

Driving Instructions:

Mexican Border (Mariposa Road at Nogales, Arizona) To Alamos, Sonora

For those driving on Mexico's Federal Highway 15D, from the Nogales border to Navojoa & Alamos, these details could be of help. Instead of using the kilometer markers, of which many are missing, I am using 'Miles'. So upon going through the US Customs check-point on Mariposa Road (Motorhomes far right lane), set your odometer on 'Zero' after the second speed bump before entering Mexico.

The first 30 miles of your trip are the ones where you must be alert due to poor signage, nearly invisible speed bumps (called 'Toe-Pay' in Spanish) and a few construction areas. For your first trip really obey the speed laws for the first 30 miles. Also, for 'first timers' I would suggest that you not leave before sunrise as I did this week. There are multiple hazards that are non-events with daylight.

Fuel? If you have a diesel I would avoid PEMEX Mexican diesel, however we have 100,000 miles on a Ford Excursion and it runs fine. Today due to de-nationalization of Pemex there are American stations in the country. Some import their gasoline and diesel from the USA. Not all Chevron stations carry diesel, however those that do have the low sulfur diesel available. If you use gasoline and are not familiar with the process, at Pemex stations if you use 'Regular' just as for 'Magna' which is the least expensive and it's good fuel, plus they have higher octanes available. Always make sure you look to see the pump is set at 'Zero', never let your credit card out of your sight, and if you pay cash count each bill with the attendant. The few corrupt stations in the country have a scam of saying things after they put the money away, "you gave me two 50's not two 500's"...make it clear when you pay with cash in that regard.

If you find errors in the mileage or other information drop a note to Jim Swickard (jnswick@aol.com) so he can correct it for other travelers. OKAY, below we start with #2 on the trip from Mariposa Road in Nogales to Alamos, Sonora, Mexico:

- 1. Overnight, prior to entering Mexico**, in Nogales, Arizona. We used to put the Prevost in the Safeway lot at night which made it easy to get directly on the Mariposa Road (in front of Safeway) and take it west to the entrance to Mexico. No one should attempt the downtown route for many reasons. It makes an easier day overall to be close to the border for your morning departure, so the Safeway lot is a great place for motorhomes and often others are present.
- 2. US-Mexico border at Mariposa Road** opens at 6 a.m., we do not recommend that anyone take the downtown border entry.
- 3.** Buy Pesos somewhere for the toll booths. They charge for a tag axle and any tow car too, so it can take alot of Pesos. I would suggest for starters (round-trip) about \$400 USD worth in Pesos, if too much I can buy them from you.
- 4. When approaching the US-Mexican entry point at Mariposa road** stay in the right lane for trucks....an RV cannot make it through the car lanes due to tight turns.
- 5.** You will have two U. S. speed tables within 100 yards of entering Mexico...slow.

SET YOUR ODOMETER NOW TO SYNC WITH THIS INFORMATION FOR THE NEXT 400 MILES

- 6. Exactly at the US/Mexico fence** bear to the left along the lane divider and DO NOT STOP or enter that inspection point. That is only for going downtown.
- 7. After entering Mexico you will be on a two lane road** which appears to be four, but it is only two lane and there will be close oncoming traffic headed to the US. Watch for any rocks in the road for the first mile...when it rains, rocks come

down the hillside. If rocks, go to oncoming lane to avoid. After every rain, on this 100 yard stretch there are rocks on the road...if driving in the dark southbound be cautious.

8. After a few miles you will encounter a divided lane which is for trucks in the right side and cars/RV's in the left....bear left. At the top of this hill is your first toll station...look for green lights for the correct lane.

TOLL BOOTH AT 5.3 MILES...1/4 MILE FURTHER A FEDERAL INSPECTION STATION (NOT FOR VISAS OR CAR PERMIT, THEY WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU ARE NOT CARRYING CONTRABAND AND ONLY PULL INTO A DIAGONAL PARKING PLACE IF YOU GOT A RED LIGHT, OTHERWISE IF IN A CAR DRIVE THROUGH THE PARKING PLACE AND CONTINUE SOUTHBOUND. MOTORHOMES MUST WAIT FOR THE INSPECTOR TO MOVE A BARRIER TO PASS...DON'T ATTEMPT GOING THROUGH A DIAGONAL PARKING SPACE WITH YOUR RIGHT.

