



Moving

PREPARATION &
LOGISTICS



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¡Bienvenido a Mérida! Your Adventure Awaits

Moving to a new country is an adventure filled with excitement, opportunity, and, let's be honest, a good amount of stress. But imagine trading in the familiar routine for the vibrant colors, rich history, and beautiful culture of Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico. Often hailed as one of the safest cities in North America, Mérida offers a unique blend of colonial charm and modern convenience.

This guide is your comprehensive roadmap—designed to demystify the logistics of your move and help you transition smoothly into your new life. We'll take you through every phase, from the earliest preparations to settling into your new Yucatecan home.

The decision to move is the first step; the successful execution of that decision is the next challenge. A move to Mérida requires significant planning, especially when crossing international borders.

This guide addresses the critical, often-overlooked details that make the difference between a chaotic relocation and a well-orchestrated one. We'll focus on establishing a clear timeline, which is the backbone of any successful international move. Early preparation—sometimes as much as six to twelve months out—is key to managing everything in the process.

You must realistically evaluate what you truly need and what items may be better purchased upon arrival. We'll provide frameworks for deciding which items are worth shipping and which are best donated, sold, or gifted. Generally, focus on high-value, sentimental, or difficult-to-replace items.

A successful relocation hinges on following a detailed schedule. Our guide breaks down the process into manageable phases. By following the recommended timeline, you can tackle tasks sequentially, ensuring no critical step—like securing necessary import permits or closing bank accounts—is missed.

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Moving to Mérida is a fantastic and life-changing decision. While the process is challenging, with this structured guide, you have the tools to manage it effectively. Take a deep breath, start planning, and get ready to enjoy the rich culture, delicious food, and friendly people of your new home. Let's get started on your seamless move to Mérida!

ORGANIZING PLAN

Researchers at Yale have identified two areas in your brain associated with pain. These areas light up in response to letting go of items you own and feel attached to. This is the same area of the brain that lights up when you feel physical pain from cutting your finger or drinking hot coffee. In a nutshell, your brain translates the loss of valued possessions into something that causes physical pain.

The fact of the matter is this: the more you've invested emotionally or financially, the more you want to keep the thing around. When you introduce new things, you immediately associate value with them, making it harder to let them go in the future. This psychological connection to things is what leads to the accumulation of stuff.

Additionally, the more things you have in your house, the harder it is to make decisions. It's called analysis paralysis syndrome. To begin taking steps to make your move, it's better to start slowly with a plan and a system. Trying to do it all at once or when you are in a hurry causes system overload and possibly regret.

Believe me, it's not worth it. I mention this so you can be aware of what may happen during the process. Part of this is painful and will take some time to work through. At the end of this guide, I'll also give tips about difficult areas such as paper, photographs, clothing, shoes, and kitchen items.

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In my former life as a professional organizer in Dallas, I was asked to create a program based on the title, *Getting Rid of Possessions, It's Harder Than You Think*. Designed for the Senior Access/Generations Group at Methodist Health Systems in Dallas, Texas, the audience was downsizing retirees. For most, it would be their last move.

I felt fortunate to have spoken to over 1,000 people, helping them get unstuck and transition into their new lives. This chapter contains the tools I developed for this group and the hundreds of clients I helped in my moving business. Assisting with the emotional and mental process was most rewarding.

To begin this process, we need to consider what common storage space, closets, cabinets, and shelving in housing look like in Mérida. Most houses and apartments have very little storage space. Some bedrooms in older colonial houses don't have closets but a wardrobe and/or chest of drawers instead. Bathrooms may or may not have cabinets or shelving underneath the sink.

Linen storage, cupboards, and large closets that we are accustomed to are not typical here. For example, you may be tempted to bring several quilts that have been in your family for decades. But you may not be able to store them properly once you're here. Keeping one and giving away the rest to family members might be a better solution than running the risk of damage due to humidity, mildew, and bugs. Keep these particular points in mind as you likely don't know what size house you'll move into.

You may want to start with the basics, store the rest, and then make a decision in a few months. This way avoids frustration when there's nowhere to store something, or it's been damaged due to the climate or insects.

Once you've decided to move, STOP buying things. This is helpful so you don't have to decide whether to keep it. The ONLY time this does not apply is when you purchase items to take with you for your move. These items include things you know you can't buy in Mérida. BUT don't go overboard!

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Once you start living in Mérida, you'll better understand other things you need or want. If you've saved things you're unsure of, then it is on hand and accessible at a later date.

I've heard repeatedly how people who want to move can't because of an emotional attachment to their things. While having attachments to a few things is understandable, being overly connected isn't healthy. Organizing is critical to starting anything.

Think of this as an example. It's easier to cook in a clean and organized kitchen. It feels better when you know where everything is. It's faster when you don't have to wash something before you use it. Trying to find the right supplies, dirty dishes in the sink, or not having enough counter space is stressful.

It's the same way with a move. So, we will accomplish two things: 1) getting organized and 2) getting ready for your move. It may seem like a lot to take on. But trust me, you'll feel much better with a clearer mind. Naturally, the more time you have, the more productive you can be. On the other hand, it may lead to procrastination and bad time management. However, I've designed a system that will help you immensely.

Depending on where you are in the process, you may be unable to accomplish every detail before you move. And that's OK! I'm super organized and have helped hundreds of clients move locally, nationally, and internationally. I couldn't do everything before my move due to my short 3-month timeline. You may need to plan return trips to handle banking, mail, and legal documents.

Give yourself time. This is one of the reasons I planned a return trip just two months after my move. I knew if there was something important I forgot or didn't plan for, I could wait a couple of months, and it wouldn't be critical.

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THE PROCESS

Begin with the end in mind; establish your moving date first. Then, determine the deadlines you need to meet until the date you are scheduled to move. Make a list of everything you need to do and then break it into phases. This makes it much more manageable and not so overwhelming.

