

## GENERAL INFORMATION AND TIPS ABOUT FLYING IN MEXICO-ALAS DE SAN MIGUEL

Mexico is a beautiful country for the General Aviation (GA) flyer but remember that GA in Mexico is a very tiny fraction of the GA industry in the United States. Don't expect the infrastructure and resources that are available to you in the US-once you are away from the airport, much of the flying is similar to "flying in the bush". The good news is that Mexican international runways and taxiways appear much as they do in the US, thanks to ICAO standards, there are a lot of non-precision approaches available, decent air-navigation resources, AND ATC controllers are bi-lingual!

The country has very limited ATC radar coverage, NO weather radar available from ATC (many radar facilities are secondary "beacon" radar only), limited communications range, limited VOR coverage with no remote voice capability, high MEAs, no GPS procedures, with the most common IFR approaches being non-precision VOR/DME. A subscription to Jeppesen's Mobile Flight Deck, Latin America Coverage (Item No. 10505648, downloaded to your iPad) or purchased from and enabled through Foreflite, is well worth the investment. We commonly use Air Nav Pro for VFR trip planning and terrain avoidance even though the old DOD "ONC" charts are obsolete (fortunately most of the mountains haven't moved!). Google Earth is also a valuable resource to check any of your destinations before taking flight.

Some airports are not laid out well to service the needs of General Aviation, have limited or no signage around the terminal facilities, and present a challenge to an unfamiliar pilot trying to complete the entry processes. If you have problems, ASK! Mexican officials are for the most part happy to see you. Be patient and don't worry about your limited Spanish skills. See the following glossary for info on most of the agencies you need to deal with. Use the checklists and try to visit those agencies in the right order-but even doing that, expect a one hour minimum to complete fueling and the international entry and departure processes. Protocol in Mexico: Shaking hands and smiling a lot is encouraged!

Flight Plans are required for ALL flights, domestic and international. The checklists attached are for international flights. When filing for domestic destinations, you'll visit a lot of the same offices: SENEAM to fill out your flight plan form, Operations to pay for landing fees and parking, and the DGAC (Airport Comandante) to show your paperwork and SENEAM again to turn in your stamped flight plan (DON'T FORGET THIS STEP!). You depart that airport with an approved flight-plan-in-hand, but don't expect ATC at your destination airport to know about your arrival when you first call them up.

If you are VFR, ATC likes to hear from you as soon as you enter their airspace (TMA) but no closer in than 20-25 miles. On initial call-up it is usually expeditious to just sloooowly state 1) WHO you are, and 2) WHERE you are, i.e., "Potosi Tower, Cherokee N12345 is 25 north". Their response might be "Station calling Potosi, say again" and will then ask you for your 1) point of departure, 2) type of aircraft (ICAO designation), 3) DME/Radial/Altitude, and, 4) intentions. Remember, you are flying in a mostly non-radar environment, so expect numerous location/altitude inquiries from ATC.

When making your initial entry from outside Mexico, advise ATC on the ground that you "need Customs" and ask if there is a certain place that you need to park on the ramp ("plataforma") for Customs. Separate ground control a rarity.

You may be requested at some point to "make a donation" to cure some official's perception that you have committed an "infracción" or there is a "multa" that needs to be paid. Most of these requests are forgiven (if you are NOT guilty) once you request a receipt or ask to speak to the "jefe" (da "boss"). It is in everyone's best interest if you do not willingly start spreading money around but, at the same time, you should do what you need to do: everything is negotiable! Remember that these people in the uniforms are not paid well and sometimes a small "propino" or "tip" is the best way to avoid an unexpected overnigher.

¡Bienvenidos a México! This is a beautiful country and the few hassles are well worth it. If nothing else, you'll appreciate the US FAA even more when you get home!

