

SERVICES AND INFORMATION – Abbey del Sol Too

ON THE PROPERTY:

CHECKING OUT Check out time - 10 A.M. **AIR CONDITIONING** PLEASE TURN OFF WHEN YOU LEAVE DURING THE DAY

THE MAIN OFFICE IS LOCATED AT ABBEY DEL SOL TOO – HOW TO CONTACT THE STAFF

If there is anything you need please stop by the office at Abbey del Sol Too. If no one is there then use the wireless phone that is either sitting on the counter or on top of the big desk by the window:

Jin - 044-998-115-2244

Freddy – 044-998-131-9418

Abby – 044-998-179-4234

If you call from your US cell phone while in Mexico you dial it exactly as listed above, don't dial an access code or country code. If the office is closed you can knock on Jin's door (right below apartment 3) or Abby & Tiff's apartment #6 (second floor facing the street) at A2.

OUR MANAGER AND HIS FAMILY

We want to make your stay as relaxed and enjoyable as possible. Our manager and his family live onsite at Abbey One. Feel free to knock on his door and ask Tere to call him on his cell phone if you need him and can't find him. Jin's Mexican name is Efrain but he's had the nickname Jin since he was a boy. Jin's wife is Teresa (or Tere) and his daughters are Mildred (Mil) who is 8 and Valeria who is 3. Jin's brother, Freddy, is our assistant manager. Jin and Freddy speak English and are happy to help you in any way they can. If you enjoy your stay and love the way the garden and property look, Jin and his family are 100% responsible. Abbey del Sol is more than a business to them it is their home, too.

SAFE – Each apartment has its own safe large enough to accommodate a laptop. If you can't open it, stop at the office and we can get the master key to open it for you.

EMERGENCY LIGHTS – Each apartment has an emergency light bar plugged in someplace in the apartment. When the electricity goes out it runs on its batteries. There should also be a flashlight and candles in your kitchen cupboard.

INTERNET ACCESS

Choose either Abby1 or Abby2 under wireless connections. Check at the office for the most recent password.

DVD PLAYER AND DVD LIBRARY

We have a DVD player in each apartment and a DVD library at the office. If you break the DVD player we will ask you to reimburse us \$75 USD to replace it. We do not charge for DVD rental, but we just ask that you return them the next day. If you have any trouble getting your TV or DVD player to work ask Jin or Freddy to help. You have Dish Cable at Abbey One with US channels.

MUSIC CHANNEL ON THE CABLE STATIONS OR BORROW A BOOM BOX

We have cable in all of our units. The Dish Cable at Abbey One has music channels, maybe in the 900 channel range. We also have a couple of CD player "boom boxes" for guest use.

DOCTOR

There are a number of options for doctors in town. Dr. Javier Olea's office is on the main boulevard 2 blocks from the town square. His number is 884-8733. There is also a 24 hour emergency office up near the Pemex station on the highway. Have Jin call for you. If you have a medical emergency don't hesitate to find Jin even if it is the middle of the night.

TOWELS & MAID SERVICE

We do not change linens every day. If you need a new towel they are in the laundry room. Leave your dirty towel on the floor. PLEASE DO NOT GET A NEW TOWEL EVERY DAY! We try and keep our costs down so that we can keep the rental fees down. If you are staying longer than a week then your apartment will be cleaned every 7 days. Please check with the office to schedule the best time for you. You may have your apartment cleaned more frequently for \$15 a time.

LAUNDRY SERVICE

You can have your laundry done for \$4 US or \$40 pesos per load. Please do not use the laundry on your own, our machines are very persnickety. At Abbey One, bring the clothes to Tere. At Abbey Too, bring the clothes to the office.

BABY SITTING SERVICE

If you give us enough lead time, we usually can arrange to find a qualified babysitter. Most of the baby sitters speak only Spanish. To find an English speaking babysitter will be more of a challenge, but given enough lead time we should be able to accommodate your needs.

BABY CRIB AND BEDS

We have a port-a-crib available for use. We do not have bedding for it so you will have to bring your own. The mattresses on our beds are firm. If you need a foam mattress cover to make it a bit softer, ask at the office.

CHARCOAL GRILL

The grill is for use by anyone in the property. Be sure to check our charcoal supply. You may have to buy your own if we are out. The grocery store does have charcoal occasionally; otherwise it has to be purchased across the highway in the Colonia. You can ask in the morning at the office and we can have more available in the evening.

KITCHEN SUPPLIES

If you need dishes, kitchen utensils, more garbage bags, etc., ask at the office. Because it is so easy to break glassware on all our hard surfaces, you are provided with plastic ware in your unit. If you prefer glass, it is available at the office for a deposit.

