

Mexico Insight

Mexico Immigration Guide

2021 Edition



About Mexico Insight

Mexico Insight is a continuously updated series of concise guides and reports that share local knowledge and helpful advice about lifestyle and living in Mexico.

The series is published and distributed by Mexperience.com





About the Mexico Insight series

Mexico Insight is a continuously updated series of concise guides and reports that share local knowledge and helpful advice about lifestyle and living in Mexico, published by Mexperience.com. These guides and reports apprise you of the subject and assist further research with helpful cross references.

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Mexico Insight: Mexico Immigration Guide | 2021 Edition.

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Get practical help with your move to Mexico

Applying for legal residency is the start of a new adventure in Mexico. Mexperience and our partners can help you to realize your plans and make the most of your experience.

Mexico Immigration Assistance: make informed choices and get practical help

This [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) offered by our associate and provided by email and telephone will help you to map-out an approach that gives you the best chance of making a successful application and help you with practical matters as you make your way through the application procedures to obtain or renew a residency permit in Mexico. They can also help with regularization procedures and troubleshooting.

Auto Insurance: peace of mind when you're driving in Mexico

Be sure that your foreign-plated car is properly insured in Mexico. Our [insurance partner, MexPro, offers comprehensive and competitively priced auto insurance policies](#) which may be arranged immediately online

Mexico Home Insurance: protecting your valuable asset

Protect your valuable asset against unforeseen events including burglary, natural disasters, and third-party liabilities. [Our insurance partner, MexPro offers insurance solutions for your house in Mexico](#)

Mexico Health Insurance: plans to ensure your health and wellbeing are covered

Learn about Mexico's healthcare system and [how to arrange private healthcare plans to cover the needs of you and your family](#) in the event of ill-health, accidents or serious illnesses

Mexperience Mexico Newsletter

Our free [newsletter about Mexico](#) brings you a monthly round-up of recently published stories and opportunities, as well as gems from our archives.



Introduction to the 2021 Mexico Immigration Guide

Mexico has a long history of attracting and [welcoming foreign residents](#).

In 2012, Mexico enacted a sweeping immigration reform law that consolidated its immigration rules and qualification criteria for would-be residents and jobseekers and, more broadly, brought Mexico's immigration rules into closer alignment with international protocols.

Mexperience has been at the forefront of helping foreign nationals to migrate to Mexico and in recent years we have seen demand for relocation to Mexico swell as foreigners seek options for retirement and lifestyle change.

Our Mexico Immigration Guide has been updated every year since 2009 and working in collaboration with our partners this guide has become a go-to resource for those seeking clear, concise, and updated information about matters relating to applying for and obtaining legal residency in Mexico.

The 2021 edition is offered as a free eBook download. The guide is co-sponsored by Mexperience and two of our partners: Yucatan Expatriate Services who we work with to provide a [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) to those who want to move to Mexico; and insurance company MexPro who offer comprehensive and competitive [auto insurance](#) and [home insurance](#) in Mexico.

This latest 2021 edition has been completely revised and updated and is now fully integrated with resources on Mexperience.com. For this reason, the guide is best used on-screen —on your desktop screen or tablet is best— so that you can easily link through to cross references for the latest updates and further reading on Mexperience.

Note: [Red colored text](#) inside paragraphs can be clicked or tapped to link to further details.

This guide is crossed-checked with immigration experts and backed by more than a decade of readers' feedback as well as practical experience helping people to apply for legal residency in Mexico.

Mexico Immigration Assistance: make informed choices and get practical help

This [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) offered by our associate and provided by email and telephone will help you to map-out an approach that gives you the best chance of making a successful application and help you with practical matters as you make your way through the application procedures to obtain or renew a residency permit in Mexico. They can also help with regularization procedures and troubleshooting.



Mexico Immigration Assistance Service

Make informed choices about the best route to apply for Mexican legal residency, and get practical help with your residency permit application, renewal, or regularization procedures

When you're thinking about or actively planning a move to Mexico and need some detailed personal advice about the move, the [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) provided by our associates can help you to map-out a strategy and approach that is suited to your personal circumstances.

Personal consultation and advice

Immigration Assistance by phone/email differs from hiring an immigration lawyer as you don't have to be physically located in Mexico and the consultancy will enable you to speak/correspond with an expert in Mexican immigration matters about your specific circumstances.

The consultant will seek to assess your individual circumstances and suggest a proper course of action, based on your personal situation, that will have the best chance of leading to a successful application to retire, work, or invest in Mexico.

Practical assistance with the application process

In addition to providing a private consultation, the [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) can also help you in practical ways as you navigate the application and its various procedures, including:

- ◆ Identifying your nearest Mexican consulate and making the necessary appointments
- ◆ Helping you to identify and gather all the required documents and paperwork you'll need to support your application
- ◆ Making the initial application at a Mexican consulate abroad, and/or at the local immigration office in Mexico
- ◆ Correctly filling-out online forms
- ◆ Writing letters in Spanish (using appropriate terms and phrases) to support your application or residency-related administrative procedure
- ◆ Helping you through visa-to-residency card exchange process in Mexico
- ◆ Support for any regularization procedures you may need to undertake, if relevant
- ◆ Providing support to answer your questions along the way and troubleshoot any issues that might arise as part of the procedures

Our associates have been helping people to apply for Mexican legal residency for over 10 years. They are experts in their field and provide tele-support services that can enable you apply for and process your Mexican residency application quickly and efficiently in-person without the need to hire a local immigration lawyer.

