

Mexperience

Mexico Insight

Guide to House Maintenance & Home Security in Mexico

2021 Edition



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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.

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Foreword

Home ownership is a considerable responsibility, whichever country your property is located in. When you have moved to Mexico and taken possession of your home here, there will be certain matters to organize and deal with on a regular basis to keep your house properly maintained and secured when you are home and away.

Owning a home in Mexico can be a rewarding experience that can provide years of enjoyment, as well as a worthwhile long-term investment. The responsibilities and costs of maintaining your Mexican home and keeping it secure need not be expensive or onerous, but they will require some local knowledge and forward planning.

Keeping your house in good working order as well as structurally and aesthetically sound is prudent: it's much more expensive to make good dilapidations which have come about through years of neglect than to keep a home regularly maintained. This also helps to protect your investment and, when you want to sell the property, it will make it more attractive to potential buyers.

Home security is an integral part of a maintenance plan and is particularly important for absentee landlords and part-time residents in Mexico. Empty houses are prime targets for burglars in any country and Mexico is no exception.

This guide helps you to get a handle on the various tasks involved and the people and organizations you will need to engage with to ensure the smooth running and maintenance of your home in Mexico.

With some local know-how and prudent planning, maintaining, and securing your home in Mexico should not create any major headaches or inconveniences. This Mexico Insight guide has been created to help you consider a maintenance and security regime for your Mexican home, with tips and practical knowledge that, when applied, can help to prevent your Mexican home from falling into disrepair and mitigate the odds of your home becoming a target for burglars.



PART ONE: HOME MAINTENANCE IN MEXICO

Moving home in Mexico

In Mexico, moving companies are referred to as "*Fletes y Mudanzas*." You will probably see trucks and vans on the street with this title: for example, "Hermanos Sanchez: Fletes y Mudanzas."

It's important to choose the right moving company in Mexico; don't just take someone's word about a particular firm; instead, find a company that is well established locally and, ideally, find someone who has used the company before, perhaps through one of the many social or business networks in Mexico. Ask for references about other people they have moved prior.

Domestic removals

If you are moving within Mexico you will need to be able to speak Spanish, or get someone to interpret for you, to make the arrangements. Some of the larger and more expensive international removals firms based in bigger cities might have some English-speaking staff on hand to assist, but the majority of local removals firms based in Mexico are unlikely to speak much English.

Removal firms work in teams and offer a sliding scale of services; from entire house packing, removal and reinstallation in your new home, to a simple 'lift, move and unload' service. Some firms offer storage services in case your goods cannot be transferred to your new home right away.

Fees and charges vary depending on:

- the level of service you require;
- what will be moved (usually calculated in cubic meters);
- the distance between the removal and delivery locations, and;
- whether they will be a delay in the time between removal and delivery (storage).

When the removals team arrives at your house in Mexico, be sure that there is some space reserved on the street for the truck if they cannot drive onto your property, and when the vehicle(s) arrives, check all of the paperwork thoroughly. **Also make a note of the vehicle and its license plates.** If you become suspicious about anything when the moving truck arrives, telephone the removal company's offices.

Most good removal companies in Mexico—even the local ones—work hard to provide a high standard of service; they work in teams of three or more people (depending on the size of the job) and are respectful and helpful in all aspects of the removal process. If you don't [speak Spanish](#), be sure to have an interpreter at your home on the day of the removal and during the subsequent delivery day.

International removals

If your move to or from Mexico involves an international destination, you will need to contract a company that deals with international removals—small local firms are unlikely to be of assistance to you.

As with domestic removals, service levels vary depending on your needs, with fees charged on a sliding scale, accordingly. If you are moving personal goods to Mexico, you will need to create a *Menaje de Casa* ahead of time. (See 'Further Insight' below for more details about this important documentation.)

Insurance coverages to support your lifestyle in Mexico

A range of Mexico-related insurance services exist that can mitigate the effect and expense of unforeseen events and mishaps when you're here.

[Learn about insurance coverages](#)



Mexico Insurance



International removal companies usually work as part of an affiliated network. If you are moving your goods from the US to Mexico, a US-based removal company will arrive at your home there and receive your items. They will subsequently transfer your items to a Mexican removals company for delivery to your home in Mexico. Mexican Customs clearance of your goods will usually be undertaken by the Mexican removals company, who will ensure that all the paperwork is in order and liaise directly with you about the status of your shipment. (If you are moving from Mexico to the US, for example, the process is the same in reverse.)

Tipping home removal workers

In addition to the fees charged by the firm, you should include a tip for each of the people undertaking the physical work of your removal and/or delivery in Mexico. The amount to tip is entirely at your discretion and ideally ought to be commensurate with the size of the removal and the effort the team made.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Moving to Mexico: Planning guide](#)
- ❖ [Menaje de Casa: Importing your personal goods to Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Tipping in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Removal companies in Mexico](#) (Google)

Hiring domestic help and maids

Many people in Mexico's professional classes employ domestic help to assist with home chores; the very wealthy tend to have live-in domestic employees while the professional classes and foreign retirees tend to have day workers arrive to undertake domestic chores around the home.

Finding reliable maids and domestic employees

Maids working at a certain property may have been working there for years, perhaps even decades. They may have come to rely upon the income. If you are moving into a rented house, you may be asked if you wish to employ the maid(s) that serves the house (or you may ask the landlord or previous tenants about the maid).

If you are buying a house, the previous owners may introduce you to the maid as well as the gardener if there is one, and any other local domestic helpers they may have employed to date.

If you want the service of domestic employees, those referred by owners or previous tenants are a great reference, because workers who have been 'with the property' for some time tend to be the most reliable. Loyalty has been built-up, perhaps over many years, and that loyalty can reflect in honesty and reliability for you. You will, however, need to cultivate your own relationship with the people working at your house and be able to [express to them \(in Spanish\)](#) what you require.

If you want to employ domestic staff but don't have the convenience of a previous owner or tenant's reference, a common way is to ask neighbors, friends, work colleagues, and/or put up a notice on your front door. Unless the person has been referred to you by a known-good contact, in all cases, ask for



references (and follow them up. You will need to be able to speak Spanish to hire domestic staff, so if your Spanish language skills are not apt to this, have someone interpret for you. Carefully interview the candidates to get a feel for them and their previous experience. Most domestic help in Mexico is hired by word-of-mouth and personal references; this is by far the best way to operate.

Day-visit domestic employees

Most domestic employees only visit during the day. They may have a long way to travel to your house and therefore may not be able to get their early in the morning; however, they will usually stay later into the evening or night before leaving. Day maids can expect an hour off during the day and a meal provided for them (or fresh food ingredients provided so that they may prepare a meal for themselves).

