

Monday December 25, 2006

TIPS FOR TRAVELERS TO MEXICO

October 2006

General Information Between 15 and 16 million U.S. citizens visit Mexico each year, while more than 385,000 Americans reside there year round. Although most visitors thoroughly enjoy their stay, a small number experience difficulties and serious inconveniences.

Travel conditions in Mexico can contrast sharply with those in the United States. This brochure offers advice to help you avoid problems while you travel. The Department of State, the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. consulates in Mexico offer a range of services to assist U.S. citizens in distress. U.S. consular officials meet regularly with Mexican authorities to promote the safety of U.S. citizens in Mexico.

Before you go, learn as much as you can about Mexico. Keep up on news coverage. Your travel agent, local bookstore, public library, the Internet and the embassy of the country or countries you plan to visit are all useful sources of information.

Have a Safe and Healthy Trip

Before You Go

Registration at U.S. Embassies or Consulates Before you travel abroad, register with the Embassy or Consulate. This can be done on the web at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. You need to provide your itinerary, passport information and the name, address and phone number of an emergency contact.

After you arrive at your destination, you can either use the web site to register or register in person at the nearest Embassy or Consulate. In accordance with the Privacy Act, information on your welfare or whereabouts may not be released to inquirers without your expressed written authorization. If you register in person, you should bring your U.S. passport with you. Your passport data will be recorded, thereby making it easier for you to apply for a replacement passport should it be lost or stolen.

Registration will make your presence and location known in case it is necessary to contact you in an emergency. Also, remember to leave a detailed itinerary and photocopies of your passport data page or other citizenship documents with a friend or relative in the United States.

Other useful precautions:

Leave a detailed itinerary and the numbers of your passport or other citizenship documents with a friend or relative in the United States.

Carry your photo identification and the name of a person to contact with you in the event of serious illness or other emergency.

Keep photocopies of your airline or other tickets and your list of traveler's checks with you in a separate location from the originals and leave copies with someone at home.

Leave things like unnecessary credit cards and expensive jewelry at home.

Take travelers checks, not cash.

Use a money belt or concealed pouch for passport, cash and other valuables.

Do not bring firearms or ammunition into Mexico without written permission from the

Mexican government.

Travel Safety Information

Consular Information Sheets are available for every country of the world. They describe entry requirements, currency regulations, unusual health conditions, the crime and security situation, political disturbances, areas of instability, and special information about driving and road conditions. They also provide addresses and emergency telephone numbers for U.S. embassies and consulates. In general, the sheets do not give advice. Instead, they describe conditions so travelers can make informed decisions about their trips.

In some dangerous situations, however, the Department of State recommends that Americans defer travel to a country. In such a case, a Travel Warning is issued for the country in addition to its Consular Information Sheet.

Public Announcements are a means to disseminate information about relatively short-term and/or trans-national conditions posing significant risks to the security of American travelers. They are issued when there is a perceived threat, even if it does not involve Americans as a particular target group. In the past, Public Announcements have been issued to deal with short-term coups, pre-election disturbances, terrorist violence and anniversary dates of specific terrorist events.

You can obtain Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings and Public Announcements in several ways.

Internet

The most convenient source of information about travel and consular services is the Consular Affairs home page. The web site address is <http://travel.state.gov>.

Telephone

The Overseas Citizens Services call center can be reached at 1-888-407-4747 from a touchtone phone, from overseas the number is 202-501-4444.

From U.S. Passport Agencies & U.S. Embassies

Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings and Public Announcements are available at any of the regional passport agencies and U.S. embassies and consulates abroad.

Visas and Travel Documents

Getting Into Mexico

Current Requirements for Getting Into Mexico: The Government of Mexico requires all U.S. citizens to present proof of citizenship and photo identification for entry into Mexico. However, U.S. citizens have encountered difficulty in boarding flights in Mexico without a passport. The U.S. Embassy recommends traveling with a valid U.S. passport to avoid delays or misunderstandings. However, U.S. citizenship documents such as a certified copy (not a simple photocopy) of a U.S. birth certificate, a Naturalization Certificate, a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, or a Certificate of Citizenship are acceptable. U.S. citizens boarding flights to Mexico should be prepared to present one of these documents as proof of U.S. citizenship, along with photo identification. Driver's permits, voter registration cards, affidavits and similar documents are not sufficient to prove citizenship for readmission into the United States.

New Requirements for Travelers Between the United States and Mexico: Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) effective **January 23, 2007**, all U.S. citizens traveling by **air** to and from Mexico are required to have a valid passport to enter the United States. As early as January 1, 2008,

U.S. citizens traveling between the United States and Mexico by **land** or **sea** (including ferries), may be required to present a valid U.S. passport or other documents as determined by the Department of Homeland Security. Ample advance notice will be provided to enable the public to obtain passports or passport cards for land/sea entries. American citizen travelers are encouraged to apply for a U.S. passport or the passport card when it becomes available, well in advance of anticipated travel. American citizens can visit travel.state.gov or call 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778) for information on applying for a passport.

Tourist Cards

U.S. citizens do not require a visa or a tourist card for tourist stays of 72 hours or less within "the border zone," defined as an area between 20 to 30 kilometers of the border with the U.S., depending on the location. U.S. citizen tourists traveling beyond the border zone or entering Mexico by air must pay a fee to obtain a tourist card, also known as an FM-T, available from Mexican consulates, Mexican border crossing points, Mexican tourism offices, airports within the border zone and most airlines serving Mexico. The fee for the tourist card is generally included in the price of a plane ticket for travelers arriving by air.

The tourist card is issued upon presentation of proof of citizenship, such as a U.S. passport or a U.S. birth certificate, plus photo ID, such as a driver's license. Tourist cards are issued for up to 90 days with a single entry, or if you present proof of sufficient funds, for 180 days with multiple entries.

Upon entering Mexico, retain and safeguard the traveler's copy of your tourist card so you may surrender it to Mexican immigration when you depart. You must leave Mexico before your tourist card expires or you are subject to a fine. A tourist card for less than 180 days may be revalidated in Mexico by the Mexican immigration service (Instituto Nacional de Migración.)

Tourists wishing to travel beyond the border zone with their car must obtain a temporary import permit or risk having their car confiscated by Mexican customs officials. To acquire a permit, one must submit evidence of citizenship, title for the car, a car registration certificate, a driver's license, and a processing fee to either a Banjercito branch located at a Mexican Customs office at the port of entry, or at one of the Mexican Consulates located in Austin, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Bernardino, or San Francisco. Mexican law also requires the posting of a bond at a Banjercito (Mexican Army Bank) office to guarantee the departure of the car from Mexico within a time period determined at the time of the application. For this purpose, American Express, Visa or MasterCard credit card holders will be asked to provide credit card information; others will need to make a cash deposit of between \$200 and \$400, depending on the age of the car. In order to recover this bond or avoid credit card charges, travelers must go to any Mexican Customs office immediately prior to departing Mexico. Disregard any advice, official or unofficial, that vehicle permits can be obtained at checkpoints in the interior of Mexico. Avoid individuals outside vehicle permit offices offering to obtain the permits without waiting in line. If the proper permit cannot be obtained at the Banjercito branch at the port of entry, do not proceed to the interior where travelers may be incarcerated, fined and/or have their vehicle seized at immigration/customs checkpoints. For further information, contact Mexican Customs about appropriate vehicle permits.

Upon arrival in Mexico, business travelers must complete and submit a form (Form FM-N 30 days) authorizing the conduct of business, but not employment, for a 30-day period. Travelers entering Mexico for purposes other than tourism or business, or for stays of longer than 180 days, require a visa and must carry a valid U.S. passport. U.S. citizens planning to work or live in Mexico should apply for the appropriate Mexican visa at the Mexican Embassy in Washington, DC or nearest Mexican consulate in the United States.

Mexican law requires that any non-Mexican under the age of 18 departing Mexico must carry

notarized written permission from any parent or guardian not traveling with the child. This permission must include the name of the parent, the name of the child, the name of anyone traveling with the child, and the notarized signature(s) of the absent parent(s). The child must be carrying the original letter – not a faxed or scanned copy – as well as proof of the parent/child relationship (usually a birth certificate) – and an original custody decree, if applicable.

Travelers should contact the Mexican Embassy or closest Mexican Consulate for the most current information. You can visit the Embassy of Mexico web site at <http://portal.sre.gob.mx/usa/> or call the Embassy of Mexico at 202-736-1000. You can also call the closest Mexican consulate in the United States for assistance. (A list of Mexican consulates in the U.S. can be found on the Mexican Embassy web site.)

Dual Nationality

Mexican law recognizes dual nationality for Mexicans by birth, meaning those born in Mexico or born abroad to Mexican parents. U.S. citizens who are also Mexican nationals are considered to be Mexican by local authorities. Dual-nationality status could hamper U.S. Government efforts to provide consular protection. Dual nationals are not subject to compulsory military service in Mexico. Travelers possessing both U.S. and Mexican nationalities must carry with them proof of their citizenship of both countries. Under Mexican law, dual nationals entering or departing Mexico must identify themselves as Mexican. Under U.S. law, U.S. citizens must enter U.S. territory with documents proving U.S. citizenship.

