

This drive log contains distances that are not necessarily accurate, so please use any numbered distances as no more than a reference. Be aware that things in Mexico can change rapidly! We do our best to keep this page updated. By all means please let us know if you encounter any major changes, or if you have any helpful additions. Updated last September 2012.

A few helpful hints before starting out:

- The best places to stop and use the bathroom are at the toll booths and the Pemex (affectionately know to us as pee-mex) stations. Quick, convenient and clean (most are kept up nicely...some are still pretty dirty). At these same stops, you can also pick up a snack or a drink. This one multi-purpose stop saves lots of time!
- Mexico loves 'topes' (speed bumps). Most are signed, some are not. Some are mellow, some are brutal! Keep your eyes open and be prepared! You're shocks will thank you for it.
- Speed limits...we have always said that these speed limits are just 'suggestions'. That said, 'highway patrol' police surveillance has increased in recent years and they do pull people over. Drive at speed you are comfortable with. Be aware of the 'policia'. Watch those big trucks and no shoulders...Enjoy the adventure of driving in Mexico!
- You will need to have pesos on you as you travel into Mexico as dollars are not as readily accepted. You can get pesos prior to leaving the USA or in Mexico at a casa de cambio or an ATM.
- The 'Green Angels' is Mexico's equivalent of a roving roadside assistance program. These green and white trucks can be spotted now and then and they are out there to help travelers in need. We have never had to use them, but we frequently see other travelers being assisted and they are generally well thought of. Just so you know that there can be help out there if you have car trouble. Beyond the Green Angels, Mexicans, in general, are very helpful in these situations and will stop to see if you are okay or need help.

And, so the adventure begins:

As you enter Nogales from the north, take the Mariposa (truck crossing) exit off of I-19. Do not go into downtown Nogales, unless you really want to cross there for some reason. We find the Mariposa crossing to be mellower. We like to gas up with before crossing the border into Mexico (although recently gas prices are comparable) There is a gas station on your right, just after you turn onto Mariposa that we frequent and one a ways further up on the left right before you cross into Mexico. After fueling up, you'll cross the border. As you leave the USA, sometimes the US border patrol has a little question and answer session with folks headed into Mexico. Continue on, cross the border and enter Mexico. Bienvenidos! You will see an inspection area to your right, where it is possible to have your vehicle inspected, but if you don't need to go to Nogales, it is better to continue straight, and onto a four lane road. They have done some weird stuff with the north bound lanes that are going towards the border, which affect the south bound lanes a bit...just be aware.

You will be within what is considered a restricted zone. It is confined by a green chain link fence. In about 5 miles you will come to a toll booth - 49 pesos (this tollbooth goes up with regularity). In the past we have often paid with dollars here and gotten some change in pesos, although recently they have not been accepting dollars.

Just down the road, you will come to the border inspection area. Be aware of a fairly low hanging metal bar that is there for no good reason...If you have bikes on your roof or have a very high vehicle, pay attention. Go through the 'Nothing to Declare' lane (unless you are carrying a large amount of items with value over \$400 usd worth not including personal effects), and wait to see if you get a green or red light. If you get a green light, keep on going. If you get a red light, you will be waved over to an inspection area, asked a few questions, and the officer may want to look in the car and the trunk. No big deal, as long as you are not a gun smuggler....or have lots of stuff of value that you didn't declare! A couple more miles, and the big new road hooks up with the big, older 4 lane Highway 15. Merge, and continue to head south towards Hermosillo/Magdalena de Kino.

A few more miles down the road, you come to the 21km (12.6 miles from the border) crossing. Park in the big parking lot that you will be directed into by various forms of English signage, none of it correct, but often times amusing.

Your first stop will be at the Immigration building. The entrance is right at the end of the parking lot. This is where you get your tourist visa. To get your tourist visa be sure you have your passport. After getting your visa you will do one of two things...If you are only going to travel within Sonora (and only southern Sonora), get back in your car and head south (see below for more on this). If you are going to travel beyond Sonora into Mexico (or go up into the mountains around Rio Sonora or Yecora), you must get a federal car permit here. Exit the Immigration building and go to one of the copy machine booth which you will see as you step outside. You will make copies of your tourist visa, driver's license and title or registration. Copies are 25 cents per page. Then go to the federal car permit building (called Banjercito) and wait in line (which can sometimes be long and slow...bring patience). Proceed to one of the open windows and get your permit. They will tell you where to place the permit on your windshield...Go back to your car and head south.

