

## HELPFUL INFORMATION

For those of you who have not visited Mexico before, or have only been across the border into Tijuana or some of the other border towns, please note Cancun and the Riviera Maya is now the wealthiest part of Mexico and much nicer than any of the border towns. Our area is safe and our town, in particular, is tranquil and secure.

### **BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME**

YOU MUST HAVE A VALID PASSPORT TO ENTER MEXICO. It is important that the expiration date be more than 6 months from the date of your travel.

### **WEATHER AND CLOTHING**

The weather from December through February is warm during the day (average 80) and cool at night (60). The temperature can be very changeable. When a cold front goes through you will want a sweatshirt, sweater or jacket and socks. There is always a chance of rain but it never seems to last for long. Think “layers” for clothing. You will only need casual clothes, most people do fine with a very limited wardrobe. Sandals or “flip flops” are the norm. It’s nice to have a pair of sneakers or walking shoes to climb the ruins or to put on when the temperature drops. PACK LIGHT! Life is very casual here.

March and April are warmer, especially at night, and May and June are usually hot and humid although tempered by our closeness to the Caribbean. By July and August the summer heat is on full throttle: highs in the high 80’s to low 90’s and lows in the high 70’s and humid. Bring suntan lotion and Aloe for sunburn; buying it in Mexico is expensive. The sun gets very hot here during the day and you will burn VERY quickly. Some form of hat is also recommended.

### **TIME ZONE**

The state of Quintana Roo where Cancun and Puerto Morelos are located does not observe daylight savings. They are on Eastern time all year. This means that in the summer when the US, Canada and the rest of Mexico are on daylight savings time, our town lines up with Central Time. In the winter our town is on Eastern time.

### **ATM’S AND BANKING**

We now have two actual banks in Puerto Morelos, Bancomer and CI. It is possible to exchange dollars there but you will get a better exchange rate if you use an ATM. We have a number in town, ask our office for details. Do NOT use the Cambio (exchange window) by the town square. They often cheat you and their exchange rate is terrible. Use official Bank ATM’s not the free standing ones that charge huge fees.

### **MONEY EXCHANGE**

Currency Converter [to be added]

Don’t worry about getting pesos until you get to Puerto Morelos; stores and restaurants take US dollars (but usually not Canadian.) Switch to using pesos as soon as you can, you will get more “bang for your buck.”

Credit cards are accepted by very few businesses in Puerto Morelos and those who do accept them tend to be very expensive. Few places take American Express credit cards, mostly just Visa and Mastercard.

### **WHAT YOU CAN BRING INTO THE COUNTRY – COMPUTERS, ETC**

The rule is one each of any electronic equipment (camera, video camera, computer, I Pod, etc.) per person for personal use only. Do not bring anything still in its retail box, they will assume it is new and for re-sale and charge you duty.

## **ELECTRICAL SERVICE**

The electrical service is the same as the US & Canada so you can use all of your electrical items here.

## **AIR PORT TRANSFER**

We work with a number of transport companies. For our preferred company, Ride-Mexico, you'll find a link on our home page. A round trip fare or 1 to 4 people rates are around \$70 USD, taxis are \$85. There is also a bus/taxi combo that is less expensive but takes more time to get to where you want to go.

## **CANCUN AIRPORT**

***KEEP THE SMALL WHITE FORM THEY GIVE YOU AT IMMIGRATION, YOU WILL NEED IT WHEN YOU LEAVE.***

Cancun airport is a large, modern airport with three terminals; Terminal #3 for the major airlines' international flights; Terminal #2 for domestic carriers and international charter airlines.

Once you are off the plane you will go through immigration first and customs second. The immigration agent will look at your papers and ask you how long you will be here and where you will be staying. General answers are fine. They speak English. Then you collect your luggage from the luggage carousels. If you have a lot of luggage free handcarts are available.

You will see everyone moving toward the same exit where the customs officials are. There is a traffic light that flashes either red or green when you push the button. Each family has to push the button as they go through customs. If you get a green light you just walk through. If you get a red light you will have your luggage inspected. Once you are through customs you can get a porter to help you with your luggage if needed. You tip them what you would at home (one to five dollars depending on the number of pieces you have brought). The porters take dollars or pesos. In the winter season if you arrive on Saturday or Sunday there will be long lines and larger crowds so expect clearing Immigration and Customs to take longer - up to an hour or more. Processing on week days usually goes a little faster; Wednesday is often the best day to fly, both for price and crowds.