Residing or Retiring in Mexico

If you plan to live or retire in Mexico, consult a Mexican consulate on the type of long-term visa required. As soon as possible after you arrive in the place you will live, register with the U.S. Embassy or the nearest U.S. consulate or consular agent. You can register on line at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>.

If you wish to register in person, bring your passport or other identification with you. Registration makes it easier to contact you in an emergency. Again, information on your welfare or location may not be released to anyone without your expressed written authorization.

For further information, travelers may contact the Embassy of Mexico at (202) 736-1000, or see the web site at <http://portal.sre.gob.mx/usa/>.

Returning to the United States – Caution!

Make sure that you can return to the United States with the proof of citizenship that you take with you. Although you may be allowed to enter Mexico with only a birth certificate, U.S. law requires that you document both your U.S. citizenship and identity when you re-enter the United States.

The most authoritative document to prove your U.S. citizenship is a valid U.S. passport. Other documents that establish U.S. citizenship include an expired U.S. passport, a certified copy of your birth certificate, a Certificate of Naturalization, a Certificate of Citizenship, or a Report of Birth Abroad of a U.S. citizen. To prove your identity, either a valid driver's license or government identification with a photo is acceptable.

The following documents are NOT sufficient proof to enter the United States: U.S. driver's license alone, Social Security Card, U.S. military ID, a photocopy of a U.S. birth certificate, a notarized Affidavit of Citizenship signed at the airport in the U.S., or a voter's registration card. Travelers with these documents may not be able to get back into the U.S.

Without proof of both identity and citizenship, you will not be allowed to board an airplane to the U.S. The airline faces a fine of \$3,300 if a passenger that the airline boarded is not admitted to the U.S., and in addition the airline must bear the cost of flying the passenger back to the point of departure. Because of these penalties, most airlines will not board anyone – including probable U.S. citizens – without proof of citizenship and identity.

Health

Health problems sometimes affect visitors to Mexico. Detailed information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747), or via the CDC's Internet site at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization web site at <http://www.who.int/en>. Further health information for travelers is available at <http://www.who.int/ith>.

Immunizations

Immunizations are recommended against hepatitis A, hepatitis B and typhoid. Booster shots for tetanus-diphtheria and measles are also recommended. For visitors coming directly from the United States, no immunization certification is required to enter Mexico. If you are traveling from a part of the world infected with yellow fever, a vaccination certificate is required. If you will participate in outdoor activities in rural areas, such as camping, hiking, or bicycling where you might come into contact with animals, you may want to consider a rabies vaccine.

Malaria

Malaria is always a serious disease and can be a deadly illness. Malaria is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected female Anopheles mosquito. Symptoms may include fever and flu-like illness, including chills, headache, muscle aches and fatigue. Malaria can cause anemia and jaundice, and, if not immediately treated, can cause kidney failure, coma, and death. If you become ill with a fever or flu-like illness either while traveling in a malaria-risk area or after you return home (for up to 1 year), you should seek immediate medical attention and inform your physician of your travel history.

Malaria is found in Mexico in certain rural areas, including resorts, in the following states: Campeche, Chiapas, Guerrero, Michoacán, Nayarit, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo, Sinaloa and Tabasco. In addition, risk exists in the mountainous northern area of Jalisco State. Risk also exists in an area between 24° north and 28° north latitude and 106° west and 110° west longitude that lies in parts of the states of Sonora, Chihuahua, and Durango.

There is no malaria risk along the U.S.-Mexico border. There is no malaria risk in the major resorts (that is, resorts located in urban areas) along the Pacific and Gulf coasts, although tourists should use insect repellent and other anti-mosquito measures.

Travelers to malarial areas should consult their physician. The recommended anti-malarial drug for Mexico is chloroquine. Although this preventative drug is not considered necessary for travelers to the major resort areas on the Pacific and Gulf coasts, travelers to those areas should use insect repellent and take other personal protection measures to reduce contact with mosquitoes, particularly from dusk to dawn when mosquitoes are active. To avoid being bitten, remain indoors in a screened or air-conditioned area during the peak biting period. If you go outdoors, wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and hats, and, use insect repellents containing DEET. Use a flying insect spray to help clear rooms of mosquitoes. The product should contain a pyrethroid insecticide; these insecticides quickly kill flying insects, including mosquitoes. Travelers not staying in well-screened or air-

conditioned rooms should sleep under bed nets (mosquito nets), preferably nets treated with the insecticide permethrin. Permethrin both repels and kills mosquitoes as well as other biting insects and ticks. In the United States, permethrin is available as a spray or a liquid (e.g. Permanone™). Pre-treated nets, permethrin or another insecticide deltamethrin, are available overseas. Clothing, shoes, and camping gear, can also be treated with permethrin. Treated clothing can be repeatedly washed and still repel insects. Some clothing is now available in the United States that has been pretreated with permethrin. Protect infants (especially infants under 2 months of age not wearing insect repellent) by using a carrier draped with mosquito netting with an elastic edge for a tight fit.

Air Pollution

Air pollution in Mexico City and Guadalajara is severe, especially from December to May, and combined with high altitude could affect travelers with underlying respiratory problems.

Altitude Sickness

In high altitude areas such as Mexico City (elevation 7,600 feet or about 1/2 mile higher than Denver), most people need a short adjustment period. Signs to look for include a lack of energy, shortness of breath, dizziness, headache and insomnia. Those with heart problems should consult their doctor before traveling.

Food and Drink

Select food with care. All raw food is subject to contamination. Avoid salads, uncooked vegetables and unpasteurized milk and milk products such as cheese. Eat only food that has been cooked and is still hot. Fruits and vegetables should be washed in a purifying solution and peeled by the traveler personally. Undercooked and raw meat, fish, and shellfish can carry various intestinal pathogens. Cooked food that has been allowed to stand for several hours at room temperature can provide a fertile medium for bacterial growth. Consumption of food and beverages obtained from street vendors has been associated with an increased risk of illness. Diarrhea sufferers may benefit from anti-microbial treatment that may be prescribed or purchased over the counter. Travelers should consult a physician, rather than attempt self-medication, if the diarrhea is severe or persists several days.

If you can't peel it or cook it, DON'T eat it!

Only the following are safe to drink:

Beverages made with boiled water, such as tea and coffee

Canned or bottled beverages, including water, carbonated mineral water, and soft drinks

Beer and wine

It is safer to drink a beverage directly from the can or bottle than from a questionable container. However, water on the outside of beverage cans or bottles may also be contaminated. Therefore, dry off wet cans or bottles before they are opened and wipe clean surfaces with which your mouth will have direct contact. Where water may be contaminated, avoid brushing your teeth with tap water. Beware of ice cubes, as they may not have been made with purified water.

Swimming

A variety of infections have been linked to wading or swimming in the ocean, freshwater lakes and rivers, and swimming pools, particularly if the swimmer's head is submerged. Water may be contaminated by other people and from sewage, animal wastes, and wastewater run-off. Diarrhea and other serious waterborne infections can be spread when disease-causing organisms from human or

animal feces are introduced into the water. If you go swimming, avoid beaches that may be contaminated with human sewage or dog feces.

Accidentally swallowing even small amounts of contaminated water can cause illness. Try to avoid swallowing water while engaging in aquatic activities. Generally, pools that contain chlorinated water can be considered safe places to swim if the disinfectant levels and pH are properly maintained. However, some organisms have moderate to very high resistance to chlorine levels commonly found in swimming pools, so also avoid swallowing pool water. All travelers who have diarrhea should refrain from swimming to avoid contaminating recreational water.

Avoid swimming or wading with open cuts or abrasions that might serve as entry points for pathogens. If you go swimming in warm freshwater lakes or rivers, thermally polluted areas around industrial complexes and hot springs, avoid submerging your head and wear nose plugs when entering untreated water.

Medical Care

Adequate medical care can be found in all major cities. Excellent health facilities are available in Mexico City. Care in more remote areas is limited. Standards of medical training, patient care and business practices vary greatly among medical facilities in beach resorts throughout Mexico. In recent years, some travelers have complained that certain health-care facilities in beach resorts have taken advantage of them by overcharging or providing unnecessary medical care. In addition to other publicly available information, consult the U.S. Embassy web site or the U.S. Embassy, a consulate or consular agency prior to seeking medical attention. The U.S. Embassy, U.S. consulates and U.S. consular agencies maintain lists of doctors and medical facilities that are available to assist U.S. citizens in need of medical care.

Health Insurance

Review your health insurance policy before you travel.

In some places, particularly at resorts, medical costs can be as high or higher than in the United States. U.S. medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Further, U.S. Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States. However, many travel agents and private companies offer insurance plans that will cover health care expenses incurred overseas, including emergency services such as medical evacuations. If your insurance policy does not cover you in Mexico, it is strongly recommended that you purchase a policy that does. Short-term health insurance policies designed specifically to cover travel are available.

When making decisions regarding health insurance, consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that medical air evacuation to the U.S. may cost over \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expense that you incur. Some insurance policies also include coverage for psychiatric treatment and for disposition of remains in the event of death.

