

SERVICES AND INFORMATION – Casa Ricardo

THE MAIN OFFICE IS LOCATED AT ABBEY DEL SOL TOO

If there is anything you need or questions you have please stop by the office and talk to Abby or whomever is on duty.

OUR MANAGER AND HIS FAMILY

We want to make your stay as relaxed and enjoyable as possible. Our manager and business partner Jin and his family live onsite at Abbey One or Abbey Too. 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 7 and Valeria who is 2. Jin's brother Freddy also works for us as Jin's assistant. 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.

If you need to contact Jin when he is away from the property you may use the office phone at Abbey Too, call him on his cell phone: 044-998-115-2244. If you call him from your US cell phone while in Mexico you dial it exactly like that; don't dial an access code or country code.

Jin and his family live in the small house in the back left corner of Abbey One. Feel free to walk over there and knock on his door and ask Tere to call him on his cell phone if you need him and can't find him. Freddy and his fiancé Leni live in the little room by the pool at Abbey Too. He can help you with anything you need.

SAFE – There is a safe by the TV in the living room behind some books. If you can't open it call the office 871-0127 and ask for help.

EMERGENCY LIGHTS - The electricity in town goes out occasionally. There should also be a flash light and candles in your kitchen cupboard.

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 you aren't careful and they may cheat you. **DO NOT BRING TRAVELER'S CHECKS**. The Cambio's won't take them anymore and the stores and restaurants never do so the only place to cash them is a bank and it is a pain.

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 rides around 10 pesos to the US dollar.

ATM'S AND BANKING

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

INTERNET ACCESS

There is a dial-up internet service that sometimes works. You are welcome to use the computer if you like. There is a computer at the Abbey office available for guests use with high speed internet access. There is also wireless access available at both Abbey's.

If you can't get it set up or need computer assistance you can hire the local computer expert to help you, his name is Gama; ask Jin to call him for you and help you translate since Gama's English is limited.

DVD PLAYER AND DVD LIBRARY

There is a large DVD library at the office. You are welcome to check out as many as you like. We do not charge for DVD rental, we just ask that you return them the next day. If you break the DVD player we will ask you to reimburse us \$75 USD to replace it..

CABLE TV – ENGLISH CHANNELS – MUSIC CHANNELS

Casa Ricardo has DishTV Satellite cable with American channels. If you have trouble with it call Jin.

DOCTOR - Dr. Carlos Taboada speaks English, French and Spanish and makes house calls; Office 206-9334. There is also a 24 hour emergency medical service on the other side of the highway, 206-9377. Call Jin's cell phone 044-998-115-2244 or knock on Jin or Freddy's door anytime of the night if it is an emergency and they can help you.

LAUNDRY SERVICE

If for any reason the washer and dryer can not handle your laundry we do have a laundry service for \$4US a load.

MAID SERVICE

To have your house cleaned midweek is \$25. If you are staying for more than one week then one cleaning per week is included in your weekly rental. Please stop in at the office to schedule your cleaning if you are staying two weeks or longer.

BABY SITTING SERVICE

We usually can arrange to find a qualified babysitter if you give us enough lead time. Freddy's fiancé, Leni, or Tere's sister Patti, often are available. They do not speak English, however. To find an English speaking babysitter will be more of a challenge. Freddy, who speaks English, often helps Leni if the children are older.

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.

COOKING SERVICE

Ask Jin if he is able to arrange cooking for you; it depends on which cook is available on the day you ask.

KITCHEN SUPPLIES

If you need dishes, kitchen utensils, more garbage bags, etc., ask at the office.

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, 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 good 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 who speaks English, French and Mexican and he will make house calls.

GARBAGE

Please take your garbage out regularly to help keep the ant and pest population down. The garbage cans are on the front street.

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. There is also a liquor store on the other side of the square. 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.

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, mangoes 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 you can attend a Spa Day in the jungle. 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. 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.

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.

BEACH AND SWIMMING

For most of the year the ocean is warm and safe to swim in. In 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 seaweed patches easily. There 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.

BEACH UMBRELLA'S AND CHAIRS

There should be beach chairs and beach umbrellas at Casa Ricardo. We ask that you be very careful with them and make sure they are in the house 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.

TELEPHONE & EMERGENCY NUMBERS

The phone number at Casa Ricardo is 998-871-0464. To have someone call it from the US they would dial 011-52-998-871-0464. Please do not use it for long distance calls unless you have a phone card. You are welcome to use it for local calls.

We have a Vonage phone in our office with a Minnesota number 651-690-3937 that you can use to call the US or Canada for free. 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 poor Mexicans may see tourists as a source of money and they are only 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.

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 have an arrangement with Executive Car Rental here in Puerto Morelos. We pass on the commission normally given to the hotel as a discount to our guests. In the high season a little Atos 4 door with a stick shift rents for \$38/day or \$266/week (includes all taxes and basic insurance.) They come to the casa to pick you up and bring you back after you drop off the car.

Basic car insurance is required, by Mexican law, to be included with every rental. 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 is too. 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 policed presence everywhere. When you are driving in the vicinity of the airport you will encounter an area where police are pulling people over and unfortunately tourists have been known to be targeted for the express purpose of extracting money.

Our best advice to you is to be very conscious of the speed limits when you are traveling and particularly near the airport turn-off. As you approach the checkpoints you stay in the left lane and if you are lucky position yourself so that a larger vehicle is between you and the police.

If the worse happens and you are pulled over they will ask for your Driver's License and will 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 \$50 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 pretending 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.

MASSAGE & ADVANCED BODY WORK

There are a couple of excellent massage therapists in town. Paula 044-998-204-1798. Fernando – 044-998-705-8183. They both do relaxation massage and other techniques. Both will come to your apartment for about \$60/90 minutes (their rates may change so just ask.) Paula also has a table setup on the beach and getting your massage there is a lovely experience.

Martina's Spa is two blocks away and she does very nice massage and spa treatments however you will find her to be more expensive. She can also come to the house if you prefer. Her rates and contact number are in a separate folder in the apartment.

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.

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 a