

## SAFE IN MEXICO ?

Yes, all the drug cartel news is very scary. In Mexico as well as in the states. Couple of simple rules – stay away from drugs and people who use them, and people who sell them. Next, make sure you keep your eyes open – and the eyes in the back of your head, too – and if you feel the hair starting to stand up – be aware!

That said, have we every had any problem? No. Does that mean we will never possibly happen to be standing in between two warring factions? No. Things happen – sometimes to the best of people, sometimes to the worst. Just be extremely cautious, whether you are in Memphis, San Francisco, Miami, Chicago, New York City, or Mexico.

Consider – one reason for the drug distribution in Mexico is – well, if you were really poor - and a whole lot of Mexicans are 'poor' as you have already read at [www.retireinluxury.com](http://www.retireinluxury.com). There, I refer to the fact that when we were kids, everyone I knew was poor, but none of us were starving and we were well taken care of – much as it is in Mexico now. However, if someone came up to you and asked you if you wanted to make oodles of money just by carrying some drugs across the border – well, I wouldn't, but a lot of people would say "Sure – what the heck! It's worth the risk!" That also ties into cost of living for us retirees in Mexico being lower. Anyway, now, let's go at this situation from a new slant.

We all know by now that visitors (North Americans and everyone else) translate to big money coming into Mexico. Tourism is the second largest source of income for Mexico. A March 2008, study showed oil still in the number one place, followed by tourism and closely followed by remittances (Mexicans who come to the States legally or illegally, and send money back to their families in Mexico. It is also a fact that approximately one of five Mexicans receive these funds. All three of these sources of income rate so closely that different studies rate them one, two and three. So, the inescapable fact is that Tourism, Oil and Remittances keep Mexico running. (No one knows how much drug money helps out, of course – but it must be huge – probably number one even – but that money doesn't get spread around so much – the rich get richer, the poor – well, you know the phrase.)

[Visitors](#) do bring big money to Mexico, so it only

makes sense that the government of Mexico is trying desperately to protect this source of income. Yes, the government is corrupt – but there are a lot of people trying to make it better. Consider how corrupt a lot of U.S. government officials are – then just imagine the problems that are faced in Mexico! But, they are trying.

In 2007, approximately twenty million people visited Mexico, spending over \$10 Billion, according to a U.S. Department of Commerce spokesperson, G. Michael Brown. That includes families, tour groups, retirees, honeymooners, and students. And of those millions of individuals, only a fraction – a very small fraction, have had any problems during their visit to Mexico. Statistics show that you are more likely to be the victim of a violent crime in the United States than in Mexico. More occurrences happen in one night in Los Angeles than in the complete Republic of Mexico in a year, according to one study - now that's scary!

Peter Greenberg, NBC travel expert says, "The reality is "it" (the drug problem - a fight for control of lucrative drug-trade routes between South America and the USA) is propelling a wave of drug-gang violence in certain places in Mexico with the three cities most affected being: Ciudad Juarez, Tijuana and Culiacan. There have been brief flare-ups in other cities across Mexico, but these three places are where most of the violence and militarization is being played out."

Bottom line is, take a look at the border towns. . . there are problems there – but, head further south and what you'll find is pretty much no problems.

More on the next page...

## Living, Visiting, and Retiring in Mexico

### [Barbie's Blog](#)

Just place your mouse over the top right hand corner when you go to [www.retireinluxury.com](http://www.retireinluxury.com) and "enter" my [Mexico Information Center](#).

Along with information pertinent when considering moving to Mexico, [it's the place to read actual experiences people, retirees, and non-retirees, are having right now in Mexico. Read about other people who live and travel in Mexico, having no problem at all, richly enjoying life.](#)

Add your experiences so we all have input from people who know.

Mazatlan, not considered a “tourist” area, is basically having no drug problems either. Around 1973, the State of Quintana Roo was created by a decree of Mexico’s President Luis Echeverria, creating also, Cancun – mainly to bring in tourist dollars. Same thing goes for Puerto Vallarta and Cabo San Lucas, and Acapulco – these areas, known as tourist destinations, and higher in living costs, were built by the government specifically as money makers – not a bad idea, at all. However, [Mazatlan, as you’ve surely read in my offerings, is a true city](#) – with agriculture and fishing ranking high as their main income sources - not tourism.