If you become seriously ill, U.S. consular officers can assist in finding a doctor and in notifying your family and friends about your condition.

The U.S. government cannot pay to have you medically evacuated to the United States.

Useful information on medical emergencies abroad, including overseas insurance programs are listed

in our publication, Medical Information for Americans Traveling Abroad, accessible on the web at http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1185.html.

What You May Bring Into Mexico

Customs Regulations

You should enter Mexico with only the items you need for your trip. Entering with large quantities of an item a tourist might not normally be expected to have, particularly expensive appliances, such as televisions, stereos or other items, may lead to suspicion of smuggling and possible confiscation of the items and arrest of the individual.

All U.S. citizens bringing gifts to friends and relatives in Mexico should be prepared to demonstrate to Mexican customs officials the origin and the value of the gifts. U.S. citizens entering Mexico by the land border can bring in gifts totaling up to \$50.00 duty-free, except for alcohol and tobacco products. Those entering Mexico by air or sea can bring in gifts totaling up to \$300.00 duty-free.

Tourists are allowed to bring in personal effects duty-free. According to Mexican customs regulations, in addition to clothing, personal effects may include one camera, one video cassette player, one personal computer, one CD player, 5 DVDs, 20 music CDs or audio cassettes, 12 rolls of unused film, and one mobile phone. Any tourist carrying such items, even if duty-free, is advised to enter the "Merchandise to Declare" lane at the first customs checkpoint. Be prepared to pay any assessed duty. Failure to declare personal effects routinely results in the seizure of the goods as contraband, plus the seizure of the vehicle in which the goods are traveling for attempted smuggling. The recovery of the seized vehicle involves the payment of substantial fines and attorney's fees.

Mexican customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Mexico of items such as trucks and autos, trailers, antiques, medications, medical equipment, business equipment, etc. It is advisable to contact the Mexican Embassy or one of the Mexican consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements.

If you are traveling to Mexico with goods intended for donation within Mexico, or traveling through Mexico with goods intended for donation in another country, should be aware of Mexican Customs regulations prohibiting importation of used clothing, textiles, and other used goods into Mexico. These regulations apply even to charitable donations. Individuals or groups wishing to make such donations should check with Mexican Customs for the list of prohibited items, and should hire an experienced customs broker in the U.S. to ensure compliance with Mexican law. The charitable individual or group, not the customs broker, will be held responsible for large fines or confiscation of goods if the documentation is incorrect. The web site for Mexican Customs, or "Aduanas," is in Spanish only at <http://www.aduanas.sat.gob.mx/webadunet/body.htm>. Mexican authorities require that all international transit through Mexico of persons and merchandise destined for Central or South America be handled only at the Los Indios Bridge located south of Harlingen, Texas on Route 509. The American Consulate in Matamoros is the closest consulate to Los Indios Bridge and may be contacted for up-to-date information by calling 011-52-868-812-4402, ext. 273 or 280, or by checking their web site, <http://matamoros.usconsulate.gov/matamoros-esp/>, which lists in English the most common items prohibited from entry into Mexico.

Currency

The Mexican government permits tourists to exchange dollars for pesos at the fluctuating free market rate. There are no restrictions on the import or export of bank notes and none on the export of reasonable quantities of ordinary Mexican coins. However, gold or silver Mexican coins may not be exported.

Take travelers checks with you. Personal U.S. checks are rarely accepted by Mexican hotels or banks. Major credit cards are accepted in many hotels, shops and restaurants. An exchange office (casa de cambios) usually gives a better rate of exchange than do stores, hotels or restaurants.

Pets

U.S. visitors to Mexico may bring dogs or cats by presenting the following certificates at the border:

1. A pet health certificate signed by a registered veterinarian in the United States and issued not more than 72 hours before the animal enters Mexico; and
2. a pet vaccination certificate showing that the animal has been treated for rabies, hepatitis, pip and leptospirosis.

As you may bring pet birds into Mexico, but, have difficulty returning to the U.S. with them, you may want to consider leaving your bird(s) at home.

Certification by Mexican consular authorities is not required for the health or vaccination certificate. There is no quarantine for healthy pets. A permit fee is charged at the time of entry into Mexico.

Safety

General information on personal safety abroad can be found in our brochure, A Safe Trip Abroad, on our home page at http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1747.html.

Avoid demonstrations and other activities that might be deemed political by the Mexican authorities. The Mexican Constitution prohibits political activities by foreigners, and such actions may result in detention and/or deportation.

Exercise caution in traveling to the southern state of Chiapas. Armed rebels and armed civilian groups are present in some areas of the state, and there is often no effective law enforcement or police protection. Violent criminal gang activity along the State's southern border – mostly aimed at illegal migrants – continues to be a concern. U.S. citizens traveling to Chiapas are encouraged to contact the U.S. Embassy for further security information prior to traveling to the region.

Sporadic outbursts of politically motivated violence occur from time to time in certain parts of the country, particularly in the southern states of Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca.

Crime in Mexico continues at high levels, and it is often violent, especially in Mexico City, Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez, Nuevo Laredo, and the state of Sinaloa. Other metropolitan areas have lower, but still serious, levels of crime. Low apprehension and conviction rates of criminals contribute to the high crime rate. Travelers should leave valuables and irreplaceable items in a safe place, or leave them at home. All visitors are encouraged to make use of hotel safes when available, avoid wearing obviously expensive jewelry or designer clothing, and carry only the cash or credit cards that will be needed on each outing. There are a significant number of pick-pocketing incidents, purse snatchings and hotel-room thefts. Public transportation is a particularly popular place for pickpockets. Be vigilant in bus and train stations and on public transport. All U.S. citizen victims of crime in Mexico are encouraged to report incidents to the nearest police headquarters and to the nearest U.S. consular office.

Visitors should be aware of their surroundings at all times, even when in areas generally considered safe. Women traveling alone are especially vulnerable and should exercise caution, particularly at night. Victims, who are almost always unaccompanied, have been raped, robbed of personal

property, or abducted and then held while their credit cards were used at various businesses and Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs). Armed street crime is a serious problem in all of the major cities. Some bars and nightclubs, especially in resort cities such as Cancun, Cabo San Lucas, Mazatlan, and Acapulco, can be havens for drug dealers and petty criminals. Some establishments may contaminate or drug drinks to gain control over the patron.

U.S. citizens should be very cautious in general when using ATMs in Mexico. If an ATM must be used, it should be accessed only during the business day at large protected facilities (preferably inside commercial establishments, rather than at glass-enclosed, highly visible ATMs on streets). U.S. and Mexican citizens are sometimes accosted on the street and forced to withdraw money from their accounts using their ATM cards.

A number of Americans have been arrested for passing on counterfeit currency they had earlier received in change. If you receive what you believe to be a counterfeit bank note, bring it to the attention of Mexican law enforcement.

Kidnapping, including the kidnapping of non-Mexicans, continues at alarming rates. So-called "express" kidnappings, an attempt to get quick cash in exchange for the release of an individual, have occurred in almost all the large cities in Mexico and appear to target not only the wealthy, but also middle class persons. U.S. businesses with offices in Mexico or concerned U.S. citizens may contact the U.S. Embassy or any U.S. consulate to discuss precautions they should take.

Criminal assaults occur on highways throughout Mexico; travelers should exercise extreme caution at all times, avoid traveling at night, and may wish to use toll ("cuota") roads rather than the less secure "free" ("libre") roads whenever possible. In addition, U.S. citizens should not hitchhike with, accept rides from or offer rides to, strangers anywhere in Mexico. Tourists should not hike alone in backcountry areas, nor walk alone on lightly frequented beaches, ruins or trails.

All bus travel should be during daylight hours and on first-class conveyances. Although there have been several reports of bus hijackings and robberies on toll roads, buses on toll roads still have a markedly lower rate of incidents than buses (second and third class) that travel the less secure "free" highways. The Embassy advises caution when traveling by bus from Acapulco toward Ixtapa or Huatulco. Although the police have made some progress in bringing this problem under control, armed robberies of entire busloads of passengers still occur.

In some instances, Americans have become victims of harassment, mistreatment and extortion by Mexican law enforcement and other officials. Mexican authorities have cooperated in investigating such cases, but one must have the officer's name, badge number, and patrol car number to pursue a complaint effectively. Please note this information if you ever have a problem with police or other officials. In addition, tourists should be wary of persons representing themselves as police officers or other officials. When in doubt, ask for identification. Be aware that offering a bribe to a public official to avoid a ticket or other penalty is a crime in Mexico.

It is increasingly common for extortionists to call prospective victims on the telephone, often posing as police officers, and demand payments in return for the release of an arrested family member, or to forestall a kidnapping. These calls are often placed by prison inmates using smuggled mobile phones. Persons receiving such calls should be extremely skeptical; most such demands or threats are baseless. Persons receiving such calls should contact the U.S. Embassy or closest U.S. Consulate, or the Department of State, for assistance.

Crime in Mexico City

In Mexico City, the most frequently reported crimes involving tourists are taxi robbery (see below),

armed robbery, pick-pocketing and purse-snatching. In several cases, tourists have reported that men in uniforms perpetrated the crime, stopping vehicles and seeking money, or assaulting and robbing tourists walking late at night. As in any large city, individuals should exercise caution and be aware of their surroundings, especially when walking anywhere in the city.

