

Mexico Insight

Mexico Immigration Guide

2023 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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Introduction to the 2023 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 was first published in 2009 and has been updated every year since then. 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.

This latest 2023 edition has been 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 the practical experience of helping people to apply for legal residency in Mexico.

Mexico Immigration Assistance: make informed choices and get practical support

The [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) offered by our associates helps you to structure your application approach based on your individual circumstances and provides practical support and assistance as you make your way through the application procedures to acquire legal residency in Mexico.

The service helps you to map-out an approach that gives you the best chance of making a successful application and supports you with practical matters as you make your way through the application procedures to apply for residency, exchange your visa for a card, renew an existing residency permit, or deal with 'regularization' procedures and troubleshooting.

[Learn more and make a service request](#)



Mexico Immigration Assistance Service

Make informed choices about the best route to apply for residency in Mexico, and get practical assistance with your residency permit application, renewal, or regularization procedures

The [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) provided by our associates offers personalized advice and practical assistance by telephone, email, and chat that will save you time and guide you correctly through the procedures—from discussing the best approach for your application to providing practical support and assistance throughout the entire application process.

Personal consultation and practical support

The service begins with a personal consultation. Our associate will help you plan your application strategy, answer any questions you have, and identify the best route for a residency application given your individual circumstances.

The service also provides **practical assistance and tele-support** as you make your own way through the various stages of the procedures including:

- helping you to find your nearest or suitable Mexican consulate to apply at;
- assistance with scheduling your appointment at the Mexican consulate;
- providing you with a checklist of all the documentation you'll need to gather as part of your application or procedure;
- answering specific questions and concerns you may have about the procedure;
- review of your documentation for accuracy and completeness;
- completion of the various application forms (in Spanish);
- writing the necessary letters (in Spanish);
- tele-support when you arrive in Mexico to exchange your residency visa sticker for a residency card;
- help to prepare for your visit to the immigration office in Mexico; and
- the service also provides ad-hoc advice and troubleshooting (if needed), as you move through the application process.

Our associates help you to formulate an application strategy, prepare all your paperwork, schedule your appointment at the Mexican consulate abroad—and the support continues when you arrive in Mexico to exchange your visa stickers for residency cards at your local immigration office.

They can also help with procedures that are initiated in Mexico including permit renewals, Family Unit applications, regularization procedures, and troubleshooting.

They are experts in their field, with over 10 years of experience helping people to apply for and manage their legal residency in Mexico. Their tele-support services enable you plan your approach and prepare appropriately with practical support as you make your way through the procedures 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 also 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.

We recommend you read our comprehensive [free eBook about Living & Retirement in Mexico](#) as you begin to make, or review, your Mexico lifestyle plans.

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. Some people have been using a Visitor's Permit to live in Mexico longer term, [recent changes to the way visitors are admitted to Mexico](#) make this difficult and we strongly recommend that 'perpetual visitors' and part-time residents apply for a 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](#)
- ❖ [Changes to time allowed in Mexico using a visitor's permit \(FMM\)](#)
- ❖ [Time limits on Mexico's visitor and residency permits](#)
- ❖ [The difference between temporary and permanent 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 permit 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

- ❖ [The difference between temporary and permanent residency permits](#)
- ❖ [Planning a new lifestyle in Mexico](#)
- ❖ **Free eBook:** [Comprehensive guide to Living & 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

- ❖ [Free eBook: Guide to working and self-employment in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [The difference between temporary and permanent residency permits](#)
- ❖ [Planning a new lifestyle in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Articles about working in Mexico](#)

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, and you must prove that you have been situated *physically* in Mexico for at least 18 months in the past two years preceding your application date.

FURTHER INSIGHT

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

About Mexico's visitors permit, 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 stay in Mexico under auspice of a [visitors permit](#). 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 visitors permit, the FMM](#)
- ❖ [Mexico is phasing out paper versions of the FMM](#)
- ❖ [Changes to time allowed in Mexico using a visitor's permit \(FMM\)](#)



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 up to four years. The temporary resident permit is a renewable permit which gives non-immigrant temporary residency status to the holder.

