult entertainment establishments.

Sinaloa: Mazatlan is a major city/travel destination in Sinaloa -see map (PDF, 286 kb) to identify its exact location: You should defer non-essential travel to the state of Sinaloa except the city of Mazatlan where you should exercise caution particularly late at night and in the early morning. One of Mexico's most powerful TCOs is based in the state of Sinaloa. With the exception of Ciudad Juarez, since 2006 more homicides have occurred in the state's capital city of Culiacan than in any other city in Mexico. Travel off the toll roads in remote areas of Sinaloa is especially dangerous and should be avoided. In the last year, the city of Mazatlan has experienced a level of violence (primarily confrontations between TCOs) not seen before and incidents of violence are occurring more frequently in tourist areas. USG personnel are permitted to travel between the Mazatlan airport and the tourist areas only during daylight hours. We recommend that any other travel in Mazatlan be limited to the tourist areas (Zona Dorada and the historic town center). In 2010 there were over 300 narcotics-related murders within the city, compared to fewer than 100 in 2009. In the first seven months of 2011, there were 300 narcotics-related murders.

Sonora: Nogales and Puerto Peñasco are the major cities/travel destinations in Sonora -see map (PDF, 286 kb) to identify their exact locations: You should defer non-essential travel between the city of Nogales and the cities of Sonoyta and Caborca (which area also includes the smaller cities of Saric, Tubutama, and Altar), defer non-essential travel to the eastern edge of the State of Sonora which borders the State of Chihuahua (all points along that border east of the northern city of Agua Prieta and the southern town of Alamos), defer non-essential travel within the state south of the city of Ciudad Obregon with the exception of travel to Alamos (traveling only during daylight hours and using only the Highway 15 toll road, aka cuota, and Sonora State Road 162), and exercise caution when visiting the coastal town of Puerto Peñasco. Sonora is a key region in the international drug and human trafficking trades, and can be extremely dangerous for travelers. The region west of Nogales, east of Sonoyta, and from Caborca north, including the towns of Saric, Tubutama and Altar, and the eastern edge of Sonora bordering Chihuahua, are known centers of illegal activity. U.S. citizens visiting Puerto Peñasco are urged to use the Lukeville, Arizona/Sonoyta, Sonora border crossing, in order to limit driving through Mexico, and to limit travel to main roads during daylight hours.

Tamaulipas: Matamoros, Nuevo Laredo, Reynosa, and Tampico are the major cities/travel destinations in Tamaulipas -see [map \(PDF, 286 kb\)](#) to identify their exact locations: You should defer non-essential travel to the state of Tamaulipas. All USG employees are: prohibited from personal travel on Tamaulipas highways outside of Matamoros, Reynosa and Nuevo Laredo due to the risks posed by armed robbery and carjacking; may not frequent casinos and adult entertainment establishments within these cities; and in Matamoros are subject to a midnight to 6 a.m. curfew. Be aware of the risks posed by armed robbery and carjacking on state highways throughout Tamaulipas. In January 2011, a U.S. citizen was murdered in what appears to have been a failed carjacking attempt. While no highway routes through Tamaulipas are considered safe, many of the crimes reported to the U.S. Consulate General in Matamoros have taken place along the Matamoros-Tampico highway, particularly around San Fernando and the area north of Tampico.

Zacatecas: You should defer non-essential travel to the state of Zacatecas except the city of Zacatecas where you should exercise caution. The regions of the state bordering Durango and Coahuila as well as the cities of Fresnillo and Fresnillo-Sombrete and surrounding area are particularly dangerous. The northwestern portion of the state of Zacatecas has become notably dangerous and insecure. Robberies and carjackings are occurring with increased frequency and both local authorities and residents have reported a surge in observed TCO activity. This area is remote, and local authorities are unable to regularly patrol it or quickly respond to incidents that occur there. Gun battles between criminal groups and authorities occur in the area of the state bordering the state of Jalisco. There have also been reports of roadblocks and false checkpoints on highways between the states of Zacatecas and Jalisco. The city of Fresnillo, the area extending northwest from Fresnillo along Highway 45 (Fresnillo-Sombrete) between Highways 44 and 49, and highway 49 northwards from Fresnillo through Durango and in to Chihuahua are considered dangerous. Extreme caution should be taken when traveling in the remainder of the state. USG personnel may not frequent casinos, sport books, or other gambling establishments and adult entertainment establishments. USG personnel may not travel outside the City of Zacatecas after dark and must abide by a curfew of midnight to 6 a.m. within a secured venue.