DRINKING WATER & EATING SAFELY

The first 20 liter (5 gal) bottle of drinking water is free. If you need more water it is \$4 USD or \$40 pesos, just ask one of the staff for a new bottle and please pay for it at the office. Do not drink the water from the tap. It is fine to brush your teeth with but try not to swallow. The town water has a lot of chlorine in it so it is probably pretty safe, but its best to not drink it.

When you are touring you can purchase bottled water in most grocery stores or at kiosks near the entrance of most tourist sites. You can of course refill a plastic bottle from your water supply in your apartment to take with you. If you have a sensitive digestive or immune system you should refrain from having drinks prepared with a lot of ice and have only sodas, beer or wine. Likewise, eating raw fish like ceviche and certain kinds of sushi can be tricky in Mexico. Lime does not completely "cook" all the bacteria in ceviche. Usually these foods are prepared safely but there is no way to be absolutely certain when traveling in a foreign country.

We recommend that you always wash any fruit or vegetables you purchase. We try to supply a fruit and vegetable rinse in each apartment. If there isn't one in yours ask at the office or you can purchase a mild bleach cleaner from most of the grocery stores here. One of the brands is MICRODYN – a drop or two in your wash water will eliminate all bacteria.

Official travel websites recommend that you eat only foods that are thoroughly cooked and that have not been "sitting" on a table or hot plate for an extended period of time. If you run into difficulties there is a doctor in town.

GARBAGE

Please take your garbage out regularly to help keep the pest population down. **DO NOT LEAVE FOOD OUT OR CRUMBS ON THE COUNTER OR SURFACES, IT WILL ATTRACT ANTS.** For the front building take the garbage across the street to Casa Anita's bins and for the back building go out the back gate and to the right.

MASSAGE & ADVANCED BODY WORK

Right next door to Abbey2 we have an excellent massage therapist, Fernando. For many years he was a holistic doctor in Cancun and has chosen a more quiet and rewarding life here in Puerto. He will come to your apartment for about \$60/90 minutes (his rates may change - so just ask.)

Martina's Spa is two blocks away and she does very nice massage and spa treatments. She can also come to the house if you prefer. Her rates and contact number are listed in this book.

If you have an injury or muscular problem there is also an excellent advanced bodywork therapist, Mauro Jaramillo 044-998-103-8791, in town in the winter months and his office is only 2 doors from Abbey Too.

NOISE AND LOUD VOICES

Noise and loud voices REALLY carry in our property. All the buildings have hard concrete walls and the noise bounces off them and voices can be heard easily by the neighbors. Please be respectful of the neighbors both here at Abbey del Sol and next door. 10 p.m. "curfew."

BICYCLES

We have a number of bikes available for guest use on a first come, first serve basis. Some are kept at A1, some at A2. You are welcome to take bikes from whichever property has them. There is a hand air pump in the office if the tires need air. We do not have any locks.

BEACH UMBRELLAS AND CHAIRS

There should be 2 beach chairs in each apartment. We ask that you be very careful with them and make sure they are in your apartments when you check-out. They are expensive to replace and if one is lost it will be a \$40 charge to your account to replace it. We have a few beach umbrellas that are available on a first come first serve basis. Ask in the office.

ROOF TOP PATIO – USE WITH CARE

The roof top patio is available for all guests. PLEASE be very careful as you go up and down the stairs. DO NOT leave any trash, dishes or personal items behind. There should be three hammocks for general use. If they are in poor condition please let the staff know so we can replace them.

Please be respect of our neighbors privacy and also please be aware how much noise and loud voices carry. People a few houses away can probably hear a conversation if it is at a higher volume.

FOOT CLEANING STATIONS

When you return from the beach or from hiking through town we ask that you stop to give your feet a rinse. For your convenience we have a faucet and a shower located by the pool. Please do not rinse the sand off in the apartment shower, it clogs the drain.

AROUND THE TOWN:

ATM'S AND BANKING

There are no banks in Puerto Morelos. There are, however, two ATM machines and 1 currency exchange window (Cambio.) Two ATM machines are on either side of the grocery store on the square. There is another one up on the highway. You get the best exchange rate, usually, with your ATM card.

MONEY EXCHANGE

There is a Cambio window (change windows) in Puerto Morelos next to the market on the square. If you change currency into pesos at a Cambio COUNT YOUR MONEY VERY CAREFULLY AND CHECK THE MATH ON THE ADDING MACHINE TAPE. Some of the Cambio cashiers are hoping that you aren't careful and they may cheat you. DO NOT BRING TRAVELER'S CHECKS. The Cambios won't take them and the stores and restaurants never do. Even many of the banks won't cash them.

Most stores and restaurants take US dollars (but probably not Canadian.) Switch to using pesos as soon as you can, you will get more "bang for your buck." The exchange rate varies. Average about 13 pesos to the US dollar.