Rusty Henson

## GLOSSARY/HELPFUL INFO/QUIPS

**Aduana (SAT):** Servicio de Administración Tributaria. Customs

**Aeronavegabilidad:** Airworthiness Certificate. The longest Spanish word you'll ever learn (or not).

**ASA (Aeropuertos y Servicios Auxiliares):** Mexican State-owned fuel providers. Ask for fuel ("combustibles") in the Operations office or wave down the yellow and black trucks that carry either "Gasavion" (AVGAS), "Turbosina" (Jet Fuel). "Lleno" (YAY-no) means "full. "Tanque" (TAHN-kay) is tank.

Quiz: "Lleno todos tanques" (YAY-no TOE-thos TAHN-kays) is.....(yep: "fill her up!")

**Cash:** Good to have pesos! Many AOE terminal buildings have ATMs. Have enough to pay your fuel bill and Permisos (1500 pesos) for those times when the credit card machine "no se funciona" (doesn't work)!

**Combustibles:** Fuel (Gasavion or Turbosina). US Dollars NOT accepted for payment. Have at least two credit or debit cards. No self-serve dispensers in Mexico. It might be good to advise your credit card company that you'll be in Mexico.

**DGAC (Dirección General Aeronáutica Civil):** Mexican FAA under the SCT: Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes. The DGAC has a presence at all Mexican international airports in the office of the "La Comandancia". There is no similar FAA office in US airports. The Comandante or one of the "inspectors" will be the one to type up your "Permiso" after reviewing your aircraft and pilot documents. His/her signature is also needed on all Flight Plans, foreign or domestic. Take extra copies of all your documents: it saves time to just hand them over and (s)he'll think you're a pro. Copy of all DGAC Airports of Entry (AOE) with contact information is available on request.

**Infracción:** Real or perceived violation of some rule that may result in a "multa" (fine): 1st cousin of "mordida" or "the bite".

**Matricula:** Tail number.

**Migración (INM):** Instituto Nacional de Migración. Immigration. May charge up to \$500 pesos/pax for Tourist visas. PAY NO SERVICIOS EXTRAORDINARIOS TO IMMIGRATION FOR WEEK-ENDS OR HOLIDAYS-PAYMENT IS NOT REQUIRED FOR PRIVATE AIRCRAFT! IF THEY INSIST, OBTAIN A SIGNED RECEIPT!

**Operaciones:** Most Mexican airports are operated under concession and the Operations office collects fees for landing and parking. Avoid MMT0 (Toluca) as it is a private airport whose FBOs charge whatever they want (a lot!) and has no GA ramp for parking and fueling. Some airports such as MMIO Satillo and MMJC Atizapán have private fueling services and charge 30% +/- more for combustibles than airports selling fuel supplied by ASA.

**Permiso:** THE MOST IMPORTANT document you will receive from DGAC upon entry. Whether it is an Entrada Unica (single-entry good for 6 months) or Entradas Multiples (multiple-entry good until the end of the calendar year) permit, you MUST have a current permit in the aircraft at all times. Do not leave the Mexican Airport-of-Entry without having a current PERMISO AND a receipt for the payment!

Foreign-registered aircraft continue to be "informally" impounded because of the lack of this "Permiso" or someone's random interpretation of the law (DGAC Circular CO SA-02/2014, 23 April 2014). Also be wary of year-end requirements to "abandon" the country before 31 December with a Multiple Entry Permit. It is best, particularly after a mid-year arrival, to not show a current Multiple Entry Permit and instead to request a new Entrada Unica (Single Entry) permit, good for six (6) months, if you don't want/need to fly on New Year's Eve! Unless asked, the only document you'll be requested to show at future domestic stops will be the "Permiso". MAKE SURE it is VALID for the length of your intended stay! Flying to the border just to turn around and re-enter Mexico for a new "Permiso" is a drag!

## GLOSSARY/HELPFUL INFO/QUIPS

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**Pesos:** If you don't have any, ATM's are usually located inside the airline terminal which is not usually where you are parked, but close. ASA fuelers may have a WORKING credit card machine in their truck but otherwise may need to disappear for 15 minutes to process your card in their office. The DGAC MAY accept a credit card for the issuance of your "Permiso". Cash is usually preferred in Migración for Tourist Cards (your "Visa" while in Mexico. Don't lose it!).

