



Rancho La Paloma Ministry Center

Building Community  *Changing Lives*

Essential Mexico Travel Information

1. GETTING TO THE RANCH

Our MOBILE FRIENDLY web site at RLP.MX has several real-time navigation aids for your drive to the Ranch. Select the MAPS button on the main mobile page to start. We recommend using the Tecate border crossing, which is open daily from **6am to 10pm**. An alternative crossing is at Otay Mesa, which is open **24 hours a day**. (A much busier and more complex border crossing to navigate).

2. EMERGENCY CONTACTS

The mobile site at RLP.MX gives email and phone contact information for reaching RLP staff, as well as a WhatsApp messaging button. WhatsApp is our **preferred** contact method. Please do not send SMS texts to RLP phone numbers, as text message delivery is often delayed when roaming in Mexico.

3. WHAT TO BRING

[This Link](#) lists what you should bring with you to the Ranch. The link for WHAT TO BRING is also listed on our full website - Bottom menu, Right panel – (but NOT on our mobile website). We suggest that you bring as little as possible in the categories of electronics, valuables, and jewelry.

4. MEXICAN BORDER ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

- Valid IDs for entering Mexico are a **U.S. Passport** or a **U.S. Passport Card**. Mexico does NOT recognize EDL's, Global Entry, SENTRI or NEXUS cards as valid IDs for entry. Non-U.S. Citizens will need a passport AND a permanent resident card OR a **Visa / Be eligible for a Visa Waiver**.
- Youth under 18 years of age who are NOT travelling with BOTH parents should bring a **signed and notarized letter** (on PAPER and signed in ink - no photocopies) from the parent(s) not present, stating that they allow the minor to enter Mexico AND return to the U.S. with the other parent and/or a chaperone. Again, digital copies of this written permission are NOT accepted.
- All vehicles must purchase temporary MEXICAN LIABILITY INSURANCE before entering Mexico. This is REGARDLESS of any coverage you have from your own car insurance company. For rental vehicles, ask your rental company for options. If you are pulled over or are involved in an accident and cannot provide a **printed paper copy** of your Mexican liability insurance, you run the risk of being taken to jail (we're not kidding, this HAS happened), your car being impounded, plus incurring fines and lawyer fees. We use BAJABOUND.COM for this service.

Administrative Offices

9008 Linden Ave. N.
Seattle, WA 98103

Tecate Ministry Center

Prolongación Cuchuma #1528
Tecate, B.C. México

Corporate Offices

2280 University Drive, #101
Newport Beach, CA 92660

5. ENTERING MEXICO

- The following items are NOT permitted on your person or in your luggage when entering Mexico: Firearms, illegal drugs, prescription drugs without a prescription (or your name on the container), fruit, vegetables, meat, plants, eggs, used clothing, rice, or beans.
- Border agents may ask for your length of stay in Mexico. For most of our guests, the answer will be less than 7 days. **Note:** If you answer 7 or more days, you will be asked to park your vehicle, go to the immigration office, and fill out an FMM-1 “tourist visa” form, paying approximately \$50 per person. If you wish to avoid this cost and are planning to stay 7 days or more, you can return to the border on day 6 of your stay, walk across the border to the U.S (there is no wait time for this), and then walk back to Mexico to finish out the remainder of your trip.
- If you enter Mexico in a commercial bus (only possible via the San Ysidro/Tijuana crossing - The third and most complex crossing) you are required to fill out the FMM-1 form on entry. See above - There is no cost if staying 6 days or less in Mexico.
- Permitted items that may appear “commercial” may be taxed at 20% of value (this percentage can change). Whether something is considered “commercial” is at the discretion of the customs inspector – Items to be donated and tools are common categories that get taxed. New items that are still packaged in original boxes, or several units of the same item, may appear to the customs inspector to be commercial items intended for resale. Our suggestions for avoiding paying the import taxes: Remove new packaging, distribute donation items among all your bags, and mark all tools with your name.
- When crossing the border into Mexico, drive SLOWLY, heading straight through an OPEN border entry lane, one vehicle at a time. A large LCD screen for your lane will either go GREEN or RED. In either case, the barrier arm will swing up, allowing you to move forward. GREEN means you may proceed. RED means you will need to pull over to the right for inspection.
- Even if you get a GREEN, and as you proceed a couple of yards forward, a customs inspector or a uniformed soldier may still pull you over to the right and inspect your vehicle and luggage if they decide you look interesting enough. This is exactly as if you got a RED light.
- In the process of crossing the border, or while being inspected, you may be asked to: Provide IDs, open the vehicle for the officer to take a look inside, provide access to your luggage, or exit the vehicle with your luggage and have it X-rayed before entering Mexico.
- We recommend that everyone in your party remain quiet and calm with big friendly smiles. Follow directions, speak only when spoken to. Explain that you are volunteers coming to stay at Rancho La Paloma to help a local ministry.

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6. **DRIVING IN MEXICO** (NOT for the faint at heart)

- Obey all speed limits. Drive cautiously. Look for hidden stop signs. Doing so is MUCH simpler than talking yourself out of a ticket or fine – in Spanish.
- Always keep your ID, wallet and money on you (we recommend fanny packs, money belts, travel wallets, etc...) Checkpoints can pop up anywhere and at any time, requiring you to show IDs for all vehicle occupants, as well as your Mexican insurance for the vehicle you are driving.
- Always secure and lock your vehicle. This applies wherever you are parked - at the Ranch, at your ministry site, or in town. When you are away from the Ranch at night, park in well-lit areas. Do not leave anything in the vehicle.

7. **U.S. BORDER RE-ENTRY REQUIREMENTS**

- Valid IDs for re-entering the U.S. are a **U.S. Passport**, a **U.S. Passport Card**, an Enhanced Driver's License, a Global Entry, SENTRI or NEXUS card. Non-U.S. Citizens will need their passport and the VISA that granted them prior entry into the U.S.
- Youth under 18 years of age who are NOT travelling with BOTH parents should bring a **signed and notarized letter** (on PAPER and signed in ink - no photocopies) from the parent(s) not present, stating that they allow the minor to enter Mexico AND return to the U.S. with the other parent and/or a chaperone. This is the same requirement listed above in item 3.

8. **RETURNING TO THE U.S.**

- The following items are NOT permitted into the U.S: Firearms, drugs, prescription drugs without a prescription (or your name on the container), over the counter meds in Mexico that require a prescription in the U.S., fruit, vegetables, plants, meat, eggs, fire crackers, and switch blades.
- The U.S. border route for re-entry into the U.S. is different than the route you took coming into Mexico. Head ½ a mile out of town (going east) before turning left, then going west parallel to the border fence. Resist the temptation to cut in line, drive up one-way streets the wrong way or find a short cut. The local police monitor the border queue, and fines are stiff. We do have a mapped route on our mobile web page (under MAPS) that you can follow to get there.
- In the process of crossing back into the U.S., you WILL be asked to provide IDs for everyone. You may be asked to open the vehicle for the officer to take a look inside, provide access to your luggage, or you may be asked to enter the SECONDARY inspection area for further examination.
- We recommend that everyone in your party remain quiet and calm with big friendly smiles. Speak only when spoken to. Explain that you are volunteers returning from a stay at Rancho La Paloma ministry center.

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