A temporary residency card is always issued for only one year initially; you can renew the card for a further one, two, or three years after year one. This permit can *optionally* give work permissions, and allows unlimited entries to, and exits from, Mexico.

Temporary resident permits can be granted under various categories, 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 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 under Further Insight, below, for more details about this.

With a few **exceptions**, initial applications for temporary residency must be made at a Mexican consulate **outside** of Mexico. Applications for renewals of existing temporary residency **cards** and applications to *exchange* an existing temporary residency card for a permanent residency card are processed at an immigration office in Mexico.

After living in Mexico for a period of four *consecutive* years with a temporary resident card, holders may apply to exchange it for permanent residency. People with temporary residency who do not want to become permanent residents but wish to remain residents in Mexico need to allow the temporary residency card to expire after four years, *purposely* making their immigration status 'irregular,' and afterwards enter 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 to avoid taking-up permanent residency in Mexico.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [The difference between temporary and permanent residency permits](#)
- ❖ [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](#)
- ❖ [Regularization procedures](#)



Permanent Residency in Mexico

Permanent Resident permits are issued to foreign nationals who have the intention of living in Mexico for an extended time **and** who intend to settle permanently (indefinitely) in Mexico.

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

To apply for and obtain **Permanent Residency**, the applicant must:

- have certain close [family ties or roots](#) 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**
- obtain residency on humanitarian grounds, or through political asylum.

With a few [exceptions](#), initial applications for permanent residency must be made at a Mexican consulate **outside** of Mexico. If you apply to *exchange* an existing temporary residency permit for a permanent residency permit, this application is processed at the immigration office in Mexico.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [The difference between temporary and permanent residency permits](#)
- ❖ [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; and 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 four *consecutive* years as a temporary legal resident in Mexico, apply to change their status to permanent resident.

FURTHER INSIGHT

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

Mexico Immigration Assistance: make informed choices and get practical support

The [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) offered by our associates helps you to structure your application approach based on your individual circumstances and provides practical support and assistance as you make your way through the application procedures to acquire legal residency in Mexico.

The service helps you to map-out an approach that gives you the best chance of making a successful application and supports you with practical matters as you make your way through the application procedures to apply for residency, exchange your visa for a card, renew an existing residency permit, or deal with 'regularization' procedures and troubleshooting.

[Learn more and make a service request](#)



Rights and obligations of legal residency in Mexico

When you acquire legal residency in Mexico, you inherit 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 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 renewals and other rules, especially if you intend to [seek Mexican citizenship](#).



Rights and obligations of Permanent Resident card holders

Permanent Resident cardholders carry 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 restriction** about permanent residency and 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, e.g., voting rights.
- 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.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [The difference between temporary and permanent residency permits](#)
- ❖ [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](#) (consultancy for best approach)



Qualification criteria for legal residency in Mexico

To acquire legal residency in Mexico, you need to apply via one of the [routes to residency](#) and satisfy the criteria set out under the rules for that route. The most common routes to residency are ‘economic solvency’ and ‘Family Unit’ routes.

Economic solvency

Most applications for residency in Mexico are granted under the auspice of ‘economic solvency.’ If you want to apply for residency in Mexico via this route you will need to demonstrate that you have sufficient means (income or savings/investments) to support yourself, and your dependents if you have any. Under the present rules, ‘economic solvency’ tests include:

- Regular income from pensions/investments
- Savings in cash or qualifying investments (**Cryptocurrency is not accepted**)
- Ownership of a residential property in Mexico (Temporary residency only)
- Investment in Mexican companies/stock market (Temporary residency only)

Important: When you demonstrate ‘economic solvency’ to apply for residency, it’s important to note 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 residential property for the temporary resident visa; it must be the full financial value from the value of the residential property only, not combined with income and/or savings.

Economic solvency with additional spouse

If you are applying for temporary or permanent residency based on economic solvency as a married couple (or common-law partners), 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/investments, an *additional* 100 days of minimum wage/UMA *of total savings/investment balance* for the dependent spouse.

