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Deportation to Mexico: Arriving in Mexico

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This document is a work in progress and part of the larger publication, [A New Path: A Guide to the Challenges and Opportunities After Deportation](#), from the Education Justice Project at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. We are working on updating this guide for 2026 but recognize how urgently its content is needed. We believe there is information here that can literally save lives, so please share this document widely. Please also share your feedback with us, including any omissions or errors. We can add updates before the next edition. Email us at reentry@educationjustice.net.

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This chapter may be hard to read. You may be facing deportation after fighting to stay in the US. Or you may be reading this chapter just in case, to be prepared. Please know you are not alone. Read on for details about what to expect during deportation to Mexico and immediately after your arrival, including what resources are there to assist you.

- ★ **Know Your Rights in Mexico.** The non-profit organization Otros Dreams en Acción has produced a “green card” to alert you to your rights in Mexico. Access a printable copy at odamexico.org/tarjeta-verde.

Transit

While you are being transported, your hands and feet will be bound to restrict your movement. This usually means handcuffs or zip ties and ankle shackles. They may be connected to a chain around your waist. They will be removed just before you arrive in Mexico. Any personal belongings that you have with you will be taken away before transit and generally returned after

deportation by the Mexican authorities. Your shoelaces will probably be removed before deportation, so you will arrive without laces in your shoes.

Be super patient during the deportation process. There's a lot of waiting, sitting around, and you won't know what's happening next. Prepare yourself mentally for this. There is a lot of uncertainty. -Ramon C.

Location of Arrival

You will either be dropped off at the border or flown to an airport in the interior. It's hard to say which will happen to you if you are deported, but most Mexicans are still dropped at the border.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is the authority that deports people from the US. They won't necessarily deport you to the state where you were born. DHS deports many people from central and southern Mexico to the border, and many people from northern states are deported to the south of Mexico. This means you may need to travel a significant distance to get where you are going. If you have the money to fly, that may be the safest option. Otherwise, you may need to take a bus, or several buses.

Two budget airlines in Mexico that have hundreds of flights around the country each day are Volaris (volaris.com) and Viva (vivaerobus.com). There are many bus options, including Flix and Omnibuses de México. More comfortable and more expensive options include Primera Plus and ADO. Many routes will take you to the Mexico City terminal, where you can transfer or purchase a separate ticket to your destination.

Arrival and Reception

Whether you are deported to the border or flown to the interior, you will be met by the National Migration Institute (INM). They are the Mexican institute in charge of the reception process, and they will register you as a repatriated citizen. At the end of the reception process, INM will give you a document that says you are repatriated to Mexico. This document is your proof of repatriation, or *constancia de repatriación*. Keep it safe. You will need it for other things like getting your official state ID.

México te abraza: México te abraza is the Mexican government's new repatriation program. Its mission is to "welcome repatriated Mexicans with warmth and compassion." Because the program is new, all of their services may not yet be implemented. But they *should* provide you with these resources when you arrive:

- Access to a phone to call family or loved ones
- Transportation to the state where you were born
- A debit card with 2,000 pesos (Approximately \$100 USD)
- Psychological and emotional support
- Your CURP, a unique number assigned to all citizens and residents in Mexico

- Shelter
- Three meals per day during the time you are at the attention center

You can learn more about the program at tinyurl.com/Mexicoteabrazo.

As part of this program, the Mexican government opened **attention centers** (*centros de atención*) near each of the border locations used for deportation. The government also plans to open attention centers at the Villahermosa and Tapachula airports, where an increasing number of people are being flown to.

If You Get Deported to the Border

People who live close to the border in the US will be taken there by bus. If you live far from the border, you may be flown rather than driven. If you live in the northern part of the US (in a city like Chicago, for instance), your flight may make some stops in the US along the way to pick up other people who are being deported. The plane will make its final stop on the US side of the border. From there, a bus will take you to the border crossing, where officers will open a large gate and tell you to cross the bridge.

At the border stick together, help each other. -Ramon C.