9. After leaving the toll booth, again poorly marked lanes, but stay on the left side of the dividers (divider will be on your right). Continue for about 1/2 mile and there are two speed bumps close together and ahead your inspection station with green lights when it's okay to enter....if Green go ahead and they probably will move a barrier for you to pass. At this point you should go through and just wait a few yards beyond the inspection area for your friends to make it through too.

10. You will continue south and after a gradual turn to the right and then a few miles down the road another to the left, you will enter a long straight stretch. Watch traffic ahead of you as they stop for two bad speed bumps....do not miss these since they can take out an airbag. (On second thought...pass at 7 a.m. or when there's daylight so you can see this first portion of Mexico's bad road system....once past the border area it's a piece of cake though)

BE ALERT AT 10.6 miles for the highest speed bumps in Mexico. Very slow is the way to take these two close together bumps.

11. After the two close together speed bumps you will see an Atlantic gas station on the right, continue south for about two miles and get ready to go into the '21 K' for your vehicle permit and Visas.

AT ABOUT 11.5 MILES SLOW DOWN TO ABOUT 25 MPH IN ANTICIPATION OF AN EXIT TO YOUR RIGHT AT 12.2 MILES. PARK ANYWHERE IN THIS LARGE PARKING LOT AND HERE YOU WILL GET YOUR VISAS AND CAR PERMIT. THERE ARE HAWKERS OF FOOD, PLUS THOSE LOOKING FOR TIPS, SO ONLY DEAL WITH UNIFORMED OFFICIALS AND WALK SOUTH TO WHERE THERES SIGNAGE ON WHAT TO DO AND HOW TO DO IT. ONCE FINISHED HERE THE ROAD GETS BETTER ALMOST ALL THE WAY TO ALAMOS.

Take the registration (must not have a bank or lien holder and if so a notarized letter saying it's okay to enter Mexico), US Passports and Mexican car insurance into the buildings beyond the parking area. Their signage is decent and you should be okay there.

12. After getting the car permit, plus the Visas, you are set for heading south.

12.5 Leaving the car permit area the road is excellent until you get to the village of Cibuta about five miles from the car permit area.. These speed bumps where you will find three spaced about 100 yards apart from each.

SLOW DOWN AT ABOUT 19 MILES, AT 20.6 THE ROAD NARROWS AND WILL BE A SINGLE LANE SOUTH BOUND THROUGH A CONSTRUCTION AREA FOR ABOUT THREE OR FOUR MILES. CONSTRUCTION MARKERS ARE THE ENTIRE DISTANCE SO USE CARE...THAT'S A CLIFF TO YOUR RIGHT SO DO NOT HUG THE RIGHT IF YOU HAVE A BIG RIG.

13. After you leave the construction area continue southbound on a new concrete highway toward the village of Imuris. At about five miles you will see a flashing amber light in the distance and this is for a greenhouse so their employees can cross the road, but basically it can be ignored. Continue south to the next speed bump.

AFTER ROUNDING A GENTLE CURVE TO THE LEFT AT 39 MILES YOU WILL ENCOUNTER A HIGH SPEED BUMP AT 39.2 MILES. Then proceed down a long straight stretch to the village of Imuris at 41.2 miles. One mile after leaving the village there's a right right turn in the road and then two speed bumps close together. Once past the second one you can run highway speeds to the next village of Magdalena.

The next toll booth is at 54.6 miles and this is at the town of Magdalena. Usually there are 'Guardia Nacional' stationed here in the median, very friendly and there to help or answer questions.

14. At 57.6 miles, after this toll booth, began slowing for a tight turn to the left which puts you back on the main line of highway 15. Large rigs should be about 25 mph...it's very tight and you have the right of way entering merging traffic after this turn...DO NOT STOP.