Have you ever heard that sometimes it's easier to determine what you don't want vs. deciding what you do want? This section is going to help you do just that. It's possible you won't be able to narrow down everything in the first or maybe the second round.

It's going to take some time to get your things situated. Good guidelines include if you haven't used something in over a year, it's a no. If you haven't used something in the last six months, it could be a no or a maybe.

PREPARE A STAGING AREA

- This area serves as the space for items categorized for no, maybe, trash, and donation.
- Clear out a guest bedroom, dining room, or other area.
- Set up folding tables or use the bed or dining table to organize laundry baskets, trash bags, or storage tubs.
- The baskets, tubs, and trash bags are taken to each room to begin thinning out your items.

STEP ONE

Start in a small area that's EASY! This gives you momentum. Unfortunately, people want to start with the most difficult area first. I do not recommend this. Set aside a 2-hour time frame. Set your alarm in 30-minute increments. This helps you keep on task.

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Depending upon your daily schedule and timeline to move, I would conquer an area a day or four areas per week, at a minimum. Based on the size of your home or apartment, you can estimate how long it might take.

- Take a laundry basket and trash bags to the area you're working on.
- Put everything you don't want into a basket or tub.
- Put donation items into a separate basket or tub.
- Put trash into trash bags.
- Take note that all the items you do want are left in place.
- When finished, take the baskets and tubs to the staging area.
- For donation items, go ahead and get them prepared to take to your charity of choice. You may want to go ahead and place them in your car for convenience.
- For the maybe items, leave them in the basket or tub. They are addressed in another step.
- Take the trash to the trash.
- This is the same process for your entire house or apartment.

LARGE ITEMS

- Write the name of each item you want and don't want on a Post-it note. Group the wants together and the don't wants together.
- Stick the notes to the door of the room where the items are located. This is especially helpful so you can see all the items together vs. looking for the Post-it note on each item.
- You can write notes about the item such as a sale price, donation, family member, put into storage, take with you, etc.

STEP TWO

Take a break or stop at the end of the 2-hour time limit. If you've set aside a whole day for this process, take at least a 30-minute break. The maximum time limit to successfully process and make decisions for this process is 2 hours. Your brain and emotions need a break.

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STEP THREE

Go through this process for your entire house, area by area, bit by bit, little by little. You'll find there are more items to keep than you realize, but this helps you make decisions at the end of the process. If you find the staging area becoming crowded, go ahead and donate what needs to be donated and decide what you want to do with the maybes.

Take items from the baskets or tubs and place them on the tables so you can see them. You can also go back to the rooms they were removed from and review all the items you've designated as yes.

Deciding what to do with their things is where most people get stuck. They ask, "What do I do with this?" There may be guilt associated with certain items. However, it's also okay to put things into the trash when they've served their purpose or lost their functionality. I'm giving you permission to just throw it away with no judgment.

If you're having a garage sale, set the items aside but keep in mind, that if something doesn't sell, you are back to, "What do I do with this?" If you have electronics, tires, appliances, mattresses, etc., locate the facility that accepts these items or a needy family. You may decide only to sell larger items. This is what I did because I didn't have the time nor the inclination to have a garage sale. Facebook marketplace is a perfect platform for this.

BUT do not, I repeat, do not, get stuck in the vicious cycle of, "I paid xxx amount of dollars for this, and I need to make xxx amount of dollars before I let it go." This one small decision can prohibit you from moving on in a timely manner.

The point of this process is to remove all the things you know you don't want. Then you can focus on what you do want in order to make realistic decisions.

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This happened to my dad when he and his wife began downsizing. He had some unreasonable expectations about the value of the items he had. At the end of the day, the value is only determined by what a buyer is willing to pay for it. It doesn't matter what the internet or a book says. If you have a buyer willing to pay for it, let it go.

Donate it if it doesn't sell, and make someone else happy. The bad news was that many donation facilities weren't accepting any items as they were completely full. Unfortunately, we had to throw a lot of stuff in the trash because there wasn't anything else we could do with it.

As soon as you have a good-sized pile to go to a local charity* or family member, take it! Don't wait until you are completely finished with the entire process.

Here's why:

#1 You need to see your progress.

#2 You need to get things out of the way to see what's left.

#3 The longer it stays in your house, the more you will second-guess your decisions.

#4 You may even be tempted to go through the bags again, just to make sure.

*Be sure to check in advance with local charities to see if they are receiving donations and if they have any restrictions.

You may need to go through this process several times. Doing it this way saves LOTS of time. It may sound counterintuitive or unproductive. But, trust me, I've done it this way for many, many years, personally and with clients. If you get stuck, don't stay stuck. Move on to something else or another area.

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I reviewed what I knew I didn't want for a couple of days without going back through the basket. I kept it in the basket where I had a visual reminder of what I had removed. As I had a few full baskets, I got rid of these items. Whether it was a donation, recycling, resale, or trash. I didn't have time or energy for a garage sale for small items. I also didn't want to get stuck in the process or start to second-guess myself. Getting rid of things you know you don't want is not only super helpful, but it also makes room for the next round.

STEP FOUR

Once you've removed ALL or almost everything you know you don't want, continue with the maybes/must-haves. Ultimately, what is left is decided by the method of transportation you choose. Whether bringing them on the plane, a border run service, or shipping, there are space limitations.

STEP FIVE

No doubt, separating your maybes from must-haves may seem like the most challenging part of the process. Unfortunately, it's not. But have no fear; I'm here to keep you on track and motivated to attain your goal. So, let's keep going! Using the same process, you'll now separate the maybes from the must-haves.

The point of this process is to ONLY leave in place the things you want and remove everything else. This is when the folding tables, bed, dining table, or other surface comes in handy. Place all the maybes where you can see them in the same general area. This helps you see exactly what you have. Additionally, you'll have the opportunity to use the maybes before your move to see if you need them or not. Take some time to thin out as many of your maybes as possible.

