

GOING TO MEXICO

Pack To Get Back

As of 2009, you need more than your good looks to get back into the United States after visiting Mexico ... so be prepared!

Citizens of Canada and other countries should bring **passports** from their country of origin – plus a visa if one was required for your original entry into the United States.

U.S. citizens should bring one of the following:



- **U.S. passport** – This is the internationally recognized travel document that verifies a person's identity and nationality, accepted for travel by air, land and sea.
- **U.S. passport card** – This new, limited-use travel document fits into your wallet and costs less than a passport, but is only valid for travel by land and sea.

- **Enhanced drivers license** – Several states and Canadian provinces are issuing special drivers licenses that denote both identity and citizenship specifically for cross-border travel by land or sea. Check Web site below for issuing states.
- **Trusted traveler program cards** – Enrollment cards from the NEXUS, SENTRI or FAST programs are issued to approved, low-risk travelers for travel by land or sea or to airports with a NEXUS kiosk.

U.S. and Canadian citizen children under the age of 16 may also present an original or copy of a birth certificate, a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, a Naturalization Certificate, or a Canadian Citizenship Card.

U.S. lawful permanent residents document requirements have not changed – present a permanent resident card (Form I-551) or other valid evidence of permanent residence status.

Other requirements may apply for groups such as Native Americans, military traveling on official orders or merchant mariners – check with authorities in advance.

Need more info? Visit www.getyouhome.gov

Also, updated travel safety information from the U.S. State Department is available online at <http://travel.state.gov> or toll-free from the U.S. or Canada at 1-888-407-4747 (8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern time, Monday-Fridays).

Visit Algodones

Ahhhhh, vacation. A perfect time for lazy days, fun in the sun – and a trip to the dentist.

An odd combination? Not for tens of thousands of Yuma visitors who head south of the border for bargains on eyeglasses and dental procedures – not to mention food, drink, souvenirs, liquor and cigarettes.

One of the most popular destinations is Los Algodones, Baja California, a visitor-friendly village seven miles west of Yuma that may just have the heaviest concentration of physicians, pharmacies, dentists and opticians of any four-block area on the planet.

Make no mistake about it – tourists are the one and only focus here, where the currency of choice is the American dollar and English is almost universally spoken. Most businesses are within a five-minute stroll of the border and within that area, Canadians likely outnumber Mexicans on any given winter day.

The violence that has plagued other border towns has not been a problem in Algodones, though visitors should follow the usual common-sense safety tips:

- Travel and shop with a group
- Don't wander out of the usual "tourist areas"
- Watch your alcohol intake
- Follow all laws and remain alert to your surroundings

During peak season, large crowds of visitors can mean long mid-afternoon waits. Visit earlier in the day -- or relax and have a cerveza till the crowds thin!

Directions: From Yuma, take Interstate 8 west to Andrade exit (Route 186), then south approximately two miles.

Parking: Please note that roadside parking is now prohibited on Route 186. The Quechan Indian Tribe charges to use its paved, lighted lot on the U.S. side.

More info: <http://www.losalgodones.com>

Bringing It Back Home Again:

U.S. residents must declare purchases when re-entering the country, even from a day trip to Mexico.

If you have not used your duty-free exemption in the past 30 days, you may bring back \$800 worth of items for your personal or household use, including – if you're 21 -- not more than one carton of cigarettes and 100 non-Cuban cigars and one liter of alcohol.

If you have used any part of your duty-free exemption within 30 days, different rules apply. If in doubt, ask U.S. border officials before you cross and buy more.

Prescription drugs:

As a matter of law, U.S. law prohibits "importation" of prescription drugs from outside the United States. But as a matter of enforcement, an exception is generally made for declared purchases of FDA-approved drugs in amounts reasonable for "personal use" (usually a 60 to 90-day supply).

If your prescription contains a narcotic or other controlled substance, you may need a prescription from a Mexican doctor to purchase it – and one from a U.S. doctor to bring it back across the border. For details, see www.fda.gov or www.cbp.gov.

There are risks associated with buying drugs in Mexico. Before you do, talk to your doctor and do some homework to find out how to minimize those risks.