Economic solvency FAQs

For a detailed summary of the rules, read our [FAQs about qualifying for residency under the auspice of ‘economic solvency’](#) that we keep regularly updated and contains frequently asked questions (with answers) in relation to matters about applying for legal residency in Mexico using your income, savings/investments, or other qualifying assets (e.g. a house you own in Mexico).



Daily Minimum Wage vs UMA

For decades, official fees, fines, and other calculations (including ‘economic’ solvency’ calculations for legal residency) in Mexico were based on a multiple of the ‘daily minimum wage’ (*Salarios Minimos*).

In 2016, the Mexican government began to **decouple** the official ‘daily minimum wage’ from all types of official calculations, and introduced a new measure, known as **Unidad de Medida y Actualización**, more commonly referred to by its initials, UMA.

The UMA has enabled the country’s daily minimum salary to be increased significantly without the corresponding punitive rises in public charges and fees. Mexico’s **minimum wage** has been increased by inflation-busting rises year-on-year since 2017, but **UMA has risen much less**—in line with official inflation.

As financial criteria for residency in Mexico are based on specific ‘multiples of’ minimum daily wage **or** UMA, the measure that is applied when you apply for residency in Mexico will affect the amount of income, savings, property value, or investment level required to qualify.

Read our articles about UMA and residency qualification as well as our article about financial criteria (links below) for details about this.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [UMA and residency qualification criteria](#)
- ❖ [Financial criteria for residency in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) (Applications based on ‘economic solvency’)

Application for residency under ‘Family Unit’ rules

If you have *specific types* of family ties or roots 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](#)
- ❖ [Financial criteria for residency in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) (Applications based on ‘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.

As of January 2023, 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 'Work Permits' – next section.

Other routes to 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. If you wish to apply for residency in Mexico on humanitarian grounds or via asylum, we recommend you visit a local immigration office in Mexico to ask for advice and guidance.

FURTHER INSIGHTS

- ❖ [Principal routes to apply for and acquire legal residency in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Mexico visas and immigration FAQ page on Mexperience](#)
- ❖ [Mexico's INM](#) (Local immigration offices)

Mexico Immigration Assistance: make informed choices and get practical support

The [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) offered by our associates helps you to structure your application approach based on your individual circumstances and provides practical support and assistance as you make your way through the application procedures to acquire legal residency in Mexico.

The service helps you to map-out an approach that gives you the best chance of making a successful application and supports you with practical matters as you make your way through the application procedures to apply for residency, exchange your visa for a card, renew an existing residency permit, or deal with 'regularization' procedures and troubleshooting.

[Learn more and make a service request](#)



Work permits

Not all temporary residency permits in Mexico carry working permissions. To work legally in Mexico under the auspice of temporary residency, your residency permit **must** include work privileges.

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 return to Mexico.
- **If you already have a Temporary Residency card:** You will need to attend a local immigration office (INM) in Mexico to inform them of your change of employer; 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)
- ❖ [Exchanging a residency visa sticker for a residency card](#)
- ❖ [Mexican consulates abroad](#)
- ❖ [Articles about working in Mexico](#)
- ❖ Free eBook: [Guide to working and self-employment in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Mexico's INM](#) (Local immigration offices)

Seeking residency through self-employment in Mexico

Applications for legal residency based on 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)
- ❖ Free eBook: [Guide to working and self-employment in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [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-related immigration fees for 2023

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 2023](#)

Time scales for obtaining visas and residency cards

When you're applying for residency in Mexico, you will need to allow for application and processing times of your visa and/or residency card.

Most applications require a two-stage process. Stage one begins at a Mexican consulate abroad; stage two completes the process in Mexico with the exchange of your visa sticker for a residency card.

Regardless of whether you are applying from abroad or if your situation enables or requires you to apply in Mexico, you will need to allow adequate space in your planning as time scales for procedures vary.

We keep articles about typical application time scales regularly updated on Mexperience.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Typical time scales for obtaining Mexico residency permits](#)
- ❖ [Typical time scales for exchanging a visa for a residency card](#)

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. Under Mexico's immigration rules, the *maximum time* you are allowed to stay in Mexico under the auspice of a visitor permit (FMM) is 180 calendar days.