Business travelers should be aware that thefts occur even in what appear to be secure locations. Thefts of such items as briefcases and laptops occur frequently at the Benito Juarez International Airport and at business-class hotels. Arriving travelers who need to obtain pesos at the airport should use the exchange counters or ATMs in the arrival/departure gate area, where access is restricted, rather than changing money after passing through Customs, where they can be observed by criminals.

Metro (subway) robberies are frequent in Mexico City. If riding the Metro or on the city bus system, U.S. citizens should take extreme care with valuables and belongings. Avoid using Metro during busy commuting hours in the morning or afternoon. Tourists and residents alike should avoid driving alone at night anywhere in Mexico City.

Taxicab Crime

Robbery and assaults on passengers in taxis are frequent and violent in Mexico City, with passengers subjected to beatings, shootings and sexual assault. U.S. citizens visiting Mexico City should avoid taking any taxi not summoned by telephone or contacted in advance. When in need of a taxi, please telephone a radio taxi or "sitio" (regulated taxi stand – pronounced "C-T-O"), and ask the dispatcher for the driver's name and the cab's license plate number. Ask the hotel concierge or other responsible individual calling on your behalf to write down the license plate number of the cab that you entered.

Passengers arriving at Mexico City's Benito Juarez International Airport should take only airport taxis (which are white with a yellow stripe and a black airplane symbol) after pre-paying the fare at one of the special booths inside the airport.

Crime in Border Cities

Visitors to the U.S. - Mexico border region, including the cities of Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez, Nuevo Laredo, Nogales, Reynosa and Matamoros, should remain alert and be aware of their surroundings at all times.

Drug-related violence has increased dramatically in recent months, and shows no sign of abating. While U.S. citizens not involved in criminal activities are generally not targeted, innocent bystanders are at risk from the increase in violence in the streets of border cities. In Ciudad Juarez, Nuevo Laredo and Tijuana, shootings have taken place at busy intersections and at popular restaurants during daylight hours. The wave of violence has been aimed primarily at members of drug trafficking organizations, criminal justice officials and journalists. However, foreign visitors and residents, including Americans, have been among the victims of homicides and kidnappings in the border region. In recent months, the worst violence has been centered in the city of Nuevo Laredo in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas, where more than 45 U.S. citizens were kidnapped and/or murdered between August 2004 and July 2005. U.S. citizens are urged to be especially aware of safety and security concerns when visiting the border region and exercise common-sense precautions such as visiting only legitimate business and tourist areas of border towns during daylight hours.

Mexican authorities have failed to prosecute numerous crimes committed against American citizens, including murder and kidnapping. Local police forces suffer from a lack of funds and training, and the judicial system is weak, overworked, and inefficient. Criminals, armed with an impressive array of weapons, know there is little chance they will be caught and punished. In some cases, assailants

have been wearing full or partial police uniforms and have used vehicles that resemble police vehicles, indicating some elements of the police might be involved.

Visitors are very vulnerable when visiting local "red light districts," particularly if they are departing alone in the early hours of the morning. In Ciudad Juarez and Tijuana, there has also been a rise in automobile accidents in which municipal police extort money from U.S. citizen victims.

Cancun and Other Resort Areas

Over 3 million Americans travel to Cancun and other Mexican beach resorts each year, including as many as 120,000 during "spring break" season, which normally begins in mid-February and runs about two months. Excessive alcohol consumption, especially by Americans under the legal U.S. drinking age, is a significant problem. The legal drinking age in Mexico is 18, but it is not uniformly enforced. Alcohol is implicated in the majority of arrests, violent crimes, accidents and deaths suffered by American tourists.

There have been a significant number of rapes reported in Cancun. Many of these have occurred at night or in the early morning. Attacks have also occurred on deserted beaches and in hotel rooms. Acquaintance rape is a serious problem. In other cases, hotel workers, taxi drivers, and even security personnel have been implicated. Anyone who is a victim of a sexual assault or other crime should report it immediately to the nearest U.S. consular office and should endeavor to make a report to Mexican authorities. Do not rely on hotel/restaurant/tour company management to make the report for you.

Under the best of circumstances, prosecution is very difficult (a fact some assailants appear to knowingly exploit), but no criminal investigation is possible without a formal complaint to Mexican authorities.

In recent years, moped rentals have become very widespread in Cancun and Cozumel, and the number of serious moped accidents has risen accordingly. Most operators carry no insurance and do not conduct safety checks. Some have been known to demand fees many times in excess of damages caused to the vehicles, even if renters have purchased insurance in advance. Vacationers at other beach resorts have encountered similar problems after accidents involving rented jet-skis.

There have been cases of mobs gathering to prevent tourists from departing the scene and to help intimidate them into paying exorbitant damage claims.

Water Sports

Visitors to Mexican resorts should carefully assess the potential risk of recreational activities. Sports and aquatic equipment that you rent may not meet U.S. safety standards nor be covered by any accident insurance. Scuba diving equipment may be substandard or defective due to frequent use. Inexperienced scuba divers in particular should beware of dive shops that promise to "certify" you after a few hours' instruction. Parasailing has killed American tourists who were dragged through palm trees or were slammed into hotel walls. Jet-ski accidents have killed American tourists, especially in group outings when inexperienced guides allowed their clients to follow each other too closely.

Do not leave your belongings on the beach while you are swimming. Keep your passport and other valuables in the hotel safe.

Warning flags on the beach should be taken seriously. If black flags are up, do not enter the water. In Cancun, there is often a very strong undertow along the beach from the Hyatt Regency all the way south to the Sol y Mar. Several drownings and near-drownings have been reported on the east coast

of Cozumel, particularly in the Playa San Martin-Chen Rio area. In Acapulco, avoid swimming outside the bay area. Several American citizens have died while swimming in rough surf at the Revolcadero Beach near Acapulco. Beaches on the pacific side of the Baja California Peninsula at Cabo San Lucas are dangerous due to rip tides and rogue waves; hazardous beaches in this area are clearly marked in English and Spanish. Recreational facilities such as pools may not meet U.S. safety or sanitation standards. Do not swim in pools or at beaches without lifeguards. If you do, exercise extreme caution. Do not dive into unknown bodies of water, because hidden rocks or shallow depths can cause serious injury or death.

Mountain Climbing and Hiking

Travelers who wish to climb Pico de Orizaba in Veracruz should be aware that summer droughts in recent years have removed much of the snow coating and turned the Jamapa Glacier into a high-speed ice chute, increasing the risk of death or serious injury. At least seventeen climbers have died on the mountain and 39 have been injured in recent years, including Americans. Rescue teams operate without the benefit of sophisticated equipment, and any medical treatment provided in local hospitals or clinics must be paid in cash. While regulation of the ascent is minimal and guides are not required, the U.S. Embassy recommends hiring an experienced guide.

The Colima Volcano, located approximately 20 miles north-northeast of Colima city, is active and erupted several times in 2005. Travelers should not enter the prohibited area within a 4.5-mile radius of the volcano.

When departing on an outing to backcountry areas to hike or climb, it is prudent to leave a detailed itinerary, including route information and expected time/date of return with your hotel clerk or a friend or family member. Similarly, mariners preparing to depart from a Mexican harbor should visit the harbormaster and leave a detailed trip plan, including intended destination and crew and passenger information.

Driving and Traffic Safety

Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death among American citizens in Mexico. Motorists should exercise special caution on the heavily traveled expressway south of Cancun, particularly between Playa del Carmen and Tulum, where the road narrows from 4 divided lanes to two-way traffic on a narrower and poorly maintained road.

While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Mexico is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Public transportation vehicles, specifically taxis and city buses, often do not comply with traffic regulations, including observing speed limits and stopping at red lights.

U.S. driver's licenses are valid in Mexico. The Government of Mexico strictly regulates the entry of vehicles into Mexico. Mexican law requires that vehicles be driven only by their owners, or that the owner be inside the vehicle. If not, the vehicle may be seized by Mexican customs and will not be returned under any circumstances.

Mexican insurance is required for all vehicles, including rental vehicles. Mexican auto insurance is sold in most cities and towns on both sides of the border. U.S. automobile liability insurance is not valid in Mexico, nor is most collision and comprehensive coverage issued by U.S. companies. Motor vehicle insurance is considered invalid in Mexico if the driver is found to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

If you have an emergency while driving, the equivalent of "911" in Mexico is "060", but this number is not always answered. If you are driving on a toll highway (or "cuota") or any other major highway, you may contact the "Green Angels," a fleet of trucks with bilingual crews. The "Green Angels" may be reached directly at (01) (55) 5250-8221. If you are unable to call them, pull off the road and lift the hood of your car; chances are they will find you.

If you are involved in an automobile accident, you will be taken into police custody until it can be determined who is liable and whether you have the ability to pay any penalty. If you do not have Mexican liability insurance, you may be prevented from departing the country even if you require life-saving medical care, and you are almost certain to spend some time in jail until all parties are satisfied that responsibility has been assigned and adequate financial satisfaction received. Drivers may face criminal charges if injuries or damages are serious.