For smaller houses or apartments, they may only stay three or four hours; they might stay longer if you agree that they should do your washing, ironing, and perhaps other chores (e.g., simple shopping). If you ask them to buy anything for you, be sure to give them enough cash for the purchase as well as their transportation.

Most day-visit maids are paid daily, or weekly if they attend your home two or more days a week.

Live-in domestic employees

If you hire a live-in domestic employee in Mexico, you will be expected to provide comfortable accommodation (most larger houses in Mexico have a maid's quarters) as well as all meals and usually a uniform (work clothing). Live-in maids can expect one day per week off work as well as all public holidays off and may require extra time off for family emergencies and exceptional occasions (e.g., weddings, funerals).

Most live-in domestic maids are paid every 15 days or, in some cases, weekly.

Rates of pay for domestic employees

Most maids work a maximum of six days a week; under Mexican Law, all laborers are entitled to one day a week off work. Check with your neighbors and/or friends and colleagues about the current daily rates for domestic maids in your area. A Christmas bonus is expected, equal to at least two-weeks of their pro-rata pay. For example, if they work for you two days a week, the bonus is four day's pay; if they work for six days a week, the bonus is 12 day's pay. Many households will pay three or even four week's equivalent pay as a Christmas bonus, especially to long-serving maids.

Employment law, employees' healthcare, and well-being

Changes in Mexico's laws now stipulate that people who hire domestic employees (maids, gardeners, etc.) register at the Mexican Health Service website. By doing this, the domestic employee receives health and medical coverages from Mexico's social security institute, the IMSS. The employer (homeowner) is also required to pay a tax to cover this cost, based on minimum salaries.

In practice, many domestic servants continue to be informally employed by private homeowners (as well as those renting homes) as neither they nor the people employing them have registered.



If your maid is informally employed, there is a tacit understanding (culturally) that you are responsible for any medical costs (including medicines and medical equipment, where required) for any injuries which might be sustained while working in your home. Furthermore, many employers of maids (especially full-time maids) contribute to their maid's well-being in a variety of ways, including, for example, giving some support to them or their families in times of exceptional (medical) need as well as remembering birthdays and other special occasions (e.g., wedding of their children).

If you own your home, you can [purchase home insurance](#) that will cover injury claims and medical expenses for any persons who attend your property who do not live there, for example, maids and gardeners—anyone who is not ordinarily resident at the property.

In summary: Hiring domestic help

- Word-of-mouth recommendations are the best way to find domestic helpers in Mexico; see notes above about getting references.
- Always verify references if you do not know the person and they have not been referred to your personal recommendation of someone you know.
- Ask previous tenants or property owners about maids and other helpers who may have been working at the property for some years.
- Establish with your maid how many days she'll work (it's usually always a woman doing this work) and what days of the week; if you are hiring a full-time maid it may be best to have a live-in maid, although check whether the maid would want this arrangement; many have families of their own to look after when they get home.
- Agree what the rate of pay will be and when it will be paid. If you are only hiring a day or two a week, you should pay daily; if you are hiring weekly then you might pay daily, weekly, or every 15 days.
- You are supposed to register your maid as well as any and all other home-help (gardeners, etc.) with IMSS; many people still don't and continue to hire maids informally; if you have a live-in maid you should certainly register them.
- Establish what you want your maid to do, especially in relation to any work that goes beyond cleaning; for example, cooking regular meals, laundry and ironing, and child-minding; be precise about the work to be done and take time to explain how you would like it done if you are particular about this; most misunderstandings about the 'quality' of the work boil down to miscommunication between the homeowner's instructions and the maid's interpretation of them—be clear and precise and help your maid to understand what you require so that she can help you accordingly.
- Look out for the health and well-being of your maid(s); see notes about registering them with the IMSS; and note that it's customary to provide long-standing maids with some support if they encounter difficult or trying times.
- Remember the Christmas bonus: this is a really important bonus for laborers in Mexico as their pay is modest and Christmas is a busy (and expensive) time of year for everyone—including your maid, gardener and any other regular helpers who attend your home.



FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Registering your maid/home-helpers with IMSS \(Spanish\)](#)
- ❖ [About Mexico's IMSS health service](#)
- ❖ [Minimum wage in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Learn about *Quincenas*: Pay-days in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Learn about the Aguinaldo: the Christmas bonus](#)
- ❖ [Home insurance: covering third party liabilities](#)
- ❖ [Public holidays in Mexico](#)

Electricity supply in Mexico

All electricity in Mexico is supplied by CFE, a colossal state-owned electric company. Electricity delivered to commercial properties is significantly more expensive than electric delivered to domestic properties.

Reliability of electric supply

Mexico's electricity power grid has been undergoing a constant upgrade in recent years, making electricity supply here more reliable than it ever has been. Power outages which were frequent and could last for days are much less frequent now and, when they do happen, the outages tend to be quite short or temporary in nature.

How frequent and severe the outages depend principally on local factors. Different neighborhoods have different 'patterns' of outages; and 'good' neighborhoods can suddenly begin to experience frequent outages for no apparent reason. Old and failing local transformers (the ones you see strapped to lamp posts) are the principal culprits of localized power outages in Mexico, and the electric company has been working hard to upgrade these.

In areas subject to the rainy/monsoon season (May - September each year) power outages tend to be more frequent as heavy rain and, at times, lightning, affect the transformers and electricity sub-stations.

Another issue to be mindful of is the fluctuation of voltage, so you should always protect sensitive equipment (for example, computers, high-fidelity electrical appliances) with power-surge protection boxes.

Most of Mexico's electricity supply is delivered by overhead cables. Some towns and cities are beginning to create underground ducts for cabling; new developments are often always designed with underground cables now, but it will be decades— if not longer—before Mexico's electricity system is principally delivered by underground ducting.

If you live in an area that is susceptible to tropical storms and hurricanes, keep in mind that electricity supplies might be affected, perhaps for days or longer, after a storm or hurricane.

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Uninterrupted Power Supplies (UPS)

If you have machines that are critical to your work or well-being, an Uninterrupted Power Supply ([UPS - wiki](#)) can be installed in your home or business.

There are many types of UPS systems on the market, and you will need to do some research to decide which one is best for your specific needs.

If you need to keep high-power appliances running continuously (or low power appliances running for more than a day or so), then you will need a fuel-powered (e.g., diesel) generator on your property. If you want to keep low-voltage appliances (e.g., modems, computers) running during regular outages which last from a few minutes to a few hours then a battery-backup system will probably work for you.