The number of days granted when you arrive has always been at the discretion of the immigration official at the port of entry *and until now*, most (but not all) visitors arriving in Mexico for leisure and business trips tended to be issued with visitor permits granting the full 180-day allowance.

The practice of granting most visitors 180 days *by default* is changing and visitors will now be granted the number of days [commensurate with the intention of their visit](#).

This is a notable change to the way that visitors to Mexico are admitted under the auspice of a visitor's permit (FMM). People who have been using the flexibility of the FMM to stay in Mexico as '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, and might not



be granted 180 days as they have been accustomed to. We have heard of cases where people trying to re-enter have been turned away or given only a small number of days on their FMM—that *cannot be extended or renewed in Mexico*. (The FMM can be exchanged for a residency card in Mexico [in a few circumstances](#), mostly related to Family Unit applications.) If you intend to stay in Mexico longer-term, we recommend you consider applying for a residency permit.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Changes to time allowed in Mexico using a visitor permit](#)
- ❖ [Do I need a visa to visit Mexico?](#)
- ❖ [Learn about Mexico's visitor's permit, the FMM](#)
- ❖ [Temporary residency in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Exchanging a FMM for a residency permit \('Family Unit' applications\)](#)

Mexico Immigration Assistance: make informed choices and get practical support

The [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) offered by our associates helps you to structure your application approach based on your individual circumstances and provides practical support and assistance as you make your way through the application procedures to acquire legal residency in Mexico.

[Learn more and make a service request](#)

Initial applications for legal residency in Mexico

Most initial applications for residency must begin at a Mexican consulate outside of Mexico. In a [few specific circumstances](#) (most related to 'Family Unit' or humanitarian applications) foreigners can exchange a visitor's permit (FMM) for a residency card in 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.

The **visa sticker** that's placed into your passport by the consulate is valid for six months from its issue date. The applicant **must** arrive in Mexico within this time frame *and* start a procedure to [exchange the temporary resident visa](#) (a sticker in your passport) for a resident permit (a plastic card), within **30 calendar days** of their arrival in Mexico, *and* before the visa's expiry date. Failure to do this will render the visa (sticker) void.

This visa carries a consulate fee that must be paid at the Mexican consulate as well as other payments that 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. See the link below for current fees.



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

- ❖ [Residency permit fees](#)
- ❖ [Exchanging your residency sticker for a residency card in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [The difference between temporary and permanent residency permits](#)
- ❖ [Applying for residency within Mexico \(Family Unit\)](#)
- ❖ [Renewing your residency permit](#)
- ❖ [Temporary residency: expiry and renewal](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#)

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 that 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 need 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 application and insert a residency visa in your passport.

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 and does cause variations in the specific amounts asked for, and it's common for consulates' requirements to vary from one another, sometimes significantly.

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, or you can request the [Mexico Immigration Assistance service](#) where our associates can advise you based on their current experience interacting with consulates, and also contact specific consulates, if necessary. Every application is treated individually, and the consulate retains discretion on acceptance or denial of your residency application on a per-case basis.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Qualification criteria for legal residency in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [FAQs about applying for residency based on 'economic solvency'](#)
- ❖ [Residency permit fees](#)
- ❖ [Mexican consulates](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#)

Exchanging your residency visa sticker for a resident card

When you're 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 to exchange it for a residency card before the visa's expiry 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 arrive in Mexico and initiate the exchange (*canje*) process within this time frame, the visa will become void, and you will need to restart the residency application process from a consulate abroad.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Procedures for entering and leaving Mexico](#)
- ❖ [How to exchange a Mexico residency visa sticker for a residency card](#)
- ❖ [Time limits on Mexico visitor and residency permits](#)
- ❖ [Get assistance with your visa-to-card exchange](#)
- ❖ [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. Our article about the procedures (see link below) is updated when we learn of new improvements that are being rolled out at immigration offices across Mexico.

FURTHER INSIGHT

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

Mexico Immigration Assistance: make informed choices and get practical support

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[Learn more and make a service request](#)

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-related application or procedure is in train, 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 start 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](#), that you must pay to acquire it.

It can take **3-5 working days to obtain an exit permit**, that you should arrange at the *same local immigration office where your residency application is being handled*; in genuine 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).