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STEP SIX

Review everything in place which are the must-haves. These are the items you know you want to take with you. My guess is that it looks like a lot, doesn't it? It's pretty surprising when you get to this point of the process to realize how much stuff you actually have.

Pay attention to your must-haves.

- Are you using them?
- Do they make sense in Mérida?
- Are you keeping some things for sentimental value?
- Is there someone you know who would love to receive one of these treasures from you?

This process also helps you assign priority to items. You may want to bring some things with you on your initial move and then set some aside for subsequent trips. I know this may seem like many steps, but please trust me. This was the same process I went through and what I always recommend.

STEP SEVEN

Space planning exercise. Now, completely clean out a bedroom, such as a guest bedroom and/or master bedroom. Place all the items, except kitchen items, you know you want into this room. Yes, every single thing. You should have a good idea of what you are keeping by now. I promise you it's going to be much, much more than you thought.

Remember at the beginning of this guide when we discussed storage challenges in Mérida? Well, this is the moment of truth. This exercise helps you better understand space limitations.

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By combining your things into one area, you can see how much you have and how much room you need. You may also find more items to get rid of. In review, you probably have quite a few things in your maybe pile, don't you? Well, how do they look now? Do you have a better idea of what you really want to take with you? What's truly important, and what's not so important? YES! I see the lightbulb going off in your head . . . this process works!

This may be the time you decide to utilize a border-run service. Services either come to your location or meet you at a border to pick up your things and even you if you choose. It may be too overwhelming to think about what you can save for subsequent trips, and that's okay. This is about you and you'll figure out what works best.

STEP EIGHT

Decisions on maybes and must-haves. This goes much faster now. You should also have some good momentum at this point. Once you eliminate most of the maybes, you can decide what to take with you. You may choose to do it in phases.

Because you are venturing into the unknown, so to speak, you may want to keep things you may not you'll need in the future or not. These items can be stored where you can shop from them later. We will discuss this more in the upcoming pages.

One thing to keep in mind at this point is your budget. If you're inclined to rent short-term in various areas; first, you may decide to store items until you find your long-term rental. Hauling things around the city with limited storage may not be the ideal way to start your new adventure. Everyone always wants to get settled as soon as possible. However, it's better to take some time to find the right area of the city for you.

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About 90% of people I know ended up breaking their first long-term lease agreement because they weren't happy with where they were living. These are people who signed an agreement after being in the city less than three months. Rent short-term for a minimum of 3 to 6 months before deciding on a long-term location. It's normal to want to settle in as soon as possible.

Give yourself time to get to know your new city and surroundings.

STEP NINE

Final details — WOO HOO! You did it! Begin to place things in suitcases, weigh them, and decide what needs to be changed. Due to the different scale calibrations at the airport, limit the weight of your luggage to 45 pounds. There's nothing worse than being a few pounds over and having to repack or pay the overweight fee.

Consider keeping a small bag or room in a backpack if you need to remove a few things at the last minute. Be sure to pack a few physical photos and/or memorabilia; there's nothing like holding a photograph vs. looking at it on your phone, memory is associated with touch.

ONE FINAL CONSIDERATION

If you bring items in phases like I did, utilize boxes or storage bins. Pack like items together and label them accordingly. You may also want to organize according to subsequent trips. For example, you may want to bring kitchen items and bedding on your second trip.

Always respect customs rules and regulations, as you may be subject to duty fees. If you bring everything all at once, you are allowed to bring them in on a one-time duty-free basis. Always keep in mind that it is up to the individual customs agent's discretion to determine actual duties.

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PROBLEM AREAS

Remember those problem areas I mentioned at the beginning of this guide? Well, now we are going to go through them one by one.

PAPER

This can be one of the most challenging things. While there are a few originals you need to keep, most items can be tossed, shredded, or scanned. Dealing with paper may also take some time. If you don't have a good scanner, for example, one that scans multiple pages, it may be worth investing in one to save time.

Consider keeping originals or scanning where indicated:

- W-2 and 1099 forms
- Receipts for tax purposes, scan when possible
- Disability records
- Unemployment income stubs
- Medical bills/claims, scan or electronic
- Certificates: Birth, Marriage, Divorce, Death, etc.
- Legal documents: Power of Attorney, Medical Directives, Wills, etc.
- Medical scans and imaging
- Tax returns, electronic
- Insurance policies, electronic

A waterproof container helps keep moisture out when storing important papers.

PHOTOGRAPHS

It's widely believed that less than 1 out of 100,000 photos taken today ends up being a printed photograph. We can view them on a computer or phone, but without one, there is nothing. Technology has changed so fast that many pictures taken 6+ years ago are stored on media that is no longer supported. Floppy discs are a great example.

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In 5 years or less, DVDs and USBs will be obsolete. File types change, and new technology may not support older file types. You may have countless pictures randomly stored without knowing who is in them, and maybe not even organized. Perhaps you have made some effort, but even that can seem overwhelming once you decide to tackle the task.

If you have photos that you must bring with you, here are some options:

- Scan your photos yourself
- Utilize a scanning service such as ScanCafe.com or ScanMyPhotos.com
- Hire a professional organizer or photo organizer
- Get family or friends to help you tackle the project
- Create a memory book by organizing photos and memorabilia into a single scrapbook or life book.
- Use services such as Snapfish.com or Shutterfly.com or Mixbook.com

A waterproof container helps keep moisture out when storing photos.

CLOTHES AND SHOES

Most people wear 20% of their clothing 80% of the time. In a recent study from IKEA, "31% of those surveyed reported more satisfaction from clearing out their closet than they did after sex." Wow, this is a BIG surprise!

From a Forbes study, "The average American woman owns 30 outfits, one for every day of the month. In 1930, that figure was nine." I would venture a guess you might have more than 30 outfits in your closet. I know I do.