Avoid driving on Mexican highways at night. Several U.S. citizens have been killed in recent years driving at excessive speeds, at night, on roads that are in poor condition or are poorly marked. Vehicular traffic in Mexico City is restricted in order to reduce air pollution. The restriction is based on the last digit of the vehicle license plate. This applies equally to permanent, temporary, and foreign (U.S.) plates. For detailed information, go to <http://www.hoynocircula.com.mx> (Spanish only).

For additional information concerning Mexican driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, mandatory insurance, etc., please contact the Mexican Secretariat of Tourism (SECTUR) at telephone 1-800-44-MEXICO (639-426), or its web site at <http://mexico-travel.com>. Consult with the Mexican Embassy or the nearest Mexican consulate in the United States for additional, detailed information prior to entering Mexico. For travel in the Baja California peninsula, travelers can also consult <http://www.traveltobaja.net/>.

Learn Local Driving signals

In Mexico, a blinking left turn signal on the vehicle in front of you could mean that it is clear ahead and you may pass, or it could mean the driver is making a left turn. An outstretched left arm may mean an invitation for you to pass. When in doubt, do not pass.

An oncoming vehicle flashing its headlights is a warning for you to slow down or pull over because you are both approaching a narrow bridge or place in the road. The custom is that the first vehicle to flash has the right of way and the other must yield.

When it begins to rain, immediately slow to a crawl. Freshly wet roads are dangerous because oil and road dust mix with water and form a lubricant. Until this mixture washes away, driving is extremely hazardous. Beware of sudden rains. Stop, or go extremely slowly, until conditions improve.

To avoid highway crime, try not to drive at night and never drive alone during this time. Never sleep in vehicles along the road. Do not, under any circumstances, pick up hitchhikers who not only pose a threat to your physical safety, but also put you in danger of being arrested for unwittingly transporting narcotics or narcotics traffickers in your vehicle. Your vehicle can be confiscated if you are transporting marijuana or other narcotics. There are checkpoints and temporary roadblocks where vehicles are checked.

If you plan to drive, learn about your route from an auto club, guide book or a Mexican government tourist office. You may not be able to avoid all problems, but at least you will know what to expect if you have done some research. Also, some of the newer roads have very few restaurants, motels, gas stations or auto repair shops. For your safety, have your vehicle serviced and in optimum condition before you leave for Mexico. It is wise to bring an extra fan belt, fuses and other spare

parts. Pack a basic first-aid kit and carry an emergency water supply in your vehicle. Unleaded gasoline (magna sin) is generally available throughout Mexico.

If you have an emergency while driving, call the Ministry of Tourism's hotline or (55) 5250-8221, extension 130/297, to obtain help from the "Green Angels," a fleet of radio dispatched trucks with bilingual crews. Services include protection, medical first aid, mechanical aid for your car, and basic supplies. You will not be charged for services, only for parts, gas, and oil. The Green Angels patrol daily, from dawn until sunset. If you are unable to call them, pull off the road and lift the hood of your car. Chances are good they will find you.

Rental Cars

Renting in the United States

Many car rental companies in the United States have clauses in their contracts prohibiting drivers from traveling out of the country. The Mexican police are aware of these regulations and will sometimes impound rental vehicles driven from the United States. When renting a vehicle in the United States, check with the company to see if your contract allows you to drive it into Mexico.

Renting a Car in Mexico

The standard insurance included with many car rental contracts in Mexico provides only nominal liability coverage, often as little as the equivalent of \$200. Because Mexican law permits the jailing of drivers after an accident until they have met their obligations to third parties and to the rental company, renters should read their contracts carefully and purchase additional liability and comprehensive insurance if necessary.

Bringing Your Own Plane or Boat to Mexico

Private aircraft and boats are subject to the same Mexican customs regulations as are motor vehicles. When you arrive at a Mexican port in your private boat, you can obtain a temporary import permit similar to the one given for motor vehicles.

Flying your own plane to Mexico, however, is more complicated. Well before your trip, inquire about private aircraft regulations and procedures from a Mexican consulate or Mexican Government Tourist Office.

As a visitor to Mexico, be alert to your new surroundings. Problem situations in Mexico may be different from those you are used to, and safety regulations and their enforcement are generally not equivalent to U.S. standards.

In large cities, take the same precautions against assault, robbery, or pickpockets that you would take in any large U.S. city. Be aware that women and small children, as well as men, can be pickpockets or pursesnatchers. Keep your billfold in an inner front pocket; carry your purse tucked securely under your arm; and wear the shoulder strap of your camera or bag across your chest. To guard against thieves on motorcycles, walk away from the curb and carry your purse away from the street.

Yucatan-Campeche and Quintana Roo Borders

The State of Yucatan has agricultural inspection stations on its border to eradicate swine fever and inspectors may confiscate pork products at these inspection stations. Yucatan health inspectors may hold travelers for possible arrest by Federal authorities if travelers appear in violation of any Mexican laws, such as immigration, firearms, narcotics, etc.

Military Checkpoints

Military and law enforcement checkpoints aimed at detecting narcotics, alien smuggling, and firearms traffic are located at various places throughout Mexico. Areas known to possess these checkpoints include the Yucatan peninsula, Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero. Many checkpoints will have a red flag marker and are operated by uniformed officials; however, others will not be marked and are manned by police/military officers not in uniform. These checkpoints have "spiked devices" and are sometimes used to deflate tires of vehicles attempting to evade these checkpoints.

In Case of Emergency Call (55) 5250-0123, the 24-hour hotline of the Mexican Ministry of Tourism. They also have a national toll free number: (01) 800-903-9200. You can also call the Mexican "911": in Mexico City, dial 060; in the rest of Mexico, dial 066. In Mexico City, dial 5346-8733, 8730, 8154, 8734 for police with English translators.

If an American is injured in an accident and needs immediate medical attention....

Call the Mexican Red Cross at 5395-1111, 5557-5758, 5557-5759, or 5557-5760. While the service is free, the Red Cross does request that patients give a donation. The Red Cross ambulance will deliver the patient to the nearest Red Cross hospital, which provides basic care.

If you are the victim of a crime in Mexico, in addition to reporting it to the local police, contact the U.S. Embassy or nearest U.S. consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can also assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds can be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. (See the contact information at the end of this brochure.)

Avoiding Legal Problems

While traveling in Mexico, you are subject to Mexican laws and not U.S. laws.

Tourists who commit illegal acts have no special privileges and are subject to full prosecution under the Mexican judicial system.

Avoid Public Drunkenness

It is against the law to be drunk in public in Mexico. Certain border towns have become impatient with teenage (and older) Americans who cross the border to drink and carouse. This behavior can lead to fights, arrests, traffic accidents and even fatalities.

Avoid Drug Offenses

Mexico rigorously prosecutes drug cases. Under Mexican law, possession of and trafficking in illegal drugs are federal offenses. For drug trafficking, bail does not exist. Convicted offenders can expect lengthy jail sentences and fines. Sentences for possession of drugs in Mexico can be as long as 25 years plus fines. Just as in the U.S., the purchase of controlled medication requires a doctor's prescription. The Mexican list of controlled medication differs from the U.S. list and Mexican public health laws concerning controlled medication are unclear. Possession of excessive amounts of a psychotropic drug such as Valium can result in your arrest if the authorities suspect abuse. Mexican law does not differentiate between types of narcotics. Heroin, marijuana, and amphetamines, for example, are treated the same. Offenders found guilty of possessing more than a token amount of any narcotic substance are subject to a minimum sentence of 10 months in prison, and it is not uncommon for persons charged with drug offenses to be detained for up to 1 year before a verdict is reached.

Remember, if narcotics are found in your vehicle, you are subject to arrest and your vehicle can be

confiscated.

Drugs and Prescription Medications

Penalties for drug offenses are strict, and convicted offenders can expect large fines and jail sentences of up to 25 years. The purchase of controlled medication requires a prescription from a licensed Mexican physician; some Mexican doctors have been arrested for writing prescriptions without due cause. In those instances, American citizens who bought the medications have been held in jail for months waiting for the Mexican judicial system to decide their fate. The Mexican list of controlled medication differs from that of the United States, and Mexican public health laws concerning controlled medication are unclear and often enforced selectively. To determine whether a particular medication is controlled in Mexico and requires a prescription from a Mexican doctor for purchase, please consult the website of the Mexican Federal Commission for Protection Against Health Risks at <http://www.cofepris.gob.mx/pyp/estpsic/es.htm> (in Spanish).

The U.S. Embassy recommends that U.S. citizens not travel to Mexico for the sole purpose of buying prescription drugs. U.S. citizens have been arrested and their medicines confiscated by the Mexican authorities, even though their prescriptions were written by a licensed American physician and filled by a licensed Mexican pharmacist. There have been cases of Americans buying prescription drugs in border cities only to be arrested soon after or have money extorted by criminals impersonating police officers. Those arrested are often held for the full 48 hours allowed by Mexican law without charges being filed, then released. During this interval, the detainees are often asked for bribes or are solicited by attorneys who demand large fees to secure their release, which will normally occur without any intercession, as there are insufficient grounds to bring criminal charges against the individuals. In addition, U.S. law enforcement officials believe that as much as 25 percent of medications available in Mexico are counterfeit and substandard. Such counterfeit medications may be difficult to distinguish from the real medication and could pose serious health risks to consumers. The importation of prescription drugs into the United States can be illegal in certain circumstances. U.S. law generally permits persons to enter the United States with only an immediate (about one-month's) supply of a prescription medication. Further information on bringing prescription drugs into the United States is available from U.S. Customs and Border Protection at Know Before You Go at <http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg/>.