[Learn more about the Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#)



Legal residency in Mexico and your lifestyle plans

People seeking legal residency in Mexico have two broad options: temporary residency, that can optionally lead to permanent residency after four consecutive years, or permanent residency. Residency permits are issued based on a range of criteria and might or might not include permission to work. The type of visa you apply for will depend on your life stage and lifestyle plans in Mexico; how long you intend to stay, and whether you intend to work or retire in Mexico.

If you intend to live in Mexico part-time, and not work

If you intend to live in Mexico part-time and not work (or volunteer), you might visit Mexico under the auspice of a Visitor's Permit. We recommend that regular part-time residents apply for a temporary resident visa to ease their passage across the border and prevent potentially being turned away.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Learn about Mexico's visitor's permit, the FMM](#)
- ❖ [Time limits on Mexico's visitor and residency permits](#)
- ❖ [Volunteering in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Documentation required for entry to Mexico](#)

If you intend to live in Mexico full-time, and not work

If you intend to live full time in Mexico and not work (for example, [as a retiree](#)) then a Temporary or Permanent residency visa will work for you. Whether you choose temporary or permanent will depend on your longer-term goals, and whether you have the economic means to apply for permanent residency from the outset. (After four *consecutive* years of temporary residency, you can optionally apply to exchange your temporary residency for permanent residency status.)

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Planning a new lifestyle in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Guide to retirement in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Articles about retirement in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Time limits on Mexico's visitor and residency permits](#)

If you intend to live in Mexico part-time or full-time, and work

To work legally in Mexico, you **must** have a temporary residency visa *with work permissions*, or permanent residency. Immigration authorities have been stepping-up enforcement with field officers making spot-checks at commercial premises across Mexico and detaining foreign residents working under the auspice of visitor permits (FMM) or temporary residency cards *without* work permissions.



FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Planning a new lifestyle in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Guide to working in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Articles about working in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Guide to working and self-employment in Mexico](#) (eBook)

If you're seeking to acquire Mexican citizenship

If you intend to apply for Mexican Citizenship, you must be legally resident in Mexico for at least five *consecutive* years (under the auspice of Temporary **and/or** Permanent Residency) before you can apply for citizenship.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Becoming a naturalized Mexican](#)
- ❖ [Articles on Mexperience about Mexican citizenship](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) (applying for Mexican citizenship)

Mexico's visitor permit and port-of-entry form, FMM

If the country that issued your passport is listed on [Mexico's 'No permit Required List'](#) you don't need to pre-apply for a visa to visit the country; instead you can arrive in Mexico and complete a special visitor permit known in Spanish as a *Forma Migratoria Multiple*, or FMM. This permit is intended for stays in Mexico lasting up to 180 days or less. You must leave Mexico before it expires; it cannot be extended or renewed.

Important: If the country that issued your passport does **NOT** appear on [Mexico's 'No permit Required List'](#) then you might need to contact a Mexican consulate to apply for a visa before you travel to Mexico.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Do I need a visa to visit Mexico?](#)
- ❖ [Learn about Mexico's visitor's permit, the FMM](#)
- ❖ [Volunteering in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Mexican consulates abroad](#)
- ❖ [Documentation required for entry to Mexico](#)



Residency permits: Temporary and Permanent

Mexico offers two types of residency permit: Temporary Residency (*Residente Temporal*) and Permanent Residency (*Residente Permanente*).

Temporary Residency in Mexico

Mexico offers a **Temporary Resident** permit, intended for people who wish to live in Mexico for more than 6 months. The Temporary Resident permit is a renewable, long-term (more than six months) permit which gives non-immigrant temporary residency status to the holder.

The visa is always issued for one year initially, and can then be renewed for a further 1, 2, or 3 years; this visa can *optionally* give work permissions, and allows unlimited entries to, and exits from, Mexico.

There are various categories under which the Temporary Resident permits are granted, and these relate to the activities you intend to undertake while in Mexico. Under the terms of the Temporary Resident permit, you are authorized to only undertake certain, specific, activities which may be **lucrative** or **non-lucrative**, depending on the permit's classification.

A key criterion that the Mexican authorities require for the issuance of a Temporary Resident permit is that the applicant prove that they have sufficient funds to sustain themselves while in Mexico and/or a proven steady income. The financial requirements are based in Mexican pesos, and the financial criteria were formalized following the introduction of the new immigration law that was enacted in 2012. See the link in Further Insight, below, for details.

With a few exceptions, the Temporary Resident permit cannot be issued to you in Mexico and you must apply for it at a Mexican consulate outside of Mexico. This is a change to the rules before 2012, where Visitor Permits could previously be exchanged for Resident Permits if the person(s) fulfilled the criteria.

