

home of the

[Home Delivery](#) | [Today's Paper](#) | [Ads](#)DESTINATION:
PRICELESSFIND
YOUR NEXT
ADVENTURE >>

SEARCH

SFGate

Web Search by YAHOO! | [Advanced Search](#)**Don't Miss:** [Gay Pride '08 Info](#) [Recent Home Sales](#) [June Election Endorsements](#) [Weird: Condi Kiss And Tell](#) [Predict The](#)

How to fly Mexico's budget-friendly skies

Christine Delsol, Special to SFGate.com

Wednesday, May 7, 2008

[SHARE](#)[COMMENTS \(13\)](#)FONT | SIZE: [-](#) [+](#)

While U.S. airlines have been dropping like flies (or at least grounding their planes and filing for bankruptcy), Mexico's discount airlines have been steadily adding new destinations. Rather than suffering an interminable bus ride, now you can start your vacation in Guadalajara and zip over to Cancún to end it on the beach for about \$120.

These new airlines crisscross Mexico, landing and taking off from more than 50 cities. Some of these destinations are border cities and industrial centers of no interest to most U.S. travelers; others are popular tourist spots already served by U.S. airlines. It's the middle ground that's really worth a look — intriguing destinations that used to be hard to reach without putting in some serious road time, as well as some likable cities that offer reasonable alternatives to busier airports.

Here's a look at Mexico's budget airlines and where they'll take you, followed by descriptions of less-known destinations that are worth a look. (The [WhichBudget student travel Web site](#) also has a nifty tool that lists 40 popular destinations and provides links to the airlines that serve them.)

AIRLINES

Aero California (21 destinations)

- **Founded:** 1960 (as charter company)
- **Hub:** Mexico City International Airport
- **Popular destinations:** Acapulco, Cancún,



Feature Articles

[Mexico City's Angelic Escape](#)[A New Spin On Oaxaca](#)[Loreto Awaits Eco-Tourists](#)[Mazatlán Remade](#)[Volunteer Vacations](#)

Mexico Mix

[Finding The Flamingos](#)[Budget-Friendly Flights](#)[Top 10 Family Destinations](#)

Just Back From

[Mérida Memories](#)[Sea of Cortés](#)

Follow The Reader

[Piña Coladas in Baja](#)[Welcoming Oaxaca Inn](#)[Go Gourmet in Mexico City](#)[More Travel Articles](#)

MOST READ

1. Mars probe a
2. Silver lining
3. Concrete cor
4. Two arreste
5. Mini-van driv
6. Mars probe a
7. Lakers-Celtic

Mexico Mix

Guadalajara, Mérida, Mexico City, Morélia, Oaxaca,
Puerto Vallarta ("coming soon"), Tijuana

[Archive](#)

- **Other destinations worth a look:** Chetumal, Chihuahua, Hermosillo, León/Bajío
- **U.S. destinations:** None

[Aladia](#) (6 destinations)

- **Founded:** 2006
- **Hub:** Monterrey (General Mariano Escobedo International Airport)
- **Popular destinations:** Cancún, Guadalajara, Los Cabos, Oaxaca, Puebla
- **Other destinations worth a look:** None
- **U.S. destinations:** None

[Alma de Mexico](#) (30 destinations)

- **Founded:** 2006 (by a former director of Aeromexico)
- **Hub:** Guadalajara (Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla International Airport)
- **Popular destinations:** Cancún, Chihuahua, Guadalajara, Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo, Los Cabos, Mazatlán, Mérida, Oaxaca, Puebla, Puerto Vallarta, Querétaro, Tijuana
- **Other destinations worth a look:** Aguascalientes, Chetumal, Ciudad del Carmen (Campeche), Ciudad Obregón (Sonora), La Paz, Los Mochis, Torreón
- **U.S. destinations:** None

[Aviacsa](#) (20 destinations)

- **Founded:** 1990 (by State of Chiapas)
- **Hubs:** Mexico City International Airport; Monterrey (Gen. Mariano Escobedo International Airport)
- **Popular destinations:** Acapulco, Cancún, Guadalajara, Mérida, Mexico City, Morélia, Oaxaca, Puerto Vallarta, Tijuana
- **Other destinations worth a look:** Chetumal, Hermosillo, León/Bajío
- **U.S. destinations:** Las Vegas (to Monterrey, Mexico City)