The latter (battery backups) are affordable and easy to install and use as you simply plug your critical appliances into the unit, which charges a battery when there is power and then feeds electricity to your appliances from that battery when the power fails.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [UPS systems \(Wiki\)](#)
- ❖ [UPS Devices \(Amazon Mexico\)](#)

Electricity prices and bills

Prices are set by the government and vary each month. Also, the more electricity you use, the higher your rate is per kWh consumed. This is done to help low-income families and to encourage users generally to conserve energy, by penalizing higher energy consumers and rewarding lower energy consumers with generous subsidies.

Seasonal Electricity Subsidies: Subsidies are applied in some northern cities and some southern cities in summer when air conditioning uses rise. The subsidies apply from April to October in the south, and May to November in the north.

CFE Online: You can get the *current and historical rates* from [this page](#) on the CFE's website (Spanish). Choose the “**Domesticas – 1**” option for residential electricity prices. You can also pay your bill online, and request changes to your services and account using the CFE's online portal. If you are cut-off due to non-payment you must visit the local CFE office in person to pay and arrange to get reconnected.

Meters: All properties have electricity meters, usually (but not always) visible to the street, so that the electric company's representative can visit and read the meter for each bill. Mexico is gradually changing-out old-style analog meters to new-style electronic meters which are digital and can be read remotely.

Bill Frequency: Electricity bills in Mexico are dispatched every **two** months. The electric company is very efficient at sending out technicians to cut your supply off if you are late in payment. If you have a new-style electronic meter, your service can be cut-off remotely, without the need for a technician to visit the property.



Bill Payment: You can either make a line at the bank (or pay using online [banking services](#)), a line at the local electricity office, at a [local OXXO or 7-11 convenience stores](#) (a small administrative fee applies) or, if available locally, at one of the CFE's new ATM-payment stations. If you are paying your bill **after the “due” date stated on the bill**, you must go to the local electricity office that deals with your property. Note that lines at the local electricity offices are usually long. Get there as early as possible in the morning and be prepared to wait your turn.

Getting Reconnected: The new-style electronic meters provide a means for the electricity company to cut you off remotely if your bill is not paid on time and it also means that once you settle your outstanding bill, the service can return almost immediately. (Similar to the telephone.) If your property still has an old-style analog meter a technician needs to visit to cut-off and restore the supply. If you are cut-off, you will need to visit the local electricity office that deals with your property and request a reconnection—a procedure that carries a penalty fee in addition to any outstanding debts on the bill. Once payment is made, a technician (if required) will be scheduled-in to revisit your home and reconnect your electricity supply.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [CFE Electricity prices page](#) (Spanish)
- ❖ [Power outages: When the lights go out](#)
- ❖ [Climates and weather in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [House maintenance and security](#)

Cooking and heating water

Hot water heaters in Mexico are fired using propane gas or natural gas. Most homes have gas-fired ovens and hobs and, if you have a tumble dryer, this will require a gas connection in addition to the electricity it consumes.

Natural and Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) in Mexico

Most homes in Mexico still use liquefied petroleum gas—a mixture of propane and butane and called **Gas LP**. The gas can be delivered in portable tanks, which are replaced when empty with tanks refilled remotely at the gas company's facilities, or to a stationary tank located on the roof of the house or apartment building, or at some other safe outdoor location on the property.

Gas price subsidies removed: During 2017, the Mexican government removed the “maximum price” cap regime for LP gas delivered to residential homes, and local gas companies are now free to set their own prices. Prices have immediately risen in the short term, and future prices will be determined by factors such as seasonal demand, local competition between gas companies, and international gas prices in the wider energy market.

Stationary gas tanks are available in a range of sizes. The smallest are 100 liters, and these are ideal for small properties or bungalows. The most common sizes are 300 and 500-liter tanks. They are refilled from a gas tanker doing daily rounds or you can telephone a local supplier and arrange delivery (except



Sundays and [public holidays](#)). The gas tanker team will run a long hose to your tank to fill it or (where present) connect the hose to a fixed inlet pipe that runs from street level to your tank; these inlet pipes are common in large properties and tall buildings where access to the tank would be impossible, even with a long hose. Prices for this type of gas are sold by the liter.

Portable gas tanks vary in weight from 20 kilos to 50 kilos of net gas inside the tank. Most homes have two tanks, so that the second will keep your hot water and cooker going while you wait for the empty one to be refilled. Larger properties may have even more tanks, connected in series, so the empty ones can be replaced in rotation. The gas in portable tanks is sold **per kilo**. Tank sizes (weights) vary, and you need to pay a deposit on the tank itself (if your property doesn't already have tanks in-situ). Tank deposits range from \$300 to \$900 pesos (US\$16-48) per physical tank, depending upon the size of the tank. The deposit is refundable upon return of the tank to the local gas company.

Mains-fed gas supply: natural gas piped directly into homes is becoming increasingly available in several Mexican cities, including the capital Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey—although it isn't available in all neighborhoods. With modern piping systems, these networks are safe even in earthquake areas, although there are campaigns saying otherwise as part of competition propaganda among gas distributors.

The companies that distribute mains-fed natural gas are represented on the website of the Mexican Natural Gas Association – www.amgn.org.mx – where you can find out more about the service and the rates they charge for installation of the service and gas supply.

The cost of natural gas piped into your home also varies from state to state. The bill includes a rate for gas consumed – usually in **cubic meters** – and an additional charge for the cost of distribution.

Tip: If you make a **switch-over** from LPG tanks (stationary tank *or* portable tanks) to mains-fed natural gas, all your gas-fired appliances will need to be adjusted by a gas technician, as mains-fed gas—methane—is lighter than the LP gas delivered in tanks. Contact a local gas engineer who will know what adjustments to make across all your gas-fed appliances (stove tops, ovens, water heaters, etc.) so that you can use the mains-fed methane gas efficiently.

Natural and LP Gas prices: You can find gas prices by region on this [official website](#).

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Gas prices in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Mexican Natural Gas Association](#)
- ❖ [Water heater maintenance](#)

Heating and air conditioning

Many of Mexico's inland towns and cities are situated at high elevation (over 4000 feet above sea level), so the climate for many inland areas can be temperate year-round; although some of these highland areas can get cool or cold after sundown during the winter months (especially at elevations above 6000 feet), even though the days themselves may be pleasantly warm.



Along the coasts and coastal plains, summer temperatures can soar and become quite humid during the spring and summer months; whereas late autumn through to late winter in these areas tend to be pleasantly warm, in the absence of a temporary cold front.

