

Country Handbook: Mexico



Introduction

Travelling to see the work of Compassion and our local church partners firsthand is an unforgettable experience. On this trip, you'll see for yourself how children are known, loved and protected by their church communities and are being released from poverty in Jesus' name.

This Country Handbook is designed to start preparing you for your trip to Mexico. Please read it before you depart, and we'd also recommend that you keep it handy for easy reference.

We pray that God will bless your time in Mexico!



Country Information



Mexico is the founding place of chocolate, colour TV, and the birthplace of famous artist Frida Kahlo. Despite Spanish conquest in 1521 by Cortez, Mexico still boasts many Aztec and Mayan ruins, including the world's largest pyramid—Cholula. In Mexico City, there are women-only buses and subway cars, and mariachi music is often heard playing in the streets. Chihuahuas originated in the north and this beloved dog breed is considered a cultural icon.

Main languages:

Spanish

Climate:

Tropical and humid from May to September, and cooler from November to February

Main religions:

Roman Catholic (78%),
Evangelical/Protestant (11%)

Currency:

Mexican Peso (M\$)



Compassion in Mexico

Compassion has been working to release children from poverty in Jesus' name in Mexico since 1979. 33 per cent of people live below the national poverty line.

Compassion's Child Sponsorship Program is tailored to be age-appropriate for each child.

Children **AGED 1 TO 3** receive home-based care.

Children and youth **AGED 3 TO 11** attend their local Compassion centre each weekday outside of school hours.

Students **AGED 12 AND OLDER** attend the centre for six hours on Saturdays.



For more information on Mexico, scan the QR code or visit:
compassion.com.au/where-we-work/mexico

Compassion assisted children in Mexico typically attend program activities at their local child development centres. Here is an example of what a typical program day looks like:

Devotional time - Children learn to pray.

Spiritual lessons - Children sing songs and learn Bible stories.

Break time - Children can play in a safe environment and develop friendships.

Social-emotional lessons - Children learn conflict resolution skills and how to develop healthy self-esteem. Children often come from challenging home environments and are taught social and personal skills.

Lunch and social time - Children generally receive a meal or snack. The meals typically consist of meat, chicken or soy cooked with vegetables, fruit and fresh water. If they are served a morning meal, it will generally be ham, eggs and fried beans. A snack is usually fruit or a nutritious dessert.

Health lessons - Children learn practical health and hygiene tips.

Letter writing and career planning - Older children work with local staff to identify their strengths and interests and set goals for their future.

Children also learn leadership development skills and are invited to join in vocational training classes, such as carpentry, painting, cooking, computer classes, English, hammock making, silk screening, embroidery, hair styling and fish farming, according to their interests and circumstances. Parents and caregivers are offered health education and parenting classes.

Cultural Considerations



Clothing

- **Women:** Please dress casually and modestly, being mindful of the length of shorts and skirts. Open-toe shoes and t-shirts are acceptable.
- **Men:** The dress style in Mexico is very casual. Shirts, t-shirts and all kinds of shoes are acceptable.
- When attending church services, it's recommended that men wear longer pants and women wear longer skirts or pants, and all tattoos are covered.
- Upon entering a church or chapel in Mexico, visitors are expected to remove their hats.
- It is best to wear closed-in shoes when visiting local church partners or children.

Greetings

- Mexicans are generally charming, courteous and polite. Making the effort to introduce yourself in Spanish will go a long way with the locals.
- Shaking hands is the most common greeting, however, women should initiate all handshakes with men. When shaking hands, use the appropriate greeting for the time of day: buenos dias (good morning), buenos tardes (good afternoon) or buenos noches (good evening).
- When greeting a group of people, it is necessary to greet and shake hands with each person individually, rather than simply addressing the group.
- Touching arms and shoulders and patting backs is very common in Mexico. Once you have established rapport with a Mexican, they may embrace you in a hug.

Security

- Please ask permission before you photograph any local people. This can include photos taken from a moving vehicle, so be sure to check with your driver or Trips and Visits Specialist first.

Emergency contact information:

Local emergency number: 911

Compassion Mexico office: 011-52-55-4777-5555

Australian Embassy: +52 55 1101 2200

Eating and drinking

- Mexican cuisine is a blend of indigenous and Spanish influences. At the heart are three important ingredients: corn, beans, and chillies.
- Mexicans value the social bonding of eating a meal together, and leaving the dinner table early may be seen as a sign of disrespect or disinterest.
- Before you begin eating, it's customary to say 'buen provecho' (enjoy your meal). It is customary to wait for everyone to be served before starting to eat.
- Whenever you catch the eye of someone who is eating in Mexico, say 'provecho' (enjoy).
- Except for finger foods like tacos or tortas, utensils are used for most dishes. When not holding utensils, it is best to keep your hands visible above the table.
- The midday meal, known as 'la comida', is often a more substantial affair, and the evening meal, known as 'la cena', is typically a lighter meal or snack enjoyed later in the evening.
- When eating salads, the lettuce is never cut; instead, fold it into a manageable bundle and use a knife and fork.

Language

- Useful Spanish phrases:

Hello: Hola

Goodbye: Adios

Good morning: Buenos dias

Good night: Buenas noches

Thank you: Muchas gracias

Please: Por favor

Excuse me: Perdon

How are you? Como estás?

I don't understand: No entiendo

I'm sorry: Lo lamento

Yes: Si

No: No



Key Challenges and Prayer Points

Low wages, high unemployment, and inequitable income distribution over many generations has resulted in a difficult and stagnant social and economic climate. The presence of powerful drug-trafficking organisations in Mexico has resulted in tens of thousands of drug-related homicides and forced disappearances. In the period between 2018 and 2022, there were 112,250 homicides across the country. Pray for wisdom and discernment for government officials as they work to serve the people of Mexico amid a turbulent social environment.

Millions of Mexicans are still living in poverty, often in huge shanty towns that surround the main cities. One of the ramifications of these poor living conditions is that many parents migrate to the United States to find employment, and this has resulted in family instability and a large number of children in the workforce. Pray for our local church partners who work in these environments, striving to bring hope and lasting transformation in the lives of children living in poverty.

Although many areas in Mexico do not experience high levels of crime, long-lasting peace has been elusive for this nation. Pray there would be stability within the social climate, and opportunities for children to continue their education and change the direction of their future.



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