When beginning the process of clothes and shoes, keep in mind the climate of Mérida: hot, humid, and tropical. It should be relatively easy to separate clothes into seasons. Also, consider off-season clothes you'll need, such as a few things for cold weather, especially when traveling. For shoes, the same applies. It should be relatively easy to thin out the ones you won't need or are impractical.

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It might be helpful to take everything — yes, every single thing — out of your closet. If you don't, the same unworn clothes will remain in the closet. Now it's time to sort into keep, donate, and maybe piles. Throw out old and damaged clothing. Use your best judgment when donating clothing. Don't donate stained, ripped, or damaged clothing, the same rule for shoes.

Ask yourself:

- Does it fit, and is it flattering?
- Is it in good condition with no repairs needed?
- Will it feel good to wear in the climate in Mérida?
- Have you worn in the last six months?
- Can you let it go if it doesn't fit your body or style? We tend to keep clothes in different sizes for weight loss/gain and from a few different eras. You may not want to admit it, but many of your clothes probably go unworn.

Remember that statistic that mentioned you wear 20% of your clothes 80% of the time? It's true! If unsure, face the hangers of all your clothes in the opposite direction. As you wear items, hang them up as usual. Do this for a period of 3 to 6 months. This helps you learn what you're wearing and what you aren't making them easier to eliminate.

KITCHEN ITEMS

As you go through your kitchen, remember that if you've never used something, it's a definite NO. Even small things take up space and eat into your budget; anything you haven't used in a while or never can be donated.

Organize your drawers where you can readily see things. Do you have six wooden spoons and four spatulas? Do you need ALL of them, especially when you probably won't have space for them? If you spend time in the kitchen, you probably have cookbooks. We often keep cookbooks for sentimental reasons.

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Take inventory of your cookbooks and decide what you want and don't want. Cookbooks are a great goodbye gift for friends. This may be one of those items that, due to their weight, falls to the bottom of the priority list.

The kitchen was harder for me than anything else because I love to cook. I also love all the little gadgets I've collected over the years. The good news is I made a comprehensive list on my research trip and knew what I needed to bring vs. what I could buy locally or through Amazon. Kitchen items on my priority list included my Breville brand small kitchen appliances: toaster oven, panini maker, and risotto maker. I wanted my good knives, small gadgets, mandolin, and a few pots and pans I loved.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Getting organized for your move is a process: physical, emotional, mental, and a vast array of logistics. Only YOU can make critical decisions about what to take, what to leave for a later decision, and things you can let go of.

I had a really hard-ass therapist, which I loved during and after my divorce. He would ask, "May I offer you a thought?" before giving me advice. When I was ready to hear advice, I would accept. Sometimes, I wasn't ready and told him no. Because I am the writer and you are the reader, I will take the liberty to offer some words of wisdom and helpful thoughts.

- During this process, keep the list from your research trip handy. Refer back to it frequently to keep you from second-guessing yourself. Use Amazon as a resource as well.
- People justify keeping almost anything if it has sentimental or perceived value.
- The more emotionally attached you are, the higher the value you place on an object.

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- People tend to keep things out of guilt or obligation.
- Take it slow so you don't regret letting things go.
- Be open to adjusting and calibrating along the way. It's essential to be flexible.
- Yes, you need to be comfortable. It's also important to be practical.
- Starting completely over can feel liberating and light.
- It may be time to let go of that item you'll use someday . . . the thing that's never used or hasn't been used for years.
- You may feel guilty about something because it was a gift or was expensive. Don't forgo the space for something you love for something that doesn't mean anything.

How you live, what you wear, and what serves you currently may not be relevant in Mérida. You may find comfort in what you have or want to freshen up your things with items more conducive to the atmosphere here.

Consider hiring professional help as you go through things if needed. The one thing that slows decision-making is multiple trips down memory lane about your stuff with friends or family. Additionally, they may not quite understand why you are moving, and it may be more challenging to have them help you vs. hiring someone who doesn't know you or isn't attached to your things.

If you doubt ANYTHING, find somewhere safe where you can store items, such as a climate-controlled storage space or with a friend or family. You run less risk of damage or loss in a storage space. If you have expensive items, inquire about additional insurance through your provider.

Early in 2019, I decided to visit five locations in Mexico over two years. At the end of that time frame, I would know where I was moving and could prepare during that time. Little by little, I got rid of things I knew I didn't want in the next chapter of my life.

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I had time to sell, give away, donate, and trash items without feeling pressure. This took much longer than I expected because I would walk down memory lane for each and every item. It was HARD and emotional!

By the time I visited Mérida on a research trip in September 2019, I had narrowed down my things to maybes and must-haves. It's interesting looking back now. My dad and his wife would come and visit and he would tell me, "You don't have anything! Where did everything go?" From his perspective, I didn't have much. From my perspective, I still had a long way to go.

As soon as I arrived in Mérida, I was enchanted. The colors of the houses in Centro, the streets, the people, the food, and the vibe. Santa Lucia Park quickly became my favorite spot. I found myself walking to a destination via the park. On the third day of my research trip, I felt compelled to stand underneath the two large trees in the center. I closed my eyes and my feet felt like they were growing roots. I envisioned this and my heart opened up. My inner voice shouted, "Move! Move as soon as you can! THIS is your new home!" I know to pay attention when my intuition is that strong. My two-year plan quickly shortened to three months. I would do whatever it took to accomplish this.

Because I had already started the process, I had a head start. Establishing a deadline of my moving date helped to get organized with logistics, priorities, and what I needed to do to start my new life. I also recognized I was not going to be able to complete every single thing on my list. Therefore, I planned a trip just two months after moving to finalize some of the critical things I knew I would not be able to do in the short time I had. For me, this was MUCH LESS overwhelming.

My priorities were selling my house, taking care of my car lease, packing what I needed to take, and planning what I might need/want in the future. I decided to take items that would fit in suitcases, knowing this would take a few trips. This was part of my budget, and this process worked well for me.