Heating systems

Homes in the mountainous regions of Mexico are not, as a rule, fitted with heating systems, although some modern apartment blocks are fitted with heating and air conditioning built-in to the building's ducting systems.

Bitterly cold winters (or cold fronts that last more than a few days) are rare in most of Mexico's central and southern highlands, and in those areas where cold winters are known (for example, in remote mountainous areas above 7500 feet and the northern desert regions), homes are generally designed with fireplaces or other heating systems.

For most winters in Mexico, you will simply need to put on extra layers of clothing during the day and perhaps use an electric heater and electric blanket to take the edge off the chill air before retiring to bed in the evening.

Here are the most common forms of heating system used in homes across Mexico:

Fireplaces: In older properties especially, and even newer country homes, wood-burning fireplaces (open air or wood-burning stoves) are still common and can be quite atmospheric as well as providing inexpensive heating; however, extensive use of these can cause wood smoke to settle in rooms over time and you should be careful to source firewood from known-good suppliers (ask locally) that sell wood from naturally felled trees or legally harvested wood. Illegally harvested wood might have been sourced by means of felling trees from a wood or forest in unsustainable ways.

Electric heaters: Unlike north-western Europe, for example, where gas-fired central heating systems (that pump hot water around a series of wall-mounted radiators or pipes underneath the floor) people in Mexico without fireplaces keep warm with electric heaters and/or electric blankets. Electricity is relatively expensive in Mexico, so heating an entire home with electric heaters may be cost-prohibitive; however, a heater or two to take off the edge of an evening chill is perfectly viable and commonly used form of heating here.

Gas-fired heaters: You can purchase small gas-fired heaters which are fed from LPG (Liquid Petroleum Gas) tanks, although these create a lot of indoor condensation, so you should keep your home well ventilated while these are in use.

Air conditioning systems

If you are living near sea-level in Mexico (e.g., by the coasts or on coastal plain) you can expect summers to get swelteringly hot. If you will be working indoors, you will probably need some form of air conditioning to keep cool and comfortable, especially during the summer months.

Modern houses and condo developments are usually fitted with air conditioning ducting systems or have water-coolant air conditioning units fitted to the walls in most rooms. These wall-mounted units are the most common and are efficient but note that they consume a lot of electricity. (Electricity prices are



subsidized by the government in hotter regions of Mexico during the summer months, to help people pay for their air conditioning facilities.)

The use of ceiling fans is extensive in Mexico as they provide excellent air flow for a fraction of the cost of air conditioning. They are healthier for you, too. If you can keep some doors and windows open and use fans, your lungs will thank you for doing so and your electricity bill will be lower.

Portable, floor-mounted, "air cooling" units are available from local hypermarkets like CostCo and Sam's Club; some have ionizing devices fitted to them, although they all tend to be souped-up fans, not proper cold air units linked to a water-fed cooling system like the type you install in your home or your vehicle.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Mexico: Land of three lands](#)
- ❖ [Mountain living](#)
- ❖ [Hot coasts, cool colonial cities](#)
- ❖ [The cold comes in snaps and waves](#)
- ❖ [Climates and weather in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Mexico's seasons](#)

Water supply and water systems

The state and condition of Mexico's water and sewerage systems vary by region and even by municipality. The water and sewerage services available will depend upon several factors include whether your home is situated in an urban or rural setting, the age of the property, and the state of local services infrastructure.

Mains water in Mexico

Most people will not drink the water from their taps in Mexico and, instead, purchase bottled water.

As the water supply in Mexico has never been universally potable, everyone in Mexico grows up being taught that the water from the tap is 'not safe to drink,' so the supply's reputation precedes it. Thus, most people boil tap water or purchases distilled (bottled) water for drinking.

However, Mexico's mains water in some locations [might be safe to drink](#).

Mains water pressure is typically low in Mexico. Therefore, water is fed from the mains into underground cisterns (usually one cistern per house or, if it's an apartment block, per building) from where it is pumped up to a water tank on the roof using an electric pump, thus giving a decent pressure for general usage and showers.

Another hygiene issue can arise where the water tank on the roof is not clean; clean water may be pumped into an infected tank, infecting the house or building's water supply. Make sure that your water tank is checked and cleaned periodically to avoid water-borne infections inadvertently getting into your home.

Insurance Coverage for Your Home in Mexico

Protecting your most valuable physical asset against unforeseen events is an essential consideration as you formulate your lifestyle budget.

[Learn how to cover your home in Mexico](#)



Home Insurance



Bottled water in Mexico

Due to the inadequacies of Mexico's mains water system, most people boil their water for consumption install a water filter or purchase bottled water for drinking and preparing food and drinks.

Like everywhere world-wide, bottled water is relatively expensive in Mexico. A 20-liter bottle (the most commonly used size for domestic water consumption) which typically rests upside-down on a water dispenser in the home, costs between MS\$25 and \$40 pesos a bottle. Smaller sized bottles are available, but the price rises considerably, and if you want to buy "designer water" brands (e.g., Evian), then expect to pay a higher premium still.

Local water purification options

Most major hotels now purify their water on-site, using specially installed water filters which re-filter mains water before dispensing the water to the local pipe work at the hotel; thus, potable water is delivered to all the taps.

Similar systems are available for domestic use and rely, principally, upon a series of carbon filters which need renewing periodically. Some of these systems also "soften" hard water, in areas where the water contains a large percentage of calcium deposits, causing "scale" to develop, especially inside water heaters, washing machines and irons.

Local wells and rainwater

Some homes in rural areas with no mains water feed, or those wishing to make the most of the abundant rains between May and September each year, may need or want to use natural water systems.

For the majority of homes off the beaten track, a local water well will be the most common means of obtaining water. It's important that you have an agreement in writing to use the water from a local well.

If you want to gather rainwater for consumption, you will need a roof system which collects and deposits the rainwater into an underground cistern, and then a local water purification system to make the water suitable for human consumption before it's pumped to the roof for use in the home. Some people gather rainwater for use to water the garden during the dry season, and to flush toilets year-round, negating the need to install a purification system to make the water safe for human consumption.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Articles and guides about water in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Water services in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Beware of land without water](#)
- ❖ [Mexico's rainy season](#)



Sewerage and drainage systems

Mains sewerage systems

Like the mains water system, Mexico's sewerage systems vary city and neighborhood but, on the whole, Mexico's sewerage systems good enough, due in part to extensive government money being poured into them to ensure that sewerage leaks are kept to a minimum and problems are dealt with swiftly due to the public health consequences of doing otherwise.