**Plan de Vuelo:** Flight Plan using the ICAO international format. Skybrary has a good guide for newbies: [https://www.skybrary.aero/index.php/Flight\\_Plan\\_Filling](https://www.skybrary.aero/index.php/Flight_Plan_Filling). It is advisable to review this before you arrive.

**Plataforma:** Ramp. If you park on the General Aviation ramp, you'll be expected to do your own paperwork which means walking through about every office in the airport (actually, not so bad once you've done it 10 times). If the airport has an FBO and you decide to park on their ramp, expect good service to do all of your paperwork for you but expect to pay for it with significantly higher parking fees than the Plataforma Aviación General (GA Ramp).

**Propino:** Tip. Be generous with those folks that fuel your plane, offer help, carry your bags, call taxis, etc.

**Registro:** You guessed it. Registration. Make sure it is current. If the registration does not match the name on the PIC's pilot certificate or is under the name of a corporation, LLC, etc., carry a notarized letter with raised notary seal signed by the Owner-of-Record stating that " \_\_\_\_\_ has the authority to operate the aircraft in Mexico for non-commercial purposes." Anything that looks official that references the Owner-of-Record's name, the PIC's name, the tail number, and type should be sufficient.

**Routing Strategy:** Unlike the US, you are able to cross the border, fly as far into Mexico as your fuel allows, and "clear in" at any Mexico Airport-of-Entry. Beware of incomplete or missing METARS and TAFs that might affect your diversion alternates, and don't arrive with empty tanks. MOST of the time, fuel availability is not an issue, the operative word being "MOST". Also be aware of rapidly changing weather and lack of remote weather reporting. Foreflight and ground-based ADS-B are both "inop" in Mexico.

**Seguros:** Liability Insurance to show to DGAC Comandante. Inspect your policy before arrival to make sure the "policy territory" covers operations in Mexico and it is current through the length of your stay. You are NOT required to have liability insurance issued by a Mexican insurance company. Carry a copy of your policy with the binder to show the "policy territory" or, if you are still nervous, contact Baja Bush Pilots or Caribbean Sky Tours.

**SENEAM:** Old-style Mexican FSS. Servicios a la Navegación en el Espacio Aéreo Mexicano. Make SURE you turn in your approved Flight Plan here after seeing Operaciones and the DGAC Comandante, (and Aduana and Migración when entering/leaving Mexico) BEFORE YOU GET IN THE PLANE for your next leg. You'll only forget this once after the Tower says they don't have a Flight Plan for you and you have to shut down and drag your butt back to the SENEAM office with your flight plan....

We hope this is helpful. Call us for help or advice (no guarantees!) US Cell 720 641 6742, [rkhenonpe@gmail.com](mailto:rkhenonpe@gmail.com).

Alas (Wings) de San Miguel is also available for flight training, Flight Reviews, and IPCs in your aircraft or ours, based out of MMCY, Celaya, Guanajuato. Please advise us of any incorrect/out-of-date information contained herein!

## LEAVING USA FOR MEXICO CHECKLIST

A/C: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

From: \_\_\_\_\_ To: \_\_\_\_\_ ETA (Z): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Check US CBP Decal for currency. Decal No. \_\_\_\_\_ . [decals@dhs.gov](mailto:decals@dhs.gov) (you need decal to return to US!)

\_\_\_ Collect a copy of all travel documents from all of your pax and submit US eAPIS Notice of Departure/Manifest [www.eapis.cbp.dhs.gov](http://www.eapis.cbp.dhs.gov) . Record eAPIS receipt number. Although Mexico has advertised a Mexican eAPIS system, we have never encountered authorities asking for confirmation of filing. Contact Caribbean Sky Tours if you are concerned about Mexican eAPIS requirements.

\_\_\_ File VFR/IFR US FAA Flight Plan or ICAO format Flight Plan for your Mexico Airport of Entry (AOE) by landline, DUATS or other means. Include "ADCUS" (Advise Customs) in "Remarks".