The U.S. Embassy cautions that possession of any amount of prescription medicine brought from the United States, including medications to treat HIV and psychotropic drugs such as Valium, can result in arrest if Mexican authorities suspect abuse or if the quantity of the prescription medicine exceeds the amount required for several days' use. Individuals should consider carrying a copy of the prescription and a Mexican doctor's letter explaining that the quantity of medication is appropriate for their personal medical use.

WARNING ON FIREARMS

Do NOT take any type of firearm or ammunition into Mexico without prior written authorization from the Mexican authorities. Entering Mexico with a firearm, some kinds of knives or even a single round of ammunition is illegal, even if the weapon or ammunition is taken into Mexico unintentionally. The Mexican government strictly enforces its laws restricting the entry of firearms and ammunition along all land borders and at air and seaports. Violations have resulted in arrests, convictions and long prison sentences for U.S. citizens.

Vessels entering Mexican waters with firearms or ammunition on board must have a permit previously issued by the Mexican Embassy or a Mexican consulate. Mariners do not avoid prosecution by declaring their weapons at the port of entry. Before traveling, mariners who have obtained a Mexican firearms permit should contact Mexican port officials to receive guidance on the

specific procedures used to report and secure weapons and ammunition.

Once you cross the border with a firearm or ammunition, IT IS TOO LATE!

The Mexican judicial system is governed by Napoleonic Law, which holds that you are presumed guilty and must prove your innocence, the opposite of U.S. law.

Mexico has severe penalties for taking in any type of firearm, weapon, or ammunition without first obtaining written authorization from Mexican authorities. It does not matter whether U.S. citizens are licensed to carry the firearm in the United States, or if they unintentionally transport it while driving in their vehicle, or have it in their luggage while traveling by commercial or private plane or boat. It also does not matter if visitors to Mexico are U.S. law enforcement or military officials. Mexican authorities strictly enforce laws restricting the entry of firearms and ammunition along their borders and at air or seaports.

Each year dozens of Americans are arrested or fined in Mexico in connection with weapons violations. There are several dozen U.S. citizens currently incarcerated in Mexican prisons on weapons-related charges. Many of them inadvertently transported a firearm that they were licensed to carry in the United States without realizing they were violating Mexican laws. Some were driving across the border for a day visit, to shop or to eat in a restaurant. Remember that if caught bringing in a firearm, ammunition, or other weapon, Mexican authorities may confiscate a visitor's vehicle or other personal property and place the individual under arrest. Detained U.S. citizens may spend months in pre-trial detention while their case is being investigated. If convicted, they may face several years in a Mexican prison. While the U.S. consul can visit U.S. citizens in jail, make sure that they are being treated humanely, and provide a list of attorneys to assist with the Mexican judicial process, the U.S. consul cannot get U.S. citizens released from jail.

U.S. citizens who approach Mexico along the land border or who arrive by boat should check carefully to ensure that someone else has not left weapons or ammunition in the vehicle or boat. If U.S. citizen visitors realize they are in possession of firearms, ammunition, or other weapons, they should not proceed into Mexico. They should not attempt to enter Mexico - even to turn around - or go through Mexican Customs. All land border crossings have pull-offs or turnarounds on the U.S. side. The only way to legally import firearms and ammunition into Mexico is to secure a permit in advance from the Mexican Embassy in Washington, D.C. or from a Mexican Consulate in the United States. Mariners who have obtained a Mexican firearm permit should contact Mexican port officials before attempting to enter Mexican waters, to learn about specific procedures to report and secure weapons and ammunition.

Some cities, such as Nuevo Laredo, have ordinances prohibiting the possession of knives, similar weapons or anything that might be construed as a weapon. Tourists have even been arrested for possessing souvenir knives. Most arrests for knife possession occur in connection with some other infraction, such as drunk and disorderly behavior.

Failure to Pay Hotel Bills

Or for other services rendered is considered fraud under Mexican law. Those accused of these offenses are subject to arrest and conviction with stiff fines and jail sentences.

Purchasing Real Estate and Time Shares

U.S. citizens should be aware of the risks inherent in purchasing real estate in Mexico, and should exercise extreme caution before entering into any form of commitment to invest in property there.

Investors should hire competent Mexican legal counsel when contemplating any real estate investment. Mexican laws and practices regarding real estate differ substantially from those in the

United States. Foreigners who purchase property in Mexico may find that property disputes with Mexican citizens may not be treated evenhandedly by Mexican criminal justice authorities or in the courts.

The Mexican Constitution prohibits direct ownership by foreigners of real estate within 100 kilometers (about 62 miles) of any border, and within 50 kilometers (about 31 miles) of any coastline. In order to permit foreign investment in these areas, the Mexican government has created a trust mechanism in which a bank has title to the property, but a trust beneficiary enjoys the benefits of ownership. However, U.S. citizens are vulnerable to title challenges that may result in years of litigation and possible eviction. Title insurance is virtually unknown and untested in Mexico. In addition, Mexican law recognizes squatters' rights, and homeowners can spend thousands of dollars in legal fees and years of frustration in trying to remove squatters who occupy their property.

American property owners should consult legal counsel or local authorities before hiring employees to serve in their homes or on vessels moored in Mexico. Several American property owners have faced lengthy lawsuits for failure to comply with Mexican labor laws regarding severance pay and social security benefits.

American citizens should exercise caution when considering time-share investments and be aware of aggressive tactics used by some time-share sales representatives. Buyers should be fully informed and take sufficient time to consider their decisions before signing time-share contracts, ideally after consulting an independent attorney. Mexican law allows time-share purchasers five days to cancel the contract for unconditional and full reimbursement. U.S. citizens should never sign a contract that includes clauses penalizing the buyer who cancels within five days.

A formal complaint against any merchant should be filed with PROFECO, Mexico's federal consumer protection agency. PROFECO has the power to mediate disputes, investigate consumer complaints, order hearings, levy fines and sanctions for not appearing at hearings, and do price-check inspections of merchants. All complaints by Americans are handled by PROFECO's English-speaking office in Mexico City at 011-52-55-5211-1723. For more information, please see the PROFECO's "Attention to Foreigners" web page at Profeco (Procuraduría Federal del Consumidor).

Avoid Disputes With Merchants. Be a Careful Shopper.

Make sure the goods you buy are in good condition and always get a receipt. There is a federal consumer protection office, the Procuraduria Federal del Consumidor, to assist you if you have a major problem with a faulty product or service. If the problem is with a service of the tourist industry, you should bring the matter to the Mexican Government Tourist Office (Secretaria de Turismo).

Operating Citizens Band (CB) Equipment

American tourists are permitted to operate CB radios in Mexico. You must, however, obtain a 180-day permit for a nominal fee by presenting your U.S. citizens' band radio authorization at a Mexican consulate or Mexican Government Tourist Office. This permit cannot be obtained at the border.

Transmissions on CB equipment are allowed only on channels 9, 10 and 11 and only for personal communication and emergency road assistance. Any device that increases transmission power to over 5 watts is prohibited. CB equipment may not be used near radio installations of the aeronautical and marine services.

Criminal Penalties

While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which

sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Mexican laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Mexico are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.

Under the PROTECT Act of April 2003, it is a crime, prosecutable in the United States, for a U.S. citizen or permanent resident alien, to engage in illicit sexual conduct in a foreign country with a person under the age of 18, whether or not the U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident alien intended to engage in such illicit sexual conduct prior to going abroad. For purposes of the PROTECT Act, illicit sexual conduct includes any commercial sex act in a foreign country with a person under the age of 18. The law defines a commercial sex act as any sex act, on account of which anything of value is given to or received by a person under the age of 18.

Under the Protection of Children from Sexual Predators Act of 1998, it is a crime to use the mail or any facility of interstate or foreign commerce, including the Internet, to transmit information about a minor under the age of 16 for criminal sexual purposes that include, among other things, the production of child pornography. This same law makes it a crime to use any facility of interstate or foreign commerce, including the Internet, to transport obscene materials to minors under the age of 16.

The Mexican government is required by international law to notify the U.S. Embassy or the nearest U.S. consulate promptly when an American citizen is arrested, if the arrestee so requests. In practice, however, this notification can be delayed by months or may never occur at all, limiting the assistance the U.S. Government can provide. Americans should promptly identify themselves as such to the arresting officers, and should request that the Embassy or nearest consulate be notified immediately.

Prison conditions in Mexico can be extremely poor. In many facilities food is insufficient in both quantity and quality, and prisoners must pay for adequate nutrition from their own funds. Most Mexican prisons provide poor medical care, and even prisoners with urgent medical conditions receive only a minimum of attention. Anecdotal evidence suggests American citizens who are incarcerated in Mexico are sometimes forced to pay hundreds and even thousands of dollars in "protection money" to fellow prisoners.