If your Mexican home is situated in an urban environment, the chances are that the property will be served by a decent sewerage system and that, in cases where things go awry, for example a blockage or leak takes place, the issue will be resolved quite swiftly.

Septic tank sewerage systems

Some properties in Mexico, especially but not exclusively those off the beaten track, will have use of a septic tank system (a natural sewer) instead of mains drainage outlet. These systems usually look after themselves and, at times, might need to be pumped out by a local sewerage company if something in the natural decomposing process goes wrong.

If your home (or the one you rent) in Mexico is served by a septic tank, **it's important not to flush any non-organic waste down the toilet** (simple toilet tissue is generally ok) and it's best not to wash large quantities of waste food down the drain either, as this can ferment and cause bacteria and other organisms to breed, perhaps causing blockages and other undesired effects.

Another note about septic tank systems: oil, grease and fat from cooking should not be washed down your sink. Some systems have a 'grease trap' that collects fat before it reaches the septic tank. In any event, it's good practice to remove as much oil/fat from your dishes using a paper towel before washing them.

Drainage in Mexico

Heavy downpours during the rainy season (May - September every year) can cause Mexico's water drainage systems to over-flow and cause localized flooding.

It's particularly noticeable in big cities (like Mexico City), where drainage systems in some neighborhoods have not kept up with the rapid population growth over the last few decades, as well as in small towns and villages that have little or no formal drainage systems in place.

Older neighborhoods tend to be worse affected than newer ones, but several factors come into play, for example, how high up your property is (relative to the location itself), and what remedial works may have been carried out in recent times by the local water authorities.

Good modern developments in cities and near the coasts are often designed with proper drainage systems that carry away excess water efficiently into local sewer mains or local streams and rivers.

Waste disposal and recycling

How you dispose of your household waste will depend on where you live in Mexico. In most places, your general garbage waste will be collected in one of two ways, and some municipalities also run a separate recycling collection scheme.



Garbage disposal vans

In most towns and cities, the garbage disposal van makes rounds every day except Sunday. Some neighborhoods are served daily by these rounds, others on a certain day (or days) of the week; check locally for details. If you are new to the area, ask a neighbor or check to see what days others put out their garbage for collection. In most towns and cities, the garbage truck men ring a loud hand bell.

The garbage team collects household waste from garbage can(s) outside your home, or in some neighborhoods (especially those with a lot of apartment blocks) garbage bags are left out on the nearest street corner, or by the curbside, from where they are collected by the garbage truck team during the course of the day.

You should separate newspapers, cardboard, magazines, and any items which are not general household waste, for example: metalwork, old pipes, old brickwork, electrical items, old computers, monitors, glass. These things will be kept separate by the garbage team as they can sell them for scrap and make a small turn from your waste. Note that if you have any non-general waste (like pipe work, computers, etc.) or an excess of general household waste (e.g., after a big party or clear-out) you should give the garbage team a cash tip, commensurate with the amount of excess garbage you have for disposal.

Community waste bins/dumpsters

In some cities and neighborhoods, you will see, dotted around, a series of community waste bins or dumpsters which are emptied daily by the local garbage team. These might be metal barrels, or they may be larger 'dumpster-like' metal boxes which are picked up by a truck and replaced with a similar, empty, dumpster. You simply take your waste to the bins and the garbage will be collected daily, except Sundays.

Waste recycling collection

Waste recycling has become more commonplace in Mexico in recent years. Not all, but many municipalities across the country now run recycling collection trucks, separate to the general garbage waste collection. If your municipality runs a recycling collection scheme (check locally to find out what day, or days, it collects) you should keep these items separate from your general waste:

- Glass bottles and jars (metal lids off)
- Plastic bottles and other plastic containers
- Metal tins, cans, and any other metals for disposal (old pipes, etc.)
- Paper and cardboard, as well as clean packaging (boxes, etc.)
- Some municipalities also take food scrap waste for composting. Keep this separate from your general garbage; you can use a special plastic bin, or buy compostable plastic bags into which you place your food scraps, and then put these out into a food scrap bin for collection.

Collection of old appliances and homewares

If you have old appliances (e.g., a washing machine) or homewares (e.g., an old mattress) you want to dispose of, some garbage collection teams will take these by prior arrangement.



More commonly, you will discover that your neighborhood is served by a mobile ‘iron monger’ or as they were called in the old days, a ‘rag and bone collector.’ They advertise their presence on your street using a loudspeaker declaring that they will buy metal, ironwork, appliances, and other homewares you don’t need. The sum of the money they offer is usually a token and you might simply gift the item(s) to them; the valuable service they offer is to take old items away from your home to strip them down and recycle every usable part without you having to make any other arrangements, or even pay for this to be undertaken for you.

House maintenance

If you own your home and, in some circumstances even when you are renting in Mexico, you will need to undertake some repair, maintenance, or remodeling work on the property.

Labor and materials costs in Mexico make home maintenance (and even home development) good value for money in comparison to costs of doing this in the USA, Canada, and Europe.

How you go about getting your maintenance and development work undertaken will depend upon your personal choices and your local circumstances.

Using informal manual labor for house maintenance

Informal manual labor is inexpensive in Mexico. It depends upon who you hire; better qualified people cost more but will do a better job than the ‘odd job’ laborers who offer themselves for hire.

Here are some tips about using informal labor for home maintenance work:

Speaking Spanish: You will need to be [able to speak some Spanish](#) (or get someone to interpret for you) if you intend to hire and deal with informal laborers. If you don't speak and understand good Spanish, and you are new to it all, it may be a good idea to get a friend to help you.

Work quality: The quality and care of the work will vary, and you will have to supervise the works being undertaken. Some workers are simply odd-job men, making the best of any job they tell you they can undertake; others are builders or craftsmen with years of experience (often [referred to as 'maestros'](#)); perhaps highly skilled people who lost a formal job and are odd-jobbing to make some money in-between contracts. If you are fortunate to find a good builder / worker, try and keep hold of them by offering them more work now: the promise of 'work in some future time' is an abstract concept in Mexico (especially manual labor); people simply don't believe it until it materializes. Also, remember that you have no recourse to anyone save the laborer (who might leave one day and not come back) for any work completed (or half completed, or not completed, or completely messed up).

Finding workers: Most people are hired directly and informally and usually through a local contact: a friend of a friend or a neighbor who suggests someone to contact. Some workers advertise on the street or via a billboard or ad sign somewhere, and to hire them you simply stop on the street where they are, or telephone the number on the ad, ask about their services, and agree for them to come to your house and quote for the work.