After living in Mexico for 4 *consecutive* years with a Temporary Resident card, holders may apply to exchange it for Permanent Residency. Some people allow the Temporary Residency card to expire after 4 years (*purposely* making their immigration status 'irregular') and then enter into a regularization procedure to re-apply for Temporary residency in Mexico; we don't recommend this, but we know of people who embark on this procedure as a means to avoid taking-up Permanent Residency in Mexico.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Time limits on Mexico's visitor and residency permits](#)
- ❖ [Financial criteria for residency in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Applying for residency within Mexico \(Family Unit\)](#)
- ❖ [Renewing your residency permit](#)
- ❖ [Temporary residency: expiry and renewal](#)
- ❖ [Regularization procedures](#)
- ❖ [Mexican consulates abroad](#)

Permanent Residency in Mexico

Permanent Resident permits are issued to foreign nationals who have the intention of living in Mexico for long periods of time (over six months) **and** who intend to settle permanently (indefinitely) in Mexico.

The Permanent Resident permit is intended for people seeking permanent residency status in Mexico.

You do not need to be a Temporary Resident first to become a Permanent Resident later, provided that you fulfill one of the other requirements needed for permanent residency.

To apply for and be granted **Permanent Residency**, the applicants must:

- ◆ have certain close [family connections](#) in Mexico, **or**
- ◆ apply for retirement status and prove they have sufficient monthly income (or substantial assets) to support themselves, **or**
- ◆ have 4 *consecutive* years of regular status as Temporary Resident, **or**
- ◆ have 2 *consecutive* years of regular status as Temporary Resident where that Temporary permit was issued through marriage to a Mexican National or marriage to a foreign permanent resident (see [Family Unit applications](#)), **or**
- ◆ meet a minimum score under the [Points System](#), **or**
- ◆ be granted residency on humanitarian grounds or through political asylum.

With a few exceptions, the Permanent Resident permit cannot be issued to you in Mexico and you must apply for it at a Mexican consulate outside of Mexico. This is a change to the rules before 2012, where Visitor permits could previously be exchanged for Resident permits if the person(s) fulfilled the criteria.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Time limits on Mexico's visitor and residency permits](#)
- ❖ [Financial criteria for residency in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Applying for residency within Mexico \(Family Unit\)](#)
- ❖ [Renewing your residency permit](#)
- ❖ [Temporary residency: expiry and renewal](#)
- ❖ [Getting married in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Points-based residency applications](#)
- ❖ [Mexican consulates abroad](#)

Converting Temporary Residency to Permanent Residency

The quickest way to gain long-term residency in Mexico is to apply for and be granted permanent residency *without* first acquiring temporary residency—but the qualification criteria for permanent residency are stricter; not everyone can qualify for permanent residency right away, while some people don't know if they want to apply for permanent residency at the outset, and later decide to apply for



permanent residency after a period under temporary residency. People who do not qualify for immediate permanent residency may, after 4 *consecutive* years as a temporary legal resident in Mexico, apply to change their status to permanent resident.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Financial criteria for residency in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Time limits on Mexico's visitor and residency permits](#)
- ❖ [Renewing your residency permit](#)
- ❖ [Temporary residency: expiry and renewal](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) (exchange from temporary to permanent residency)

Rights and obligations of legal residency in Mexico

When you acquire legal residency in Mexico, you have certain rights and obligations.

Rights and obligations of Temporary Resident card holders

Temporary Resident cardholders carry the following rights and obligations:

- ◆ Reside in Mexico for more than 180 days, up to 4 years
- ◆ Register a Mexican-plated car in Mexico
- ◆ [Receive social security \(from Mexico\)](#)
- ◆ [Open bank accounts in Mexico](#)
- ◆ [Bring household goods from abroad without paying duties](#)
- ◆ [Import foreign-plated cars temporarily](#)
- ◆ [Travel freely in and out of Mexico](#)
- ◆ Optionally obtain permanent residency after 4 *consecutive* years of temporary residency

But...

- ◆ Temporary residents **cannot** vote in Mexico.
- ◆ Temporary residents **cannot** own land directly if it is located within 50 kilometers of the beach or 100 kilometers from the Mexican land border, but they can [own property near beaches and land borders](#) through a trust, or through a Mexican corporation **and** have legal right to the property in all but name.

And...

- ◆ Temporary residents must inform their local immigration office of any change of employment (with a letter stating the new job), marital status (marriage, divorce, or death of spouse), nationality (new passport or letter of naturalization) and address (with a letter providing the new



address) within 90 calendar days of the change. If this does not take place in such time frame, the temporary resident will be subject to penalties.

- ◆ There are currently no maximum or minimum times the holder of Temporary Resident card must be physically present in Mexico during the course of a year; however, see this article about [time limits on residency permits](#) for further information about rules, especially if you intend to [seek Mexican citizenship](#).

Rights and obligations of Permanent Resident card holders

Permanent Resident cardholders have the following rights and obligations:

- All the rights enjoyed by temporary residents, e.g., car registration, access to social security, travel freely in and out of Mexico, etc. – see previous section; but **note the important exception** about importing foreign-plated cars (see below).
- All the guarantees that the Mexican Constitution grants to all Mexicans, except for the political guarantees that are reserved exclusively for Mexican citizens.
- No need to renew the Permanent Residency status (although some INM offices request its renewal every 10 years to keep the photograph current). If the holder is less than three years old, he or she will have to renew *every year* until reaching 3 years of age; and then *every four years* until reaching the age of 18.
- The right to engage lucratively in any legal activity without having to request the INM's permission. Notification of *job changes* is still required. If you are working under a professional designation (as an engineer, architect, etc.), you may be required to file your degree at the *Dirección General de Profesiones*. Check with your local INM office for details.