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After separating the priority items, I stored the remaining items in boxes with detailed information of what was inside the box. All linens and towels together. All kitchen items together. All memorabilia together. Etc. This made it easy to find things on subsequent trips.

When I visited Dallas, I brought empty suitcases to pack with appropriate items. This was an easy way to take things back to Mérida. Also, I didn't take all my clothes at once. I left clothes in Dallas that I could wear and brought back what I needed. After spending more time in Mérida, some of my choices were relevant, and some were not. However, I didn't get rid of anything until the end, when I knew, without a doubt, I didn't want it or need it.

I planned for five trips back and forth, each time taking three suitcases full of items. On my very last trip, I ended up with five suitcases because I knew that was my final trip. All in all, I spent about \$1,500 U.S. in baggage fees coming in under my \$2,000 budget.

MOVING TIMELINE

In this next section, I've provided all the logistics of what, when, and how to organize your timeline. With many years as a professional organizer and stager, I'll share all my tips, tricks, and advice, and then you can adjust as needed.

I recommend starting at least six months in advance, minimum. I promise things will take much longer than you anticipated, think double or triple the time. Additionally, it's good to have a deadline to work toward.

Information provided takes into consideration that you've been approved for residency and will need to enter Mexico within six months.

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6 MONTHS

DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

- This is definitely one of the things that takes much, much longer than expected. While some advise keeping these documents on a USB or external drive, keeping them in the cloud is better. If this is an option, research the best solution you'll feel comfortable with.
- A USB did not have enough memory, so I bought an external drive. Due to the heat and humidity, I had two external drives crash even when protected in anti-static bags. An expensive and frustrating lesson.

LEGAL DOCUMENTS

- Wills, Powers of Attorney, Medical Directives, Birth Certificates, Marriage Certificates, Divorce Decrees, School Transcripts and Diplomas, Vaccination Cards, Insurance Policies.

MEDICAL RECORDS

- Anything and everything you might need, including MRI scans, X-rays, Current Prescriptions, Letters from Physicians, etc. It is difficult and sometimes impossible for your doctor back home to send medical records here.

PHOTOGRAPHS

- Bring some physical photos with you. My best advice is to choose a plastic box similar to the size of a shoebox and fill it with photos and memorabilia that mean the most if you are arriving with only suitcases.

HOUSING

- Do you have a house to sell? Contact an agent to start the process. You may decide to wait until your home sells to move. Have a backup plan if your house sells quickly and you need an interim place to live.
- If you're renting, give the appropriate notice when it's time.
- If you're not 100% sure about your move, consider keeping your house as an Investment property.

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4 MONTHS

- Notify your CPA of your upcoming move to ask how it can impact your income tax return. You may want to hire an international tax professional if your current CPA is unfamiliar with what is needed to file when living in a foreign country.
- By now, you should know if your current insurance plan covers you in Mexico. Do you need to purchase travel insurance in the interim, if not? You may need to make travel plans back to your home country for insurance reasons, OR you may decide that Mexican insurance is a viable option.
- Start thinning out items that you know you don't want. Start selling and throwing away things. Consider selling only high-dollar items vs. having a garage sale for smaller items. I promise the reward is not commensurate with the time you'll spend. Remember that this process takes longer than expected, so use your time and resources wisely.
- Decide how to bring your things to Mérida, including furniture and personal items. Get quotes on baggage fees, shipping, and border-run services. If you decide to drive, budget for gas, hotels, and possible car maintenance.
- If driving is a consideration, ask social media groups for the best routes, stops, locations of hotels and gas stations, and other important tips and advice. Check out the Facebook Groups: On the Road in Mexico and Traveling in Mexico - Viajando por Mexico.
- If you have high-value items, decide how to distribute or sell those, such as art, books, antiques, furniture, tapestries, etc. If you bring them, I recommend hiring a reputable international moving company and purchasing extra insurance.

EXPIRATION DATES

- Check everything in your wallet for expiration dates. Driver's license, credit cards, membership cards, etc. Renew everything before leaving if it is going to expire during the time you're gone.

Moving



PREPARATION & LOGISTICS

3 MONTHS

- Research and set up a virtual mailbox. This may seem like it's too far in advance. However, doing it this far out gives you time to transition to the service and try it out. If you don't like it, you have time to change to a different service. Remember to keep a U.S. address for income tax purposes. Virtual mail forwarding services have this option.
- Sign up for a Charles Schwab bank account. Charles Schwab refunds ATM fees, and it's easy to transfer internationally with them. You can open an account online.
- If you are a U.S. Citizen, research absentee voting: [fvap.gov/guide](https://www.fvap.gov/guide)
- If you wear glasses, have at least one or two backup pairs. I lost both pairs of glasses within a week of arriving, and it caused a lot of anxiety, having to wait for a new pair.
- Book your flight and make your hotel reservation. Flights are cheaper traveling on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Saturday. Consider purchasing travel insurance or flight insurance.

2 MONTHS

- Cancel memberships and subscriptions. I like to have enough time to handle things like this in case it doesn't get done the first time. Plan enough time so you're not stressed at the last minute.
- Notify banks and set up paperless statements. Set up paperless statements for other bills and services like credit cards or phone services.
- Make sure your phone service works and adjust your plan accordingly.
- Schedule last visits to your doctor, dentist, gynecologist, etc.
- Before completing the packing process and leaving home, consider taking photos. It's nice to have a reminder of where you were and the memories associated with this transition.

Moving



PREPARATION & LOGISTICS

1 MONTH

- Fill enough prescriptions for three months.
- Disconnect utilities and other services. Make a list and keep it somewhere readily accessible to remind yourself what you've done and need to do.
- If you are a U.S. Citizen, register with the S.T.E.P. program online (this is important for notifications): step.state.gov/step/
- I like to order pesos in advance to have small bills for tipping as soon as I arrive. I recommend \$10,000 pesos: \$4,000 in \$500's, \$2,000 in \$200's, \$2,000 in 100's, \$1,000 in \$50's, and \$1,000 in \$20's.
- Begin to organize items you know you are taking with you. Dedicate an area exclusively for these things.

