



VFR Charts for Mexico, a comparative analysis

By: Rick Gardner, Caribbean Sky Tours – July 25, 2008

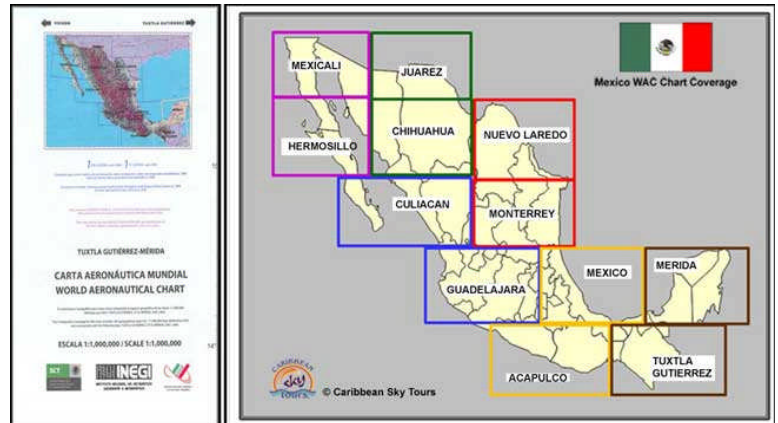
One of the most common questions that we receive from pilots wishing to fly to Mexico is; “what VFR charts do I need and where can I get them?” There are a variety of different VFR charts for Mexico that are published by the FAA, DOD and INEGI. In this article we will investigate some of the advantages and disadvantages of these different charts.

Available VFR charts

The charts most familiar to U.S. pilots are the VFR Sectional Aeronautical charts (Sectionals) and VFR World Aeronautical Charts (WAC) which show topography, airport information (location, elevation and runway length), nav aids (location, type and frequency), TCA’s, restricted/prohibited airspace and airways. The U.S-Mexico border is covered by five sectional charts; Los Angeles, Phoenix, El Paso, San Antonio and Brownsville or by two FAA WAC charts; CH-22 and CH-23 which cover the entire Baja California peninsula. FAA WAC charts cover a little more Mexican territory than sectional charts but they only extend down to 24 degrees north leaving the majority of Mexico uncovered. VFR WAC chart CH-22 is updated every two years and CH-23 is updated every year.

Up until recently, the only VFR charts that covered all of Mexico were Operational Navigation Charts (ONC charts) from the Department of Defense (DOD) which show topography, airports (location and elevation) and restricted/prohibited airspace. These charts are developed by the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency and four ONC charts cover Mexico; H-22, H-23, J-24 and J-25. Physically, the charts are large and can be very awkward to use in the cabin of a light aircraft. There are no fixed update cycles for ONC charts and chart information can be up to 20 years old.

A new set of charts available to the aviation community are the recently released **Mexican WAC charts** which were developed in a joint effort between the two aviation branches of Mexico’s Secretary of Communication and Transportation; the DGAC and SENEAM along with INEGI (Mexico’s National Institute of Statistics, Information & Geography). Mexican WAC charts show topography, airport information (location, elevation and runway length), nav aids (location, type and frequency) and restricted/prohibited airspace. This effort was spearheaded by Mexico’s General Aviation Council (of which Caribbean Sky Tours is a member) under the leadership and direction of Gilberto Lopez Meyer, Director General of the DGAC (who had the foresight and vision to identify the need for these charts), and Agustín Arellano, Director General of SENEAM. Twelve chart regions cover the entire country of Mexico and there are two regions per chart yielding a total of six separate charts. These charts were issued in July of 2008 and are scheduled to be updated every four years.



Comparison of the VFR charts

Information on nav aids and approximately 89 towered and/or international airports in Mexico is kept up to date in Mexico’s Aeronautical Information Publication (AIP) and published to registered subscribers like Caribbean Sky Tours and the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency. Information for the remaining 1,400 airports in Mexico is kept by the DGAC and is not distributed on a regular basis. Therefore, users of FAA WAC charts, ONC charts and any other source of airport information should be aware that information for airports, other than major Mexican airports, could be in error. On the other hand, Mexican WAC charts were developed with the latest information for **ALL** airports in Mexico.