But...

- Permanent residents **cannot** vote in Mexico.
- Permanent residents **cannot** own land directly if it is located within 50 kilometers of the beach or 100 kilometers from the Mexican land border, but they can [own property near beaches and land borders](#) through a trust, or through a Mexican corporation **and** have legal right to the property in all but name.
- **Permanent** residents **cannot** import or keep [foreign-plated vehicles](#) in Mexico. This is a notable difference to rules for Temporary Residents who can import foreign-plated vehicles and keep them here while their temporary residency status is valid.

And...

- Permanent Residents must inform their local immigration office of any change of employment (with a letter stating the new job), marital status (marriage, divorce, or death of spouse), nationality (new passport or letter of naturalization) and address (with a letter providing the new address) within 90 calendar days of the change. If this does not take place in such time frame, the resident will be subject to penalties.



Qualification criteria for legal residency in Mexico

If you intend to apply for legal residency in Mexico, you will need to fulfil certain criteria and apply via the route which satisfy those criteria. Here is a list of the most-common routes to apply for legal residency in Mexico.

Economic solvency

If you want to apply for residency in Mexico under the rules of ‘economic solvency,’ you will need to demonstrate that you have sufficient means to support yourself, and your dependents if you have any. Under the present rules, ‘economic solvency’ tests include:

- ◆ Regular income from foreign pensions/investments
- ◆ Savings in cash or cash-like investments
- ◆ Ownership of real estate in Mexico
- ◆ Investment in Mexican companies/stock market

Important: In regard to proving ‘economic solvency,’ it’s important to mention that the financial options listed above **cannot be combined**; the officer reviewing your application will need to see either the full minimum income requirements **or** the full minimum balance of savings/investments. The same applies in the case of Real Estate for the temporary resident visa; it has to be the full financial value from real estate only, not combined with income and/or savings.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Financial criteria for residency in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Financial criteria: Minimum salary vs UMA](#)
- ❖ [Articles about UMA](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) (Applications on the basis of economic solvency)

Economic solvency with additional spouse

If you are applying for temporary or permanent residency based on economic solvency as a married couple, you will need to demonstrate the income **or** savings in the amounts stated in the criteria **plus**:

- ◆ if you are applying based on your monthly income, an *additional* 100 days of minimum wage/UMA *per month* for the dependent spouse, **or**
- ◆ if you are applying based on your savings, an *additional* 100 days of minimum wage/UMA *of total savings* for the dependent spouse.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Applying for residency under the rules of ‘Civil Partnerships’](#)
- ❖ [Financial criteria: Minimum Wage vs UMA](#)



- ❖ [Financial criteria for residency in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) (Applications on the basis of economic solvency)

Application for residency under 'Family Unit' rules

If you have *certain types* of close family connections in Mexico, you can apply for residency under auspice of their sponsorship. Depending on the type of family relationship, economic solvency criteria might apply, although if they do, the levels are lower than those for non-family unit applications.

Family Unit applications can be made in-country: When you apply under the auspices of Family Unit you can, optionally, exchange a visitor's permit for a residency permit in-country.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Applying for residency within Mexico \(Family Unit\)](#)
- ❖ [Renewing your residency permit](#)
- ❖ [Temporary residency: expiry and renewal](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) (Applications on the basis of Family Unit)

Application for residency under 'Points System' rules

Under Mexico's 2012 immigration reform law, a clause was added that would enable foreigners to apply for residency in Mexico under a points-based system, designed to attract highly educated/qualified individuals to fill key roles in Mexico's economy. However, as of January 2021, this program has not been implemented and, therefore, Mexico does not currently offer a points-based application system in practice.

Application for residency with a formal job offer

See 'Working Permits' – next section.

Other criteria for legal residency in Mexico

You can apply for residency in Mexico on humanitarian grounds or seek political asylum. Mexico applies international protocols in matters related to these types of application for residency. We suggest you contact a lawyer specializing in these fields if you intend to apply on humanitarian grounds, or because you are seeking political asylum.

FURTHER INSIGHTS

- ❖ [Mexico visas and immigration FAQ page on Mexperience](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#)

Work permits

Not all temporary residency permits in Mexico carry working permissions. In order to work legally in Mexico under the auspice of temporary residency, your permit **must** carry work privileges in addition to residency.