[Avolar](#) (19 destinations)

- **Founded:** 2005
- **Hub:** Tijuana (Gen. Abelardo L. Rodriguez International Airport)
- **Popular destinations:** Acapulco, Cuernavaca, Guadalajara, Morélia, Oaxaca, Puebla, Querétaro, Tijuana, Zacatecas
- **Other destinations worth a look:** Aguascalientes, Colima, Durango, Hermosillo, León/Bajío, Tepic, Uruapán
- **U.S. destinations:** None

TopJobs

TECHNICIAN
INSTALLER Low Voltage
Cabling

BANKING
BRANCH MANAGER
financial

CARPENTER
REMODEL G.C. 2 p

CONSTRUCTION
CHIEF ENGINEER
Tower

MARKETING
LEADERS Start at 1st
floor

PRINTING
Cameo Crafts, one

About Top Jobs
View All Top Jobs
Search more Jobs

PROVIDED BY —
YAHOO! hotjobs

Click Mexicana (25 destinations)

- **Founded:** 2005 (subsidiary of Mexicana, incorporating Aerocaribe Airlines)
- **Hub:** Mexico City International Airport
- **Popular destinations:** Cozumel, Guadalajara, Ixtapa-Zijuatanejo, Manzanillo, Mérida, Mexico City, Oaxaca, Puerto Vallarta
- **Other destinations worth a look:** Aguascalientes, Chetumal, Ciudad del Carmen, Colima, Huatulco, León/Bajío, Puerto Escondido, San Luis Potosí, Turreon
- **U.S. destinations:** None

Interjet (13 destinations)

- **Founded:** 2005
- **Hub:** Toluca (Lic. Adolfo López Mateos International Airport)
- **Popular destinations:** Acapulco, Cancún, Guadalajara, Ixtapa-Zijuatanejo, Los Cabos, Mérida, Puerto Vallarta
- **Other destinations worth a look:** Chihuahua, Ciudad del Carmen
- **U.S. destinations:** None

Viva Aerobus (23 destinations)

- **Founded:** 2006 (co-owned by family that founded Ryanair)
- **Hub:** Monterrey (General Mariano Escobedo International Airport)
- **Popular destinations:** Acapulco, Cancún, Cozumel, Cuernavaca, Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo, Los Cabos, Mazatlán, Mérida, Morélia, Oaxaca, Puerto Vallarta, Querétaro, Tijuana
- **Other destinations worth a look:** Chihuahua, Hermosillo, Huatulco, La Paz, León/Bajío
- **U.S. destinations:** Austin, Texas (to Cancún, Monterrey)

Volaris (21 destinations)

- **Founded:** 2005 (co-owned by El Salvador national airline Grupo TACA)
- **Hub:** Toluca (Lic. Adolfo López Mateos International Airport)
- **Popular destinations:** Acapulco, Cancún, Guadalajara, Los Cabos, Mazatlán, Mérida, Morélia, Oaxaca, Puebla, Puerto Vallarta, Tijuana
- **Other destinations worth a look:** Aguascalientes, Campeche (summer 2008), Hermosillo, León/Bajío
- **U.S. destinations:** Approved to fly to Los Angeles; airport not yet assigned.

DESTINATIONS

Aguascalientes — This prosperous state capital boasts historic hot springs and some handsome colonial buildings; it's one alternative for touring the colonial region that includes San Luis Potosí and the fabled silver city of Zacatecas.

Campeche — Mexico's most beautiful yet least-discovered colonial city is full of pirate lore and provides a gateway to historic haciendas and largely unexplored Maya ruins deep in the Yucatán.

Chetumal (Quintana Roo) — This state capital has the Caribbean's finest museum on Maya culture and offers access to the unspoiled Costa Maya (think Riviera Maya 20 years ago) and Belize to the south, as well as Calakmul and the pristine Río Bec ruins to the west.

Chihuahua — The capital of Mexico's largest state is the eastern terminus of the Copper Canyon railroad and has a fine colonial core with beautiful parks and plazas.

Ciudad del Carmen (Campeche) — Previously known primarily as the hub of Campeche state's petroleum industry, this island city 140 miles south of the state capital is being transformed by luxury resort development.

