

MEXICO



TRAVEL TIPS

— By Jay Scott —

For hunters, sometimes traveling to Mexico can be a nerve-racking experience. Usually hunters are excited to just get to their ranch and start hunting, but they quickly forget some things that could create a trip-spoiler. The goal of this article is to provide some tips for packing, traveling and dealing with the task of getting to your Mexican hunting destination. I would like to thank Brad Fulk from Rio Sonora Outfitters for helping with this article and giving some generous insight to ensuring a smooth trip. Remember to cross reference these tips with your outfitter and use them as a guideline. Please remember that things seem to change all of the time in Mexico and the need to be flexible is important. It is wise to plan on a

full travel day when entering into Mexico. If you get an evening hunt in, then it is a bonus. Being as prepared and organized as possible is essential when traveling to Mexico.

TRAVEL TO MEXICO

It is important to note that Mexican policies and fees are subject to change at any time.

1. A valid passport is necessary to travel into Mexico.
2. Two forms of identification are necessary to cross into Mexico (*Passport, Drivers License or Birth Certificate*).
3. Make sure to have all of the necessary paperwork while traveling (*Firearm Transportation Permit, Tourista Visa, Ranch/Outfitter Contract, Truck/Trailer/Quad Permits*).
4. Have your driver's license, passport/birth certificate, a completed personal order form from the outfitter, and completed hunter questionnaire.
5. The best way to keep all paperwork organized is to get a three-ring binder with see-thru plastic dividers. You can



The author Jay Scott (left) and his good friend and partner Darr Colburn have successfully hunted in Mexico for many years.

- keep a copy of all your pertinent info in there. A few zipper dividers are nice for your passports and things.
6. You no longer need to provide a letter of good conduct from your local police department.
 7. Do not take full gas cans into Mexico. They will make you pour it out or leave it at the border.
 8. When taking a trailer or Quad/UTV, make sure that they are titled in your personal name. If they are titled in your company/LLC or corporate name, make sure you have a letter on company letterhead that gives you the right and authorizes you to drive, and/or use the quad or trailer in the Country of Mexico in the state of Sonora.
 9. If you go with a friend and you both are riding in the vehicle make sure your quad/utility vehicle or trailer is being pulled by your truck, not by somebody else in your party.
 10. You can take up to two rifles into Mexico on the same permit. Make sure and double check the serial numbers on your firearms, they must match the paperwork. Also, when checking in with the ADUANA and Military, make sure they sign and date the back of the permit, both on the trip in and out. This will reduce problems at interior check-points. If there is a mistake on the paperwork, advise the ADUANA up front. Simple mistakes can usually be corrected by the Military. Apply for Firearms Transportation Permits well in advance of the season to ensure they are on time.
 11. You can have ammo for the gun(s) that you have a permit(s) for and you can take 100 cartridges for each gun. Clean out your truck completely before entering Mexico. No ammo of any kind, including empty shell casings, can be on board.
 12. Pack your rifles on the top of your gear in your truck, because you will have to get them out multiple times when traveling to your ranch. Several stops include: Military checkpoints, Policia checkpoints and random checkpoints. Make sure your ammo is accessible for inspection as well.
 13. You are required to declare all firearms with U.S. Customs prior to entering Mexico. You have to complete a Certificate of Registration Form listing all firearm information, including optics. You can also list other expensive hunting equipment on the form, it is not restricted to just firearms. It is wise to stop at the U.S. Customs office in your town or just before crossing the border to declare your weapons and valuables. You can fill out a declaration form that includes your spotting scopes, binoculars, cameras, guns, etc. This is important because when you cross back from Mexico into the U.S., the U.S. Customs will need that declaration form to prove that you didn't buy the goods in Mexico. You could be subject to a tax if all valuable items are not declared.
 14. Get Mexican Vehicle/Trailer/Quad insurance in the United States prior to reaching the border. One site you can use is www.acomainsurance.com.

15. Contact the USFWS Wildlife Inspector at the Nogales, AZ Port of Entry, Office of Law Enforcement (520-287-4633) regarding any new changes to policies pertaining to crossing game trophies. It is also important to schedule your return out of Mexico and call the Port of Entry and inquire about the hours of business to ensure a timely crossing.