\_\_\_ Confirm Passports/Visas/Border Crossing Cards in pax/crew in possession before leaving for the airport: ALL pax/crew!

\_\_\_ Carry pesos if possible for Tourist Visa(s), entry "Permiso" (1,500 pesos +/-) , landing fee, and fuel. Many international airports will have an ATM machine inside the terminal that issues pesos. Avgas now \$4.65/gal with wing tax included.

\_\_\_ Verify aircraft and pilot documents are valid and current. IF aircraft not owned under the name of the PIC, have a notarized, official-looking letter granting permission to that PIC to operate that aircraft in Mexico, and signed by owner-of-record. It is good to have all documents saved on a thumb-drive (USB), PDF files in iBooks on your iPad, or emailed to yourself. Carry paper photocopies of ALL documents to leave with authorities.

Aircraft: \_\_\_ Registration \_\_\_ Airworthiness Certificate \_\_\_ Radio License \_\_\_ Permission letter to Operate A/C (if req'd))

Pilot: \_\_\_ Certificate(s) \_\_\_ Current Medical Certificate

\_\_\_ Check policy territory of insurance policy to determine coverage in Mexico. You will find that under "Policy Territory" in your policy. You do not need to acquire additional liability insurance policy underwritten by a Mexican insurer if your policy covers your aircraft in Mexico. Be forewarned that SOME DGAC Comandantes randomly require that the insurance policy be valid through the expiration date of the "Permiso" (six months for the Entrada Unica, or 31 December for the "Entradas Multiples") even though it is your intention to renew in a timely manner.

\_\_\_ Once aloft, open your US FAA Flight Plan with US FSS if you are VFR.

\_\_\_ Upon landing, advise the tower that you "need Customs" and ask the controller if there is a specific place to park on the ramp for Customs (Aduana) inspection.

\_\_\_ You will most likely be met on the ramp by a soldier asking for your "datos" (information.) That will usually be your name as PIC, your pilot certificate number, name of the owner of the aircraft, number (and maybe names) of passengers, where you arrived from, the make/model of your aircraft, where you are going later, and the "motivo" for your flight. "Diversion" (fun) is a perfectly good answer. This might also happen when you are departing. Be patient. Most of these soldiers are young, speak zero English, and have never been this close to an airplane.

\_\_\_ Upon deplaning, and while making your initial rounds to SENEAM, Operaciones, and the DGAC office, leave your passengers in the terminal or GA waiting area. There will be restrooms available there.

\_\_\_ Go to the SENEAM office and fill out Flight Plan Closure form (a half-page sized "Cierre de Plan de Vuelo") for the US-Mexico leg. You will later have the original and copies of this form stamped by (first) Migración, (second) by Aduana, and maybe (third) by Sanitation with your passengers in attendance. Fill out a new ICAO format Flight Plan (full page "Plan de Vuelo") if planning to continue your flight further into Mexico that day.

## LEAVING USA FOR MEXICO CHECKLIST

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\_\_\_ Visit Operaciones and order fuel. Specify "Gasavion" or "Turbosina" to the attendant. If continuing your flight into another domestic airport that day, present your new Flight Plan (that you filled out in SENEAM) and ask Operaciones to stamp the back of it. If your next leg is to an airport with no fuel, write "recarga tecnica" in "Remarks" and you might be able to avoid paying a landing fee. If they ask you if you need a "Factura" for any fees, reply "Gracias, No".

\_\_\_ Visit DGAC (SCT) Airport Comandante's office. If you do not already hold a valid Entradas Múltiples (Multiple Entry "Permiso") for that calendar year, ask him/her for a new "Permiso". Whether you ask for an "Entrada Unica" or Entradas Múltiples, the cost is the same, about 1500 pesos. The Comandante or his/her Inspector will need copies of all of your pilot and aircraft documents listed above. They rarely request to see originals. You should understand the differences between the two "Permisos" before making your request. If asking for the "Entrada Unica", check to be sure you have been allowed the full 180 days from the date of your arrival. Expect the preparation of the "Permiso" to take 30-45 minutes. If continuing to another domestic airport that day, present your new Flight Plan to the DGAC official. (S)he will need to sign that before you can turn it in to SENEAM. Late in the calendar year, it is best to request the "Entrada Unica" if you do not want to leave Mexico before the end of the year.

