

## Driving to San Carlos

(Updated 5/11/22)

Travel to Mexico with a boat and trailer is not difficult but there are some rules to follow.

### **REQUIRED DOCUMENTS**

Passports or passport card will be required on both sides of the border. DO NOT LEAVE WITHOUT THEM. Passport cards are more convenient, can be used in the Ready Lane on re-entry and eliminate the need to have a passport stamped, but they may not be used for air travel. Enhanced Drivers Licenses issued by the following states are equivalent to a passport card: Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Vermont, and Washington. Note that some state's Real ID License (including Arizona's) are sometimes referred to as "enhanced", but they are not valid for travel to any foreign country.

Car or Trailer Permit—for travel to Baja or to the hassle-free zone of Sonora (including San Carlos and Guyamas) you will not need either a car or trailer permit. In Sonora the free zone is generally west of Highway 15 (including the bypass and west. Permits are required for travel east of Hwy 15 so don't wander to this area unless you have a permit. If you stay on Hwy 15 (or the Hermosillo bypass) you are always in the free zone.

Boat import permit (TIP Permit) — A Temporary Import Permit (TIP) permit is required for all boats entering and staying in Mexico. It can be obtained at KM21 or online at <https://www.banjercito.com.mx/registroVehiculos>. The site is titled Vehicle Temporary Import Application System, but it covers boats as well. You will find the information and the form for boat import permits which will need to be completed. Follow the directions carefully. Be sure you accurately list all equipment as required by the permit including the correct serial number for your outboard motor. There is a fee and you will receive your permit by overnight carrier. You may request your permit 11 to 60 days prior to entering Mexico by vehicle. Once the payment has been accepted, they will send the permit to your address within 11 business days. The credit card that is used to make the payment for the Temporary Import Permit, must be in the name of the person who is applying. Permits are valid for 10 years and may be renewed once. Cost is 1,086.80 Mexican Pesos or about \$52 as of May 2022.

There have been issues with boats being required to stop at entry and drop boat and then go to KM21 for permit and return to pick up boat. This should not be required. If you have this issue, call KM21 (number from US phone: 011-52-631-313-9222) and have guard talk to KM21. As always when in Mexico, stay calm and polite even if the border guard insists that you drop your boat after he talks to the agents Km 21.

Vehicle, boat and trailer insurance — you will need vehicle insurance on your vehicle and boat trailer written by a Mexican insurance carrier (Liability insurance is mandatory). Your current (local) insurance agent may be able to provide this coverage through a Mexican company but many people buy this coverage online. Try <http://www.bajabound.com/> to buy this insurance. For your boat, property damage insurance is not required but liability is.

Car, boat and trailer registration and Coast Guard documentation for documented boats — be sure to take these documents with you.

## **DRIVING TO SAN CARLOS**

### **Tucson to KM21**

It is best to cross the border at the Mariposa truck crossing. As you approach Nogales, take the Hwy 189 exit off I-19 and proceed west. If you are hauling a trailer keep watchful eye for the most straightforward and less winding route through the barricades. Immediately after crossing the US border there is an inspection station to your right...do not stop unless flagged in. Stay in the left lane and proceed up the hill. Do not take the right to Nogales Centro. Proceed along the divided and fenced off toll road for 5.4 miles until you reach the toll booth. Use pesos to pay the toll if you have them. It is always better to use pesos as they sometimes do not take US currency. After the toll booth you will see three lanes open ahead as you head south. The two lanes on the right are for commercial transport. Stay in the far-left lane with a concrete border only on your right side. You will go thru a checkpoint where you will receive either a green light or a red light. A green light you proceed slowly thru the inspection lanes and continue your trip. A red light you will stop at the inspection table in one of the lanes. The border guards speak English and are courteous. They may ask to look in your vehicle or boat. Let them know you are on vacation headed for San Carlos. Relax and be courteous and you will soon be on your way. At about 4.4 miles down the road, you will cross under an underpass and then another 1.7 miles on the right is the Mexican immigration facility at Kilometer 21. There is a Pemex station on the left just before. Here you will obtain your tourist permit (FMM). It is free if you plan to stay one week or less. There is a fee of 595 pesos or about \$28 for the 180-day permit. The procedure has been to fill out the form and show your passport, then if you have the 180 day permit proceed to the bank (Banjercito) with the form and your passport just behind the office, then return to the office with the receipt and have your document stamped. The recent policy is to pay directly at the permit office – not clear if this a permanent or temporary change. It is possible to buy the FMM online, but it is not recommended as you still have to stop at the immigration to have it stamped and you must specify your entry date in advance and any change will invalidate it. You may also exchange your dollars for pesos here although you can use cash machines in San Carlos to do this. You may be able to obtain a boat permit at Kilometer 21, but it is recommended that you purchase it online in advance. If you have not purchased Mexican auto insurance in advance, it can be purchased here.

### **KM 21 to Hermosillo**

Proceed south along the highway towards Magdalena, Santa Ana and Hermosillo. The road to Santa Ana has recently been converted to concrete. It is mostly divided with two lanes and a shoulder both ways (there is currently one section that is still under construction). Follow signage to Santa Ana and always take the toll routes (cuota). Santa Ana to Hermosillo is blacktop (2 lanes plus shoulder in each direction). The next toll booth will be for the route around Magdalena. It maybe inactive although persons at the stations may ask for a donation of a few pesos. At Santa Ana bear left at the major highway intersection towards Hermosillo. Do not turn right towards Caborca. There is a relatively new and clean gas station just outside of Santa Ana in the median and a great spot to take a break before the long 90-minute pull to

Hermosillo (not sure of current status). Santa Ana to Hermosillo is blacktop (2 lanes plus shoulder in each direction). Your next landmark will be Benjamin Hill where there is an inspection station for north bound traffic only. At the toll station just before entering Hermosillo (it may also be inactive) there are restrooms with an attendant. It is a good place to stop for a break. The bypass around Hermosillo is open as of May 2019 and the southbound flyover entrance is open as of January 2020. It is a LEFT hand exit approximately 0.3 miles north of the previous exit (about where the kokopelli -dancing Indian- sign is) and leads directly to the bypass. Always travel during daylight hours. There is one toll plaza on the bypass.