Payment of materials: Manual building and maintenance laborers work and live on a hand-to-mouth basis; they do not have the means to go out and pre-purchase materials for use on your project and charge

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you for them later. You will need to give them cash to go and buy any materials they may need for your particular job, or they will tell you what they need, and you can purchase it for them. Although they will probably have access to most tools they require, any specialized tool will also need to be purchased for them. They will give you store receipts for everything they buy for you (e.g., paint, cement, tiles, etc.), but don't expect a receipt for their labor.

Payment of services: Manual builders and maintenance people are accustomed to being paid weekly, in arrears, in cash. Don't pre-pay for time or work in advance; only pre-pay for materials and tools (see above) that are required for your work project.

Times and schedules: Informal builders and maintenance workers live by their own schedules. They may show up on time, they might not. During holidays and festivals, especially (but not exclusively) they may disappear for days or even weeks, because some will travel large distances to return their home villages and be with their families at those times. Asking about, and taking some interest in their families, their hometowns, etc., can pay dividends for you as you could be pre-warned about any absences you may otherwise not understand; for example, perhaps one of them has a daughter who is getting married next month. Most have mobile phones, and you will need to call them for updates, (re)scheduling of work, etc. If you hire informal labor you have to allow for breaks in work and, generally, a longer completion timescale than you may expect when hiring a company to do the work for you.

Work supervision: Whenever you have builders in (informal or formal) it's a good idea to have someone at home keeping an eye on things. Some workers can be left alone for a few hours but it's probably unwise to go away for any longer period than that without someone being there who you know and who is able to supervise proceedings and able to make decisions (or contact you about choices that may have to be made).

When formal is better: Informal work for general maintenance on wear-and-tear, replacement windows and doors, new tiles, straightforward painting work, a new floor laid, etc. is usually fine. *Anything dealing with major structural work, as well as specialized trades, e.g., plumbing, electricity, and gas, is best arranged through an established firm or through a known-good contact that has a solid reputation and an established track record locally, see notes below.*

Hiring formal trades people

There are plenty of local companies that are set-up as established businesses doing building and maintenance work of various types. Most, but not all, tend to work out of small or mid-sized hardware stores, so ask locally if this may be the case if you are looking for a formal trades person to do some work for you. Other ways to find a local firm is by word of mouth, social networks, and local advertising. If you hired an architect to design your project, they will usually have their own formal trade contacts and teams that they will use for the building work.

Formal trades people will be better equipped for the job and have a staff of skilled or semi-skilled workers (and perhaps some apprentices) working for them. They are likely to be registered as a business so you will be able to get receipts for the work and have recourse to any work undertaken with the owner of the business. There are no 'builder's guilds' which guarantee standards, so you are always hiring on reputation, reference, and word-of-mouth, even in the formal economy.



People you hire formally are likely to purchase the materials as you need them and may ask for money up-front to do this. If they don't, they will add the cost to your final bill, as agreed.

Dealing with formal trades people will be, in many ways, much like dealing with informal trades people (see notes above), except that in the formal arrangement you will have a professional firm to deal with, a project 'boss', and higher fees.

You should always have someone at home keeping an eye on the proceedings, even when you hire formally.

Below is a summary of the principal trades people you may need to call upon to help with the running, maintenance, and repair of your home:

Major works: Anything to do with major structural work (new or maintenance of existing major structures) should be referred to an architect. The architect will have a list of local builders and firms he/she works with and will trust to deliver. If you have an existing relationship with an architect locally, then he/she may be able to help you find maintenance people, but it will cost more, and the architect might make a modest commission on the transaction.

General maintenance work: You may either hire informally or formally; see notes above for details.

Electricity: Anything to do with electricity should be undertaken by an experienced electrician hired through an established firm, or a known-good contact from a trusted source.

Plumbing, water, and sewerage: For pipe work on your own property, plumbing works should be undertaken by an experienced plumber hired through an established firm, or a known-good contact from a trusted source. This is also true if need work undertaken on your own sewerage (septic tank) system—do not leave this to amateur odd-job men as the cost to repair mistakes can be high. Anything to do with the water or sewerage mains (e.g., if you are not getting any water in from the street, or your sewerage is faulty) needs to be dealt with by the local water authority only; if they find you or your private contractor has meddled with the public water works (which includes the inlet pipe to your house water cistern), they have powers to fine you extraordinary amounts of money.

Natural gas: Gas systems should be installed and maintained by an experienced technician hired through an established firm, or a known-good contact from a trusted source; some plumbers have gas service qualifications, too.

Carpentry: A good craftsman carpenter may be hired informally, if you are extremely fortunate or know of someone locally who can refer you to one. Many Mexican carpenters (especially older people) are master craftsmen who work with a young apprentice and can do wonderful woodwork for your home.

Gardeners and pool maintenance: Ask locally about gardeners; most are hired informally. Pool maintenance companies exist, especially in towns and cities where pools in homes are common; alternatively, you may be able to hire a pool attendant informally, but test to be sure he/she knows about the required maintenance routines. If you have a whirlpool or spa, you should contact a specialist firm (some of the pool maintenance firms will do spa maintenance also) for repairs, etc.

Pest control: In some areas of Mexico, especially in more remote towns and villages, creatures such as cockroaches, scorpions, spiders, and other insects can nest in people's homes. Some people take 'preventative action' and have their homes fumigated once or twice a year (although this does not guarantee the absence of creepy-crawlies); others will wait until they see an infestation of creatures before



they call the pest control company (ask for '*control de plagas*'). Find a local pest control company online or ask locally for a reference or contact.

Drains and drainage: If the drains on your property get blocked up, you can buy powerful drain unblockers from the local hardware store (but they may not be good for the environment and definitely not good for septic tank systems) or hire from a number of drainage specialists you can call on who will use rods and hoses with air-pressure to de-clog your drains.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Articles and guides about real estate in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Things that can make you say ouch](#)
- ❖ [Dealing with mosquitoes](#)



PART TWO: HOME SECURITY IN MEXICO

Home security is an important aspect of home management in any country, whether you own or rent a property, and Mexico is no exception.

Contrary to how Mexico is sometimes portrayed at times, the country is not as dangerous, nor indeed as violent, as some may have you believe. The country has tight gun and lethal knife laws (gun ownership is not widespread) and violent crime, outside of certain areas and certain criminal circles, is quite rare.

Nonetheless, burglary and other residential crime is an issue that needs to be considered when you are living in Mexico, especially in the larger towns and cities and when you are away from your home for extended periods, leaving the house empty or unattended.

This part of the guide describes the key issues and shows you how to plan a home security regime that is appropriate for your needs.