(More about travel within Sonora...If you are traveling as far as San Carlos/Guaymas and no further...you don't need a car permit. Just go. If you are traveling further south than that, like to Alamos, you need a Sonora Only permit which is now issued at a new place just south of Guaymas in Empalme. See below for more info on this very unintuitive car permitting program! Also if you are traveling up into the mountains of the Rio Sonora or Yecora then coming south, you need to get a federal permit...even though you should technically only need a Sonora Only permit...it's a long story!)

As you leave the parking lot here, turn right to head south and drive through the 'Nothing to Declare'. Same as before, if you get a green, go. If you get a red, stop. Right as you leave customs, you'll see a sign for 'Alamos-654k', so that's your goal!

38 mile mark - Imuris, where Highway 2 goes off to the east. Continue straight and south on Highway 15. There are several taco stands here on the right side of the road that serve up some tasty treats. Good quesadillas, too.

52 mile mark - The outskirts of Magdalena de Kino. It is possible to avoid the toll by going through the town (following signs for 'Hermosillo Libre'), but we recommend continuing on the main highway (following the signs for 'Hermosillo Cuota'). Easier and faster. Soon you'll come to the toll booth. The toll is 25 pesos. Keep heading south towards Hermosillo as the 'libre' road joins back with the highway.

62 mile mark - Santa Ana. There is a major intersection where Highway 2 heads west to Puerto Penasco and Mexicali. Stay to the left and keep heading towards Hermosillo. It is a rather poorly set up intersection, but the signage is good if not erratic.

There is sometimes a strange fiscal police check point just south of Santa Ana, (maybe 3 miles) but they never seem to do anything. We have never been stopped there, and I have never seen another US car pulled over there. Just be aware that there may be cones on the road and a couple of guys with clipboards standing around doing nothing. This can be a common occurrence in Mexico.

87 mile mark - The abandoned police check point at "Benjamin Hill" out in the middle of nowhere.

95 mile mark – The new police checkpoint is on the left, checking cars going north. Now there's a long stretch with nothing but wide open road...From Benjamin Hill to Hermosillo there are few towns (no large ones), but several spots to get gas and drinks. This stretch is about 75 miles long and there is one more toll booth before you get to Hermosillo - \$65 pesos. Good time to put on a fresh CD and pop a cold soda. (At some point in this stretch, before the toll, there is a turn off for 'Hermosillo Libre'. Just stay on the highway, following the 'Hermosillo Cuota' signs).

162 mile mark - Hermosillo. The road into Hermosillo is kind of fast and hectic. You will go through a couple of stop lights on the road into Hermosillo. After the second or third light, you'll want to be in the left lanes. You will be looking for the light that leads you onto the Periferico Este road that takes you around the downtown part of the city and towards Guaymas. Landmarks at this light are a defunct Chevy dealership in front of you as well as a Fiesta Americana hotel. You are following signs for the Periferico Este towards Guaymas. At the stop light, be prepared to have your window washed by rather aggressive street boys, you will probably need a wash by then anyway. Give them some change (50 cents or 5 pesos is plenty. Don't give them "Won Doughlar" as they will suggest, and say "Muy amable". Turn left. (If you are interested in spending the night in Hermosillo, continue straight at the light for a few blocks and look for the Holiday Inn on the left, a comfortable and convenient place to spend the night).

On the Periferico, you will be driving through a combination of residential and commercial areas and the streets are really bad, poorly signed, and the traffic will be moving faster than it should. Take it slow! Lots of topes and potholes. Sometimes there are a couple of detours to keep things interesting. Just stay with the flow of traffic (there is plenty). Eventually, you will come to a stop light, continue straight past La Saucedá park (on your right) followed by the Rio Sonora reservoir (dam) on your left. As you go by the giant grassy field on your left that used to be a lake, full of water from the Rio Sonora. . . pray for rain!

2 more miles and you pass a big prison on the right and soon after the road veers to the right at a big new intersection (thanks to the Ford plant that is just south of this spot and the brand new mall on your left...) There is a confusing series of signs around here and a new interchange...Stay tuned, stay right and follow signs to Guaymas.