Mexican police regularly obtain information through torture, and prosecutors use this evidence in courts. The Constitution and the law prohibit torture, and Mexico is party to several international anti-torture conventions, but courts continue to admit as evidence confessions extracted under torture. Authorities rarely punish officials for torture, which continues to occur in large part because confessions are the primary evidence in many criminal convictions. U.S. citizens have been brutalized, beaten, and even raped while in police custody. Since the beginning of 2002, 18 American citizens have died in Mexican prisons, including four apparent homicides.

The Mexican government has announced an aggressive program to discourage sexual tourism and to punish severely those who engage in sexual activity with minors. Soliciting the services of a minor for sexual purposes is illegal in Mexico, and is punishable by imprisonment.

Travel through Mexico to Central American Countries

Mexican authorities require that all international transit of persons (transmigrantes) and merchandise from the U.S. through Mexico, destined for Central America, be handled only at the Los Indios Bridge located south of Harlingen, Texas, on Route 509. Every transmigrante must obtain the services of a Mexican customs broker to prepare the documents required by Mexican Customs for

their entry into Mexico.

Transmigrantes must declare everything they are bringing through Mexico or any undeclared items found by Mexican Customs will/will be confiscated. Although items for international transit are not taxed, transmigrantes will have to pay a fee to the customs broker for their professional services. The customs broker is responsible for informing the transmigrante about items that are prohibited for international transit.

Crossing into Mexico by a bridge other than Los Indios is considered importation of goods and will result in everything being taxed. When the transmigrante leaves Mexico through Chiapas, he must then also pay export taxes. The earlier "import" tax is not returned.

Transmigrantes on their way to Central America have ten days to leave Mexico through Chiapas. Mexican Customs now has a barcode system that controls the entry and exit of transmigrantes.

Americans who intend to transit Mexico are cautioned that some unscrupulous vendors on the U.S. side, known as "grupos," purport to be Mexican customs brokers but are not. "Grupos" have been known to charge large sums of money but do not provide the required services that only bona fide Mexican customs brokers can, potentially leaving the American transmigrante bilked and his goods confiscated.

Currently, there are only two Mexican customs brokers handling transmigrantes. For further information, travelers can contact the U.S. Consulate in Matamoros prior to departing the U.S. at (011-52) 868-812-4402 and ask for the American Citizens Services Unit, or visit the Consulate's Web site at <http://matamoros.usconsulate.gov/>.

U.S. Assistance in Mexico

Where To Turn If You Have Serious Legal or Financial Difficulties

Legal Problems

If you find yourself in serious difficulty while in Mexico, contact a consular officer at the U.S. Embassy or the nearest U.S. consulate for assistance. U.S. consuls cannot serve as attorneys or give legal assistance. They can, however, provide lists of local attorneys and advise you of your rights under Mexican laws.

Worldwide, Mexico has the highest number of arrests of Americans abroad - over 1,000 per year - and the highest prison population of U.S. citizens outside of the United States - about 800 at any one time. If you are arrested, ask permission to notify the U.S. Embassy or nearest U.S. consulate. Under international agreements and practice, you have the right to talk with an American consul. Although U.S. consuls are limited in what they can do to assist you in legal difficulties, they can monitor the status of detained U.S. citizens and make sure they are treated fairly under local laws. They will also notify your relatives or friends upon your request.

An individual is guaranteed certain rights under the Mexican constitution, but those rights differ significantly from U.S. constitutional guarantees. The Mexican judicial system is based on Roman and Napoleonic law and presumes a person accused of a crime to be guilty until proven innocent. There is no trial by jury or writ of habeas corpus in the Anglo-American sense. Trial under the Mexican system is a prolonged process based largely on documents examined on a fixed date in court by prosecution and defense counsel. Sentencing usually takes 6 to 10 months. Bail can be granted after sentencing if the sentence is less than 5 years. Pre-trial bail exists but is never granted when the possible sentence upon conviction is greater than 5 years.

Financial Problems

Consular officers can arrange the transfer of emergency funds to you if you become destitute as a result of robbery, accident or other emergency.

Shopping - Some Things To Beware of Buying

Wildlife and Wildlife Products

Beware of purchasing souvenirs made from endangered wildlife. Mexican markets and stores abound with wildlife, most of it prohibited from international traffic. You risk confiscation and a possible fine by U.S. Customs and Border Protection if you attempt to import virtually any wildlife from Mexico. In particular, watch out for and avoid:

- All products made from sea turtles, including such items as turtle leather boots, tortoise-shell jewelry, and sea turtle oil cosmetics

- Fur from spotted cats

- Mexican birds, stuffed or alive, such as parrots, parakeets, or birds of prey

- Crocodile and caiman leather

- Black coral jewelry

- Wildlife curios, such as stuffed iguanas

When driving across state lines within Mexico, you can expect to be stopped at agricultural livestock inspection stations.

Antiquities

Mexico considers all pre-Colombian objects to be the "inalienable property of the Nation" and that the unauthorized export of such objects is theft and is punishable by arrest, detention and judicial prosecution. Under U.S. law, to import pre-Colombian monumental and architectural sculpture and murals, you must present proof that they were legally exported from the country of origin. U.S. law does not prohibit the import of nonmonumental or nonarchitectural artifacts from Mexico.

Glazed Ceramics

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, it is possible to suffer lead poisoning if you consume food or beverages that have been stored or served in improperly glazed ceramic ware. Analysis of many ceramic pieces from Mexico has shown them to contain dangerous levels of lead. Unless you have proof of their safety, use glazed ceramics purchased in Mexico for decorative purposes only.

Returning to the United States

You must present the visitor's copy of your tourist card at your point of departure from Mexico; you will be required to pay a fine if you cannot do so. If you are returning by motor vehicle, you will need to show your vehicle import permit when you cross the border. At the time of publication, the airport departure tax is \$10 or the equivalent in Mexican currency for those returning by commercial airline.

U.S. Customs

The duty-free exemption, also called the personal exemption, is the total value of merchandise you may bring back to the United States without having to pay duty. You may bring back more than your

exemption, but you will have to pay duty on it. For Canada, the personal exemption is \$800, but there are some exceptions to this rule. There are limits on the amount of alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, cigars, and other tobacco products you may include in your duty-free personal exemption.

The duty-free exemptions apply if:

The items are for your personal or household use or intended to be given as bonafide gifts.

They are in your possession, that is, they accompany you when you return to the United States. Items to be sent later may not be included in your \$800 duty-free exemption.

They are declared to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). If you do not declare something that should have been declared, you risk forfeiting it. If in doubt, declare it.

You are returning from an overseas stay of at least 48 hours. For example, if you leave the United States at 1:30 p.m. on June 1, you would complete the 48-hour period at 1:30 p.m. on June 3.

You have not used all of your exemption allowance, or used any part of it, in the past 30 days—for example, if you go to Canada and bring back \$150 worth of items—you must wait another 30 days before you are allowed another \$800 exemption.

The items are not prohibited or restricted.

Tobacco: Travelers may import previously exported tobacco products only in quantities not exceeding the amounts specified in exemptions for which the traveler qualifies. Any quantities of previously exported tobacco products not permitted by an exemption will be seized and destroyed. These items are typically purchased in duty-free stores, on carriers operating internationally, or in foreign stores. These items are usually marked “Tax Exempt. For Use Outside the United States,” or “U.S. Tax Exempt For Use Outside the United States.”

For example, a returning resident is eligible for the \$800 exemption, which includes not more than 200 cigarettes and 100 cigars. If the resident declares 400 previously exported cigarettes, the resident would be permitted 200 cigarettes, tax-free under the exemption and the remaining 200 previously exported cigarettes would be confiscated. If the resident declares 400 cigarettes, of which 200 are previously exported and 200 not previously exported, the resident would be permitted to import the 200 previously exported cigarettes tax free under the exemption and the resident would be charged duty and tax on the remaining 200 foreign-made cigarettes.

The tobacco exemption is available to each adult. Except for information and informational materials, no traveler (whether traveling legally under an Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) license or traveling illegally without an OFAC license) may import Cuban origin goods, including Cuban cigars, unless authorized to do so by a specific license issued by OFAC.

Alcoholic Beverages: One liter (33.8 fl. oz.) of alcoholic beverages may be included in your exemption if:

You are 21 years old.

It is for your own use or as a gift.

It does not violate the laws of the state in which you arrive.

Federal regulations allow you to bring back more than one liter of alcoholic beverage for personal use, but, as with extra tobacco, you will have to pay duty and Internal Revenue Service tax.

While Federal regulations do not specify a limit on the amount of alcohol you may bring back for personal use, unusual quantities are liable to raise suspicions that you are importing the alcohol for

other purposes, such as for resale. CBP officers are authorized by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) to make on-the-spot determinations that an importation is for commercial purposes, and may require you to obtain a permit to import the alcohol before releasing it to you. If you intend to bring back a substantial quantity of alcohol for your personal use, you should contact the port through which you will be re-entering the country, and make prior arrangements for entering the alcohol into the United States.

