



Information

Language: Spanish

Capital: Mexico City

Population: 108,700,891

Currency: Peso (MXN)

(Good) [Rate!]

Current rating: 3.9/5 (13 votes)

Your rating:

Hitchability: Excellent Good Average Bad Almost impossible

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Mexico is a country in North America. Hitching in Mexico is extremely easy. In many places, locals hitch to get home from the grocery store, etc. You'll likely ride in the back of a lot of pick-ups, and many people will offer you food and drinks, especially Coca Cola! Whenever you're going to wait for a longer time, it's going to be due to low traffic. On heavily touristed routes with poor public transportation, payment is sometimes expected.

In rural parts of Mexico it's common to see whole families hitchhiking together, or for a pick-up to stop for several different groups of hitchers until the back of the truck is completely full. Because pick-up trucks are the vehicle of choice, it's quite easy to get rides just outside of any small town (knock on the back window when you're ready to get out).

Useful Spanish words are "ride" and "aventón", both meaning a lift. Near the Guatemalan border the word "jalón" is used.

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Where to hike?

The best place to get a ride is not on the side of the road or an on-ramp, like in many other countries, but at petrol stations or exits from shopping centers, in truck stops or at the restaurants where truckers eat. Some petrol stations

Mexico

in the north don't allow people to do that, but you can try to speak with the manager, it works sometime. Otherwise, just stay by the cashier of the petrol station, or at the door of the store or anything else (they can't forbid you that), and ask. Nevertheless if you don't ask people and stick out your thumb you can still make good distance.

Signs

Signs are almost always unnecessary in Mexico.

However, if you're in an area with a lot of local traffic, it might be useful to make a sign that says "Siguiente Gasolinera" (next gas station). Then you can get a ride to a better hitchhiking spot.

License plates

Mexican license plates are very easy to interpret: The name of the issuing federal state is written on them (as you will easily notice once in the country). When travelling longer distances or in central Mexico with its many small states it can therefore be useful knowing which state your destination is in (if you have one).

Shelter



New born turtles in the coast of Mexico, walking towards the ocean.

When traveling long distances with no specific plan, it becomes difficult to arrange shelter through hospitality networks. Also, in many small towns few people have access to the internet. Luckily, it's really easy and safe to stay over in **gas stations** or **fire stations**. If you get stuck on the road at night, you can ask to be dropped off at any PEMEX (the only gasoline company of Mexico). If you talk directly to the people in charge, they will tell you what's the safest spot to sleep at. Many gas stations also have free showers and you don't need to be a truck driver to use them. When you're inside of a town, it's better to go to the fire station. The firemen are very friendly and they are used to host broke travelers from exotic places.

If you're traveling through the West Coast it might be difficult to find a free camping site at the popular beaches. However, almost every beach town has a **turtle camp** where you can camp for free. You might be asked to do some work in exchange, like counting and liberating baby turtles!!!

Precautions

It is even less recommendable than in other countries to take drugs or weapons with you, especially as of 2010 since the Mexican government, backed by the US ADA who are actually present in Mexico (!!) have decided to crack down on narco and weapon trafficking. Therefore you likely will be checked at one of the numerous check points, especially in the north as you near the US border. But it's also good to know that the soldiers hardly ever search all the way through a large back-pack, unless you answer their questions really bad. If the vehicle you're riding in does get stopped just stay calm, show your passport, say the magic words "*turista*" ("tourist") and "*de paseo nada más*" ("just passing"), and if they ask to see your stuff open your bag and show them that it's all clothes and stuff.

Also, in the south, your rides might ask you about your immigration status and advise you of immigration check points.

In some mid-sized cities like Tampico, Oaxaca, and Pachuca there are no transit roads and you have to cross the city. Taking a bus makes things easier.