Ciudad Obregón (Sonora) — Sonora's second-largest city is an option for coastal explorations; it's more convenient than Hermosillo if you're bound for the port city of Guaymas and its ferry across the Sea of Cortés.

Colima — The pleasant state capital is just about 25 miles inland from the Pacific resort of Manzanillo and is the gateway to two spectacular volcanoes: the steaming Volcán de Fuego and the extinct Volcán Nevado de Colima.

Durango — The laid-back cowboy town, former home of Pancho Villa and Dolores Del Río, boasts one of Mexico's most delightful plazas and has been a favorite filming site for U.S. Westerns.

Hermosillo (Sonora) — The state capital is a bustling agricultural center with little to hold the tourist, but it's only about 45 miles from the coast, presenting one alternative for reaching the increasingly popular resorts of Puerto Peñasco.

Huatulco, Oaxaca — The Mexican government has trodden more gently at its newest big resort, lying along a series of beautiful sandy bays, than at its other tourist creations.

La Paz (Baja California Sur) — Long before there was Los Cabos, this tropical capital city drew sun-seekers and sports fishermen; its appeal only increases by contrast with the commercialized tip of the peninsula.

León/Bajío (Guanajuato) — León, a likable enough place to spend the night, is a major bus hub, and its airport serves the enchanting colonial cities of Guanajuato, San Miguel de Allende and Dolores Hidalgo.

Los Mochis (Sinaloa) — The western terminus of the Copper Canyon railroad is an agreeable modern city with a good selection of inns and restaurants.

Puerto Escondido (Oaxaca) — The traditional fishing village on the remote Oaxaca

coast is a longtime surfers' hangout that is becoming more popular with tourists seeking a relaxed and inexpensive beach destination.

Querétaro — A fine colonial city, steeped in revolutionary history, with a sophisticated modern side, Querétaro sits at the crossroads where northeastern, western and central Mexico meet.

San Luis Potosí — This state capital is a university town with an active nightlife and culture, exquisite colonial buildings and proximity to the better-known colonial cities of Guanajuato and Zacatecas — as well as the newly trendy silver mining ghost town of Real de Catorce.

Tepic (Nayarit) — This pleasant state capital, founded by the nephew of Hernán Cortés in 1524, has an active traditional Huichol culture and offers an alternative to flying to Puerto Vallarta or Mazatlán for Pacific Coast explorations.

Torreón (Coahuila) — History buffs might consider starting their travels here, at the site of Pancho Villa's first big victory in the Mexican Revolution, and then taking in the more cosmopolitan cities of Durango or Chihuahua.

Uruapán (Michoacán) — This very traditional Mexican city has the only national park within city boundaries and is close to Michoacán state's highland craft towns, the Parícutín volcano and the mountain monarch butterfly reserves.



(13) [View Comments »](#)

Share your thoughts on this story.

Add Your Comment

You must be signed in to add a comment. [Sign In](#) | [Register](#)

Submit

Ads by Yahoo!

AirTran Airways Discount Travel Site

Find low fares to 50 cities. Go. There's nothing stopping you.
(www.AirTran.com)

VEGAS.com Official Site

Book Las Vegas Hotels, Shows & More from the Vegas Travel Experts.
(www.VEGAS.com)

Luggage, Baggage and Golf Bag Shipping

We will pick-up and deliver your luggage, golf bag, and any other baggage when you travel.
(baggageshipping.com)



[Subscribe to The Chronicle](#)

[Home](#) [News](#) [Sports](#) [Business](#) [Entertainment](#) [Food](#) [Living](#) [Travel](#) [Columns](#) [Classifieds](#) [Jobs](#) [Homes](#) [Cars](#) [S](#)

Advertising Services: [Place a Classified](#) [Advertise in Print](#) [Advertise Online](#) [Media Kit](#) [Today's Print Ads](#) [Public Notices](#)

Reader Services: [Home Delivery](#) [Subscribers](#) [Today's Paper](#) [Mobile](#) [RSS Feeds](#) [Newsletters](#) [Join Community](#) [Feedbac](#)

Company Info: [Contact Us](#) [Hearst Corp.](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Terms and Conditions](#) [Work for Us](#) [Chronicle in Education](#) [Event:](#)

© 2008 Hearst Communications Inc.

HEARST *newspapers*