170 mile mark - 1 more mile and you come the newest big intersection...most of the flow of traffic will be going straight, over the new overpass, but you want to be in the RIGHT LANE. It is a very poorly marked intersection, with the sign right where you need to could really miss getting in the right lane! So be in the right lane to get back on Highway 15 going south. Under the overpass, you'll turn left toward Guaymas and points south.

As you leave Hermosillo, there are several gas stations if you need gas before the next stretch of long open road towards Guaymas...Enjoy the scenery. From Hermosillo to Guaymas its little over an hour of driving.

243 mile mark - The main landmark at this junction is the 'El Valiente' Pemex. Good place to get gas if needed. Just past the gas station, there is a Y in the road. Veer left to stay on the main toll road, following signs for 'Obregon Cuota'. If you go straight, you'll go towards the turn off for San Carlos and eventually into the city of Guaymas. We often times take the main road into to town at this point, as it is typically about lunch time, and there is a good places to eat...Guaymas, is, however, a bustling and busy place. Be prepared! On the toll road that bypasses Guaymas, the toll is \$30 pesos.

253 mile mark - The toll road intersects the main highway 15 that went through Guaymas. If you went into Guaymas, this is where you hook back up with the main route south. There is a new bridge in the north bound lanes...Follow the signs south towards Ciudad Obregon. You'll see the signs 'Ciudad Obregon 106 km, Navojoa 171 km'.

A few miles from this merge you will see a huge new parking lot with no cars in it and a dumpy little trailer. This is the Sonora Only office, which should be called 'Southern Sonora Only'...If you are coming to Alamos and don't have a federal car permit, stop here and go through the motions and get your car permit. It used to be free...now they make you pay around \$50 usd. This whole 'system' is flawed and confusing and the business in southern Sonora have been very vocal about trying to get it eradicated...for now, do the deal, get back in your car and head south. This is about a 60 mile stretch from the above intersection to the toll booth on the north side of Ciudad Obregon. After several more miles you'll go through the town of Vicam, otherwise know as 'the tope town'.

313 mile mark - Toll booth on the north side of Ciudad Obregon - \$65 pesos. After the toll booth it's a busy stretch of road as you enter Ciudad Obregon with lots of stop lights.

315 mile mark - Just past the Walmart/Sam Club/Home Depot on the right, there is a stop light and a fancy statue. Go through the stop light, and take a left on the next street, it is a one way headed south. It's another weird intersection. There is a small sign that says 'Navojoa/Los Mochis'. This is a stretch of road with feeble lines and most of the time you have the right of way with the intersecting streets. Runs for about two miles. Eventually you should be in the left lane, ready to rejoin the main Highway15 that runs through the center of town. You will come to an intersection where you must go left (the street you are one turns to one way coming from the opposing direction...a good motivator to not go straight...). Landmark at this intersection is a brand new Nissan dealership on your left before you make the left turn. You are now back on 15, heading towards Navojoa and Los Mochis.

About 8 miles south of Ciudad Obregon, you'll pass Ciudad Obregon Airport on the right. This is when you say "Let's fly next time".

335 mile mark - Toll booth at Fundicion - \$65 pesos. After about 20 miles you'll see a 'Bienvenidos a Navojoa' sign. As you enter Navojoa, you will cross a big bridge that once used to span the Rio Mayo. Just after the bridge is the Hotel Del Rio on your right. Great place to stay if you plan on heading further south, or just can't make the last 35 miles to Alamos! After going through several stop lights on the main road through the 'lovely' city of Navojoa, be looking for an American looking pizza joint and a grocery store called Bodega Aurora at an intersection. At

this stop light, you'll want to be in the left hand lane. You'll see a small-ish sign that says 'Alamos 50 km'.

Turn left and start heading east. You'll be driving through the outskirts of Navojoa for a while, the road is 4 lane. Watch for poorly marked topos. After several miles, you leave Navojoa and start on the newly improved super highway to Alamos. It's smooth, there's a huge shoulder, fancy painted lines and one of the better roads in all of Mexico...The road gains elevation gradually, traveling through rural areas. After the curves and the town of Minas Nuevas (watch for two topos) you have the final stretch and you arrive in Alamos! Bienvenidos!
See "Directions to El Pedregal from the edge of town" for the remainder of the directions.

NOTE:

All of these mileages are as general and have been converted from KMs to miles by yours truly. They are to be used as a rough reference, and by no means should you set you odometer to them.