

CALIFORNIA/BAJA CALIFORNIA BORDER CROSSING INFORMATION

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There are six international border crossings, two each in Tijuana and Mexicali and one each in Tecate and Algodones. All are open to motor vehicles and pedestrians alike. Travelers usually do not encounter long delays when entering Mexico, but prolonged waits are possible when heading north, since all travelers must stop at U.S. Customs. The border crossings are as follows, listed from west to east, with a brief description of each one:

- 1 San Ysidro, just north of downtown Tijuana at the southern terminus of Interstates 5 and 805, is the busiest crossing in the world. Waiting times for northbound motorists can exceed two hours on summer weekends. However, late-night and midday waiting times on weekdays are usually 20 minutes or less. It is open 24 hours a day.
- 2 Otay Mesa, six miles east of San Ysidro and just east of the Tijuana airport, handles passenger vehicles and all the commercial truck traffic in the San Diego-Tijuana region. Crossing times are shorter than San Ysidro but may still exceed an hour on busy summer weekends. It is open 24 hours a day.
- 3 Tecate is about 30 miles east of San Ysidro, and about 25 miles east of the Otay Mesa crossing. Waiting times at this small crossing may reach an hour on weekend afternoons, but at other times seldom exceed 10-15 minutes. It is open 6 a.m. to midnight.
- 4 Calexico West, at the southern end of SR 111 and adjacent to downtown Mexicali, is the primary crossing for these two cities, and crossing times may top an hour during busy periods. It is open 24 hours a day.
- 5 Calexico East, six miles east of downtown Mexicali, has shorter waiting times than the downtown crossing and handles all the commercial truck traffic between the two cities. It is open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.
- 6 Algodones, at the extreme northeast corner of Baja California, is about 10 miles west of Yuma, Arizona. Waiting times are usually a half-hour or less at this small crossing. It is open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.



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Vehicle insurance

Most U.S. insurance policies are not valid in Baja California, which means motorists should purchase separate insurance before driving across the border. Mexican authorities recognize only policies issued by companies licensed to sell insurance in Mexico, which eliminates most U.S. firms. Mexican-licensed insurance agencies have offices on both sides of the border at Tijuana, Mexicali and Tecate. Policies are issued as soon as the application is accepted.

Documents

Foreign nationals arriving in Baja California by land and staying less than 72 hours do not need a tourist card if they are not traveling beyond Ensenada. However, those staying more than 72 hours in the border region or traveling beyond Ensenada for any length of time must obtain a tourist card. Cardholders may travel anywhere in Mexico for up to seven days without paying a fee. For more than seven days of travel, a peso-equivalent fee of about \$20 USD (as of October 2004 exchange rate) is required. Tourist cards issued to overland travelers are valid for up to 180 days from date of issue (they may be issued for shorter periods) and are good for multiple entries. Tourist cards are available from many venues, including any border crossing, the Mexican Immigration office near the north entrance of Ensenada, and Mexican consulates in the United States. Fees, where required, are payable at any Mexican bank. Travelers overstaying the time limit are subject to a fine.

Automobile permits are not required in Baja, but are necessary in mainland Mexico.