Seeking a work permit through a formal job offer

You can obtain temporary residency with work privileges in Mexico under the auspice of a formal job offer. In all cases, **the employer** must petition the application on your behalf. When the application is accepted:

- ◆ **If you are outside Mexico:** You must attend your nearest Mexican Consulate and obtain a Temporary Resident visa stamp in your passport which must be exchanged for a residency card when you arrive in Mexico.
- ◆ **If you are in Mexico under the auspice of a Visitor permit (FMM):** You will need to leave Mexico, attend a Mexican Consulate abroad and obtain a Temporary Resident visa stamp in your passport which must be exchanged for a residency card when you arrive back in Mexico.
- ◆ **If you are in Mexico and already have a Residency permit:** You will need to attend a local immigration office (INM) to inform them of your change of employer; or if you don't have work permissions on the card, you will also need to apply for a change of status.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) (Assistance with job offer applications, or change of status on an existing residency permit)
- ❖ [Mexican consulates abroad](#)
- ❖ [Guide to working in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Articles about working in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Guide to working and self-employment in Mexico](#) (eBook)
- ❖ [Mexico's INM](#) (Local immigration offices)

Seeking residency through self-employment in Mexico

Applications for legal residency on the basis of self-employment are complex. If you intend to move to Mexico and work independently, we **strongly** recommend you [talk with our immigration assistance partners](#) who can assess your intentions and recommend an approach that will give you the best chance of a successful application.

- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) (Assistance with self-employment residency application)
- ❖ [Guide to working and self-employment in Mexico](#) (eBook)
- ❖ [Articles about working in Mexico](#)

Mexico residency permit essentials

This section of the Mexico Immigration guide offers practical advice about matters related to applying for, holding, and renewing a Mexican residency permit.

Residency Permit Fees 2021

If you intend to apply for legal residency in Mexico or need to engage in some administrative process regarding your existing legal residency permit, you will need to pay some fees to facilitate the procedures.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Schedule of residency-related fees for 2021](#)

Residing in Mexico using a Visitor's permit

If your Passport is issued by one of the many countries [on Mexico's 'no visa required' list](#), then you can use Mexico's Visitor permit (FMM) to enter Mexico for up to 180 days. There is no time limit to remain outside the country before re-entering using a *new FMM*—and thus obtaining another 180 days' leave to remain in Mexico.

Some people have been using this flexibility to stay in Mexico longer-term; however, with today's computerized entry and exit systems, immigration officials at ports of entry have ready-access to your movements through Mexico, and 'perpetual visitors' —people who continuously enter, stay for a few months, exit and then re-enter Mexico in short order with another FMM— may now have their intentions questioned at the port of entry. We have heard of cases where people doing this have been turned away; if you intend to stay in Mexico longer-term, we recommend you consider applying for temporary residency in Mexico.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Do I need a visa to visit Mexico?](#)
- ❖ [Learn about Mexico's visitor's permit, the FMM](#)
- ❖ [Temporary residency in Mexico](#)

Initial applications for legal residency in Mexico

Before the 2012 immigration reforms, a foreigner could change from a visitor's permit to any other type of visa while in Mexico.

After November 2012, the rules changed and now only in a few specific circumstances (related to Family Unit or humanitarian reasons) can foreigners exchange a visitor's permit (FMM) for a residency card inside Mexico. *Most people need to apply at a Mexican Consulate outside of Mexico.*

When applied for from overseas, the Temporary and Permanent Resident cards themselves are not issued by Mexican consulates. Instead, they process and pre-approve the application and place a *visa (sticker)* in



your passport. When you arrive in Mexico you have to attend your local immigration office **within 30 calendar days of your arrival in Mexico** and undertake a procedure to exchange your temporary resident visa (a passport sticker) for a Temporary Resident permit (a plastic card).

The **visa sticker** placed into your passport by the consulate is valid for 180 days from its issue date. The applicant must enter Mexico within this time frame and start the “*canje*” (exchange) process within the 30 calendar days of their entry date to Mexico.

This visa carries a consulate fee that must be paid at the Mexican Consulate and another payment must be made in Mexico as part of the *canje* (visa exchange) procedure: the *canje* fee will depend on the type of visa that was approved by the consulate.

Important! Once a residency visa is obtained, it **must** be used on your subsequent entry to Mexico: you cannot get a resident visa and then enter as a tourist, leave, and come back to Mexico later using your resident visa sticker.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Temporary and Permanent residency in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Applying for residency within Mexico \(Family Unit\)](#)
- ❖ [Exchanging your visa sticker for a residency card](#)
- ❖ [Renewing your residency permit](#)
- ❖ [Temporary residency: expiry and renewal](#)
- ❖ [Residency permit fees](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) (Initial applications)

Procedural variations by consulate and local immigration offices

Consulates and local immigration offices in Mexico broadly follow the same procedures; however, we have observed from experience that variances do exist between consulates in different US states and countries, as well as between local immigration offices in different Mexican states.

To save time, pre-check the requirements with the Mexican consulate you intend to deal with and, when you come to Mexico to exchange your visa sticker (or renew an existing residency card) speak to your local ‘*tramitador*’ (person assisting you at the local immigration office) before applying. Our associate’s [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) can also help you through the process.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Mexican consulates abroad](#)
- ❖ [Mexico’s INM website](#) (National Immigration Institute)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#)



About currency exchange rates applied by Mexican consulates

When you are applying for residency based on your economic solvency, you will be asked to show documentary evidence of your income, savings, or investments. Most applicants do this abroad at a Mexican consulate, who assess the evidence, interview prospective resident(s), and if the application is successful, they pre-approve the residency visa.