Insurance Coverage for Your Home in Mexico

Protecting your most valuable physical asset against unforeseen events is an essential consideration as you formulate your lifestyle budget.

[Learn how to cover your home in Mexico](#)



Home Insurance



Securing your Mexican home

The security of a home, and the safety of those living in it, is a top priority in any household.

How you secure your home in Mexico will depend upon where you live, what you do, and what material valuables you have to protect.

Home security in Mexico is much like home security anywhere else: by combining a number of common-sense precautions with some security features, your home and everyone who lives there should remain safe.

As with any security 'system' the most powerful form of security is that of a strong community. Getting involved locally and making a positive contribution to the security of your neighborhood and neighbors will always be the least expensive and most effective security deterrent.

Knowing your local neighborhood

By the time you [move to Mexico](#) (or decide to live in Mexico after a visit there) you should know where you want to live, not just in terms of the town or city, but the neighborhood as well.

Nearly every big town and city world-wide has 'good' and 'bad' neighborhoods; Mexico is the same and you need to know which neighborhoods to avoid. Moving into the wrong neighborhood, especially as a foreign resident, can spell trouble whatever security systems you might put in place. Therefore, the first rule of home security in Mexico is: *choose your neighborhood carefully*, as you would when you are living in your home country.

If you're unfamiliar with the town or area, the services of a [good local realty agent](#) can be invaluable; the agent will be able to apprise you of the area and ensure that you discard any unsuitable neighborhoods.

Once you have found a suitable neighborhood, make sure you take plenty of time to get acquainted with it and the other people who live nearby.

Shopping at the local shops and using local services on a regular basis will get you and your family known locally. Make friends and be sociable with the people in your local community. Get used to the people you see on a regular basis and let them get used to seeing you come and go each day. Take time and effort to smile and greet them as you walk by.

If your children play with other children locally, use that opportunity to meet with other parents and build a rapport with them. Another way to get to know the neighborhood is to invite your new neighbors around for parties or other social occasions.

The local corner shops and coffee houses often serve as small community hubs in Mexican neighborhoods. Go there often enough and you'll see that other regulars go there too. Making the effort to integrate with the local community you live in will play a significant role in improving your home and personal security in Mexico.



Common home security features

The home security devices and systems you'll use in Mexico will be much like the ones you are used to seeing in your home country. Here is a summary of the main ones:

Locks and bolts: A good lock and key system on doors and windows is the first essential line of defense against potential intruders. Most burglars are looking for 'easy' (fast) access break-ins, so making it difficult (i.e., time consuming) for a person to get into your home is a great deterrent in its own right. If you have just moved into a new house you bought from previous occupants, you may want to consider changing the locks: you only have to change the barrels, not the entire locking mechanism. Ask a local locksmith (*cerrajero*) to visit your home and advise you.

Security lighting: Your property should be properly lit at night and, ideally, have one or two outdoor sensors which switch on lights in strategic places when they detect movement after dark. Great lighting is another inexpensive deterrent to would-be intruders. If you are away, or plan to be away, try to set lights and lamps inside your home to come on for a few hours each evening using timed switches.

Radio or music player: Another deterrent some people use to secure their home is to have a radio or music player switched on automatically for a number of hours in the day when they are out or away from the house for a period. Burglars prefer empty houses, and the presence of light and sound are the two most common deterrents after a good lock and bolt system.

Alarms systems: The screech of alarm is mostly ignored in Mexico just as it is in most places around the world, not least because it may get set-off by any number of benign occurrences: the wind, birds, a large vehicle going past the house, the neighbor's cat, etc. If your alarm is linked to a local security firm, you may want to trigger it on purpose periodically to test the firm's response times. If you have an alarm that is not linked to a central surveillance team, be sure that it cuts out after a few minutes; this is especially important if you're away from the property as you don't want to irritate your neighbors.

Surveillance systems: Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) systems are becoming commonplace now, especially those linked wirelessly over the internet. The images may be recorded onto a hard disk drive or beamed online to a remote storage location. You can spend a lot of money on these types of surveillance systems and, if you are inclined to, you should seek professional advice to do it properly. The simplest CCTV system is a wired camera with a door-entry system: most modern apartment blocks have these installed as standard and enable you to see and communicate with whoever is at the front door before you attend in-person, or you might also be able to let them in using an automated door-entry system.

Window bars: You may notice that most windows in Mexico, especially those facing the street, have heavy iron window bars surrounding them. On some properties, they make up part of the feature of the house (e.g., colonial style houses). *Remember that window bars lock you and your family in as well keeping intruders out.* **Always have an emergency exit plan** in place and ensure that any door keys required for exit are constantly at hand. If rooms have limited exits, install fire extinguishers or fire blankets to aid passage out of the building in case of a fire. If it's your property and you have the budget, you may want to consider installing the latest reinforced glass windows with strong window locks instead of window bars; however, the windows themselves will need to be of a reasonable size if you expect to use them as an emergency exit (you won't be able to break the glass).

Pet dogs: One of the best deterrents against intruders in Mexico is a pet dog (preferably a medium or larger dog). It does not have to be a 'natural' guard dog (e.g., Doberman Pincher). Many people in Mexico



have a fear of dogs and, besides the noise it would make if a stranger were to enter the home, the 'prospect' of being bitten or worse also acts as a deterrent.

Fire prevention and fire drills: It's a good idea to have a fire drill in place for your family, a fire extinguisher(s) and/or a fire blanket, to mitigate any small fire incidents and/or help you exit the house in an emergency situation caused by fire. If your home has window-bars downstairs but not upstairs, you may want to consider having rope ladders in the upstairs rooms as an emergency exit route. *Note that smoke alarms are not commonly installed in Mexican homes*, so if you are renting you may want to purchase battery-operated units from your local hardware store or super-market that you can take with you when you leave. If you are buying a house, the chances are that smoke alarms will not be installed there, either.

Other security systems: The home security device market is vast and a visit to the [Wiki entry](#) on the subject demonstrates. An entire raft of electronic devices available, should you want them.

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Pets in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Living in Mexico](#)

Insurance policies for your Mexican home

Home insurance is a sensible product to buy when you're living in Mexico. Premiums will depend on where you live and the value of your material possessions you want to insure, especially items of high value such as fine watches, precious stones, and jewelry.

Most good insurance policies will provide coverages for:

The physical estate: Property insurance covers the cost of repair of physical buildings after break-ins, floods, or other natural disasters, e.g., earthquakes, hurricanes. Some policies also cover the cost of repair due to acts of vandalism related to any break-in or burglary.