Two important points to note about exit/re-entry permits:

- 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.
- If you are in the process of a ‘Regularization’ procedure (see next section) you **cannot** avail yourself of this exit/re-entry permit; you will have to remain physically in Mexico until the ‘regularization’ procedure is complete.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Procedures for entering and leaving Mexico](#)
- ❖ [How to exchange a Mexico residency visa sticker for a residency card](#)
- ❖ [Temporary residency: expiry and renewal](#)
- ❖ [Residency permit fees](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#)

‘Regularization’ procedures related to your residency status

If, during your residency application, or while you are legally resident in Mexico, you deliberately or inadvertently break the rules, then your immigration status may become ‘irregular’ and if you wish to remain (resident) in Mexico you will need to enter a ‘Regularization’ procedure to remedy this.

Examples of situations where your immigration status becomes ‘irregular’ include (but not limited to):

- allowing your visitor permit (FMM) to expire;
- 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 must leave the country and re-commence your residency application from the beginning. (The only exception is for those people with close [family ties or roots 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**.

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 Wage vs UMA

See the [section in this guide that describes the changes taking place](#) regarding calculations for residency qualification based on 'minimum daily wage versus UMA.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [UMA and residency qualification criteria](#)
- ❖ [Financial criteria for residency in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [FAQs about financial criteria for residency in Mexico](#)

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](#)
- ❖ [Mexico is phasing out paper versions of the FMM](#)
- ❖ [Documents required for travel and entry to Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Regularization procedures](#)

Time limits on Visitor and Residency permits

Specific time limits exist on visitor permits, visas, 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](#)
- ❖ [Temporary residency: expiry and renewal](#)
- ❖ [Time scales for obtaining residency visas and cards](#)
- ❖ [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; you cannot process residency permit renewals outside Mexico.

If you applied for and were granted permanent residency or have subsequently exchanged your temporary residency card for a permanent residency card, you don't need to apply to renew your permanent residency card because it never expires.

When you hold a temporary resident card you must attend your local immigration office (INM) *within 30 days prior to the permit's expiration date* to apply for a renewal (or to apply for exchange from temporary to permanent).

You cannot begin a renewal process before this 30-day window and we strongly recommend that you do not leave applying for your residency renewal to the last minute. Applications entail form filling, making appointments at the INM office, paying fees, etc. The application for renewal is reviewed by the INM and they must **accept and register** it on the system *before the card's expiry date*. If something is amiss, the INM will decline your application and ask you to return after making corrections, and we therefore recommend you start the renewal process at the *beginning* of the 30-day window before the permit expires to allow time for any corrections.

Note about economic solvency for renewal applications: According to the immigration law, you do not need to demonstrate 'economic solvency' for temporary residency card *renewals*. However, we are hearing of cases where immigration offices are occasionally 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's called for. If you are asked to demonstrate economic solvency as part of a residency renewal procedure, the immigration office in Mexico will apply the **(lower) UMA values to the calculations**.

FURTHER INSIGHT

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

Mexico Immigration Assistance: make informed choices and get practical support

The [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) offered by our associates helps you to structure your application approach based on your individual circumstances and provides practical support and assistance as you make your way through the application procedures to acquire legal residency in Mexico.

[Learn more and make a service request](#)



Expired temporary residency cards

If you hold a temporary resident card and let it expire, specific rules exist about applying to get your card renewed. *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 our associate's [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 a renewal.* Residency 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 becomes lost or damaged beyond use, you'll need to replace it. The procedures for doing this differ depending on whether you are in Mexico or abroad when your card is lost or becomes unusable.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Replacing your lost or damaged residency card](#)
- ❖ [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) (Residency card replacement)

Applying for legal 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 and guidance.
- ◆ **If you are applying from abroad**, you should contact the [Mexican consulate](#) you intend to apply at for advice and guidance about the documentary evidence you will need to provide in absence of a marriage certificate.

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 minors (persons under the age of 18 years) who are legally resident in Mexico, you will need to undertake a special procedure if they are not traveling with you, or their legal guardian. This procedure is part of an international protocol designed to protect minors who are crossing international 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 unaccompanied by at least one of the two parents or a legal guardian**, they will need to carry authorization to leave Mexico using the ‘SAM’ procedure.