## **AVOID THE INDIVIDUALS SELLING INFORMATION IN THE EXIT CORRIDOR**

As you leave the customs area you will see many booths along each side of the exit corridor with men and women in official looking shirts trying to get your attention. The best course of action is to ignore these people completely and continue to leave the building. All they want is to sell you a time share or hook you into some fabulous "free" tour in exchange for a "short" visit to a resort or condo timeshare complex. IT IS NOT WORTH IT! The "short" visit can be hours and they trap you in a room and won't let you out until you say yes and buy a time share.

## **TAXIS**

If you would rather take a taxi be prepared for the regulated fare from the airport of \$85 USD (plus a tip); there is an airport surcharge when the taxis exit the airport, that is why it is more expensive to leave than to return. There is an official taxi service now at the airport and you go to the taxi window to hire a taxi.

The road to Puerto Morales is straight out to Highway 307 and South 10 miles (15km). There aren't any other routes. As long as the taxi bears right (south) toward Chetumal, Playa del Carmen and Tulum you are fine. Cancun is to the north (left) and the Hotel Zone is straight ahead.

Within Puerto Morelos you will find many taxis if you don't feel like walking for \$3 US or \$50 pesos around town.

## **BUSES**

If you want a more "native" experience, you can take a bus and taxi combination from the airport that will cost you about \$12 each. It takes a lot longer but it will save you money. There is a bus ticket window in the hallway just before you leave

the terminal. Ask for the ADO line that goes directly to the Puerto Morelos stop on the highway. (Do not take the local bus, MAYAB, it makes frequent stops and is very crowded.) Buses leave hourly. The last bus leaves the airport at 8:00 p.m.

The bus will drop you at the turn off for Puerto Morelos. There will be taxis there waiting to take you the 2 miles into town and to our office. The taxi costs about \$7usd.

The ADO bus 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 \$24p (about \$2 US).

### CAR RENTAL

Our recommendation is that you get to PM some other way than renting a car, get to the property, get settled in and get a feel for the town, then rent a car in town. Check at the office for the latest information about renting a car in town. If you rent your car at Cancun airport you can choose from Alamo, National, Dollar, Budget, Executive, and Thrifty and inexpensive off-site rental companies you'll find on the internet. If you make your reservations before you arrive be sure to call the 800 line in the U.S. to confirm your reservation. Reservations made online tend to not get registered at the Cancun offices of the rental companies. Bring a copy of your reservation. Be patient when you pick up your car, it can take quite awhile. If you land late at night don't rent a car. So often the company is out of cars by that time so even if you have a reservation you won't get a car.

Liability 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 and Playa del Carmen are too. We have been told that none of your American insurance will apply down here, so please check on this carefully.

### POLICE CHECKPOINTS

You will notice when you are in Mexico that there is a high police presence everywhere. When you are driving in the vicinity of the airport there is an area where police are occasionally pulling people over. **WATCH YOUR SPEED AND WEAR YOUR SEAT BELTS!!** Tourists driving rental cars are often picked on since they usually don't know the local laws. All the police want is a bribe. Everyone not using their seatbelts is a popular excuse for pulling you over, so make sure everyone in the car has their seat belt on.

If 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 you are sure you weren't speeding or doing anything wrong then get the number of the police car and ask nicely for an official traffic violation ticket so you can go to the police station and take care of it right away. This should call their bluff since stopping people just to get money is illegal. The police aren't supposed to take any money.

Sometimes it is easier to just decide to pay something and say, "Is there anything I can do to avoid giving you my license and going to the station?" If they say "yes" and ask for \$5000 pesos (\$500 US) just tell them you don't have that kind of money, would \$5 US do? If you are Canadian tell them you only have a few Canadian dollars and haven't gotten any pesos yet. You can also try playing 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. If you are tied up for an unreasonable length of time give Jin a call on his cell: 044-998-115-2244 (dial just that way, no country code.)

### ARRIVING AT ABBEY DEL SOL

The office at Abbey del Sol is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. everyday. For any of our properties you can check in at the office first. **IF YOU ARE ARRIVING AFTER 5:00 PLEASE BE SURE TO RECEIVE ARRIVAL INSTRUCTIONS AHEAD OF TIME!!**

### WHAT IS PROVIDED

Sheets, beach towels, bath and hand towels and wash cloths are provided. Each unit has a hair dryer and bar soap. There are cooking utensils and dishes in your kitchen, and a blender, toaster and coffee maker. Most of our units have

microwaves. If you need anything else please ask us and we'll do our best to accommodate you. Our kitchens are the best equipped in town.