AT 67.4 MILES YOU WILL ENTER THE TOWN OF SANTA ANA AND A SPEED BUMP AT 67.5., BE IN THE LEFT LANE, IT WINDS TO THE LEFT AND YOU HAVE THE RIGHT OF WAY OVER TRAFFIC THAT YOU WILL SEE TO YOUR LEFT. A SECOND SPEED BUMP COMES SHORTLY AFTER THE FIRST. FROM HERE ON THROUGH THE VILLAGE NO MORE BUMPS.

15. About 10-15 miles is the town of Santa Ana. As you enter there is one speed bump, then the road winds to the left and another speed bump at 67.6.

16. Just outside of Santa Ana, after the road winds to the left (68.3), stay in the left lane and there is a US style truck-stop (about the only one in Mexico). If a stop is not needed then stay in the right lane and your next town is Hermosillo. Between Santa Ana and Hermosillo there are three Pemex gas stations but I doubt that you will need any of these.

NOTE: in the event of a mechanical issue, medical issue or any major problem, call the Toll Road help number which is 074. They provide towing, fuel mechanics, etc at no charge since you have a valid toll road receipt. From Santa Ana to Hermosillo there are five gas stations (one at 93.2, 101.6, 126.8, 150.6 one on your left) if you need to pull off and take a break. Four of the five are on the right side of the road with easy access.

THE NEXT TOLL BOOTH IS ON THE NORTH SIDE OF HERMOSILLO, however at 148.2 on your right look for the Hacienda de los Santos billboard with Mariah Swickard Alcantar's photo in her wedding dress!

At 161.0 began slowing for the toll booth at 161.7. NOTE THE CHEVRON ACROSS THE MEDIAN ONE MILE AHEAD, when returning to the USA this is an excellent stop for good diesel fuel and snacks.

17. Go past the Chevron about two miles and be in the left lane where you enter the bypass for Hermosillo and it takes up to an hour off the trip...same is true for the Cd. Obregon bypass...very important not to go into either city for time and possibly corrupt policemen.

At about 164.0 get into the left lane to take an overpass, not too fast it's curvy, on to the bypass of Hermosillo. This can take about 45 minutes off your trip time, or more, if in a motorhome.

18. Continue on this bypass (not a four lane with few places to pass) until you reach the toll booth at 176.5. If you need to stop, pay your toll, and park to the right just beyond the building on the concrete.

19. The bypass ends and joins the main highway at about 188.4. Use caution, but don't stop if possible, when entering the flow of traffic southbound on Highway 15D. On this type of highway entry often you will see a stop sign and this is usually considered a 'courtesy stop sign' where you only need to stop if there is oncoming traffic. Often it can be hazardous to stop with high speed traffic on the main highway.

20. Now you are southbound on Highway 15D toward Guaymas. At about mile 248, merge to the left lane since there will be a fork in the road (straight ahead for San Carlos and Guaymas), left at the fork with a toll booth about a mile ahead. This is the Guaymas Bypass and pay your toll at mile 251,

21. This is an excellent four lane bypass until the end where you pass a PEMEX station on your right. If in a large rig, DO NOT take this overpass fast since it is in poor condition and poorly designed. After the bypass you will merge with traffic to your right. About 200 yards after the bypass the asphalt road becomes concrete with a bump so don't exceed about 50 mph until back on the concrete.

22. For tourists who are getting the 'Solo Sonora' permit (allows your car not to leave Sonora, such as cars ONLY going to Alamos) then you can get the permit at the 'Empalme Station' which is to your right at mile marker 269.5 (there's a small entrance side on the shoulder of the road). NOTE, never go there if you do not have Visas since they are required to get a Solo Sonora permit and you would be required to return to Nogales. We do not recommend getting a 'Solo Sonora' permit, since the cost is the same and if there is any glitch in the process you are more than 200 miles from the border. Better to get your permit at what is called the '21K', at Nogales as described above.

23. At 294 to about 295 you will encounter two or three speed bumps. NOTE, at times on Mexican roads instead of speed bumps they use the small round low vibration type bumps on the highway. As a rule, you can avoid those by staying in the right lane instead of the left lane where they are often present. They are to wake-up the driver of a possible hazard.

24. At about mile 300.0 you will enter a challenging two miles. STAY IN THE LEFT LANE ALL THE WAY THROUGH THIS VILLAGE...the 'topes' are easier to see and the right lane in spots is in very bad condition.