House contents: Contents insurance covers the repair or replacement of material goods you own inside the property, should they become damaged or stolen. This element of the policy usually carries a co-pay (so only higher value items are worth claiming for) and the policies also tend to include clauses that limit the total amount of coverage, unless named items (like expensive jewels) are specifically covered.

Third party liability: The better policies include coverage for third party liability damages. These include things like a tree falling from your garden onto your neighbor's home, and also includes coverages for any injuries sustained by people visiting the property (e.g., guests, maids, gardeners).

FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Guide to Insurance in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Guide to Property Insurance](#)
- ❖ [Third party liability](#)



Closed streets and gated communities

Streets that have been cordoned-off and purpose-built gated communities are an extension to the concept of the 'neighborhood watch' program. In Mexico's larger towns and cities, and especially in Mexico City, closed streets and gated communities are more commonplace.

Cordoned-off streets

A popular (and increasingly common) way to protect a cluster of houses in Mexico is to cordon-off the street or set of streets around a defined area. Agreement must be acquired from every homeowner on the street(s) in question and the fees for setting up the cordon and administrating access to the street must be met by the neighbors. Usually, a committee is formed, made up of resident-owners, who meet regularly and administrate the scheme between them.

Closed streets (that can comprise entire blocks, encompassing perhaps a dozen or more streets) are a gray area in Mexican law. All public roads are and remain federal property and, technically, it's illegal to deny people access to them (and thus the houses that they serve). Nonetheless, closed streets exist and thrive in considerable numbers across towns and cities in Mexico, and especially in Mexico City.

With closed streets, the defined area is cordoned off by means of a gatehouse and vehicle barrier-entry system. A private security firm is hired to set up the installations and provide 24-hour, year-round security at the gate. In some cordoned-off areas, the guards also patrol the street, on foot, in a patrol car, or on bicycles, depending on the size and nature of the enclosure.

Residents living inside the enclosure are issued with stickers they display in their car window, enabling them access to the secured area; the stickers are usually updated annually, and handed out in return for payment of the community's security and administration fees. Some schemes use plastic access cards, or chips on the windscreen that are scanned when a vehicle approaches the gatehouse.

Non-resident cars, taxis, etc. (and sometimes pedestrians) entering the area must register at the gatehouse and leave some form of identification (e.g., a driver's license). Exact policies and procedures vary by street or area.

Sometimes these enclosure arrangements fall apart, perhaps because the neighbors could not agree fees or entry policies, and you can see dismantled barriers and abandoned gatehouses at the entry of streets, where a previously 'closed' street has become 'open' again.

Gated communities

Gated communities are usually made up of modern homes or condos, built inside a pre-defined area with a 'natural' cordon and enclosure around it (like a walled garden), unlike streets with houses that were there long before any additional security was built-up around them.

Gated community security procedures operate in much the same way that closed streets (or blocks) do, with one considerable difference: all of the property behind the cordon is private land, and therefore there is no 'gray' area in the law as there is when a public street is cordoned off.

Residents living in the gated community pay an annual fee for their security cordon which is managed by a private security firm, and anyone purchasing a property in the gated community agrees to be bound by the security fees, in addition to any other covenants that might exist as part of the property ownership.

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Entry policies vary by community: some are quite straightforward; others are almost militaristic in their approach to screening and allowing access to non-residents.

If you visit someone who lives in a gated community, you will be asked to show a form of ID and usually leave that or your car's registration document at the gate post. Some gate houses telephone the resident to ensure that the visitor is known and expected, before allowing access.

FURTHER INSIGHT

❖ [Guide to realty developments in Mexico](#)

Unattended properties

One of the most common reasons for house burglaries in Mexico is due to a property being empty and unattended for a period of time. Try to avoid leaving your property unattended in Mexico for long periods without someone looking after it for you; if you have a home insurance policy, it will probably stipulate that you cannot leave the house unattended for a certain number of consecutive days (usually 30).

Vacations

If you are going away on vacation—even if only for a long weekend—ask a friend or a neighbor to check in on the house for you. For longer vacations (e.g., a week or more) consider asking someone to house-sit for you, especially if your house is situated in a remote or quiet rural area.

If you will be away for a short while, use automatic timed light switches that come on for a few hours each evening, and get a music player or radio (or the TV) switch on as well. See [common home security features](#) in this guide for details.

Part-time residency

If you only live in your house part-time, then you should seriously consider paying someone locally to manage the property for you while you are away. Home managers usually stop-by once or twice a week to clear any post and check on any issues that may have arisen, e.g., leaky pipes, as well as to water plants you may have in the house.

House managers will also stop-by after any major storms or heavy rainfalls to see that everything is in good order. A good house manager will also stock your fridge and pantry with fresh basic food items and perhaps some beverages that you like before you are due to arrive back. They will email you with regular reports and telephone you in the event of any unforeseen incidents. If you are only living in your house part-time, you may also consider renting your home out.

If your home is situated in a gated community, it will be easier to manage part-time residency issues and your property will be generally safer. If your home is situated in the countryside or in a rural enclave, then you should seriously consider getting a house sitter, a live-in property manager, or renting the house out during your absence. A good realty agent will be able to advise you about options.



FURTHER INSIGHT

- ❖ [Protecting your Mexican home against burglars](#)
- ❖ [Guide to realty agents in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Guide to renting property in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Articles about property rental in Mexico](#)
- ❖ [Shared space rentals in your Mexican home](#)

Private security firms

Private security is a significant industry in Mexico. It is estimated that there are over 10,000 security firms operating in the country, although few of them are formally licensed or regulated.

The provision of security guards is the most common service provided by private security firms to domestic and commercial clients. Guards may work on the premises, perhaps on a 24-hour rotary system, or off-premises making regular patrols.

Security guards for closed streets and gated communities, private schools and colleges, shops and offices are the most common. They are not very well paid and may have limited training. Nonetheless, the presence of a guard, with a communications link to their firm (and able to alert the local police) can provide a useful deterrent and early warning system which at best will deter a would-be assailant and, at worst, give the potential to raise an alarm for others to assist.

For executives and individuals of high net worth, an entire raft of services is available from highly specialized firms, usually hiring ex-military personnel. Services include such things as armored vehicles, private bodyguards and even highly detailed security arrangements personalized to individual circumstances. These services are outside the scope of this guide; but they are available, and you can find details with a search online.

For the vast majority of people the deployment of an elaborate private security cordon is not in any way necessary in Mexico and, by using some common sense and basic precautions as those outlined in this guide, security should never become a major issue for you when you are [living, working](#) or enjoying a [retirement in Mexico](#).

Property-related references

- ❖ [Articles about real estate and property in Mexico](#)
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