

# Getting a Fishing License in Mexico

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Getting a fishing license in Mexico requires a lot of stamina. You have to really WANT to fish. Or, more to the point, you have to want to fish *legally*. Most people fish anyway. We got licenses last year, even though we never fished, but it took half a day. We went to SEMARNAP, the equivalent of the Fish and Game Department in Ensenada, but, although they issue the fishing licenses, they don't have the forms you need to *apply* for a fishing license. You have to buy the forms for 25 pesos at another government office 10 blocks away. (Every place you need to go is 10 blocks from where you are now.) and bring them back to SEMARNAP. So, after going three different places, each 10 blocks from the other, each of which should have had the forms but didn't, we finally got a packet of forms and brought them back.

If you're going to fish in Mexico, you need a license for each person on board, even if only one person is fishing, a license for the boat itself, and if you have a dinghy on board from which you *might* fish, a license for it too. For us, that equated to five licenses.

Although there were at least 10 people in the office, we were quickly handed off to the one guy that seemed to be the only one doing anything. The rest were engaged in talking, reading magazines or answering the occasional phone call. We were also the only applicant in the office all morning. Our guy rolled our newly purchased forms into a typewriter (!) and tediously typed all the information in. It took almost an hour to do that. Then he gave the papers to us and we had to go to the bank, 10 blocks away, to pay the fee, approximately 200 pesos (\$20) each.

When we came back, I expected we were done, but that was only the application. Now he needed to create the actual licenses. He rolled each license, five of them, one by one, into the typewriter, three copies each, with carbon paper (!!!) in between and began transferring all the information on the application to the licenses. That process took one and a half hours. But we persevered, and were duly licensed to fish. This consumed our morning, as well as the official at SEMARNAP—all he did from 8:30 to 11:00 am was process our licenses.

In 2002, we went back down the Baja, directly across to Mazatlan, then all the way down to Zihuatanejo. Fishing licenses are good for a year and ours had been issued January 15, so when we got to Barra de Navidad in early January on the way to Zihuatanejo, we went to the SEMARNAP office there to renew them. The office wasn't too hard to find, even though it was in the middle of a residential district in an ordinary house. After much arm waving, pointing and incomprehensible (to us) Spanish, we determined that she could not, or would not, renew the licenses until they actually expired, which they hadn't, yet.

So we waited until we got to Zihua to renew them. We asked several people where the SEMARNAP office was and got varying opinions, all of which proved to be places where it once had been, or maybe might be in the future, but wasn't at this moment in time. Finally we asked

the Capitan de Puerto at the wharf and he pointed to a man walking down the wharf who was the very official we were seeking. He spoke not a word of English, but understood immediately what we wanted when we showed him our now expired fishing licenses. He told us to come to his office the following day and he would have the licenses ready, and he even drew us a map as to where the office was.

The next day we took the bus over from Ixtapa, arrived at his office, and sure enough, he was there with the licenses all filled out and ready, and he was even able to take the money without us having to go to the bank. I remember this office as being a little strange. It was a huge, mostly vacant warehouse with a cement slab floor, no interior walls, and a large roll-up door in front. Near the large roll-up door was a porcelain toilet sitting on the floor. Over against the far wall were sacks of some sort of beans, some spilling out on the floor. Square in the middle of this was one desk—his office. But it worked. We got the licenses.

So the next year, 2003, we went down the Baja again, across to Puerto Vallarta and once again, straight down to Zihuatanejo. We didn't attempt to renew the fishing licenses on the way down since we knew how easy it would be in Z-town. This time the official was not so easy to deal with. After several tries, he finally told us he would meet us at Rick's Bar, which he did, and we filled out the application for fishing licenses, gave him the money, and he said we would get the new ones in a couple weeks— they had to be processed in Mexico City now. He would deliver them to Rick's Bar.

Well, we were going to be there that long, but not much longer. A week or so before we had to leave, we started checking at Rick's Bar on a daily basis. No licenses. Calls by Rick (since we spoke very little Spanish) proved to be futile and we finally left Z-town without the licenses. We never did see them.

The final chapter was in 2005. We learned that you can get Mexican fishing licenses in San Diego at the Mexican Consulate on Fifth Street. Sure enough, you can. Just fill out the form, pay the money, and in 30 minutes you are the proud possessor of fishing licenses. The only hitch here was the money had to be a money order from a bank, no checks, no credit cards, no cash. But there was a bank just around the corner that was familiar with the process.

Who knew?

***The End***