Also, you should be aware that state laws might limit the amount of alcohol you can bring in without a license. If you arrive in a state that has limitations on the amount of alcohol you may bring in without a license, that state law will be enforced by CBP, even though it may be more restrictive than federal regulations. We recommend that you check with the state government before you go abroad about their limitations on quantities allowed for personal importation and additional state taxes that might apply.

In brief, for both alcohol and tobacco, the quantities listed as being eligible for duty-free treatment may be included in your \$800 exemption, just as any other purchase would be. But unlike other kinds of merchandise, amounts beyond those discussed here as being duty-free are taxed, even if you have not exceeded, or even met, your personal exemption. For example, if your exemption is \$800 and you bring back three liters of wine and nothing else, two of those liters will be dutiable. Federal law prohibits shipping alcoholic beverages by mail within the United States.

Money and Other Monetary Instruments: You may bring into or take out of the country, including by mail, as much money as you wish. However, if it is more than \$10,000, you will need to report it to CBP. Ask the CBP officer for the Currency Reporting Form (FinCen 105). The penalties for non-compliance can be severe.

“Money” means monetary instruments and includes U.S. or foreign coins currently in circulation, currency, travelers’ checks in any form, money orders, and negotiable instruments or investment securities in bearer form.

Visit the U.S. Customs web site at <http://www.cbp.gov> for specific, detailed information.

Importation of Food, Plant, and Animal Products Into the U.S.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture establishes criteria for the admissibility of plant, dairy and meat products returning with travelers and has the final say about what may be admitted into the U.S. Disease and pest outbreaks, which impact the admissibility status of fresh and packaged food items, occur all over the world at a moments notice. For the most current information, contact the USDA at 301-734-8896.

Failure to declare all food products can result in civil penalties.

Because CBP inspectors are stationed at ports of entry and along our land and sea borders, they are often called upon to enforce laws and requirements of other government agencies. Because of the complexities of regulations governing the importation of food, CBP officers may need to contact an expert for information about what is or is not admissible. If no expert is available, food may be detained in the interest of preventing possible food-borne diseases into the U.S. This is done to protect community health, preserve domestic plant and animals life, etc.

Bakery items, candy, chocolate, and cured cheese are generally admissible. Canned goods and goods in vacuum-packed jars (other than those containing meat or poultry products) are also generally admissible if being imported for personal use.

Dairy items such as **milk, yogurt, butter** are generally admissible, although this is subject to change,

depending on disease outbreaks. Eggs may be admissible, although frequent outbreaks of Exotic Newcastles Disease and avian flu make it very likely that they will be denied entry. Hard cured cheese such as parmesan or cheddar are generally admissible, soft cheeses such as brie and soft curd cheese and cheese in water (ricotta, feta, etc.) are not.

Fish, if it is for your personal use, is generally admissible.

Condiments such as oil, vinegar, mustard, catsup, pickles, syrup, honey, jelly, jam, etc., are generally admissible.

Many fruits and vegetables are either prohibited from entering the United States or require an import permit (for commercial importers) or a phytosanitary certificate from the country of origin. Every fruit or vegetable must be declared to a CBP Officer and must be presented for inspection - no matter how free of pests it appears to be. Failure to declare food products can result in a \$10,000 fine.

Meats, livestock, poultry, and their products are either prohibited or restricted from entering the United States, depending on the animal disease condition in the country of origin. If there is any question as to the country of origin, the product will be denied entry. **Pet food with meat by-products is not admissible as traveler's baggage.**

The U.S. Customs Service currently permits U.S. citizens returning from international travel to bring back \$400 worth of merchandise, including 1 liter of alcohol, duty free. The next \$1,000 worth of items brought back is subject to a duty of 10%.

In addition to U.S. Customs regulations, be aware that some U.S. border states (most notably, Texas) have imposed restrictions on liquor, wine and beer imports from Mexico. If you are planning to bring back alcoholic beverages, inquire about these restrictions from the liquor control office of the state through which you plan to return.

U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Mexico

American Embassy
Paseo de la Reforma 305
Colonia Cuauhtemoc
Mexico 06500, D.F.
Telephone from the United States: 011-52-55-5080-2000
Telephone within Mexico City: 5080-2000
Long distance telephone within Mexico 01-55-5080-2000
<http://mexico.usembassy.gov>

American Consulate General
Avenue Lopez Mateos 924-N
Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua
Tel: (52)(656) 611-3000
<http://ciudadjuarez.usconsulate.gov>

American Consulate General
Progreso 175
Guadalajara, Jalisco
Tel [52] (33) 3825-2998/2700
<http://www.usembassy-mexico.gov/guadalajara/guadalajara.htm>

American Consulate General
Avenida Constitucion 411 Poniente
Monterrey , Nuevo Leon, 64000
Tel [52] (81) 8345-2120
<http://www.usembassy-mexico.gov/monterrey/Monterrey.html>

American Consulate General
Tapachula 96
Tijuana , Baja California
Tel [52] (664) 622-7400
<http://www.usembassy-mexico.gov/tijuana/Tijuana.htm>

American Consulate
Ave. Monterrey 141 Pte.
Hermosillo , Sonora
Tel [52] (662) 289-3500
<http://hermosillo.usconsulate.gov/hermosillo-esp/>

American Consulate
Ave. Primera 2002
Matamoros , Tamaulipas
Tel [52] (868) 812-4402
<http://matamoros.usconsulate.gov>

American Consulate
Paseo Montejo 453
Merida , Yucatan
Tel [52] (999) 925-5011

American Consulate
Calle Allende 3330, Col. Jardin
Nuevo Laredo , Tamaulipas
Tel [52] (867) 714-0512
<http://nuevolaredo.usconsulate.gov>

U.S. Consular Agents

Resident consular agents have been designated in other locations in Mexico to assist U.S. citizens in serious emergencies. Each consular agent is supervised by one of the above-listed offices and may be contacted through it or by calling the consular agent s direct number.

Acapulco: Hotel Continental Emporio Costera Miguel Aleman 121 - Local 14, telephone (52)(744) 484-0300 or (52)(744) 469-0556

Cabo San Lucas: Blvd. Marina Local C-4, Plaza Nautica, Col. Centro, telephone (52)(624) 143-3566

Cancun: Plaza Caracol Two, Second Level, No. 320-323, Boulevard Kukulcan, km. 8.5, Zona Hotelera, telephone (52)(998) 883-0272

Ciudad Acuna: Ocampo # 305, Col. Centro, telephone (52)(877) 772-8661

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

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

Mazatlan: Hotel Playa Mazatlan , Playa Gaviotas #202, Zona Dorada, telephone (52)(669) 916-5889

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

Piedras Negras: Prol. General Cepeda No. 1900, Fraccionamiento Privada Blanca, telephone (52) (867) 788-0343

Puerto Vallarta: Zaragoza #160, Col. Centro, Edif. Vallarta Plaza , Piso 2 Int.18, telephone (52) (322) 222-0069, <http://www.usembassy-mexico.gov/guadalajara/Vallarta.htm>

Reynosa: Calle Monterrey #390, Esq. Sinaloa, Colonia Rodriguez, telephone: (52)(899) 923 – 9331

San Luis Potosi: Edificio “Las Terrazas”, Avenida Venustiano Carranza 2076-41, Col. Polanco, telephone: (52)(444) 811-7802

San Miguel de Allende: Dr. Hernandez Macias #72, telephone (52)(415) 152-2357 or (52)(415) 152-0068

Planning Another Trip?

Consular Affairs publishes the following pamphlets:

General Travel Information

A Safe Trip Abroad- contains helpful precautions one can take to minimize the chance of becoming a victim of terrorism or crime.

Tips for Americans Residing Abroad- offers information for U.S. citizens living abroad on dual citizenship, tax regulations, voting, and other consular services.

Travel Tips for Older Americans- contains special health, safety and travel information for older Americans.

Travel Tips for Students- contains safety and travel information for Americans student.

Tips for Women Traveling Alone- offers safety and travel information that is especially useful for women who are traveling alone.

Your Trip Abroad- offers tips on obtaining a passport, considerations in preparing for your trip and traveling, and other sources of information.

Country Specific Information

The following brochures contain information on currency regulations, customs, and dual nationality for specific areas of the world:

Tips for Travelers to Canada

Tips for Travelers to the Caribbean

Tips for Travelers to Central & South America

Tips for Travelers to Mexico

Tips for Travelers to the Middle East & North Africa

Tips for Travelers to the People's Republic of China

Tips for Travelers to Russia

Tips for Travelers to South Asia

Tips for Travelers to Sub-Saharan Africa

Tips for Travelers for Business Travelers to Nigeria

Advance Fee Business Fraud

- contains useful information for persons engaging in business abroad

Passports: Applying for Them the Easy Way

- provides information on how, where and the best time to apply for a U.S. passport.

Travel Smart/Travel Safe

- contains general safety tips and travel information.

Travel Tips for Students

- contains safety and travel information for students studying, residing and/or traveling abroad.



This site is managed by the Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views contained therein. Copyright Information Disclaimers