Mexican immigration law expresses the minimum income or savings requirements required for residency in **Mexican pesos**; however, when you apply for your residency visa via Mexican consulates abroad, they will express the required amounts in the **local currency** of the country where they are situated, and the income or savings they ask to see *may or may not reflect the current market exchange rates in relation to the amount required in Mexican pesos*. This can cause variations in the specific amounts asked for, and it's not uncommon for consulates' requirements to vary from one another.

If your income or savings balance is near the cusp of qualification, we recommend you contact your [nearest Mexican Consulate](#) to determine how it's currently applying the rules regarding financial criteria for residency applications. Every application is dealt with individually and the Consulate retains discretion on acceptance or denial of your residency application on a per-case basis.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Mexican consulates abroad](#)
- ❖ [Qualification criteria for legal residency in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Residency permit fees](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) (Initial applications)

Exchanging your residency visa sticker for a Resident Card

When you are granted a residency visa at a Mexican Consulate abroad, you are issued with a **visa sticker** in your passport. This sticker grants you **one-time entry** to Mexico as a resident, and you **must** arrive at a port in Mexico within 180 calendar days of its issue date.

You then have **30 calendar days** from the *date of your arrival in Mexico* to attend your local immigration office and begin a process to exchange your resident visa sticker for a **residency card**. If you fail to initiate the exchange (*canje*) process in this time frame, the visa will become void and you will need to restart the application process.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Procedures for entering and leaving Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Time limits on Mexico visitor and residency permits](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) (Initial applications and visa exchange)



Improvements in procedures for Mexico residency permits

Mexico's INM (National Institute of Immigration) has been working hard to modernize the processing and issuance of Mexican residency permits and, since the autumn of 2020, significant procedural improvements are being rolled-out at local immigration offices across the country for the benefit all applicants and residency card holders.

Some of the changes are happening behind-the-scenes to streamline the processes and reduce the burden of time on staff and applicants, while other changes are readily visible when you attend an immigration office.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Mexico's immigration offices are modernizing their procedures](#)

Leaving Mexico during a residency-related procedure

If you have a residency-related procedure in train at the immigration office in Mexico, for example, when you are exchanging your visa sticker for a residency card, renewing a residency card, or replacing a lost card, you cannot leave the country until the procedure is complete.

If you need to leave the country while your residency paperwork is being processed, then you need to apply separately for an **exit/re-entry permit**, because you won't be in possession of your residency documents which facilitate normal exit and re-entry to the country.

You commence the application for an exit/re-entry permit [with an online form](#) that you later print and take to your local INM office accompanied by a signed covering letter **written in Spanish** explaining the *force majeure* that requires you to leave the country. There is also a fee to obtain the permit, which you must pay at a local bank.

It usually takes **3-5 working days to obtain an exit permit**, which you should arrange at the same local immigration office where your residency application is being handled; in true emergencies you may arrange this at an airport although you will need at least one clear working day to arrange the paperwork, so don't leave it until the last minute (you are likely to miss your flight if you do).

Important notes about exit/re-entry permits: **1)** The exit/re-entry permit is only valid for **60 calendar days** from the date of issue and you must return to Mexico *before* it expires otherwise your entire residency application becomes void. **2)** If you are in the process of a 'Regularization' procedure (see next section) then you **cannot** avail yourself of this exit/re-entry permit; you will have to remain physically in Mexico until the 'regularization' process has been completed.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Procedures for entering and leaving Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Temporary residency: expiry and renewal](#)
- ❖ [Residency permit fees](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) (Exit/Re-entry permits)



'Regularization' procedures related to your residency status

If during the course of your residency application or while you are legally resident in Mexico you deliberately or inadvertently break the rules, then your immigration status may become what is legally termed as 'irregular' and if you wish to remain (resident) in Mexico you will need to enter into a 'Regularization' process to remedy this.

Examples of situations where your immigration status becomes 'irregular' include:

- ◆ allowing your visa sticker to expire while you're in Mexico;
- ◆ allowing your residency card to expire while you're in Mexico or abroad;
- ◆ entering Mexico as a tourist/visitor when you are legally resident in Mexico; and
- ◆ working illegally in Mexico.

'Regularization' procedures are more complex than regular applications and carry fines in addition to the regular fees and charges for permits.

There are also time-limits for regularization; for example, if your residency card expired, you must enter into a regularization procedure **within 60 calendar days of its expiry date**—failure to do so forfeits your legal residency status and you have to leave the country and re-commence your residency application from the beginning. (The only exception is for those people with close family connections in Mexico.)

It's also important to note that when you are in the throes of a regularization process you cannot leave Mexico—**even in an emergency**.

Get assistance with regularization procedures: due to complexities involved in these procedures, we recommend you seek assistance when entering a regularization process. The [Immigration Assistance Service](#) offered by our associates can provide relevant advice and practical help.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Procedures for entering and leaving Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Exchanging your visa sticker for a residency card](#)
- ❖ [Renewing your residency permit](#)
- ❖ [Temporary residency: expiry and renewal](#)
- ❖ [Residency permit fees](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) (Regularization, troubleshooting)

Minimum Salary vs UMA

Historically, qualification criteria when applying for residency in Mexico on the basis of economic solvency were calculated using multiples of the country's official minimum salary.