2 WEEKS

- Finalize items to take with you. Place anything you aren't taking on the first trip into short-term storage. This is an excellent idea if there are items you're unsure of. You can get them on subsequent trips or decide later.
- Purchase items you know you can't find, such as personal care, supplements, etc.
- Call bank and credit card companies to let them know you'll be in Mexico for an undetermined amount of time.
- Try out a VPN – Virtual Private Network. Different ones offer a range of services. You may or may not need one once you arrive in Mérida. But it helps to have the information in advance vs. needing it urgently.
- Clean out your pantry, spices, freezer, and other food-related items.
- Make sure your pet is up to date with their vaccinations and get a letter from the Vet if needed. Purchase any items your pet needs for travel.

Moving



PREPARATION & LOGISTICS

1 WEEK

- Make a copy of your passport, ID, credit cards, and other vital documents. Leave the copies with a trusted family member or friend. This precautionary measure can help if your wallet is lost or stolen while traveling.
- Schedule transportation to the airport for your day of departure.
- Say any final goodbyes.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Remember the saying, “Best laid plans?” Well, even with all my years of professional experience, things took longer than I anticipated. When you get stuck, look at things objectively while putting your emotions aside. If you need a break, take a break to understand better and begin again.

The process takes longer than expected because we don’t consider the emotional strain it causes. It’s normal to second-guess yourself or even have doubts along the way. Each and every situation is unique, with its own set of issues, solutions, and dynamics. My best advice is to keep your eye on the prize of Mérida. Beginning a new life brings many rewards!

I sold my house six weeks before my move. I negotiated a four-week lease back with the buyer. I decided to live in a hotel for the remaining two weeks which was a great decision! It was lovely to have this luxury experience for myself as a send-off. It was also great not to second guess myself at the last minute about my packing decisions. In the final two weeks, I could fully concentrate on saying final goodbyes and spending extra time with my sons and friends vs. packing and repacking.

Moving



PREPARATION & LOGISTICS

CAR INFORMATION

Before importing a foreign car into Mexico, it's essential to understand the requirements and restrictions the Mexican government sets. Depending upon the age and type of vehicle, it may not be eligible for importation. Understanding these requirements and restrictions can save you time, money, and legal issues.

Bringing your car may seem simple, but it can be more complicated and expensive than expected. While you'll find information and answers to frequently asked questions, it's recommended, and in some cases mandatory, to hire a professional customs broker or import agency to assist with importing a car. One small mistake can jeopardize the entire application.

Cars entering the country undergo a strict inspection process before being legally driven. This inspection aims to verify the car is in good condition and meets the requirements of the country's standards. You can only import a car into the country if you are a tourist OR temporary resident.

Permanent residents are not allowed to import cars into Mexico unless the car undergoes the nationalization process to change and register the car legally which includes changing the license plates of the vehicle.

- Foreign-plated vehicles can be driven beyond the 25km border zone and outside the defined Free Zones by visitors and temporary residents for a defined period using a Temporary Import Permit associated with the vehicle. The vehicle must be driven out of Mexico before this permit expires.
- Permanent residents cannot apply for a TIP and cannot bring a foreign-plated car to Mexico, except within the Free Zone, where a TIP is not required.
- If you drive your vehicle outside of one of the defined Free Zones without a TIP, the vehicle will become subject to confiscation.

Moving



PREPARATION & LOGISTICS

DEFINED FREE ZONES

- The entire Baja California peninsula.
- A defined area in the state of Sonora.
- The state of Quintana Roo.
- NOTE: Mérida is NOT located in the Free Zone.

TEMPORARY IMPORT PERMIT (TIP)

If you intend to drive your vehicle beyond the 25km border zone or anywhere outside a defined Free Zone, you MUST obtain a TIP before crossing into Mexico. They are not available inside Mexico, nor at any checkpoints. Once you have a TIP, you do not need to exit Mexico through the same port you entered. For example, if Nogales was your entry point, you could exit through Laredo.

REGULATIONS

Strict regulations govern the importation of cars. Failure to comply can lead to heavy fines and even car confiscation. Cars more than eight years old cannot be imported. However, some exceptions exist, such as classic cars and those with specialized equipment.

Some are eligible for importation by the original owner. Others are eligible only by Mexican nationals. This prevents the illegal entry of stolen vehicles into the country. Additionally, cars must comply with specific emissions standards to ensure they don't contribute to environmental pollution. Hence, the car must meet the EPA standards or have an emissions certification from a recognized environmental organization.

Moving



PREPARATION & LOGISTICS

STEPS TO IMPORT

- Step 1: Research Mexican regulations on car importation.
- Step 2: Check to see if your car is eligible for importation.
- Step 3: Gather the required documentation.
- Step 4: Complete the importation paperwork.
- Step 5: Prepare the car for inspection.
- Step 6: Submit the required documents.
- Step 7: Pay importation fees such as permit cost, refundable warranty deposit based on age/make/model of car, etc.

ENTERING MEXICO: VISITOR'S PERMIT

- If you are visiting Mexico on a tourist/visitor permit, you can import your foreign-plated vehicle to Mexico using a TIP.
- Entering as a visitor, your TIP is valid for the same number of days as indicated on your tourist permit and cannot be renewed or extended beyond this period.
- You must drive the vehicle out of Mexico before the TIP expires. If you don't, you run the risk of losing your deposit as well as possible confiscation of the vehicle.

