

you have completely checked the contents. At the airport, verify that your baggage claim tags match those on your bags before passing through customs. Choose travelling companions carefully, since you may be implicated if they are found to be carrying drugs. Be equally careful about what is in your car, since the driver may be held accountable.

Prescription medicines and syringes may be considered suspicious by Mexican authorities. Keep all drugs in their original containers and carry the prescriptions with you. If you have a medical need for syringes, carry a medical certificate stating so.

Crime

Some parts of Mexico suffer from serious crime problems. The economic crisis spawned by the devaluation of the peso in 1995 led to a sharp rise in the crime rate, especially street crime. The severity of the problem varies greatly depending on the specific location, and you should take common sense precautions to protect yourself.

Robbery and theft — the principal crimes faced by foreign visitors — are a bigger problem in larger

cities. They are also a more serious threat at night than in the daytime. In resort areas, beaches should be avoided at night and visitors should return directly to their hotels from restaurants and nightclubs. Professional travel advisors suggest particular caution when using taxis or public transportation in Mexico City. There has been a sharp increase in reports of foreigners being beaten and robbed by taxi drivers. You can hire a car and driver by the hour or day at major hotels. If you use a taxi, use a radio (*sitio*) car. Do not hail taxis in the street. Credit and automated teller machine (ATM) cards are not necessarily safer than cash. There have been some incidents where visitors were held captive so the cards could not be reported stolen. A few visitors have been forced to reveal a personal identification number (PIN), often resulting in a maximum daily withdrawal before midnight and another on the next day.

The following precautions are suggested for Mexico City and other large urban areas.

- Take taxis only from authorized stands, and never in front of nightclubs or tourist facilities.