GROCERIES & LIQUOR STORE

There is a grocery store located down by the wharf and the central square that has most of your basic needs. The fresh fruit and meat is in a separate room in the back, right corner of the store. If you are going to cook a lot you may want to consider going into Cancun or Playa del Carmen to shop at Walmart, Sam's Club, or any of the big Mexican grocery stores. They do sell liquor at the grocery store. The cheapest liquor is at Wal-Mart or Sam's Club in Playa or Cancun.

RESTAURANTS

There are a surprising number of restaurants in Puerto Morelos for such a little town. There are many European, American and Canadian visitors here so the locals have learned to cater to many tastes. Prices range from a moderate (\$6US a meal) to expensive (\$50US a meal.) Please see our list of local restaurants in this book for our recommendations

BARTERING AND BUYING IN TOWN

Much of what you can buy in the way of tourist items anywhere in the Cancun area you can find at one of the little stores here in PM. We like to support our local merchants since helping this town prosper is part of being a good neighbor. The Artisan's Market on the south side of town is worth strolling through. Most merchants quote a price 25 to 50% higher than what they will settle for. Aggressive bartering is tiresome for them. Most of them are barely feeding their families so a couple extra bucks to them is much more important than it probably is to you. They have 3 months a year to make their money since this town is pretty quiet the other 9 months.

WALKING TOUR OF THE COLONIA - BEST PLACES TO FIND FRESH FRUITS, VEGETABLES AND FOODS

We offer a walking tour of the Colonia area (on the other side of the highway where the locals live) to show you where to buy the best fresh fruits and vegetables as well as inexpensive authentic Mexican cafes and food vendors. Check at the office for the next tour.

COOKING CLASS – AUTHENTIC MAYAN DISHES

We have a couple of options for cooking classes. Check with the office.

MARKETS AND OTHER BUYING EVENTS

There is a local produce market in Puerto Morales every Wednesday morning where you can purchase excellent fruits and vegetables. The market sets up on the south side of the Church in the town square at 7:30 a.m. and is there until around noontime.

You will also hear a vendor on a loud speaker in the neighborhood most days who sells oranges, mangos and pineapples from the back of his truck. His produce is usually good and inexpensive.

There is also a jungle market on the west side of the highway on Sunday's where you can get good produce and handicrafts. Ask us at the office for directions.

Also on Wednesdays and Fridays you can attend a Spa Day in the jungle from 10 AM – 4 PM. The local Mayan women offer such services as pedicures, manicures, massages and facials. Stop by our office for directions and more information.

NIGHT LIFE

There is little in the way of nightlife in our sleepy little town. There are 3 or 4 bars that are open until 1 a.m. In the winter a couple of the bars have music Thurs, Fri, Sat. and sometimes Sunday. Most people go into Cancun or Playa del Carmen if they want activity after 10 p.m. Playa del Carmen is my first recommendation. In Playa you can stroll up and down the cobblestone "pedestrian only" boulevard and stop at any restaurant, bar or shop that grabs your fancy. It's about 12 blocks long and fun. Playa del Carmen is about 30 minutes south of us. You can take a taxi there for \$35 or a bus for \$2.

Cancun's hotel zone is also a possibility for nightlife if you like more noise and glitz. Personally, I think it's too expensive to put up with the crowds, but it might be just the thing for you.

AA MEETINGS

There are three 6 P.M. meetings at Mama's bakery every week. Additional meeting schedules and Al-Anon meeting information can be found there

SNORKELING, TOURS AND FUN THINGS TO DO (see Suggested Activities page)

To get the very best from your stay with us remember ask Abby, Jin or Freddy for recommendations. We can arrange outings for you and, if we aren't too busy, Freddy or Jin may be available for hire along with their car to be your tour guide. Snorkeling is best on a sunny day with little wind. They are not frequent in the winter months so if you see that the weather is fine grab the day and go! In the summer the wind is less and the good days are much more frequent.

BEACH AND SWIMMING

For most of the year the ocean is warm and safe to swim in. From March to June, however, look for little jelly fish floating in the water; their sting very painful. Look in our Medical Reference section to get more information. We have anti-sting lotion in our office for sale that may help prevent being stung.

Do not swim too far out from the beach to snorkel unless you have a diver's flag. Boats do speed by and do not always see swimmers. Going out on the snorkeling boats to the reef is definitely the best snorkeling experience; lots of fish and things to see. Ask Jin to arrange a trip for you. It is around \$22/person, including gear, for a 1 ½ hour trip.