According to INM, there are eleven places along the border where you might cross into Mexico:

- Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas – Puente Juárez–Lincoln Bridge
- Matamoros, Tamaulipas – Puente Nuevo / Puerta México Bridge
- Reynosa, Tamaulipas – Hidalgo International Bridge
- Tijuana, Baja California – San Ysidro, El Chaparral Port of Entry
- Mexicali, Baja California – Calexico, Downtown Port of Entry
- Nogales, Sonora – Dennis DeConcini Port of Entry area
- San Luis Río Colorado, Sonora – San Luis Port of Entry
- Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua
- Ojinaga, Chihuahua – Presidio/Ojinaga Port of Entry
- Ciudad Acuña, Coahuila – Del Río/Acuña Port of Entry
- Piedras Negras, Coahuila – Camino Real International Bridge

The border city you will be deported to often depends on where you are coming from. For example, people from Illinois have been released in Matamoros, at the border with Brownsville, TX, as well as the Reynosa/McAllen, TX, border crossing. Your local Mexican consulate may be able to tell you where you could expect to be deported. For a list of consulates, see the [directory](#).

After Crossing the Border: After crossing the border, you will be put on a bus and taken to the nearest attention center for processing by INM. All attention centers are located near the border drop-off areas listed above:

- Matamoros, Reynosa (Estadio Municipal Pedro Salazar Maldonado)
- Reynosa, Tamaulipas (Estacionamiento del Centro Cultural)
- Tijuana, Baja California (Flamingos Eventos)
- Mexicali, Baja California (Estacionamiento del Centro de Ferias, Eventos y Exposiciones (FEX))
- Nogales, Sonora (Unidad Deportiva Estrellas Nogalenses)
- San Luis Río Colorado, Sonora
- Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua (El Punto)
- San Juan Sabinas, Coahuila (Bodega Industrial)
- Nueva Rosita, Coahuila
- El Carmen, Nuevo León (Polideportivo Alianza Real)

After INM finishes your reception process, you will get your *constancia de repatriación*. Remember to hold on to it. ICE should have given your personal belongings to INM when you arrived in Mexico. If they did, you will also get your belongings back at this time.

At the attention center, you will be offered a meal, access to a phone, medical assistance if needed, essential documents, and transportation support. The attention centers also serve as shelters. You are allowed to stay there for a few days, but you don't have to. If you need a place to stay and would prefer to stay somewhere else, some areas also have shelters run by non-profit organizations. In Tijuana, for instance, Casa del Migrante runs a shelter.

When you leave the government-run shelter, you will be provided with a bus ticket to the place where you were born. If the town where you were born is not your final destination, you will have to pay for your transportation. Certain organizations like Casa del Migrante and some churches may offer transportation vouchers.

When I crossed the border, it was like a scene from a movie! The government officials were on one side saying, Come with us; we'll give you food and a place to stay. On the other side were people involved in organized crime saying, Come with us; we can help you make a lot of money. I thought, Wow, Mexico really is like they say! But once I got to where I was going to live, I saw that it wasn't like that at all. Where I am now, I have a nice community. We look after each other. My neighbors even bring me food. -Ivan

If You Get Deported to the Interior

In addition to deporting people to border cities, the US is flying people to the following airports:

- Guadalajara, Jalisco
- Morelia, Michoacán
- Querétaro, Querétaro
- Toluca, Estado de México
- Tapachula, Chiapas

- Villahermosa, Tabasco
- Mexico City (Felipe Angeles Airport)

At the time of publication (January 2026), flights to Mexico City are paused and the US is primarily sending people to airports in the central and southern parts of the country.

Before 2025, deportation flights arrived on Thursdays and were limited to three per day. Currently, flights do not arrive on a regular schedule, and they often arrive late in the day.

After Landing: After your plane lands, the INM will register everyone on your flight. During the reception process, you should be offered access to a phone and transportation support. When the process is complete, they will give you your *constancia de repatriación*. Make sure to keep it safe. They will also offer you a meal and give medical assistance to anyone who needs it.

You generally get your belongings back at this time as well, but you may be asked not to open your bag or use your phone until you are outside of the airport. The INM should also help you to get bus tickets and food.