Greenberg says that even with the increased violence and fear of drug lords’ aggressive behavior along the border, American tourists are not the target. “[The drug lords] are not targeting American’s in terms of American tourists,” claims Greenberg.

[Vacationing](#) still, in most areas in Mexico is safe and affordable. There are so many ways to be a safe traveler – some may seem trite, but will help make your travels more enjoyable – here are some basics:

Travel during daylight hours.

Keep your travels mainly to the tourist areas – don’t wander off to unknown areas.

[If you’re driving, use the quote \(toll\) roads.](#) There are more than 1,000 Green Angel trucks traveling the toll roads to offer tourists aid such as car repairs, directions, gasoline, and even medical assistance. You’ll also probably be aware of increased numbers of uniformed cops and army units posted and patrolling on the major tourist highways – that’s a good thing.

On the beaches, realize there are not life guards every 20 feet, telling you to be careful, as you find in the States. Use your common sense and be very aware of the undertow and other dangers of the water. Also, be glad if you see marines toting machine guns on those public beaches – they are there to protect you.

You know to make sure the water is purificado – if it’s not – don’t drink it. How do you know??? ASK! Aqua purificado? And by the way, what do you think ice is made of ?? Drink bottled water and canned sodas...sans ice...unless you know it’s purified.

Mexico is still a pretty machismo country – women, by themselves, or even with companions, may be the object of unwanted attention from men. I’ve said before, just ignore them – keep you head high – don’t frown - smile and keep walking...just ignore the situation.

[Single women](#) need to take the usual precautions that they would anyplace they travel. And honestly, wouldn’t having a friend along make the whole experience more fun – think it through very thoroughly - have your plans well laid out before traveling by yourself anyplace. And then, give your itinerary to a friend.

Here’s a new one I only recently became aware of. Carry a key chain whistle on a bungy-type bracelet and, if you’re truly bothered by someone, give your whistle a mighty blast. Mexican cops use whistles to signal each other and to scare off troublemakers.

You’re on vacation or holiday to enjoy yourself, not to impress anyone, so leave the expensive jewelry and handbags, etc., safely at home. And for goodness sake, don’t flash your cash! That’s just basic street smarts!

[As far as traveling in Mexico,](#) you can almost forget about bandits... the greatest threats to your safety are slippery uneven cobblestones, (sturdy tennis shoes are the very best footwear), uneven heaved-up sidewalks, knee-high curbs, head-knocking awnings, eye-poking signs, toe-stubbing thresholds, open ditches, unexpected drop-offs, lack of warning signs on the highways, unmarked construction the devious “topes”, and discarded construction debris, and the water...and perhaps a lack of Tums in your pocket.

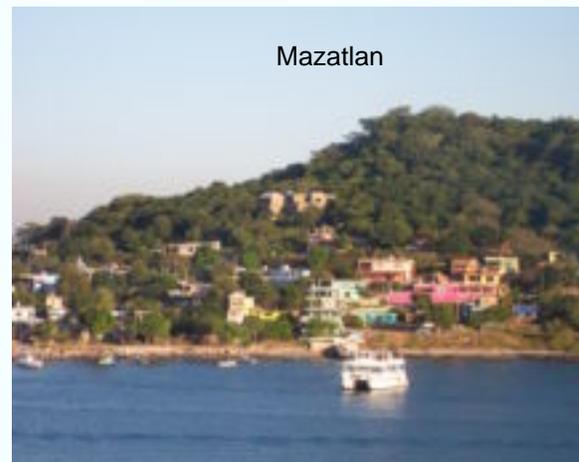
Violence happens every day, in every country – and Mexico is no exception. However, the facts stand – serious incidents involving visitors to Mexico are rare. At the same time, if it happens to you, or someone you know, it really is a different story. Be aware, keep your eyes open, and don’t call attention to yourself. Don’t be an ugly American (loud, obnoxious, demanding ) – there are plenty of them already – be a good, kind and wise visitor and enjoy yourself and stay safe.

In an emergency, contact the U.S Embassy located in Mexico City. The Embassy’s number to call long distance from locations in Mexico is 01-55-5080-2000; within Mexico City it’s 5080-2000.

A Director of the Center for Latin American Studies at San Diego State University claims, “The murder rate in Tijuana is less than 40 per 100,000, which puts it between Oakland, CA and St. Louis, MO.” That is high, but less than Baltimore and Detroit (mid-40s) and well below New Orleans - 65 to 95, depending on whom you talk to.