We have lovely beaches in Puerto Morelos and the water is usually warm and clear. The sands move around a lot after every big storm so stroll up and down the beach to see where the best access point is. You can avoid the sea grass patches easily. Occasionally, here are sting rays, so look down and shuffle your feet when you are in shallow water. If you do get stung it hurts a lot for a couple of hours. You can call the doctor (see below) if you are concerned.

TELEPHONE & EMERGENCY NUMBERS

We have a Vonage phone in our office with a Minnesota number. If you would like to give an emergency number to someone back in the states it is 651-690-3937. They would dial it just as if they were calling Minnesota. They can leave a message if it isn't answered and Abby will be sure to get the message to you.

Another option is to dial Jin's cell phone: 011-52-1-998-115-2244 or the office phone 011-52-998-871-0127.

CELL PHONES

Cell phone numbers in this area all start with 044. To dial a cell phone from a land line phone you must dial the 044. To dial a cell phone from another Mexican cell phone you drop the 044. To dial a Mexican cell phone from a US cell phone you DO dial the 044 but do not dial a country code or access code. Jin's cell phone is 044-998-115-2244 if you need to call him. To call his phone from the states dial 011-52-1-998-115-2244.

SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE AND GETTING TO KNOW THE LOCALS

If you can attempt to speak Spanish, it is always appreciated. About 25% of the locals you meet will speak English. For many Mayan is their first language, Spanish their second and English their third. The most important thing to remember is to be friendly and respectful and people will respond in kind. The people here love it if you try to speak their language and will try to help you learn more if you are open to it.

Mexico is a poor country and the Mexican's have tremendous pride. They very much want what the tourists have and are hoping to build friendships so that more of the American lifestyle can be theirs. However at the same time they want to retain their heritage and customs. Being sensitive to this dilemma will help you make friends and be treated well. However, be aware that for some poor Mexicans tourists are only as a source of money and they are being friendly to get your money.

TAXIS

Taking a taxi is a popular way to get around our little town. The charge is usually \$2 US or \$20 pesos. You can have someone in the office call you a taxi 871-0090 or you can flag one down on the street. The main taxi stand is on the corner of the town square. All the taxis know Abbey del Sol 1 and 2.

CANCUN, PLAYA DEL CARMEN AND BEYOND

BUSES

Buses are also a good way to get around as long as you don't mind taking the extra time to use them. There is a little local bus that goes around town and can take you up to the highway (called the Crusero [the cross or intersection]) or over into the Colonia (the non-tourist part of town across the highway where the locals live.) It costs about 40 cents (\$4 pesos.)

The ADO bus line is a great way to get to Playa del Carmen or to Cancun. They are very nice buses; similar to a tourist bus in the states, and it is only \$2.50 to ride it. You take a taxi or the local bus to get to the Crusero (highway) and then buy your ticket at the ticket window. Do not take the MAYAB line, it is the local highway bus that stops all the time and is very crowded and uncomfortable. The ADO line is a non-stop either south to Playa del Carmen, Tulum or north to Cancun.

CAR RENTAL

We can help arrange a car or van rental for you. There are two rental companies in Puerto Morelos, Europcar right by the church on the square and Executive up on the highway next to the Pemex. Rates vary depending on the season so check at the office for a current bid. Your rental is required, by Mexican law, to include basic car insurance. Many of the rental agents in Cancun will tell you it isn't and try to push you to get more insurance. It is up to you how covered you want to be. Puerto Morelos is a pretty safe town and, during the day, Cancun and Playa are too (just lock the car and do not leave valuables inside.) We have been told that none of your American insurance will apply down here, so please check on this carefully.

POLICE CHECK POINTS

You will notice when you are in Mexico that there is a high police presence everywhere. Unfortunately, some of the police see tourists as a good source of extra cash. Our best advice to you is to be very conscious of the speed limits when you are traveling and ALWAYS have everyone in the car keep their seat belts on.

If you are pulled over they will ask for your Driver's License and tell you they will impound the car and take you to the police station. This is all part of an act that leads to asking you for money. If they ask for \$5000 pesos (\$500 US) just tell them you don't have that kind of money, would \$10 US do? If you are Canadian tell them you only have a few Canadian dollars and haven't gotten any pesos yet. You can say "Is there anything I can do to avoid having to go to the station?" Mostly, just play dumb and pretend you do not understand what they are saying or what they want. There is a chance they will get bored and let you go without having to pay. Speaking Spanish doesn't seem to help. Whatever you do DON'T GET ANGRY that will really get you in trouble. If you are woman tears seem to work pretty well with these macho guys. If you are tied up for an unreasonable length of time give Jin a call on his cell: 044-998-115-2244 and see if he can talk to them for you.

You can also "call their bluff" and ask for an official ticket and an opportunity to go to the police station and talk to the police chief because you are sure you didn't do anything wrong. I haven't tried this technique but some guests told me it works as a last resort.