

Information about Mexico

Weather: Average temperatures range between 25° C to 30° C (77° F to 86° F). The hottest time of the year runs from May to September (especially on the coasts), and it gets cooler from October to April.

Official Language: Spanish, although still spoken are some 66 indigenous languages, which come from pre-Hispanic cultures.

Time (GMT –7 hours) and Baja California is on Pacific Standard Time (GMT –8 hours). Daylight savings time is applied during the summer.

Currency: Bills come in denominations of 20, 50, 100, 200, 500 and 1,000 pesos. Coins are issued in denominations of five, 10, 20 and 50 cents, and one, two, five, 10 and 20 pesos (although the latter is no longer accepted in many places). The U.S. dollar is accepted at all money exchange bureaus across the country; it's also possible to exchange such currencies as the euro and the

Leaving Tips: Generally, you should tip waiters, bellhops, skycaps (about US\$1 per bag), tourist guides and valet parking attendants. In restaurants, leave 10% or 15% of the bill. Taxi drivers usually don't expect tips.

Systems of Measurement: Metric (for distances), Celsius (for temperatures), and the 60-cycle, 120-volt system (for electricity).

Making a Phone Call: The country code when dialing to Mexico is 52 and the long distance code is 01. When calling the United States and Canada, you must first dial 001. To place other international calls, dial 00, followed by the country and city codes. In Mexico, you'll find pay telephones in most cities; some are coin-operated phones and others require prepaid cards that cost 30, 50 or 100 pesos.

Emergency Numbers: Here are some important emergency phone numbers: 060 for police, 080 for the fire department and ambulances, 078 for highway emergencies, (55) 5250-0123 for tourist security, and (55) 5658-1111 for information service Locatel.

Social Customs: When greeting someone in Mexico, it's common to shake hands with men and women that you have just met; women might also greet men or women with a kiss on the cheek.

Holidays: The most important holidays are: Independence Day (September 16), Easter week (in March or April), Day of the Dead (November 2) and the Virgin of Guadalupe Day (December 12). Other Holiday Dates: January 1, May 1, May 5, November 2 and 20, and December 25

THE BAJA CALIFORNIA PENINSULA

Located in the northwest region, the Baja California Peninsula borders the United States on the north, and lies east of the Pacific Ocean and west of the Sea of Cortez. The peninsula has an ideal climate, with sunny days throughout most of the year and average temperatures ranging from 15° C (59° F) in the winter and 30° C (86° F) during the summer.

Its territory, which spans about 1,300 kilometers (806 miles) from north to south, is divided into two states: Baja California and Baja California Sur. In the former, Tijuana stands out as one of the most visited border cities in the world, thanks to its popular bullfights, dog racing, cultural center and its famed contribution to international cuisine: the Caesar salad. Also in the state of Baja California, you can visit Ensenada, a town surrounded by nearby vineyards, which explains why it has become the peninsula's cultural capital in recent years. Or you can do some whale-watching at la Laguna Ojo de Liebre (Scammons Lagoon), where you can spy the Gray Whale. Also nearby is Rosarito, one of Mexico's top destinations for scuba diving and fishing.

In the peninsula's southern state, Baja California Sur, you'll find incredible natural scenery: beach resorts deserts, nature reserves and the mountains of the Sierra de San Francisco, where you can witness magnificent cave murals or visit old missions. What's more, you can enjoy the numerous spas and resorts of Los Cabos, one of Mexico's most popular destinations, which also offers top-notch golf courses. North of Los Cabos, in La Paz and Loreto, you can do some sportfishing, surfing, windsurfing, kayaking, scuba diving and whale-watching on the Sea of Cortez.

For road trips, it's worth noting that you can drive across the region along the Transpeninsular Highway, which stretches from Tijuana to Los Cabos. You can also travel by way of the so-called Escalera Nautica, a nautical route that stops at various ports along the coast.