This is the Yaqui village of Vicam. Besides having about six speed bumps, you will have people begging with plastic milk containers. Some are legitimate, such as the Red Cross, others asking for money, but they do appreciate fruit and any form of gift, however it is not necessary to offer same.

From time to time the Yaqui stop all traffic and shake down drivers for a required donation, usually they are at the speed bumps and usually it is your option on donating. A few Pesos is adequate. At the south end of town there is a Pemex on your right with a large paved area if you need to make a stop. Once past the last speed bump you will encounter some of the best highway in Mexico.

25. Prepare to see the largest Indian in the world, known as the 'Yaqui Dancer' on your right at mile 321. This is a decent place to pull-off onto the shoulder if you should need to stop for any reason.

26. Common error by foreigners is to misinterpret the highway sign that reads 'Libramiento Ciudad Obregon' on your right just a mile past the indian. It means that ahead is the bypass for Ciudad Obregon and not the 'free' road. Stay in the right hand lane and 1 mile after the long easy curve to the right you will exit for the Cd. Obregon bypass at about the 323 mile.

27. Toll Booth at the 326 mile. If you need to stop for any reason, as with all toll booths, pay the toll and drive through and then park to the right where there's plenty of safe space.

28. RADAR? Yes, it's used quite often on Mexico's toll roads. On this bypass it is nearly always in operation, sometimes stationary at the 329.00 mile (see the trees to the east side of the road, they park there in the shade:)) This is not a four lane road and the custom on roads with wide shoulders is to hug the shoulder if traffic is trying to pass from behind.

29. At about the 344 mile de-accelerate since you will reconnect the the main highway and there is a tight turn to the left on this downward ramp. Here again is a stop sign on your left but no need if there's no traffic in your merge lane. Continue south to the village of Fundicion just a few miles south. You will be greeted with a speed bump just past mile 349.

IF you need fuel stay in the left lane (Not the Pemex to the right) and exit a couple of hundred yards beyond the speed bump. This is US fuel and low sulfur diesel. The diesel islands are to the south in two separate areas. Gasoline to the north. Just a few miles from here is the birthplace of baseball player Fernando Valenzuela.

30. One half mile past the first speed bump is a second one, then just a couple of miles to the toll booth. This booth usually has only one lane open so judge that from a distance so you end up on the line. NOTE...DON'T FOLLOW TRAFFIC AT ANY BOOTH THAT GOES TO THE RIGHT. THEY HAVE PERMITS FOR AN AUTOMATIC PASS.

31. Straight road south from the Fundicion toll booth to Navojoa. It's common to find bridge work in progress on this highway so watch for construction crews and merge to a single lane

32. NAVOJOA gets periodic press for corrupt police giving bogus tickets so watch the stoplights and speed when going through downtown Navojoa. The first stoplight is at the intersection where you will see a large Pemex station (good place for parking with a motorhome, as are most Pemex stations for overnight in a motorhome) THIS MAY BE IN ERROR...SOMEONE LET ME KNOW, FIRST STOP LIGHT IS THE 371 MILE.

Looking for a motel? (Although you are only about 45 minutes from the beautiful village of Alamos and Hacienda de los Santos. More and more Canadians and US visitors are making Hacienda de los Santos as their overnight choice for the best beds, excellent cuisine, authentic cantina, 4 pools & full service Spa...awards include #3 Hotel in Mexico & #1 Small Hotel by Trip Advisor, #1 Hotel in Northern Mexico, by U.S. News & World Reports, Winner of the Americas including South America, Central America, Mexico & Canada by Historic Hotels Worldwide and 2021 Winner in Mexico by Conde Nast Traveler. Call from your car now 647-428-0222 to secure a room or a luxurious suite. If you have a motorhome and want to splurge one night we can park you on our other property at the edge of town. For those looking for a more economical hotel we also have a second hotel in the historic district which is 'Hotelito Alamos').

Slow down, just after the 371, to your right we recommend two motels, the first is the 'Cazadores' just after the 'El Rancho'...slow...tight right turn, big rigs no. The second is just across the bridge which is on the highway as you wind to the right. Immediately at the end of the bridge you will see their 'Rio Mayo' motel sign.