### **BABY CRIB AND BEDS**

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

### **DRINKING WATER**

You will be provided with a large 5 gallon bottle of filtered water when you arrive. Most of our properties provide additional drinking water for free. Do not drink out of the tap. Brushing your teeth with the water is fine.

Concerns about the safety of the water: The Cancun area is the most prosperous part of Mexico and their livelihood depends on keeping the tourists healthy. All the restaurants use filtered water for the ice cubes and drinking water. Do not drink any water out of any tap anywhere in Mexico.

### **MAID AND LAUNDRY SERVICE**

If you are staying with us for a week or less there is no maid service. You can ask for clean towels whenever you want. If you stay with us for 8 nights or more your apartment will be cleaned during each week at no cost. If you would like additional cleaning that can be arranged for a modest charge. Laundry service is available for \$10usd/load with a same day turn around in most cases.

### **RESTAURANTS**

There are a surprising number of good restaurants in Puerto Morelos. There is a reference list in your Guest information book in your unit. Also on this website under Puerto Morelos, The Town, you will find a list of our favorite restaurants.

### **GROCERY STORES**

There is a small grocery/liquor store in Puerto Morelos by the town square and many convenience stores around town that will offer basic items. There are two large grocery stores on the highway that will offer pretty much anything you need. One is like a small Walmart with household items as well as food.

### **MARKETS AND OTHER THINGS OF INTEREST**

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 7:30am is there till 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.

### **SIGHTSEEING AND TOURS**

We work with a number of reliable tour operators and we can help arrange the nicest and most cost effective tour or sightseeing trip for you. We recommend small, private to semi-private tours so you can be flexible with your time. Some options are snorkeling on the reef or in a calm lagoon; swimming in a crystal clear spring fed cenote; seeing the ruins at Tulum or Ek Balam; visiting Playa del Carmen to wander the pedestrian only boulevard with great shops and restaurants; or taking a trip into the market in Cancun. Once you get settled check in at the office to explore your options. You can check some of them out on our website under Puerto Morelos / Activities.

## **NIGHT LIFE**

Our sleepy little town gets quite lively on Thursday through Sunday nights. There are 3 or 4 nice bars that are open until 1 a.m. In the winter season you will find a lot of street musicians by the most popular restaurants and interesting things going on at the Town Square. We don't have much of the "spring break" type crowd, most of the visitors are retired or have young families. The younger set usually goes into Cancun or Playa del Carmen if they want to get wild.

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 although it is seldom the first choice.

## **BATHROOMS AND SEPTIC SYSTEMS**

Be prepared for challenging bathroom situations in many places throughout Mexico. It is getting better but it often is not what you may be used to. For the women: occasionally there are no toilet seats or toilet paper unless you buy it from the person taking care of the toilets. This usually costs \$2 to \$5 pesos (20 to 50 cents.) Always have small change with you in Mexico as it seems everyone needs to be tipped. Bathrooms can usually be found at the Pemex gas stations (the only kind of gas station in Mexico) and at any of the big stores such as Wal-Mart, Costco, and the 4 Mexican "big box" stores. Restaurants will have bathrooms and the larger the restaurant the nicer the bathroom (usually.)

Everyone in our town is on a septic system, as are most places in Cancun. This means that you are always asked to throw your used toilet paper in the trash can next to the toilet instead of in the toilet bowl. Never put tampons, pads or diapers in a toilet or there may be disastrous consequences! We ask you to refrain from putting paper or other products into our septic system as well. Puerto Morelos is adding an actual sewer system so hopefully by 2019 septic tanks will be a thing of the past.

## **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 to better their lives 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 many poor people see tourists as a source of revenue and the only reason they are friendly is to get your money. This is true all over the world as Tourism becomes king.

## **CELL PHONES**

Many US and Canadian cell phone companies now have "free in Mexico" calling plans. You just need to call them and ask to have it put on your line. You may also be able to purchase a SIM card here for about \$150 pesos (\$10us.) If your service does work in Mexico just remember to put the + sign before the country code of the phone number you are dialing. If you don't have a phone that works but would like to make a call we have a phone in the Abbey office that you can use for free.