Southern Mexico

Aguascalientes: You should defer non-essential travel to the areas of the state that border the state of Zacatecas. The security situation along the Zacatecas border continues to be unstable and gun battles between criminal groups and authorities occur. Concerns include roadblocks placed by individuals posing as police or military personnel and recent gun battles between rival TCOs involving automatic weapons.

Campeche: No advisory is in effect.

Chiapas: San Cristobal de las Casas is a major city/travel destination in Chiapas -see [map \(PDF, 286 kb\)](#) to identify its exact location: No advisory is in effect.

Colima: Manzanillo is a major city/travel destination in Colima -see [map \(PDF, 286 kb\)](#) to identify its exact location: You should exercise extreme caution when traveling through the areas of the state of Colima that border the state of Michoacán. You should also exercise caution when traveling at night outside of cities in the remaining portions of the state. The security situation along the Michoacán border continues to be unstable and gun battles between criminal groups and authorities occur. Concerns include roadblocks placed by individuals posing as police or military personnel and recent gun battles between rival TCOs involving automatic weapons.

Estado de Mexico: Toluca is a major city/travel destination in Estado de Mexico -see map (PDF, 286 kb) to identify its exact location: No advisory is in effect.

Guanajuato: San Miguel de Allende and Leon are the major cities/travel destinations in Guanajuato -see map (PDF, 286 kb) to identify their exact locations: No advisory is in effect.

Guerrero: Acapulco, Ixtapa, Zihuatanejo and Taxco are the major cities/travel destinations in Guerrero -see map (PDF, 286 kb) to identify their exact locations: You should defer non-essential travel to the northwestern and southern portions of the state (the area west and south of the town of Arcelia on the border with Estado de Mexico in the north and the town of Tlapa near the border with Oaxaca), except for the cities of Acapulco, Zihuatanejo, and Ixtapa. In those cities, you should exercise caution and stay within tourist areas. You should also exercise caution and travel only during daylight hours on highway 95D (cuota/toll road) between Mexico City and Acapulco and highway 200 between Acapulco and Zihuatanejo/Ixtapa. In Acapulco, defer non-essential travel to areas further than 2 blocks inland of the Costera Miguel Aleman Boulevard, which parallels the popular beach areas. In general, the popular tourist area of Diamante, just south of the city, has been less affected by violence. Flying into the coastal cities in southern Guerrero remains the preferred method of travel. You should also exercise caution in the northern region of Guerrero (the area north of the town of Arcelia on the border with Estado de Mexico in the north and the town of Tlapa near the border with Oaxaca). The state of Guerrero has seen an increase in violence among rival criminal organizations. Acapulco's murder rates increased dramatically since 2009; in response, the Government of Mexico has sent additional military and federal police to the state to assist State security forces in implementing operation "Guerrero Seguro" (Secure Guerrero) that focuses on combating organized crime and returning security to the environs of popular tourist areas.

Hidalgo: No advisory is in effect.

Jalisco Guadalajara and Puerto Vallarta are the major cities/travel destinations in Jalisco -see map (PDF, 286 kb) to identify their exact locations: You should defer non-essential travel to areas of the state that border the states of Michoacán and Zacatecas. You should also exercise caution when traveling at night outside of cities in the remaining portions of this state. The security situation along the Michoacán and Zacatecas borders continues to be unstable and gun battles between criminal groups and authorities occur. Concerns include roadblocks placed by individuals posing as police or military personnel and recent gun battles between rival TCOs involving automatic weapons.