ENTERING MEXICO: TEMPORARY RESIDENT

- Holders of Temporary Residency may import their car to Mexico using a TIP.
- The expiration of the TIP is aligned with the expiry of your temporary residency. If you bring your vehicle to Mexico using a temporary residency sticker as a new temporary resident before changing your status, your vehicle TIP lasts only 30 days. You must visit the local customs office to get your residency card and update the TIP.
- You must drive the vehicle out of Mexico before the vehicle's temporary import permit expires OR update it along with the renewal of your temporary residency. If you don't, you'll lose your warranty deposit, and the vehicle could be confiscated. Once you become a permanent resident, you are required to drive the car out of Mexico.

Moving



PREPARATION & LOGISTICS

ENTERING MEXICO: PERMANENT RESIDENT

- This is a little more complicated if you are a Permanent Resident. Permanent residents are not allowed to apply for a TIP. However, driving a foreign-plated car to Mexico without a TIP AS LONG AS the vehicle remains in one of the defined Free Zones is allowed.
- To drive the car outside the Free Zones, you must go through a process to permanently import the car and obtain Mexican license plates. However, the import rules are highly complex; only certain types of vehicles, manufacturing locations, and ages are allowed. If you're considering this, hiring a Customs Broker or an attorney is recommended and sometimes mandatory.

SHIPPING A CAR

- This is another area where professional help is recommended. While you can research legal requirements and customs fees, contacting someone knowledgeable about current regulations and requirements is best.
- Depending upon the origination, you may want to speak to a local company who can drive it to Mérida for you. You may also coordinate bringing pets and personal items at this time.

LEAVING A VEHICLE IN MEXICO

- You can leave Mexico without your vehicle as long as the TIP is current AND you plan on returning. Once your TIP expires, it is not possible to obtain an extension. At that time, the TIP becomes invalid. Losing your warranty deposit is possible, and the vehicle could be confiscated. If you decide to abandon a foreign-plated car in Mexico, expect to pay a massive fine of 40% of the car's value.

CHANGING FROM TEMPORARY RESIDENCY TO PERMANENT RESIDENCY

- After exchanging your residency status from temporary to permanent, there are some steps to go through to keep your vehicle. It's mandatory to hire a Mexican Customs Broker to assist you with this process.
- Drive the car out of Mexico and then re-import.
- If approved, you'll pay duties, import taxes, and be issued Mexican plates for the vehicle.

Moving



PREPARATION & LOGISTICS

ELIGIBLE CARS

- Manufactured in North America but some restrictions apply.
- Less than ten years old.
- Meet environmental and safety standards.
- Clean title, free of liens or outstanding debts.
- Personal use only as vehicles used for commercial purposes are not eligible.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

- Original Title and Registration in the name of the person or entity importing the car.
- Import Permit
- Bill of Sale
- Vehicle Inspection Certificate
- Mexican Insurance
- Identification Documents such as passport, residency card, visa, etc.

INSPECTION PROCESS

Once you have completed the documentation process and your car has arrived in Mexico, it is subjected to an inspection by the Mexican authorities to ensure it meets safety and environmental standards.

During the inspection, your car is thoroughly examined for compliance with all Mexican regulations and requirements, including but not limited to the following:

- Condition of the engine and its emissions.
- Safety features such as seat belts, airbags, and lights.
- Condition of the tires, brakes, and suspension system.
- Presence of any illegal modifications such as tinted windows or modified exhausts.
- Overall condition of the car's body, including rust, dents, and scratches.

Moving



PREPARATION & LOGISTICS

If your car passes the inspection, you are issued a sticker called Holograma de Verificacion proving your car meets all the Mexican regulations. This sticker is valid for six months. Upon expiration, you are required to have your car re-inspected. However, if the car fails inspection, you must complete the required repairs and upgrades before receiving the hologram sticker. Then, you're required to bring the car back for another inspection. It's important to note the inspection process can take several days. So, scheduling well in advance is advisable to avoid delays or inconveniences.

APPROXIMATE COSTS (SUBJECT TO CHANGE W/O ADVANCE NOTICE)

Mexican Customs Fee: This fee is based on your car's value, typically ranging from 1.5% to 10% of the car's value.

Federal Tax: Mexico has a federal tax on all imported goods, including cars. The tax rate is typically around 16%, but it varies based on the car's age and other factors.

Brokerage Fee: If you're using a broker to help you import your car, their fee ranges from \$500 to \$2,000+ U.S.

Transport: You'll need to factor in the cost of getting your car to Mexico, which can range from a few hundred dollars to several thousand dollars, depending on the distance and method of transport.

Inspection Fees: When your car arrives in Mexico, it must be inspected to ensure it meets Mexican safety and emissions standards. The cost of this inspection varies depending on the location and the type of car.

Moving



PREPARATION & LOGISTICS

Miscellaneous Expenses: You must pay for deposits, paperwork processing fees, customs storage fees, and insurance while your car is in transit.

All in all, you can expect to pay several thousand dollars to import your car to Mexico. The total cost depends on the make and model of your car, condition, and other factors. You may decide it's not worth importing your car and buy one after you arrive.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can I bring in a car that is leased or still being financed? Approval from the lien holder in the form of a letter is required stating that you are allowed to bring the car into and be driven in Mexico. Prior to crossing the border, you'll need to show proof of insurance from a Mexican insurance provider. Permission is given on a case-by-case basis so be sure you understand all the details prior to entering the country.

Are there weight limits? You may NOT request a permit for a vehicle weighing more than 3.5 metric tons or 7,716 lbs.

How can I check the status of my TIP? Enter (1) the vehicle serial number and (2) the document number under which you processed the permit, such as passport, resident card, work visa, etc. on this website: portalsat.plataforma.sat.gob.mx/aduanas_cpitv_internet/

Can I bring a salvaged vehicle into Mexico? Salvaged vehicles are not allowed. It's common for customs to check Carfax for structural damage. If you bring the car into Mexico anyway and have an accident, your insurance is voided. If you have no insurance, this could mean jail. If you're stopped at a road check, your vehicle may be confiscated, and a hefty fine applied.

