

First Impressions Matter: Mexico on the World Stage in 2026

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In 2026, Mexico will inevitably be under the international spotlight. The review of the USMCA, the economic and political relationship with the United States and, above all, the FIFA World Cup will place the country at the center of the global conversation. Millions of visitors will arrive not only for football, but out of curiosity, for business, and with high expectations. The relevant question is not how many tourists will arrive, but what experience they will have and what lasting effect that first contact with the country will leave.

Tourism has a strategic quality that is seldom discussed: it is often the first channel of economic discovery. Before investing, relocating a plant, or opening an office, many decision-makers get to know a country as tourists. They walk its streets, use its services, assess its infrastructure, and form a perception (positive or negative) that is difficult to erase. In this sense, the World Cup represents a unique opportunity for Mexico to showcase, in real time, its economic and productive potential.

The three host cities serve as a showcase to highlight this diversity. Mexico City concentrates a cultural, gastronomic, and services offering comparable to that of any global capital. Guadalajara combines creativity, technology, agribusiness, and a dynamic business ecosystem. Monterrey is the industrial face of the country, with deep integration into North America and a well-established export-oriented vocation. For many visitors, this journey between cities will be the first tangible evidence that Mexico is much more than a tourist destination.

To seize this opportunity, a comprehensive visitor experience is required. The tourist's journey begins even before arriving in Mexico, with clear information on immigration requirements and air and ground connectivity. Upon arrival, visitors seek relief from the typical congestion of airports, through an efficient immigration process, a diverse, functional, and safe transportation offering, clear signage, and immediate connectivity. This continues with hospitality in hotels and restaurants, ease of mobility within the city, a perception of safety when walking, and the ability to pay using digital and contactless methods, just as they do in their country of origin. Other elements to consider include digital connectivity, price transparency, cleanliness in public spaces, and integrated services through transportation mobile applications.

None of this happens spontaneously. It requires coordination across the three levels of government and consistent execution of public policies. But it also demands that the private sector do its part. Hotels, restaurants, transportation, entertainment, banking, and payment systems are all part of the same value chain. If one of these links fails, the overall experience is fragmented. If all function in a coordinated manner, the effect is multiplied. Banking and payment systems play a particularly relevant role. A tourist who can pay digitally, quickly, and securely not only generates greater economic spillovers, but also perceives the country as modern and integrated into the global economy.

Tourism derived from the World Cup should not be understood as an isolated event or a temporary windfall. It can and should be the gateway to a deeper relationship with Mexico. A satisfied visitor is an involuntary ambassador, a potential investor, and a commercial partner in the making. The difference between a fleeting opportunity and a structural impact will lie in the country's ability to offer a safe and competitive experience from start to finish.

The convergence of the World Cup and the USMCA makes 2026 a defining moment for Mexico's global standing; and tourism will be one of the first indicators of its economic performance. Every trip, every transaction, and every service delivered will send a clear message to the world about how prepared Mexico truly is to compete in the global economy.

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