

# Crossing the Border

## Ports of Entry

There are three ports of entry near San Diego: San Ysidro, Otay, & Tecate



### San Ysidro

- Open 24 hours
- This is the same port you crossed to enter Mexico
- Busiest US port of entry, but also has the most lanes
- Occasionally, when this port gets very backed up, the officers will direct you to reroute to Otay - this happens rarely and not typically at the times we cross

### Otay

- Open 24 hours
- Typically not as many lanes open
- May be faster than San Ysidro if traveling from Nuestra Familia orphanage

### Tecate

- Open 6:00 am - 11:00 pm
- Typically only a more convenient option than Otay or San Ysidro from orphanages in Valle de Guadalupe (Rancho de los Niños & Niños de Baja orphanages)
- Taking this route you can go back through San Diego to join I-15 or meet up with I-15 in Las Vegas to avoid San Diego/LA traffic

# Lane Types

## General/All Traffic Lane

- Open to all border crossers
- If anyone in the car does not have a US passport, you must use this lane (i.e. international passport or using a birth certificate or other form of identification)
- Typically a minimum of one hour wait

## Ready Lane

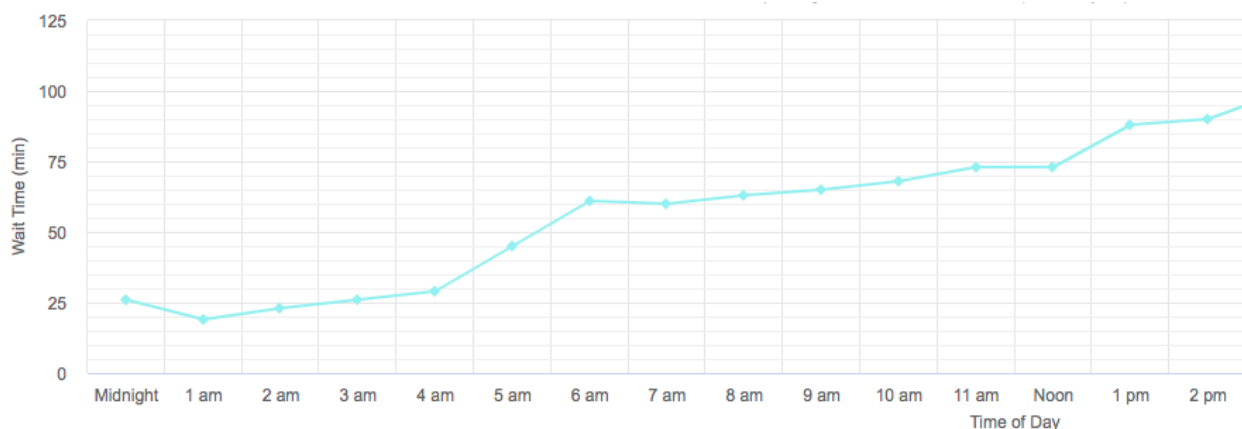
- All people in the car must have a US passport
- There is an unspoken rule that this lane is US citizens only
- This lane is typically faster but may be slower than the general lanes. The border patrol can convert lanes between general and ready lanes so the wait depends on how many lanes are open of each type