Single Women

One of the great things of hitchhiking in Mexico is that even if you travel alone, you rarely have to hitch-hike alone, because hitchhiking is such a common activity among locals - joining locals hitching will not only add to the fun, but also your safety. This is especially handy as in certain areas - like in the North, around Chihuahua - men might take you for a prostitute (even if you have a large bag and totally look like a foreigner).

Notes on Baja California and Yucatan

- It may be extremely easy to hitch in mainland Mexico, but in the Baja California peninsula, it's a completely different story! In Baja California, there is only one road, the HWY 1, which isn't hell to hitchhike on but requires a lot of patience: there are often large distances in between cities (which are barely even cities, rather a few ranches and cactus farms) and even larger distances between petrol stations (example: El Rosario is the last one before Guerrero Negro, about 360 km further down in Baja California Sur). Getting stuck in the middle of the desert is NOT fun, and many people can only take you from town to town as it is local traffic or gringos doing one of the many races down in the Baja. Also, unless you are planning on staying in Baja and going back up towards the USA-Mexico border, you should hitchhike from Mexicali south. If you plan on heading to mainland Mexico from the Baja, you must take a ferry in either La Paz or Cabo San Lucas towards Mazatlán, which costs about 80\$ USD.
- The Yucatan Peninsula (Campeche, Yucatán, Quintana Roo), on the other hand, outshines all Mexico for its ease and amiability of hitchhiking. You might not even fall victim to Moctezuma revenge eating old papaya slushies and bean burritos out of the trash in some of those tourist strips. Hey!

Map

The Guia Roji road atlas with the maps of the major cities is maybe worth the 100 Pesos, but people tend to know the roads so if you ask lots of questions you can also get around without one.

Personal experience

In 10 months and tens of thousands of km covered by thumb, my only "bad" experience was between Pto. Angel and Oaxaca City (a notorious drug route, as I later learned). The driver asked me to drive and once I was behind the wheel informed me that the van was full of Colombia's finest. I nearly shat myself, but the experience turned out to be quite interesting, as we were forced to make several detours to avoid police checkpoints, taking me through beautiful and remote parts of the Oaxacan mountains I otherwise never would have discovered. Be careful not to get set up. A very, very, rare occurrence, but one that can happen.

I traveled for 8 months in Mexico, all by thumb. I came down Baja California, hitched a sailboat from La Paz to Mazatlán, steamed over to Veracruz for the carnival, went up and around the Yucatán, then down into Chiapas, Guatemala, and then back to Veracruz, across to all the big central cities, and down the Pacific coast to Oaxaca and Guatemala once more. I got picked up by plenty of self-proclaimed drug dealers. Whatever. Lovely country. --Chael777

*I hitched at exits and on-ramps and speed bumps (topes) and made excellent time from Matamoros to Catemaco. As long as cars are going somewhat slow any place is really a good place to hitchhike. I rarely waited more than fifteen minutes. People were very hospitable. I was treated to lots of delicious food and given places to stay by those who picked me up. **This is my favorite country to hitchhike thus far.** --Eripson*

Cities

- Mexico City (capital)
- Oaxaca
- Poza Rica
- Acapulco
- Guadalajara
- San Cristóbal de las Casas

Gallery



Hitchhikers Katja and Augustas barely fit with all their stuff in the front of this pickup.



Katja is ready to get a ride!



Mexico

A usual ride on a back of a pickup.



Sometimes hitchhikers can be of help to a driver - here Lithuanian hitchhiker Augustas helping to push a truck somewhere in Mexico.

States of **Mexico**

Aguascalientes | Baja California | Baja California Sur | Campeche | Chiapas | Chihuahua | Coahuila | Colima | Durango | Guanajuato | Guerrero | Hidalgo | Jalisco | Mexico State | Michoacán | Morelos | Nayarit | Nuevo León | Oaxaca | Puebla | Querétaro | Quintana Roo | San Luis Potosí | Sinaloa | Sonora | Tabasco | Tamaulipas | Tlaxcala | Veracruz | Yucatán | Zacatecas

Federal District