\_\_\_ When seeing the fuel truck approach your aircraft, excuse yourself to supervise fueling on the ramp. Take your flight plan with you when you clear out to the ramp through Security. Security may call back to Operaciones to confirm you are the pilot before allowing you on the ramp. Before starting the fueling operation, be careful to confirm that the "wing tax" (DUGEUM on your receipt) shown on the truck's terminal is for YOUR type of airplane. The computer default on the machine in the fuel truck defaults to a GLF4 (Gulfstream G-4 that is about \$4,000 pesos!). You can usually pay the fuelers directly with a credit card (no AMEX, debit preferred) If the card machine in the truck is not working, an ATM can usually be found in the terminal (max withdrawal might be 3000-6000 pesos!).

\_\_\_ Double check type of fuel (name on side of the truck), closure of all fuel caps, and quantity/quality of fuel. In most cases you will pay the fuelers directly in cash (no US Dollars) or Credit/Debit card.

\_\_\_ When time permits, gather your passengers and any hand luggage and proceed to (first) Immigration (Migración or INM). After reviewing travel documents, and asking for forms to be completed by crew and pax, Migración will collect fees for tourist cards except from anyone having Immigrant status in Mexico. Migración will stamp your half-page "Cierre de Plan de Vuelo" form and copies.

\_\_\_ Visit Customs (Aduana or SAT) and present the half-page "Cierre de Plan de Vuelo" form. Aduana will likely want to inspect (un "revisión") your aircraft. Open doors and compartments ONLY as requested. They may just glance inside your aircraft or they may ask you to unpack it and carry all your bags to the screening area, maybe close to your parking area, maybe not. Aduana must stamp your half-page "Cierre de Plan de Vuelo" form.

\_\_\_ The next-to-the-last stop will be back to DGAC to collect and pay for your completed "Permiso" and your SIGNED Flight Plan authorizing the next leg (if applicable). **DO NOT LEAVE THE DGAC'S OFFICE OR DEPART THE AIRPORT WITHOUT A VALID "PERMISO" AND A RECEIPT FOR THE PAYMENT!** If DGAC not able at that time to give you an official receipt, obtain a simple receipt (hand-written OK), provide your email, and ask them to email the official receipt to you.

\_\_\_ Stop by SENEAM and present the "Cierre de Plan de Vuelo" form and your next-leg Flight Plan (if applicable). You will receive from the SENEAM agent the ORIGINAL of the "Cierre de Plan de Vuelo" form and the ORIGINAL of the next-leg Flight Plan (if applicable). Make sure you keep the "Cierre de Plan de Vuelo" form. It is the only document that proves your date of arrival.

\_\_\_ Ask ALL pax if they have their travel documents and review to make sure that you have your pilot and aircraft documents AND a valid "PERMISO" AND RECEIPT BEFORE BOARDING THE AIRCRAFT. Escort your pax to the aircraft through Security.

HAVE A GOOD FLIGHT (BUEN VUELO) and call us if you need help!

## LEAVING MEXICO FOR USA CHECKLIST

A/C: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

From: \_\_\_\_\_ To: \_\_\_\_\_ ETA: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Check US Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) Decal for currency. Decal No. \_\_\_\_\_ . [decals@dhs.gov](mailto:decals@dhs.gov)

\_\_\_ Submit eAPIS Notice of Arrival/Manifest. Note eAPIS receipt number that you receive by return email.