## Sentri Lane

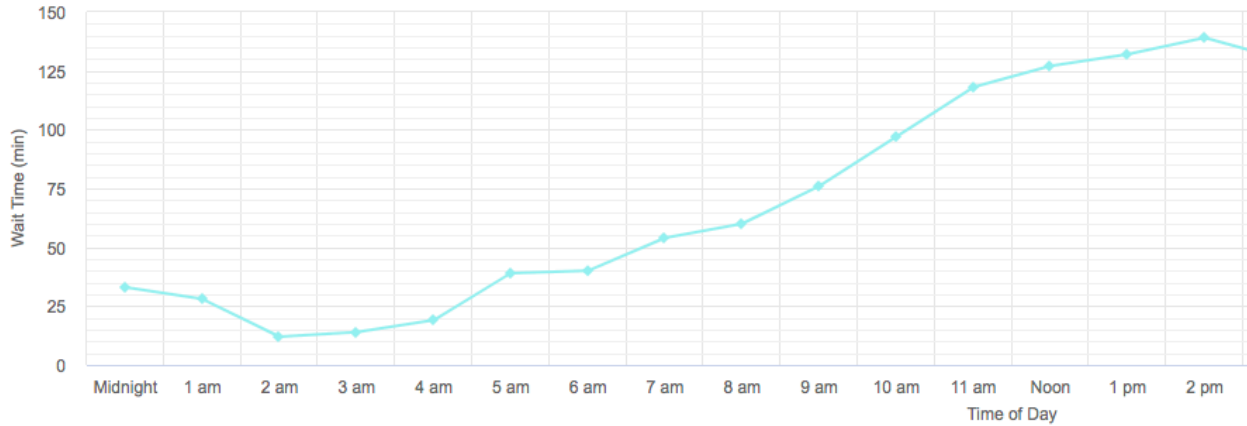
- Must obtain Sentri pass prior to trip: includes vehicle registration, fingerprinting & background check, and a large fee
- *If you accidentally go through the Sentri lane without a pass, you may be required to pay a fine of around \$1,000. The lanes are well marked though, so pay attention to the signs. Sentri Lane will be written in English*
- ALL PASSENGERS in the vehicle must have Sentri pass in order to use this lane. If the driver has a pass but passengers do not, the fee will still apply
- Wait time is 10-15 minutes
- Typically only useful to obtain the pass if you are a regular commuter across the border

## Tips for shorter wait times

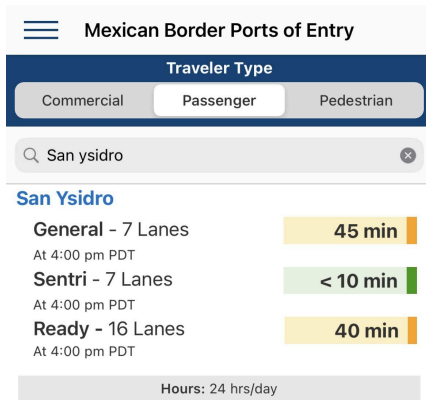
- **Leave early:** Wait times at ports of entry are typically 60-70 minutes if you can make it to the port between 7:00-9:30 am. Lines can get up to 3 hours long later in the day. Sunday evenings are the busiest crossing times, but most days the line drops to less than an hour around 5:00 pm
  - **Most Months:** Lines are typically a little bit shorter between 7:00-8:00 am but wait times only vary by about 10 minutes between 7:00-10:00 am for most of the year.
    - Average Saturday wait times in March:



- **August, November, & December:** Wait times can vary much more during these months historically. Wait times go from 45 minutes to 95 minutes between 6:00 am and 10:00 am so we recommend trying to arrive at the border earlier during these months to avoid long waits
  - Average Saturday wait times in December:



- **Research wait times at different ports of entry:** determine which port of entry has the fastest lines and whether general lanes or ready lanes will have the best wait times
  - **Download the free *CBP Border Wait Times* app:**



- This app allows you to search wait times for each port of entry and each lane type: General, Ready, and Senti
- The app also shows how many of each type of lane are open at the moment for each port (i.e. 6 ready lanes and 10 general lanes are open)
- You can also view historical wait time data in the “plan ahead” section to give you a general expectation prior to the day you cross
- Past experience has proven this app to be very accurate for wait times

- **Visit <https://bwt.cbp.gov>**
  - This is the website version of the above app with all the same capabilities but a bit less user friendly in the mobile version

## What to Expect in line

- **Vendors**
  - Street Vendors like to walk through the lines of cars selling goods and services, some vendors can be persistent but are not dangerous
  - The churro carts are delicious!
  - You will likely see people with rags/spray who will come and try to wash your windshield. Just shake your head no if they approach your car. If they start washing your windows, they will try to get money out of you

- Bathrooms
  - There are no advertised bathrooms in line, plan to make a stop before you get close to the border if necessary
  - Some volunteers have found bathrooms while in line but, for safety, we recommend you avoid these, unless it is an emergency

