

DRIVE LOG – Nogales to Alamos

Made by Jennifer MacKay

This drive log contains distances that are not necessarily accurate, so please use any numbered distances as no more than a reference. Be aware that things in Mexico can change rapidly! We do our best to keep this page updated. By all means please let us know if you encounter any major changes, or if you have any helpful additions.

Updated last April 2024 (please note that some of the toll prices are approx because they've been going up frequently)

A few helpful hints before starting out:

- The best places to stop and use the bathroom are at the toll booths and the Pemex (affectionately known to us as pee-mex) stations. Quick, convenient and clean (most are kept up nicely...some are still pretty dirty). At these same stops, you can also pick up a snack or a drink. This one multi-purpose stop saves lots of time!
- Mexico loves 'topes' (speed bumps). Most are signed, some are not. Some are mellow, some are brutal! Keep your eyes open and be prepared! Your shocks will thank you for it.
- Speed limits...we have always said that these speed limits are just 'suggestions'. That said, 'highway patrol' police surveillance has increased in recent years and they do pull people over. Drive at speed you are comfortable with. We drive around 70 mph. Be aware of the 'policia' who are in white Guardia Nacional cars or trucks.
- There are sometimes random checkpoints set up by different law enforcement agencies. If you come upon one of these, simply answer their questions and carry on.
- You will need to have pesos on you as you travel into Mexico as dollars are not as readily accepted. You can get pesos prior to leaving the USA or in Mexico at a casa de cambio or an ATM.
- The 'Green Angels' is Mexico's equivalent of a roving roadside assistance program. These green and white trucks can be spotted now and then and they are out there to help travelers in need. We have never had to use them, but we frequently see other travelers being assisted and they are generally well thought of. Just so you know that there can be help out there if you have car trouble. Beyond the Green Angels, Mexicans, in general, are very helpful in these situations and will stop to see if you are okay or need help. If you need Green Angels' help dial 078. If you need other highway assistance, you can call 074.

And, so the adventure begins:

As you enter Nogales from the north, take the Mariposa (truck crossing) exit off of I-19. Do not go into downtown Nogales, unless you really want to cross there for some reason. We find the Mariposa crossing to be mellow. We like to gas up before crossing the border into Mexico. (As of late 2022, the gas in the border region of Mexico is significantly less than the USA or further

into Mexico...so you might consider topping off once you get through the border. There's a big gas station on the left side of the road right before arriving at the 21 km area).

As you leave the USA, sometimes the US border patrol has a little question and answer session with folks headed into Mexico. Continue on, cross the border and enter Mexico. Bienvenidos! You will see an inspection area to your right but just disregard and continue straight heading south. There is a weird south bound lane that has been turned into a northbound lane for cars going to the border...just be aware! This area always seems to be under construction of some kind...cuidado! You will be within what is considered a restricted zone. It is confined by a green chain link fence. In about 5 miles you will come to a toll booth – 60 pesos...? (this tollbooth goes up with regularity). In the past we have often paid with dollars here and gotten some change in pesos.

Just down the road, you will come to the border inspection area. Go through the 'Nothing to Declare' lane (unless you are carrying a large amount of items with value over \$300 USD worth not including personal effects), and wait to see if you get a green or red light. If you get a green light, keep on going. If you get a red light, you will be waved over to an inspection area, asked a few questions, and the officer may want to look in the car and the trunk. No big deal, as long as you are not a gun smuggler....or have lots of stuff of value that you didn't declare! (As of early 2023, whether you get a green or red light, they are sending all cars through the inspection area. If you had a green light they will almost always just wave you through.)

In all instances when dealing with the customs agents (Aduana) or the military personnel that are now at the border, we recommend being courteous, nice, follow instructions, stay alert and smile! A couple more miles, and the big new road hooks up with the big, older 4 lane Highway 15. Merge, and continue to head south towards Hermosillo/Magdalena de Kino. There is a new concrete barricade that divides southbound/northbound lanes.

A few more miles down the road, you come to the 21 km (12.6 miles from the border) crossing. Park in the big parking lot that you will be directed into by various forms of English signage, none of it correct, but oftentimes amusing.

Your first stop will be at the Immigration building. The entrance is right at the end of the parking lot. This is where you get your **tourist visa** (*you must get it here...can't get it further south*). To get your tourist visa be sure you have your passport. They will give you a visa for a few days and up to 6 months. If you plan on making more trips into Mexico soon, get one for 6 months! For a visa of 7 days or less, you don't have to pay. If it's more than 7 days, you have to pay and you can do so at Banjercito just outside the door and down to the left. The immigration folks will tell you where to go.

After getting your visa you will do one of two things...If you are only going to travel within Sonora (and only southern Sonora), get back in your car and head south (see below for more on this). If you are going to travel beyond Sonora into Mexico (or go up into the mountains around Rio Sonora or Yecora), you must get a federal car permit here. Exit the Immigration building and go to one of the copy machine booth which you will see as you step outside. You will make copies of your tourist visa, driver's license and title or registration. Copies are 25 cents per page. They take pesos or dollars here. Then go to the federal car permit building (called Banjercito) and wait in line (which can sometimes be long and slow...bring patience). Proceed to one of the open windows and get your permit. They will issue your permit for as long as your tourist visa. The cost is approximately \$50 usd and they also put a bond on your car to ensure you return it. The amount varies depending on the year of your car. It will be somewhere between \$200-400 usd. When you leave, you have to return the car permit and they will credit your credit card (only return it if you are not doing multiple entries...but just be sure to return it before it expires...otherwise your card gets charged!).