The whole reception process is reported to take about 40 minutes. But there have been reports of people fainting while waiting to be registered because they had gone too long without food.

At the airport, you may pass through an area with booths hosted by federal agencies. These agencies may be able to provide you with information on entering the workforce in Mexico. They may be able to help you once you reach your destination. See the [directory](#) for more information.

- ★ If you have special needs, the Mexican consulate may be able to arrange for you to fly to a city near your destination. Contact them to request help. See the directory on [p x](#) for a list of consulates in the US.

LGBTQ+ Border Resources. In general, if you are a member of the LGBTQ+ community, it is important to use caution at the border. You may face discrimination from service providers or even be targeted by criminal organizations. But there are also a number of organizations dedicated to providing support and protection for LGBTQ+ people at the border, including **Al Otro Lado** and organizations like **Rainbow Railroad** or **Border Butterflies** that find pathways to safety for people in the LGBTQ+ community. Find the contact information for these and other LGBTQ+ resources in the [Directory](#).

Preparing for Deportation

If you are facing deportation, think about what you will do when you arrive: Will you stay in a nearby shelter? Will you take a bus to your home? Will someone be there to meet you? ICE won't tell you where you will be dropped off, so making these plans will be challenging.

Contact your Consulate. Your local Mexican consulate can offer support, regardless of your immigration status. They can help you get your documents in order and help you prepare for return to Mexico. If you or someone in your family is being deported, they may also be able to confirm if they are on a particular flight. See the [directory](#) for a list of Mexican consulates in the US.

Keep in mind that the areas around deportation points at the border can be dangerous and have concentrated criminal activity. Airports, besides the one in Mexico City, tend to be located outside of major cities, and transportation may not be easy to access. Stay in close contact with friends or family members in Mexico. **Memorize their phone numbers.** See the [Plan for Possible Deportation](#) chapter on for more ideas about how to prepare.

Transportation costs: If you are deported to the border, the Mexican government program will pay for a bus ticket to the place where you were born. If that is not where you want to go, you will need to pay for your own transportation. If you are deported to an airport in Mexico, you will receive no transportation assistance at all.

Getting from the border to your destination: *If you live deep in Mexico, like Michoacán as I did, there will NOT be direct buses there. You will have to take a bus to other nearby cities to pick other people up or to get a different bus altogether, so calculate enough money to take multiple buses depending on how far south you are going. Bus tickets range from around \$10 USD (200 pesos) to over \$100 USD (2,000 pesos) depending, of course, on where you are going.* -Erick N.

- ★ Note that the US dollar sign [\$] is often used for pesos, and MXN is an abbreviation for Mexican pesos. For the exchange rate at the time of publication, see the “[Finances, Credit, and Taxes](#)” chapter.

Tip for Preparation: Often, a few days before your deportation, the detention center or staging area where you are being held will allow someone to bring you a small bag of clothes (up to 40 pounds), toiletries (but no liquids), and money (US dollars or pesos). Pesos will be easier to spend, while dollars may have to be changed first, but any form of cash will be very helpful. NOTE: It has been reported that many detention centers are no longer allowing this, but try to find out. Having a small bag will be more comfortable than traveling with nothing.

- ★ If you are from [Guatemala](#), [Honduras](#), or [El Salvador](#), please see the country specific section for information on what to expect when you arrive. There is also information about life in your nation of origin.

Resources After Deportation

There are several organizations in Mexico support recently deported people. Tijuana has more of these services than other parts of the country, but there are resources further south. See the chart below for more information on organizations throughout the country.

You've got to have people to help you. Make contact with people in your home country and try to have someone waiting for you when you get there. -Israel G.