## What to Expect with Border Patrol Officers

- Have Documents for all passengers at the front and accessible to the driver, open to the information page
  - If you have lost your identification, as a U.S. citizen you will still be able to reenter the country, they will just pull you to secondary screening which will takes longer
- If traveling in the Ready Lane, they will ask you to hold up and show all of the passports to a border patrol officer or to a camera prior to entering the booth area to verify that all passengers have US passport and you are allowed to be in the Ready lane
- Follow all signs & light signals indicating for you to wait to proceed forward
- At the booth:
  - Roll down your window. If you're driving a van or SUV, they may ask you to open your car door
  - Driver will present documents for all passengers to the border patrol officer. They'll look at each passport and read the name and expect the person in the car to acknowledge when their name is read
  - They will likely ask you what you have been doing in Mexico - explain that you have been part of a service group at an orphanage. Border patrol officers are American, you can show them the letter from A Child's Hope in the folder, but you do not need the Spanish version
  - Another officer will likely walk around your vehicle and use a mirror to check under the car
  - They will also ask you if you purchased anything in Mexico that you are taking back over the border. **You must declare everything you purchased** (i.e. Mexican vanilla, sweatshirts, blankets, etc.). You are allowed to bring up to \$800 worth of merchandise across the border without paying duties. However, they are very strict about bringing fruits/vegetables, meats, or other agricultural products across so if you purchased any, try to eat it before you leave! See <https://cbp.gov> for more information.

## Fast Pass Tijuana

For those interested in a faster crossing, there is the option of purchasing a pass to get into the medical lane at the border. The pass is DIGITAL, no need to print it out, the worker at the booth will scan it on your phone. This pass is a one time use only and you only need one per car, you will merge into the normal lane at the front so you will still cross the border how you normally do, just faster. They will send instructions on how to get to the lane. The lane is open daily from 7 am - 9 pm. You can reserve your pass up to 3 days in advance because they DO sell out.

**Cost: \$75 per car**

## Instructions:

All communication is via Whatsapp

Phone number: +1(951)418-9905

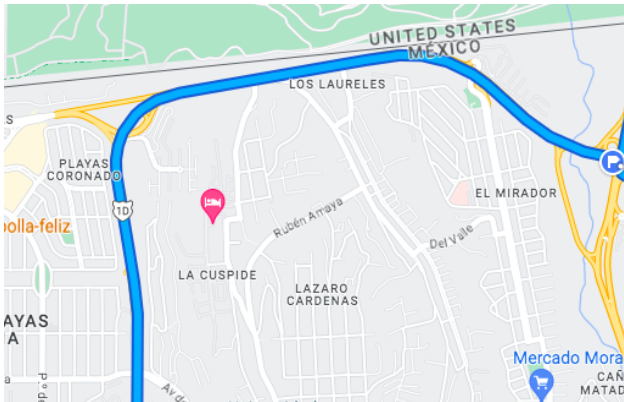
1. Send payment:
  - a. Zelle - 9514189905 under Ferraca Ent. or
  - b. ApplePay - 9514189905 (Put Date of Travel in MEMO only).
2. Once payment is sent please send screenshot confirmation & we will confirm.
3. We will ask for name of driver, # of people in car & license plates.
4. You will receive your digital pass in minutes through Whatsapp with google maps directions, please watch the video included with directions.

## Driving Directions to San Ysidro

*Note: these are the same directions that google maps will give you if you would prefer to follow that.*

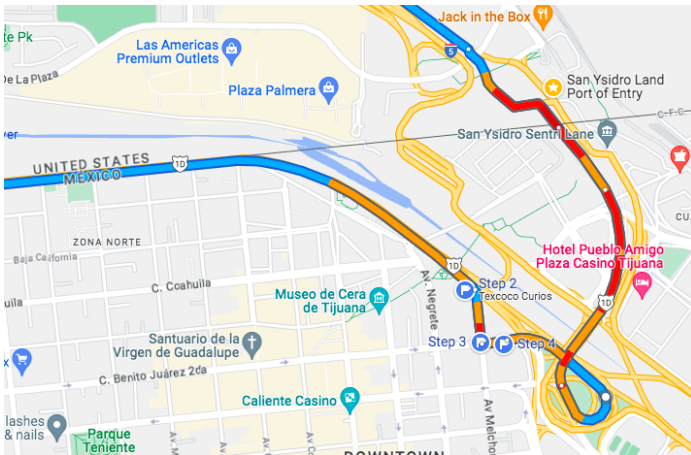
### Step 1:

Most of Interstate 1 travels north, parallel to the ocean, until you near the US. About 1 mile after the road turns to head west, parallel to the border, **exit Interstate 1** to the right at the sign that says San Diego. The exit loops around under the interstate and onto 'Via Internacional'.