(More about travel within Sonora...If you are traveling as far as San Carlos/Guaymas and no further...you don't need a car permit. Just go. If you are traveling further south than that, like to Alamos, you need a Sonora Only permit which is now issued at a new place just south of Guaymas in Empalme. See below for more info on this very unintuitive car permitting program! Also if you are traveling up into the mountains of the Rio Sonora or Yecora then coming south, you need to get a federal permit...even though you technically only need a Sonora Only permit...it's a long story!) As you leave the parking lot here, turn right to head south. Right as you leave 21km, you'll see a sign for 'Alamos-654k', so that's you're goal!

38 mile mark - Imuris, where Highway 2 goes off to the east. Continue straight and south on Highway 15. There are several taco stands here on the right side of the road that serve up some tasty treats...this area is known for its quesadillas.

52 mile mark - The outskirts of Magdalena de Kino. Follow the signs for 'Hermosillo Cuota', which will take you on the bypass around town. The toll is 35 pesos (?). Keep heading south towards Hermosillo as the 'libre' road joins back with the highway.

62 mile mark - Santa Ana. There is a major intersection where Highway 2 heads west to Puerto Penasco and Mexicali. Stay to the left and keep heading towards Hermosillo. It is a rather poorly set up intersection, but the signage is good if not erratic.

Just south of Santa Ana, there's a new big gas station with good bathrooms and several food vendors, including Subway and a few other chains. Good place to stock up on supplies for the drive if you haven't already.

95 mile mark – The military checkpoint is on the left, checking cars going north. Now there's a long stretch with nothing but wide open road...From Benjamin Hill to Hermosillo there are few towns (no large ones), but several spots to get gas and drinks. This stretch is about 75 miles long and there is one more toll booth before you get to Hermosillo - \$103 pesos. (At some point in this stretch, before the toll, there is a turn off for 'Hermosillo Libre'. Just stay on the highway, following the 'Hermosillo Cuota' signs).

162 mile mark – Hermosillo*. Just past the toll booth is the access to the brand new Hermosillo bypass. Follow the very big signs for the Libramiento and signs for Guaymas and Ciudad Obregon. It's 40 km of wide-open road with very little traffic and well worth the \$120 pesos. You rejoin the main highway well south of Hermosillo.

243 mile mark – On the north side of Guaymas/San Carlos is a new overpass thing. Follow the signage for 'Ciudad Obregon/Navojoa cuota' and keep heading south, veering to the left. The cuota takes you around Guaymas instead of the libre which takes you through it. On the toll road that bypasses Guaymas, the toll is \$40 pesos.

253 mile mark - The toll road intersects the main highway 15 that went through Guaymas. If you went into Guaymas, this is where you hook back up with the main route south. There is a new bridge in the north bound lanes...Follow the signs south towards Ciudad Obregon. You'll see the signs 'Ciudad Obregon 106 km, Navojoa 171 km'.

A few miles from this merge you will see a huge parking lot with no cars in it and a dumpy little double-wide trailer building. This is the poorly signed **Sonora Only** office (and currently a bit hard to get into because of the recent road construction) which should be called 'Southern Sonora Only'...**If you are coming to Alamos and don't have a federal car permit, stop here** and go through the motions and get your car permit. It used to be free...now they make you pay around \$50 usd. This whole 'system' is flawed and confusing and the businesses (including yours truly) in southern Sonora have been very vocal about trying to get it eradicated...for now, do the deal, get back in your car and head south.

This is about a 60 mile stretch from the above intersection to the toll booth on the north side of Ciudad Obregon. After several more miles you'll go through the town of Vicam.

310 mile mark – The world’s biggest Yaqui statue

313 mile mark - Just past the big Yaqui statue follow the signs for the Libramiento (the Obregon bypass)** It costs \$204 pesos but is well worth it. We recommend taking this right veer off the highway onto the new overpass and onto the bypass. It comes out south of C. Obregon just past the airport.

335 mile mark - Toll booth at Fundicion - \$103 pesos. After about 20 miles you'll see a 'Bienvenidos a Navojoa' sign. As you enter Navojoa, you will cross a big bridge that once used to span the Rio Mayo.

After going through several stop lights on the main road through the 'lovely' city of Navojoa, be looking for a grocery store called Bodega Aurrera at an intersection. At this stop light, you'll want to be in the left hand lane. You'll see a small-ish sign that says 'Alamos 50 km'. Turn left and start heading east. You'll be driving through the outskirts of Navojoa for a while, the road is a 4-lane road. Watch for poorly marked topes and stop signs. After several miles, you leave Navojoa and start on the two lane highway to Alamos. It's a generally good road and there's a huge shoulder. Watch for a few random potholes! It gains elevation gradually, traveling through rural areas. After the curves and the town of Minas Nuevas (watch for two topes) you head through the arches toward Alamos! Entering town, you will pass the soccer field on your right, a Pemex station on your left and the hospital/fire station on your right.

Take the main road right into the beautiful main plaza of Alamos. You have arrived!

NOTE: All of these mileages are as general and have been converted from KMs to miles by yours truly. They are to be used as a rough reference, and by no means should you set your odometer to them.