Mexico Customs Surprises: Pills, Vapes, and Laptop Rules

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Key Points

- **Crew warning: AFAC officials at MMSD asked a crew member to carry unknown pills back to the U.S. – possible setup. Decline, document, and don't touch.**
- **Vapes banned: Mexico officially outlawed vapes in January 2025. A new federal law now criminalises almost any activity involving them, including production, storage or transport for commercial purposes. Penalties can exceed USD 14,000 or result in prison sentences of up to eight years. Since the law does not define what counts as commercial activity, authorities may treat multiple devices as intent to distribute.**
- **Device limits: Customs is enforcing a one-laptop/tablet rule per person. Extra devices may be taxed at 19% – no crew exemptions.**

Flying to Mexico has always come with a few quirks, but there have been a few **notable developments recently** that crews should be aware of. Here's a quick look at some of the latest updates – from strange inspections to unexpected customs issues. Might be worth a heads-up to your team before your next trip south.

The "would you mind taking this bag?" situation

A recent report out of MMSD/San José del Cabo raised eyebrows. After clearing customs and immigration without issue, a crew member was asked to step into the AFAC office. There, officials presented them with a ziplock bag full of prescription pill bottles and asked if they could take it back to the U.S. The crew member wisely declined.

Was it a test? A setup? It's unclear – but it looked staged, and could easily have ended badly. If something

like this happens to you, the advice is simple: stay calm, politely say no, ask for everything in writing, and don't touch anything you haven't personally verified. **Accepting unknown items could lead to serious legal trouble or even aircraft seizure.**

Vapes are banned. Like, officially.

Mexico has not only banned the import and use of vapes. **A new federal law now makes almost anything involving them a criminal offence.** It covers acquiring them, storing them, transporting them and selling them, and it uses the term "for commercial purposes" without explaining what that actually means. Because the wording is so vague, authorities can interpret it as they see fit. **Penalties can reach fines of around USD 14,000 and prison sentences of up to eight years.**

This vagueness is the real issue. You may think that bringing a few vapes clearly counts as personal use, but an inspecting officer may reach a different conclusion. There is no defined threshold, so the final judgement is entirely in the hands of the person checking your bags.

The message for passengers and crew is simple: do not bring any vapes to Mexico. Even someone who believes they are carrying only harmless extras can suddenly find themselves facing a much more serious problem.

It is much easier to avoid the situation completely and leave them at home.

That laptop in your flight bag might cost you

Mexico has a long-standing rule that **only one laptop or tablet is allowed per person when entering the country.** We've heard from members that customs officers are starting to enforce this again. One crew reported being stopped at MMSP/La Paz because they had more than one device and were told they'd be charged 19% of the declared value.

And no – aircraft iPads, iPhones or EFBs don't get special treatment. The rule applies per person, regardless of what the devices are used for. Declaring them as commercial equipment can actually make things worse. So best to split up the gear among the crew and passengers or avoid overpacking the electronics.

If you have been to Mexico recently and have a story to share – please do! Reports like these are super useful for everyone in the group. **File an Airport Spy report anonymously here.**