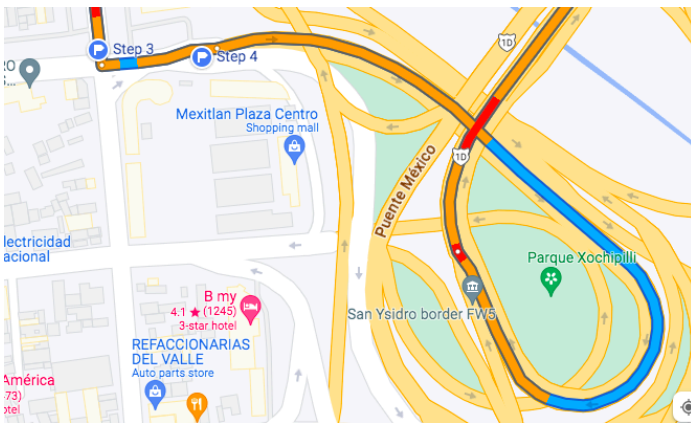
## Step 2:

Via Internacional runs right alongside the border. After about 3 miles, you will exit Via Internacional to the right towards 'San Diego & Paseo de los Heroes'. You will turn left at the first light after exiting at this point.



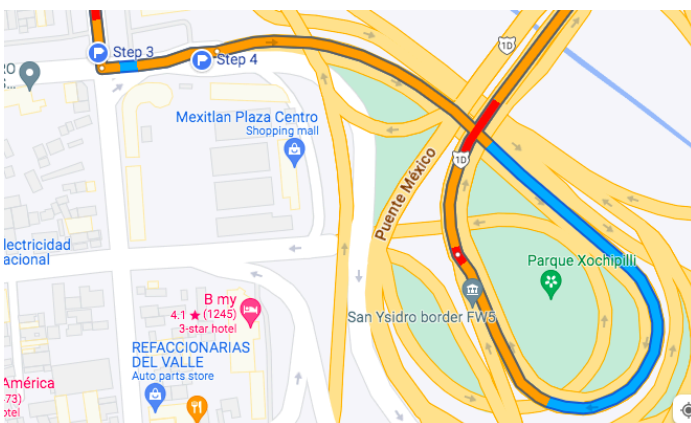
## Step 3:

Turn left on Benito Juárez. You will need to stay in the left lanes.



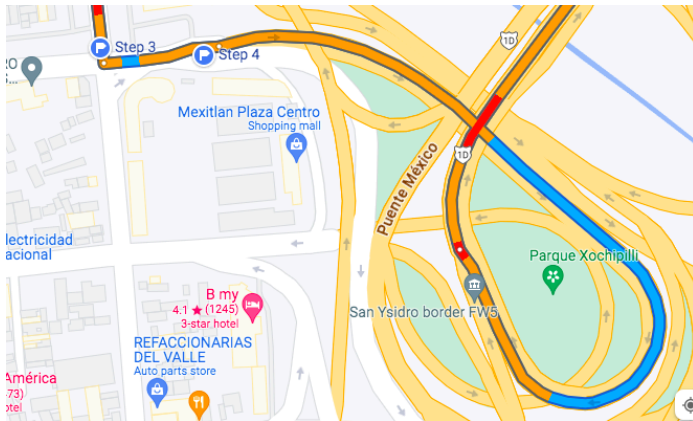
## Step 4:

Get in the second lane from the left so that you are not stuck in the wrong lane when the concrete barriers begin almost immediately after your left turn.



## Step 5:

Follow the sign for 'San Diego'. Make sure you are to the left of the concrete barriers.



## Step 6:

After the concrete barriers, stay right to keep following signs for San Diego, the road will curve around and direct you to the border lines. You are now in the border section and can pick your lane from here. Follow signs for either "All Traffic" or "Ready Lane"