TRAVEL FROM MEXICO BACK TO THE U.S.

1. Make sure that your tag that goes on the antlers is signed. This is very important. Please put the UMA# on the tag also.
2. Upon arrival at the Border you will need a USFWS Declaration Form, USDA Notice of Arrival Form, Ranch Hunting Contract and the Ranch Hunt Authorization Form in order to cross your trophy legally.
3. Before returning to the US, clean your vehicle/quad/UTV/trailer thoroughly on the Mexican side. If it is muddy, the U.S. customs agents will make you turn around and go wash your vehicle in Mexico. This is due to some disease that is in the mud that they don't want in the U.S.
4. Capes need to be completely frozen (*solid*) in order to cross from Mexico into the U.S. The main reason they need to be frozen is due to ticks. If they are soft at all, the capes will be subject to quarantine or forfeiture. The best way to handle this is to bring a generator and small freezer. When you leave the ranch you can keep the generator running and the freezer will keep the capes frozen. The other option is have a USDA approved taxidermist to consign the cape to. You will be required to provide the taxidermist's name and address to the Inspectors. The cape must be shipped or personally taken to the taxidermist immediately for inspection and processing. I have had good luck with Mogollon Taxidermy (www.mogollontaxidermy.com). Another website to find a USDA approved taxidermist is www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/nciel/query-app-estab.html.



Rod Fogle and Dan Bishop with Rod's 118" buck.

5. All skulls must be completely clean, with no meat or hair of any kind remaining. They also must be dry before they cross into the U.S. The best way to handle this is to boil the skulls at least 24 hours prior to returning to the U.S.
6. Cancel your vehicle permit and trailer permit upon your last visit to Mexico for that season. This can be done at the border crossing's office at the border on the Mexican side.

HUNTING IN MEXICO

1. Make sure the ranch you are hunting has been surveyed and certified by the Mexican government. Each ranch must be registered annually by the Government of Mexico to hunt legally. This registration process is called an "UMA." Prior to hunting, request your tag along with a current hunt authorization form (*attached*). This form will be dated, list the ranch name, location, size, species legal to hunt, season dates, and



A good outfitter will make your trip into Mexico a pleasure.



Years of persistent planning and preparation paid off for Jay.

tag numbers for each species. Make sure the tag is filled out with the Ranch Name and UMA registration number and check the species listed. The UMA number on the tag must correspond with the UMA number on the Ranch Hunting Contract (*very important*). If this information does not match, the trophy will be seized by USDA or USFWS Inspectors and you will be subject to a fine for a violation of the Lacey Act. Some species fall under the CITES Act and must have an accompanying CITES permit when declaring them, *i.e. Desert Bighorn Sheep, Mt. Lions, etc.* For more information go to www.cites.org, call 800-358-2104, or contact USFWS-Office of Law Enforcement in Albuquerque, NM at (505) 248-7889 with any question regarding hunting Mexico.

2. Make sure you are hunting the exact ranch that you are permitted to hunt. Sometimes you will have tags for another ranch and you won't even know it.
3. Be sure to ask the outfitter where the boundaries of the ranch are located. Neighboring ranches certainly frown upon hunters who are trespassing.
4. Tipping your guides/cooks and helpers is always appreciated. Many times you can give money as well as clothing items such as jackets, boots and knives.
5. The ranches have families that live at the ranch. Items such as socks, underwear, t-shirts, sweatshirts, toothpaste/toothbrushes, deodorant, mouthwash, etc. are also appreciated. Bring several sizes to fit all the family members. These can



Darr Colburn poses with his incredible Mexico Coues deer.

- be great gifts to the families who are in desperate need of the everyday items. A quick trip to Costco or Wal-Mart can be an incredible way to make a family's day in Mexico.
6. Remember, organization is very important to ensure a good hunting trip. Have fun and be safe! 🍷

OUTFITTERS

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 Cola Blanca Outfitters www.colablancaoutfitters.com
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