Note: When *either* parent, *both* parents, or the *legal guardian* travels with the child(ren)—you do not need to undertake the SAM authorization procedure.

FURTHER INSIGHT

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

Residency applications from a ‘third country’

Most applications for residency need to begin at a Mexican consulate abroad. You can apply for residency in Mexico at *any* Mexican consulate world-wide; whether it is in your home country, or a ‘third country.’

However, if you apply from a country that is not your home country (or certain documents you submit in support of your residency application were not issued in the country where you apply), you will need to get certain documents that support your application, e.g., marriage certificates and bank statements, ‘apostilled.’ See the next section about this.

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 a foreign-issued legal document as part of application procedure. Before a Mexican consulate abroad, or a Mexican immigration office in Mexico will receive *certain types* of foreign-issued legal documents for processing, it’s necessary to get these ‘apostilled.’ Some documents, like marriage certificates can be *directly* apostilled; others, like bank statements, must be *notarized first* and then sent to be apostilled. There is a different process in Canada because it’s not signatory to the Apostille Convention. The articles below describe the procedures in detail.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Applications for residency at a Mexican consulate abroad](#)
- ❖ [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**.

“*Menaje de Casa*” is the name given to the list of household goods that a foreign citizen (or a Mexican national who has been living abroad) can import into Mexico free of duties. There are various rules to adhere to, and if you’re a foreign resident, you need to have a temporary or permanent resident **card** for Mexican customs (*Aduana*) to release the goods.

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 notable restriction that was introduced is that holders of Permanent Residency visas/cards **cannot** 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 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.

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](#)
- ❖ [How to arrange Auto Insurance online](#)



Further resources

- ❖ See the latest articles on Mexperience about [Residency in Mexico](#)
- ❖ Mexperience regularly updates this '[Mexico visas and immigration](#)' [FAQ page](#) online. It's a collection of frequent questions with up-to-date answers based on the latest rules and our experience of helping people to apply and acquire residency in Mexico.
- ❖ 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 Insight eBooks

You can download all our Mexico Insight eBooks free from our library. Each eBook offers detailed local knowledge and practical insights about living and lifestyle in Mexico.

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Mexico Immigration Assistance Service

Make informed choices about the best route to apply for residency in Mexico, and get practical assistance with your residency permit application, renewal, or regularization procedures

The [Mexico Immigration Assistance Service](#) provided by our associates offers personalized advice and practical assistance by telephone, email, and chat that will save you time and guide you correctly through the procedures—from discussing the best approach for your application to providing practical support and assistance throughout the entire application process.

Personal consultation and practical support

The service begins with a personal consultation. Our associate will help you plan your application strategy, answer any questions you have, and identify the best route for a residency application given your individual circumstances.

The service also provides **practical assistance and tele-support** as you make your own way through the various stages of the procedures including:

- helping you to find your nearest or suitable Mexican consulate to apply at;
- assistance with scheduling your appointment at the Mexican consulate;
- providing you with a checklist of all the documentation you'll need to gather as part of your application or procedure;
- answering specific questions and concerns you may have about the procedure;
- review of your documentation for accuracy and completeness;
- completion of the various application forms (in Spanish);
- writing the necessary letters (in Spanish);
- tele-support when you arrive in Mexico to exchange your residency visa sticker for a residency card;
- help to prepare for your visit to the immigration office in Mexico; and
- the service also provides ad-hoc advice and troubleshooting (if needed), as you move through the application process.

Our associates help you to formulate an application strategy, prepare all your paperwork, schedule your appointment at the Mexican consulate abroad—and the support continues when you arrive in Mexico to exchange your visa stickers for residency cards at your local immigration office.

They can also help with procedures that begin in Mexico including permit renewals, Family Unit applications, regularization procedures, and troubleshooting.

They are experts in their field, with over 10 years of experience helping people to apply for and manage their legal residency in Mexico. Their tele-support services enable you plan your approach and prepare appropriately with practical support as you make your way through the procedures efficiently in-person without the need to hire a local immigration lawyer.

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