### Hermosillo to San Carlos

You are now on the final downhill run to San Carlos and about 90 minutes away from your destination. This section has also recently been converted to concrete with 2 lanes plus shoulder in both directions. Enjoy the scenery as the highway winds south through the country. The next landmark is the turn off to Kino Bay. Stay on the main highway headed to Guaymas. As you approach the coastal mountains surrounding Guaymas watch for signs directing you to Guaymas and steer clear of any signage or routes going to Empalme and Obregon. Just before the airport there is one final overpass for San Carlos. Bear right and continue along the coast to San Carlos and your final destination. You made it!

### **GENERAL DRIVING ADVICE**

Signs are in Spanish, speed limits (a number inside a circle) are in kilometers per hour (multiply the speed limit by 0.6 to convert to mph). The federal police on the main highways appear to not enforce the limits any more than you would expect in Arizona. That is not true of local police. Traffic lights are different. They go from steady green to flashing green to orange to red. That flashing green is equivalent to the US caution yellow. The Mexico yellow and red lights have the same meaning – that is you may not enter the intersection on a yellow (or red) light. Topes (speed bumps) in Mexico can be extremely aggressive – drive accordingly. Both federal police and military checkpoints are common. Only rarely will you be inspected when stopped.

### **YOUR BOAT IN SAN CARLOS**

If you plan to launch and/or store your boat in San Carlos, you may want to look at the Marina San Carlos web site at <http://marinasancarlos.com/>. Marina Seca is the marina's storage facility located 1/2 mile inland from the marina. They provide excellent facilities and a friendly staff. Marina San Carlos (and almost all marinas) will require proof of liability insurance on your boat, a copy of your boat import permit and your boat & trailer registration forms. See <https://www.gotmexico.com/mexico-boat-insurance/> for more information (this site may be slow).

**PLEASE REMEMBER YOU ARE ENTERING A FOREIGN COUNTRY AND DUE DILIGENCE IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE TRAVELER TO BE SURE THEY MEET THE CURRENT PROTOCOL FOR DOCUMENTS AND INSPECTIONS. THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE SHOULD BE A STARTING PLACE ONLY IN YOUR DUE DILIGENCE TO BE SURE THAT PROTOCOL HAS BEEN MET.**

### **RETURNING TO THE UNITED STATES**

For those without trailers, approaching the US, there will be signs directing you to the border (frontier). You will arrive at a point where the northbound lanes divide into three lanes separated by Jersey barriers. You need to keep left (Autobuses de pasajeros, autos y rvs). This

about 5.5 miles from the border. You will pass through a toll booth. When you reach the border, pick a lane. Ready lanes have restrictions, see next paragraph.

Ready Lanes (sometimes referred to as Fast Lanes) are suitable if all the passengers have either a U.S. Passport Card; the Enhanced Driver's License (EDL); the Enhanced Tribal Card (ETC); Trusted Traveler Cards (NEXUS, SENTRI, Global Entry and FAST cards); the new Enhanced Permanent Resident Card (PRC) or new Border Crossing Card (BCC). A passport is not an eligible document. For SENTRI or NEXUS lanes (available only at DeConcini (Nogales Centro), the driver and all passengers must have the appropriate card (SENTRI, NEXUS or Global Entry card) and vehicle must be registered with that card. For more information on Ready Lanes, see: <https://www.cbp.gov/travel/clearing-cbp/ready-lanes>.

Those towing a trailer are required (they are getting testier about this) to use the far-right lane. That is very difficult to reach with the above directions. Therefore, exit to Nogales Centro (about 4.4 miles after passing kilometer 21) and then at about 12.6 miles turn left onto Bulevar Luis Donaldo Colosio. That will take you to the Nogales entrance of the Mariposa border crossing and makes it easy to reach the boat and RV lane.

Declarations at the border. If you declare it and it is found to be impermissible, it will be confiscated but there are no penalties. If you fail to declare it, penalties may be imposed in addition to confiscation. Products that should be declared include food and food products, alcohol, tobacco, animals, and pharmaceuticals. For more information see: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/resources/traveler/intl-travel>. The best solution is to compile a list and hand it to border agent. For pets from Mexico, the only requirement is that they appear healthy. Arizona requires cats and dogs to have a current rabies vaccination. Shells and similar items are for the most part legal unless they are some type of protected species.

For Nogales border wait times, see the following:

- [Border Wait Times \(cbp.gov\)](https://www.cbp.gov/border-crossing/wait-times)
- Border entry webcams: <https://heroicanogales.gob.mx/webcams-garitas>

Customs and Border Patrol twitter could be useful: **@CBPARizona Twitter**

**Other related sites:**

- US Customs and Border Protection: <https://www.cbp.gov/>
- US Customs and Border Protection (Nogales): <https://www.cbp.gov/contact/ports/nogales>
- US State Dept: <https://www.state.gov/>