[Why Mexico? The answer is always – Why not?](#) Good weather, [low cost of living, excellent health care](#)...even assisted living facilities are being developed!

Yes, prices have gone up in the past 10 years, but not nearly to the extent they have in the States. I’ve said before, I think the sad part of the whole situation is that some North American retirees actually cannot afford to live any longer in their own country! [Thank goodness for our southern neighbors!](#)



Mazatlan

## YOU'LL FIND A FRIEND AT THE CONSULAR / CONSULATE OFFICE

There are Consulates or Consular Agencies in these cities (and I've added a little help pronouncing the locations)

Acapulco- (52)(744) 484-0300 or 52)(744) 469-0556.  
Cabo San Lucas - (52)(624) 143-3566.  
Cancún - (52)(998) 883-0272.  
Ciudad Acuña - (52)(877) 772-8661.  
Ciudad Juarez (Warh-ez)- (52)(656) 227-3000.  
Cozumel - (52)(987) 872-4574.  
Guadalajara ( Ga-wad-ah-lah-har-ah) - (52)(333) 268-2100.  
Hermosillo (Air-mo-sea-yah) - (52)(662) 289-3500.  
Ixtapa (Ex-ta-pa) / /Zihuatanejo ( Zee- wah- teh-nae-ho )-  
(52)(755) 553-2100.  
Matamoros - (52)(868) 812-4402.  
Mazatlán - (52)(669) 916-5889.  
Merida - (52)(999) 942-5700.  
Monterrey - (52)(818) 047-3100.  
Nogales - (52)(631) 311-8150.  
Nuevo Laredo - (52)(867) 714-0512.  
Oaxaca (Wah-hah-kah) - (52)(951) 514-3054 (52)(951) 516-2853.  
Piedras Negras - (878) 782-5586.  
Playa del Carmen - (52)(984) 873-0303.  
Puerto Vallarta - (52)(322) 222-0069.Reynosa - (52)(899) 923 -9331.  
San Luis Potosí - (52)(444) 811-7802/7803.  
San Miguel de Allende (Ay-yen-dae) - (52)(415) 152-2357 or (52)(415) 152-0068.  
Tijuana (tea-whan-ah) - (52)(664) 622-7400.



## TRAVELING BY BUS TO MAZATLAN

If you live in the Southwest, driving or bus travel are often the best option to get to your destination in Mexico. The 750 mile toll (quota, autopista) road from Nogales to Mazatlan is in very nice condition, but can, at times, be busy with big trucks and busses.

If you're planning on driving, don't forget to include the cost of Mexican auto insurance, which you must have (pretty cheap), the road tolls, and the cost of your gas. Stay on the toll roads when possible –You'll read about Dick's and my driving trip in my book, [Retire In Luxury](#).

A bus ride is not for everyone, it's a long 16-hour journey from Nogales with some busses making several stops unless you get a direct non-stop service. Unlike airlines though, you can pretty much travel when you like. Just buy a ticket when you're ready to travel, no restrictions.

The modern German busses that are used, are clean and comfortable with toilets and movies. Seats are wider than the airline's and there is plenty of legroom. If you're lucky, you might end up with two seats to yourself, especially if you take a night bus.

I found only a few bus lines that operate from the US or border towns with websites. Tufesa leaves several times a day from Los Angeles, Phoenix and Tucson. Travel time can vary depending on the service you take. If you travel over the border to bus stations that are located in Mexico, you will have more choices. Leaving every 30 minutes, TAP and Tufesa offer first class service from the west and Grupo Senda from the east. A few offer non-stop trips, so make sure you ask before getting your tickets.

Tufesa offers some non-stop services on their luxury Gold busses from US cities. These run to major cities like Culiacán, where you can then change to another bus for the two-hour trip to Mazatlan. Their website doesn't mention this, so call their local number for information, listed on their site.

If you're traveling long distances try the night busses, leave Nogales at 3 p.m. arrive Mazatlán around 8:30 a.m. Or take a break half way and spend the night. Guaymas/San Carlos is a good overnight stop with a hotel about 2 blocks away from the bus station, with rates around \$50 US.

P.S. The swine Flu outbreak worries, I'll leave to our government - if it is bad enough, why not close U.S. borders - the horse may be already out, but there may be a whole lot more horses in the line - Dick and I are avoiding crowds, and using lots of hand cleaners :)

Best to you all, Barbie