\_\_\_ Confirm landing rights by phone to CBP Officer \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_ (Z) at least one hour prior to departure. [www.eapis.cbp.dhs.gov](http://www.eapis.cbp.dhs.gov). It is always good to have numbers of Customs and Border Patrol offices in your cell phone. Do not expect to have internet access or a reliable cell phone signal at Mexican airports. If you are able, update your ETA with CBP at the USA Airport of Entry (AOE) by telephone if your estimated ETA differs by over 30 minutes from the eAPIS filing. Write down the officer's name and ask if everyone needs to stay with the aircraft upon US arrival.

\_\_\_ File VFR/IFR US FAA Flight Plan by landline, Foreflite, or other method. Include ADCUS in "Remarks".

\_\_\_ Confirm Passports/Visas in hand before leaving for airport, all pax/crew. If carrying foreign national(s), confirm possession of Border Crossing Card(s) and plan on USA entry at an AOE that has a full-time CBP office on the airport. Officers that must travel to the AOE from a bridge crossing or other border location may require that the foreign nationals be processed "back on the bridge", adding significant logistical problems and delays.

\_\_\_ Confirm aircraft documents/pilot certificates in possession and current before leaving for airport. Carry a copy of CBP email or Confirmation Number for Arrival and make sure you have the name of the CBP officer and the time of your call you made to confirm landing rights!

\_\_\_ Upon arrival at the Mexican departure airport, and while making your initial rounds to SENEAM, Operaciones, and the DGAC office, leave your passengers in the terminal or GA waiting area. There will be restrooms available there.

\_\_\_ If you arrived to the Mexican Airport-of-Departure in your aircraft, go directly to the SENEAM office and fill out a Flight Plan Closure form (a half-page sized "Cierre de Plan de Vuelo"). You'll now also need to fill out a new full-sized ICAO-format Plan de Vuelo for the outbound Mexico-US leg. You will later have the original and copies of this Flight Plan form stamped by (first) Migración and (second) by Aduana with your passengers in attendance, and lastly by the DGAC Comandante. Take that Flight Plan and....

\_\_\_ Visit Operaciones and order fuel if needed. Specify "Gasavion" or "Turbosina" to the attendant. If you just arrived at the Mexican Airport-of-Departure from an airport with no fuel, write "recarga tecnica" in the Flight Plan "Remarks" and you might be able to avoid paying a landing fee. If they ask you if you need a "Factura" for any fees, reply "Gracias, No". Operaciones needs to stamp the back of your outbound Flight Plan as "paid". If you have been parked at the Mexican Airport-of-Departure, you'll need to settle your parking fees with Operaciones.

\_\_\_ Supervise fueling in accordance with the "Leaving USA for Mexico Checklist" above.

\_\_\_ When time permits, gather your passengers and any hand luggage and proceed to Immigration (Migración or INM). After reviewing travel documents, and possibly asking for forms to be completed by crew and pax, Migración may collect tourist cards and stamp your outbound Flight Plan. They may also ask you to list your passengers and sign a form as PIC. "Sin Lucros" means it is a non-commercial flight.

\_\_\_ Visit Customs (Aduana or SAT) and present the outbound Flight Plan. Aduana may or may not want to inspect (un "revisión") your aircraft. Open doors and compartments ONLY as requested. They will probably just glance inside your aircraft on the outbound leg to the US. Aduana will stamp your outbound Flight Plan.

\_\_\_ Park your passengers again and visit DGAC (SCT) Airport Comandante's office. The Comandante will want to retain any unexpired "Entrada Unica" "Permiso" you have or inspect your "Entradas Multiples" Permiso that you are carrying (good until 31 December). They may also ask to see your pilot and/or aircraft documents. Have copies available. Give the outbound Flight Plan to the DGAC official. (S)he will need to sign that before you can turn it in to SENEAM.

## LEAVING MEXICO FOR USA CHECKLIST

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\_\_\_ Last stop! Go by SENEAM and present the outbound Flight Plan, now stamped by Operaciones and signed/stamped by Migración, Aduana, and the DGAC Comandancia. You will receive from the SENEAM agent the ORIGINAL of the outbound Flight Plan.