Territory coverage between the various VFR charts is not the same. Visitors to the Baja California area will benefit from the design of the FAA WAC CH-22 which covers the entire peninsula with one chart but will have to recognize that the topographical and airport information will not be as accurate as the Mexican WAC charts which break the



VFR Charts for Mexico, a comparative analysis

By: Rick Gardner, Caribbean Sky Tours – July 25, 2008

same area down into two separate charts. As airport and topographical information changes over time, the renewal frequency of charts can be an important factor in the accuracy of the information they contain. Since ONC charts for Mexico have not been updated in up to twenty years, information on ONC charts can have limited value.

In Mexico, Aerodrome Traffic Zones (ATZ's) exist around towered airports and Terminal Control Areas (TCA's or TMA's in ICAO) exist around larger, busier airports. ATZ's typically have a 10 NM radius around the airport and they, along with TCA's, are class D airspace. FAA WAC charts are the only VFR charts to show TCA's but none of the VFR charts show ATZ's. Therefore, users of Mexican WAC charts and ONC charts would be wise to supplement their charts with IFR low altitude enroute charts which show airways and TCA's and pilots should be aware of the presence of ATZ's around towered airports.

<u>Item</u>	<u>FAA WAC</u>	<u>ONC</u>	<u>Mexico WAC</u>
Dimension folded W X H*	5" X 10 ¼"	14 ½" X 10 ½"	6" X 10 ¼"
Dimension open W X H*	55" X 20 ¾"	57 ½" X 42"	36 ¾" X 20 ¾"
Covers all of Mexico	No	Yes (4 charts)	Yes (6 charts)
Topography	Yes	Yes	Yes
Airport location and elev.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Runway length	Yes	No	Yes
Nav aids	Yes	No	Yes
TCA's	Yes	No	No
ATZ's	No	No	No
Airways	Yes	No	No
Scale	1:1,000,000	1:1,000,000	1:1,000,000
Renewal cycle	1 -2 years	10-20 years	4 years
Cost (US\$)	\$ 8.60	\$ 7.99	\$ 11.99

* Folded and open dimensions of Mexican WAC charts may vary by territory.

Additional Resources

WAC charts typically do not identify CLOSED or PRIVATE airports in Mexico. Therefore, Caribbean Sky Tours has developed 6 new web pages, one for each chart, that provide additional "unofficial" information to supplement what is depicted on the chart. Each web page shows the International Airports Of Entry (AOE), reports of CLOSED/PRIVATE airports and other aeronautical information of interest for the territory depicted on that chart. These 6 web pages can be accessed from the *Aeronautical Charts* page of the Caribbean Sky Tours website. Pilots are encouraged to e-mail or call Caribbean Sky Tours with observations on Mexican WAC charts to share with the international pilot community. Caribbean Sky Tours also offers its **Pilot's Guide** which contains official procedures for ALL of Mexico and detailed airport information for airports along the Gulf Coast and southeast Mexico. In addition, the Pilot's Guide contains important local information, unique "border crossing chart", unpublished RCO's for in-flight weather briefings in Mexico, verified list of Mexican and U.S. AOE's, emergency contact numbers, direct dial telephone numbers for U.S. and Mexican Flight Service Stations and much, more. The Pilot's Guide is a "must have" for any trip to Mexico.

Summary

Overall, we believe the **new** Mexican WAC charts are the most reliable VFR charts for all of Mexico. They are based on the most current airport and navaid information as well as the most up-to-date topographical information. In addition, their size and the way they are folded make them much more practical for use in flight. Although ONC charts are slightly less expensive and cover Mexico with only 4 charts versus 6 for the Mexican WAC, the Mexican WAC charts contain far more up-to-date and useful information than the 10-20 year old information on ONC charts. When supplemented with the 6 new web pages on the Caribbean Sky Tours website, they give pilots much more valuable information than they have ever had. **All of the FAA, ONC and Mexico WAC charts can be purchased at the on-line**



VFR Charts for Mexico, a comparative analysis

By: Rick Gardner, Caribbean Sky Tours – July 25, 2008

Pilot Shop of the Caribbean Sky Tours website; www.caribbeanskytours.com or by calling Caribbean Sky Tours at 1-(866) 420-9265.