Moving



PREPARATION & LOGISTICS

Can I extend my TIP? Yes, the TIP can be extended. As long as you are legal, your vehicle remains legal. For example, when renewing temporary residency, the TIP must also be renewed. Additionally, the renewal of your temporary visa can begin up to 30 days before expiration. Therefore, you need to renew your visa AND extend your TIP at Customs, called Aduana, before they expire. If you don't renew accordingly, you may forfeit your warranty deposit, although your vehicle is still legal. As you can see, it's a complicated process where a professional could be helpful.

Can I sell or donate a foreign-plated vehicle in Mexico? No, this is not allowed. Also, if a foreign-plated car cannot be driven, it must be towed to the border.

Can I finance or lease a car? While it is possible to finance a car, you must establish Mexican credit, which can take seven or eight years. It is a slow, tedious process, but it can be done. Before dedicating time to building Mexican credit, research interest rates. It may not be worth it, as interest rates for purchasing on credit are high. We checked interest rates out of curiosity at the local Toyota dealership. The quoted interest rates were between 12 to 18% if we could qualify.

If you are interested in either short term rentals and/or leasing, we have a relationship with Lex's Tours. Please mention we recommended him!

LEX'S TOURS
FULL SERVICE TRANSPORTATION COMPANY

AIRPORT TRANSFERS / PRIVATE DRIVERS
TOURISM / DAY TRIPS / BEACHES
LONG & SHORT TERM RENTALS
FLUENT ENGLISH

JENER DZUL, OWNER
WHATSAPP +52 999.221.8683

The advertisement for Lex's Tours features a light beige background with decorative orange wavy lines in the corners. On the left, there is a photograph of a red van parked in a lot. On the right, there is a photograph of a dark-colored sedan. The text is centered and uses a mix of bold, serif, and sans-serif fonts.

Moving



PREPARATION & LOGISTICS

FINAL THOUGHTS

Hiring professional assistance to help import a vehicle into Mexico is highly recommended and sometimes mandatory. Having all the required documents is essential before attempting to import a car to Mexico. Any missing documentation may result in delays or even the rejection of the importation request.

Something to consider: sometimes, a foreign-plated vehicle can be the target of scammers, especially when traveling through other parts of the country. Hire a local customs broker if you need more clarification.

If you decide to buy a car after you arrive, here are a few helpful tips:

- Only purchase a car with the state of Yucatán plates. Out-of-state plates are time-consuming and costly to change.
- It's easier to buy a used car vs. a new car. But make sure all the paperwork is in place. The original bill of sale for the car is required.
- If you prefer a new car, it might need to be ordered. Not many car dealerships keep stock. Wait times can range from 2 months up to 8 months, depending on the dealership.
- Paying in cash is the most common way to buy a car.
- You'll also need an RFC number, equivalent to a social security number. Some dealerships provide a general RFC but I do not recommend this as it can cause problems when selling The car.
- Used cars keep their value, and it's better to buy from a reputable used car dealer vs. an individual unless they are a reputable car broker.

Life in Mérida™
CAR PURCHASE ASSISTANCE

CAR PURCHASE TIPS / VETTED CAR SALESMAN
MECHANIC CHECK / REGISTRATION ASSISTANCE
INSURANCE & REPAIRS RECOMMENDATIONS

ANGEL RODRIGUEZ
WHATSAPP +52 999.326.2287

The advertisement features a light beige background with decorative orange wavy lines in the corners. On the left is a blue SUV parked on a paved area with trees in the background. On the right is a silver sedan parked on a paved area. The text is centered between the two car images.

Meet the team

The humans behind Life in Mérida™

A foreign resident and a Mérida native, guiding you through the move you're actually making.



Amy

Co-founder • The Mérida Ambassador

From	Dallas, Tx
In Mérida from	2019
Background	Relo & real estate
Happy place	Santa Lucia
Restaurant	Micaela
Best Tacos	Jefe de Jefes

After 30 years in Dallas, I came to Mérida on a research trip in 2019. Three months later, I moved. I'm still finding something new to love every day. Mérida isn't for everyone — people feel it or they don't. For those of us who do, it's enchanting.

Before starting Life in Mérida™, I spent decades in real estate and relocation. These days I focus on what brings me the most joy — helping others navigate the things I had to learn the hard way. Including how to slow down and actually enjoy life here.



Angel

Co-founder • The Local Insider

From	Tabasco, MX
In Mérida from	1993
Background	Culture & Hospitality
Happy place	Mayan Pub
Restaurant	Manjar Blanco
Best Tacos	El Negro

My background is in food and hospitality — if you join one of our tours, you'll figure out pretty quickly that Yucatecan cooking is a particular obsession. I love walking clients through the culture, the history, the neighborhoods, and slipping in a Spanish lesson along the way.

I joined Amy full-time in 2022 to expand our services and tours. In 2024 we launched Life in Mérida™ Real Estate — representing buyers and renters so they understand the culture and the process, not just the paperwork.



"Life in Mérida™ is a labor of love. We've spent years building the resource we wish we'd had."

What started as a blog has grown into the work we do today — scouting trips, a real estate brokerage, a monthly newsletter, a YouTube channel, a private community, and a library of free guides.

We're not slick relocation consultants with a polished pitch. We're two people who've been in the trenches with you — honest about what works, what doesn't, and what's worth it. Our goal isn't to sell you on Mérida. It's to help you figure out if it's the right move, and to make the transition easier if it is.

If you're considering Mérida, we'd love to hear from you. Reach Amy directly at: amy@lifeinmerida.com

What readers are saying



I truly felt like I gained an immense amount of knowledge about an incredible city with the Learn About Mérida Guide. Amy and Angel are worth their weight in gold.

— Eva G.



We purchased the guidebook bundle. Each one was truly helpful with many things we hadn't considered. Amy has done the research and gets to the point with facts.

— Suzy & George B.