Mexico City (also known as the Federal District): No advisory is in effect.

Michoacán: Morelia is a major city/travel destination in Michoacán -see map (PDF, 286 kb) to identify its exact location: You should defer non-essential travel to the state of Michoacán except the cities of Morelia and Lázaro Cardenas where you should exercise caution. Flying into Morelia and Lázaro Cardenas, or driving to Lázaro Cardenas via highway 200 from Zihuatanejo/Ixtapa, are the recommended methods of travel. Attacks on Mexican government officials, law enforcement and military personnel, and other incidents of TCO-related violence, have occurred throughout Michoacán.

Morelos: Cuernavaca is a major city/travel destination in Morelos -see map (PDF, 286 kb) to identify its exact location: You should exercise caution in the state of Morelos due to the

unpredictable nature of TCO violence. Numerous incidents of narcotics-related violence have occurred in the city of Cuernavaca, a popular destination for U.S. students.

Nayarit: You should defer non-essential travel to all areas of the state of Nayarit north of the city of Tepic as well as to the cities of Tepic and Xalisco. The security situation north of Tepic and in these cities is unstable and travelers could encounter roadblocks or shootouts between rival criminals. There is no recommendation against travel either to Riviera Nayarit in the southern portion of the state or to principal highways in the southern portion of the state used to travel from Guadalajara to Puerto Vallarta.

Oaxaca: Oaxaca, Huatulco and Puerto Escondido are the major cities/travel destinations in Oaxaca -see map (PDF, 286 kb) to identify their exact locations: No warning is in effect.

Puebla: No advisory is in effect.

Queretaro: No advisory is in effect.

Quintana Roo: Cancun, Cozumel, Playa del Carmen, Riviera Maya and Tulum are the major cities/travel destinations in Quintana Roo -see map (PDF, 286 kb) to identify their exact locations: No advisory is in effect.

Tabasco: Villahermosa is a major city/travel destination in Tabasco -see map (PDF, 286 kb) to identify its exact location: No advisory is in effect.

Tlaxcala: No advisory is in effect.

Veracruz: You should exercise caution when traveling in the state of Veracruz. In recent months, the state of Veracruz has seen an increase in violence among rival criminal organizations. In response, the Government of Mexico has sent additional military and federal police to the state to assist State security forces in implementing operation "Veracruz Seguro" (Secure Veracruz) that focuses on combating organized crime.

Yucatan: Merida and Chichen Itza are the major cities/travel destinations in Yucatan -see map (PDF, 286 kb) to identify its exact location: No advisory is in effect.

Further Information

We encourage you to review the U.S. Embassy's Mexico Security Update. The update contains information about recent security incidents in Mexico that could affect the safety of the traveling public. For more detailed information on staying safe in Mexico, please see the State Department's Country Specific Information for Mexico.

For the latest security information, U.S. citizens traveling abroad should regularly monitor the State Department's internet web site, where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts can be found. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 001-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). U.S. citizens traveling or residing overseas are encouraged to enroll with the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program. For any emergencies involving U.S. citizens in Mexico, please contact the U.S. Embassy or the closest U.S. Consulate (see list below). The numbers provided below for the

Embassy and Consulates are available around the clock. The U.S. Embassy is located in Mexico City at Paseo de la Reforma 305, Colonia Cuauhtemoc, telephone from the United States: 011-52-55-5080-2000; telephone within Mexico City: 5080-2000; telephone long distance within Mexico 01-55-5080-2000. U.S. citizens may also contact the [Embassy by e-mail](#).