Name	Contact Info	Location	Description
Al Otro Lado Binational Deportee Center	alotrolado.org (66) 4208-8994 info@alotrolado.org	Tijuana, Baja California	Holistic legal and humanitarian support to refugees, deportees, and other migrants in the US and Tijuana. Assistance includes: family reunification, getting US identification and criminal records, obtaining Mexican identity documents, social service referrals, free educational workshops, and community. Survey for recently deported and returned people: (tinyurl.com/AlOtroLadosurvey)
Comunidad en Retorno	facebook.com/p/Comunidad-en-retorno-100071424504267/ (551) 492-7872 info@comunidadenretorno.com	Mexico City	A group of Mexicans returning from the US who formed a network of solidarity support with social, political, and community actions. Offers help with obtaining identity documents.
Deportados Unidos en la Lucha	www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100087364622418 (55) 7681-9357	Mezcales, Nayarit	Welcomes deported and returned community members through assistance returning to the workforce and worker's rights education.

	deportadosunidosenluch@gmail.com		
Instituto para las Mujeres en la Migración (IMUMI)	imumi.org (55) 2562-5516 juridico@imumi.org	Mexico City	Legal Advice for U-VISA and VAWA, dual citizenship support, access to education, mental health support, pension help, and custody support.
Otros Dreams en Acción (ODA)	odamexico.org (55) 6875-1027 (55) 5925-9689 retornodigno@odamexico.org	Mexico City	A community of people born in Mexico who grew up in the US and are now back in Mexico because of deportation. They provide an orientation on how to obtain identity documents, general information on deportation, and a shared cultural space.
The Rhizome Center for Migrants	rhizomecenter.org (33) 2182-0836 connect@rhizomecenter.org	Guadalajara, Jalisco	Free cross-border legal aid and direct representation, humanitarian aid, and access to education and employment opportunities.

For a list of organizations that assist deported people throughout the country visit tinyurl.com/DeportedDirectory.

The Mexican government runs a number of programs intended to serve deported and returned people. Their main program is México te abraza, which is described above.

Government Assistance Programs for Deported and Returned People		
Program	What It Provides	Where to Learn More

México te abraza	Reception and orientation at the border (See above)	tinyurl.com/Mexicoteabraza
Grupos Beta	Reception and orientation at the border, rescue services	tinyurl.com/GruposBeta
Héroes Paisanos	Reception and orientation at the border, publishes a helpful guide (in Spanish) for returning citizens. tinyurl.com/paisanos-guide	gob.mx/heroespaisanos
Somos Mexicanos	Reintegration services for returned Mexicans., publishes a helpful guide tinyurl.com/Guia-PRIM	tinyurl.com/SomosMexicanos

For a more complete list, see the [directory](#).

Stay hydrated. I remember being really thirsty once we hit the road, so manage your water intake and go to the bathroom every chance you get because you don't know when you will get the chance again. -Ramon C.

Be patient. Stay positive. Eventually they will take you to a safe place. -Alex A.

At the border, stick together, stay in well-lit areas, and be aware that people will pick up on the fact that you are not from here and may try to take advantage of you. Don't talk to anyone you don't need to and keep an eye on your bag. -Ramon C.

Risks of Returning to the US

Many people don't plan for life in Mexico because they plan to cross back to the US after they arrive. There are a few reasons you may not want to try this:

First, the border region is very dangerous. It would be dangerous to stay there while you planned your reentry. There have been reports of kidnapping and people being forced to join organized crime organizations.

Second, people who get caught entering the US illegally after deportation can be fined and/or imprisoned for up to **two years**. If you have a felony conviction, you can be imprisoned for up to **twenty years**.

I was desperate to go back. I never wanted to live here. And the whole first year I was resisting the idea of making a life here. That attitude made it harder for me to adjust. But once I accepted living here, I put all my efforts into getting ahead here. Learning the language, making contacts, and getting focused on living here. If you give it your all, if you are committed to living here, you can actually make a good living and have a happy life here. I'm here, I'm working, I'm living, and I'm happy. -Israel G.

★ Post-Deportation Legal Resources:

- **Were your rights violated during detention or deportation?** The migrant-rights organization Justice in Motion helps migrants after they have left the US. Learn more at justiceinmotion.org/defender-network.
- In addition to other social and legal support, the Rhizome Center's post-deportation legal aid clinic may be able to help you to file a motion to "reopen or reconsider" the terms of your deportation. Learn more at rhizomecenter.org/legal-clinic.