33. Upon entering Navojoa, your first stoplight of several (374.3 mile) will be at an intersection with a Chevy dealership on the SE corner. If you make a right turn at this stoplight you will find a Sam's Club 1 block on your right.

34. The next stoplight indicates 'Los Mochis' straight ahead. Then proceed through three or four more stoplights until you see a large 'Sushi' sign on your left and next to the stoplight over the traffic lane is a sign which reads 'Los Mochis straight and ALAMOS left. This light turns green and you then have the right of way since northbound traffic is delayed. The next two miles are rough so use caution as follows:

a. One block from the stoplight you just passed, is a busy four way stop. Wait your turn since a policeman is nearly always at this intersection watching traffic. About 375.1.

b. 100 yards further a speed table, then railroad tracks (375.2) followed immediately by a speed bump. Stay in left hand lane

c. **At the next stoplight** stay in the left hand lane since the road ahead in the right lane is bad and dangerous. (375.4)

d. There are 2 stop signs which are well hidden in the next 1/2 mile and police tend to be there. (375.9 and near the Repsol Gas Station to your right). Stop sign at 377.3...last one.

35. You are now on the road to Alamos. Every summer new potholes appear but are usually repaired promptly. There's a wide shoulder on both sides and this road of about 30 miles is used often for bikers all year round. At mile 392 is a new motocross park which will be a national event center for both bikes and motorcycles.

36. WARNING...AT THE 396 MILE...watch for little speed bumps between the lanes. These are not harmless and will blow a tire since they are taller than they look and are cast iron. The road divides here with a turn-off to the left to a large lake (Mocuzarit). Do not attempt to pass on this long stretch until it returns to just painted yellow lines.

37. At mile 404.9 you are nearly to Alamos and there are TWO high speed bumps close together. Just a mile down the road (405.8) you will see a colorful 'Alamos' sign under triple arches and there is a low speed bump here also. At the 406.6 you will see the Alamos Convention center on your left. Coming up on your left is a new Pemex station which can accommodate large motorhomes easily. There is a second one a block further with diesel pumps just as you enter.

NOTE: MOTORHOMES SHOULD NOT PROCEED PAST THIS SECOND PEMEX, unless they know specifically where you are headed. Alamos streets are narrow, some one-way and not marked and big rigs can get into trouble.

If you are stumped at this point call Jim Swickard or Humberto Enriquez at Hacienda de los Santos (647-428-0222 for assistance). If your destination is the Hacienda Ranch, then you take a left turn at the Pemex corner, drive past 'Mapco' and park until Hacienda people have arrived (or Jim) to guide you to the ranch.

Just past the second Pemex there's a speed bump (407.3). You will see the Alamos hospital to the right and immediately a second speed bump by the fire station (407.5). At the 407.7 another speed bump.

38. Alamos, at the 407.8 you will find a Banorte bank on your right and they have an ATM which is located inside the left door. Just beyond the bank the business district (Alameda) is to your left and is one-way counterclockwise with the bus station at about 9 o'clock. Central market at 12 o'clock and drug stores at 3 and 6 o'clock.

To get to Hacienda de los Santos DO NOT enter the business district but continue up the one-way street into the historic Spanish Colonial district. More than 180 structures in Alamos are Spanish Colonial and on the national register as are several of the HdIS buildings. There is a speed bump just 50 yards ahead, then continue straight to the Plaza de las Armas which has counter clockwise traffic. The Cathedral will be on your left after you enter the Plaza with a right turn.

Continue straight passing the church with it to your left. To your right, just past the church is the 'Palacio' which is the city hall and also was designed as an opera theater with a canted stage in the center. Go slow and you can see the stage. Immediately take a left if possible, if not proceed past the next alleyway and turn left at the next street. If turning left at the Palacio go a hundred feet for a speed bump, then a few hundred for a second one and turn right at

the 'Casa de los Tesoros hotel' and continue one block to Hacienda de los Santos. If you did not turn left and continued a block then turn left and the Hacienda de los Santos will be on your right.

We hope that his travel information has made your trip a little easier. If you have suggestions, or corrections, please write Jim at jnswick@aol.com.



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