Consulates (with consular districts)

Ciudad Juarez (Chihuahua): Paseo de la Victoria 3650, telephone (011) (52) (656) 227-3000. [Facebook](#) & [Twitter](#)

Guadalajara (Nayarit, Jalisco, Aguas Calientes, and Colima): Progreso 175, Col. Americana; telephone (011) (52) (333) 268-2100. [Facebook](#) & [Twitter](#)

Hermosillo (Sinaloa and the southern part of Sonora): Calle Monterrey 141 Poniente, Col. Esqueda; telephone (011) (52) (662) 289-3500. [Facebook](#)

Matamoros (the southern part of Tamaulipas with the exception of the city of Tampico): Avenida Primera 2002 y Azaleas; telephone (011) (52) (868) 812-4402. [Facebook](#) & [Twitter](#)

Merida (Campeche, Yucatan, and Quintana Roo): Calle 60 No. 338 K x 29 y 31, Col. Alcala Martin; telephone (011) (52) (999) 942-5700.

Monterrey (Nuevo Leon, Durango, Zacatecas, San Luis Potosi, and the southern part of Coahuila): Avenida Constitucion 411 Poniente; telephone (011) (52) (818) 047-3100. [Facebook](#) & [Twitter](#)

Nogales (the northern part of Sonora): Calle San Jose, Fraccionamiento "Los Alamos"; telephone (011) (52) (631) 311-8150. [Facebook](#)

Nuevo Laredo (the northern part of Coahuila and the northwestern part of Tamaulipas): Calle Allende 3330, Col. Jardin; telephone (011) (52) (867) 714-0512.

Tijuana (Baja California Norte and Baja California Sur): Paseo de Las Culturas s/n Mesa de Otay; telephone (011) (52) (664) 977-2000. [Facebook](#)

All other Mexican states, the Federal District of Mexico City, and the city of Tampico, Tamaulipas, are part of the Embassy's consular district.

Consular Agencies (mainly serving the location city only)

Acapulco: Hotel Emporio, Costera Miguel Aleman 121 – Suite 14; telephone (011)(52)(744) 481-0100 or (011)(52)(744) 484-0300.

Los Cabos: Las Tiendas de Palmilla Local B221, Carretera Transpeninsular Km. 27.5, San José del Cabo, BCS, Mexico 23406 Telephone: (624) 143-3566 Fax: (624) 143-6750.

Cancun: Blvd. Kukulcan Km 13 ZH Torre La Europea, Despacho 301 Cancun, Quintana Roo, Mexico C.P. 77500; telephone (011)(52)(998) 883-0272.

Cozumel: Plaza Villa Mar en El Centro, Plaza Principal, (Parque Juárez between Melgar and 5th Ave.) 2nd floor, Locales #8 and 9; telephone (011)(52)(987) 872-4574.

Ixtapa/Zihuatanejo: Hotel Fontan, Blvd. Ixtapa; telephone (011)(52)(755) 553-2100.

Mazatlan: Hotel Playa Mazatlán, Playa Gaviotas 202, Zona Dorada; telephone (011)(52)(669)

916-5889.

Oaxaca: Macedonio Alcala No. 407, Interior 20; telephone (011)(52)(951)514-3054 or (011)(52)(951) 516-2853.

Piedras Negras: Abasolo 211, Local 3, Col. Centro; telephone (011)(52)(878) 782-5586 or (011)(52)(878) 782-8664.

Playa del Carmen: The Palapa, Calle 1 Sur, between Avenida 15 and Avenida 20; telephone (011)(52)(984) 873-0303.

Puerto Vallarta: Paseo de Los Cocoteros 85 Sur, Paradise Plaza – Local L-7, Nuevo Vallarta, Nayarit C.P.; telephone (011)(52)(322) 222-0069.

Reynosa: Calle Emilio Portes Gil #703, Col. Prado Sur; telephone: (011)(52) (899)-921-6530

San Luis Potosi: Edificio "Las Terrazas", Avenida Venustiano Carranza 2076-41, Col. Polanco; telephone (011)(52)(444) 811-7802 or (011)(52)(444) 811-7803.

San Miguel de Allende: Centro Comercial La Luciernaga, Libramiento Manuel Zavala (Pepe KBZON), telephone (011)(52)(415) 152-2357.