In 2016, the Mexican government began to decouple the minimum salary multiplier from official measures and prices and in 2020 Mexico's local immigration offices started to transition to the alternative measure, UMA, that's an acronym for *Unidad de Medida y Actualización*.



Some local immigration offices and some Mexican consulates abroad may still be applying the (higher) minimum salary multiples to their calculations during this transition period.

Therefore, the income or savings you need to qualify for residency in Mexico will depend on whether the authority applies Minimum Salary or UMA to the calculation. The articles referenced in the links below will help you to understand the difference between Minimum Salary and UMA and how it might affect your application for legal residency on the basis of ‘economic solvency.’

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Mexico’s Immigration Institute begins to adopt UMA](#)
- ❖ [Mexico residency qualification criteria: Minimum Salary vs UMA](#)
- ❖ [Financial criteria for residency in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Articles on Mexperience about UMA](#)
- ❖ [Mexican consulates abroad](#)

Procedures for legal residents entering and leaving Mexico

When you are legally resident in Mexico, you will need to undertake some special procedures each time you enter and leave the country.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Procedures for entering and leaving Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Forma Migratoria Multiple, the FMM](#)
- ❖ [Documents required for travel and entry to Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Regularization procedures](#)

Time limits on Visitor and Residency permits

Time limits exist on Visitor permits and Temporary Resident permits. Permanent Residency permits never expire but may require occasional renewal to update the photograph on the card.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Time limits on Mexico’s visitor and residency permits](#)
- ❖ [Renewing your residency permit](#)
- ❖ [Temporary residency: expiry and renewal](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) (Residency permit renewals and troubleshooting)



Renewing your existing Temporary Residency card

When you're living in Mexico and want to renew your Mexico residency permit (card) for further years, you **must** undertake the renewal process in-country: it cannot be done from outside Mexico. If you applied for and were granted Permanent Residency, then there is no need to renew your card (it never expires).

You must attend your local immigration office (INM) *within 30 days prior to the permit's expiration date* to apply for a renewal. We strongly recommend that you do not leave applying for your residency renewal to the last minute. Applications entail form filling, bank payments, etc. The application needs to be reviewed at the local immigration office and the application formally **accepted and registered** on the system before the expiry date. If something is amiss, you will be turned away to correct something(s) on the application, and we therefore recommend you start the renewal process at the *beginning* of the 30-day window before the permit expires.

Note about economic solvency for renewal applications: According to the immigration law, economic solvency does not need to be demonstrated for temporary residency card *renewals*. However, we are hearing of cases where immigration offices in some Mexican states are exercising their right to request additional information and asking applicants for recent bank statements when they apply for renewal of temporary residency. Therefore, you should be prepared to demonstrate your 'economic solvency' when you renew your temporary residency in case it is called for.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Renewing your residency permit](#)
- ❖ [Financial criteria for residency in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Mexican consulates abroad](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) (Residency permit renewals)

Expired residency cards

If you hold a Temporary Resident card and let it expire, specific rules exist about applying to get your card renewed. These rules are complex, strict time limits apply, and the procedures will vary depending on whether you are physically situated inside or outside Mexico on the date when the card expires.

Help with expired residency cards: Consider using this [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) to discuss your situation and help you through the regularization procedure. *We strongly recommend that if you hold a resident permit and you plan to remain living in Mexico you do not let it expire before applying for it to be renewed.* Resident cards can be renewed up to 30 calendar days prior to their expiry date.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Temporary residency: expiry and renewal](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) (Help with expired residency permits)



Lost, stolen, or damaged residency cards

If your Mexico residency card is lost, stolen, or damaged, there are procedures to get replaced.

- ◆ If you are **inside** Mexico when you lose your residency permit, you'll need to attend your [local immigration office](#) to apply for a replacement; you can [find details here](#)
- ◆ If you are **outside** Mexico when the loss happens, you should contact your nearest Mexican consulate for guidance
- ◆ You will also need to pay a card replacement fee

Important: These procedures apply to cards that have *not expired*—see previous section about resident card expiry. If your card is lost, stolen or damaged **and** expired, different rules apply. Consider using this [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) to discuss your situation and help you through the replacement procedure.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Renewing your residency permit](#)
- ❖ [Temporary residency: expiry and renewal](#)
- ❖ [Schedule of residency-related fees for 2021](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) (Residency card replacement)

Applying for residency as 'Civil Partners'

Mexico's immigration law states that "*Concubinos*" (sometimes referred to in Spanish as "Union Libre" or in English, "Common-Law Union") can apply for residency in Mexico under the Family Unit rules. (This also includes same-sex civil partnerships.)

- ◆ **If you are in Mexico** making the application, we understand that you might need to apply to a local judge with evidence of your partnership and he/she would issue a certificate to this effect. Contact your [local immigration office](#) for advice.
- ◆ **If you are applying from abroad**, you should contact the [Mexican consulate](#) you intend to apply at for advice.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Applying for residency within Mexico \(Family Unit\)](#)
- ❖ [Guide to getting married in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) (Residency applications via Family Unit)



Resident minors traveling alone

If you are the parent or guardian of resident minors (persons under the age of 18 years), you will need to undertake a special procedure if they are legally resident in Mexico and not traveling with you. This procedure is part of an international protocol designed to protect minors traveling across borders.