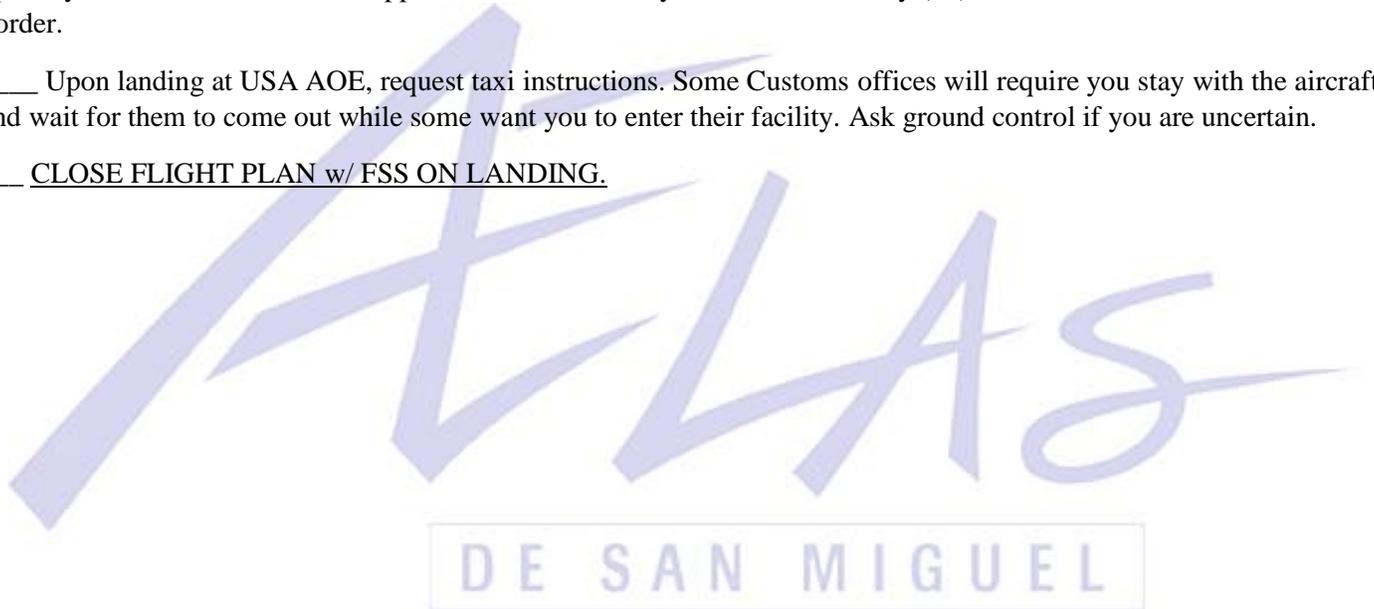
\_\_\_ Ask ALL pax if they have their travel documents and confirm that you have ALL of YOUR travel documents, your pilot and aircraft documents, and your “Permiso” BEFORE BOARDING THE AIRCRAFT! Carrying your approved outbound Flight Plan, escort your pax through Security to the aircraft.

\_\_\_ If you are running late, call the CBP office at the US Airport of Entry for which you filed your eAPIS Notice of Arrival. Advise them of your LOCAL ETA and confirm if you are to remain in the aircraft upon arrival or disembark to the CBP office in the terminal building. Again, record the name of the CBP officer with whom you spoke.

\_\_\_ Approaching US Airspace, call FSS, confirm they have an active Flight Plan on you, request an ADIZ squawk code, update your ETA, and contact an approach or tower facility when within twenty (20) miles or 10 minutes of the US border.

\_\_\_ Upon landing at USA AOE, request taxi instructions. Some Customs offices will require you stay with the aircraft and wait for them to come out while some want you to enter their facility. Ask ground control if you are uncertain.

\_\_\_ CLOSE FLIGHT PLAN w/ FSS ON LANDING.



GOOD FLYING (BUEN VUELO) and call us if you need help!

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