If your child is a Mexican citizen (*including* dual nationals), or if your child is not Mexican but is a legal resident of Mexico (temporary, temporary student, or permanent), **and the child(ren) will be traveling alone**, they will need to carry authorization to leave Mexico using the ‘SAM’ procedure. When *either* or *both* parents, **or** the *legal guardian* travels with the child(ren), there is no need for this SAM authorization procedure to be undertaken.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Traveling with minors to Mexico](#)
- ❖ [SAM authorization procedure for minors who are Mexican \(dual\) nationals](#)

Getting foreign documents legalized (Apostilled)

For certain legal procedures, usually related to immigration, residency, investment, or marriage (or a combination of these) it may be necessary to present Mexican authorities with foreign legal documents as part of application procedure—foreign birth certificates and foreign marriage certificates are the most common. Before the Mexican authorities will receive foreign-issued legal documents for processing, it’s necessary to get these ‘Apostilled.’

FOREIGN INSIGHT

- ❖ [Getting foreign documents Apostilled \(legalized\) for Mexico](#)

Importing your personal and household goods to Mexico

When you move to Mexico, you may have personal goods you want to bring with you. Normally, all goods crossing borders are subject to tariffs and duties; however, there is a procedure in place that allows **new** residents to import their personal goods without paying these duties: this is a **one-time allowance** that cannot be repeated.

“*Menaje de Casa*” is the name given to the list of household goods that a foreign citizen can import into Mexico free of duties. There are various rules to adhere to, the importer needs to have a temporary or permanent resident **card** for the goods to be cleared through Mexican Customs (*Aduana*).

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Importing your personal goods to Mexico](#)
- ❖ [How to relocate and move to Mexico](#)



Bringing your foreign-plated vehicle to Mexico

Mexico's reformed immigration law enacted in 2012 changed the rules concerning the import of foreign-plated vehicles. For temporary visitors (tourists) and temporary residents, procedures remain straightforward; however, a significant change is that permanent residents are **not** allowed to drive a foreign-plated car into Mexico using a Temporary Import Permit (TIP). See the links below under 'Further Insight' for details.

Note about vehicle insurance: Your US or Canadian insurance policy is not valid in Mexico, so you need to purchase a policy that covers you while you're driving your vehicle here. Being adequately insured will prevent you from having to deal with potentially complex situations and facing substantial costs and expenses in the event of a mishap or serious accident. See the [Guide to Auto Insurance in Mexico](#) on Mexperience for details. Our partners MexPro offer [competitively priced auto insurance plans](#) that you can arrange online.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Bringing a foreign-plated vehicle to Mexico](#)
- ❖ [TIP: Temporary Import Permit for your vehicle](#)
- ❖ [Guide to auto insurance](#)
- ❖ [Articles on Mexperience about driving in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Auto insurance quotes](#) (MexPro)

Further resources

- ❖ Mexperience regularly updates this '[Mexico visas and immigration](#)' FAQ page online. It's a collection of questions we get asked with up-to-date answers based on the latest rules and our experience of helping people to apply and acquire residency in Mexico.
- ❖ See all the latest articles and updates about [Mexico visas and immigration on Mexperience](#)
- ❖ When you need a personalized service to help you make informed choices about the best route to apply for Mexican legal residency, as well as practical help with your residency permit application, renewal or regularization procedures, the [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) provided by our associates can help.



Mexico Immigration Assistance Service

Make informed choices about the best route to apply for Mexican legal residency, and get practical help with your residency permit application, renewal, or regularization procedures

When you're thinking about or actively planning a move to Mexico and need some detailed personal advice about the move, the [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) provided by our associates can help you to map-out a strategy and approach that is suited to your personal circumstances.

Personal consultation and advice

Immigration Assistance by phone/email differs from hiring an immigration lawyer as you don't have to be physically located in Mexico and the consultancy will enable you to speak/correspond with an expert in Mexican immigration matters about your specific circumstances.

The consultant will seek to assess your individual circumstances and suggest a proper course of action, based on your personal situation, that will have the best chance of leading to a successful application to retire, work, or invest in Mexico.

Practical assistance with the application process

In addition to providing a private consultation, the [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) can also help you in practical ways as you navigate the application and its various procedures, including:

- ◆ Identifying your nearest Mexican consulate and making the necessary appointments
- ◆ Helping you to identify and gather all the required documents and paperwork you'll need to support your application
- ◆ Making the initial application at a Mexican consulate abroad, and/or at the local immigration office in Mexico
- ◆ Correctly filling-out online forms
- ◆ Writing letters in Spanish (using appropriate terms and phrases) to support your application or residency-related administrative procedure
- ◆ Helping you through visa-to-residency card exchange process in Mexico
- ◆ Support for any regularization procedures you may need to undertake, if relevant
- ◆ Providing support to answer your questions along the way and troubleshoot any issues that might arise as part of the procedures

Our associates have been helping people to apply for Mexican legal residency for over 10 years. They are experts in their field and provide tele-support services that enable you apply for and process your Mexican residency application quickly and efficiently in-person without the need to hire a local immigration lawyer.

[Learn more about the Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#)