

GRINGO

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Photo by: Desiree Bilon

Gringoized Mexican house on display at the Todos Santos Cultural Center

Mexico Changes Auto Import Laws

■ Listen up, this is going to impact anyone who brings a car down here.

BY ADAM BAUM

Up to now we could import cars from the United States that were older than 2003. Only.

And if you allow your Mexican friends to drive a car that has not been imported, and they get caught at it, the police can impound the car. Forever.

Best to jump through the hoops and get the Mexican placas (plates) on it.

But that has changed with a new law passed last week. Now, we can only import cars that were manufactured for the years 1998 to 2003. Period. You can drive other cars here, but you can not import them. Next year, cars manufactured for the years 1999 to 2004 will be permitted.

Many Mexicans have gone

into the business recently of importing cars and caravanning them down here, and they're all squawking like wounded chickens.

This puts new pressure on all the 1998 cars in the United States that are along the border. "The prices we were asking for them retail is what we're going to have to start paying wholesale," said Luis Esparza, sales manager for a Houston Heights used car dealership. "You can throw the Blue Book away."

Bernardo Garcia, another dealer, said a '98 extended cab F-150 in good shape used to sell for about five grand on his lot. Now, the price could jump as high as seven grand. Garcia said his business mostly caters to Mexicans.

The changes to the import law were brought about from pressure on the legislature by the Mexican Association of Auto Distributors, who

whined that all the cars flowing in to Mexico by the mom and pops along the border were undercutting their new car sales. 🐦

Cruise Ships Stop Coming To Mexico

■ The cancellations roll in as the five dollar tax takes effect in June

BY LOU COWT

The cruise ship line Holland America announced last week that it's cancelling all stops to Cabo and other Mexican ports of call for 2009. The new law goes into effect in June.

Astrid Castaneda, manager

of the local port administration API, said that Holland America is cancelling its Mexico stops in response to the new \$5 tax that will be levied on passengers disembarking.

The \$5 tax was approved by the Mexican Congress last year in an effort to raise additional revenue to improve infrastructure in Mexican resort areas.

Test! Test!

The Ministry of Finance is surveying United States and Canadian citizens living in Mexico. The goal is to identify the main difficulties foreigners face while migrating to Mexico, and once they have settled in the country. The information gathered will be used to make migrating to Mexico easier.

All information provided by the foreigners is anonymous and strictly confidential. It takes about five minutes to make your opinion known. Here is the url:

<http://survey.kdsgn.com>
Folks, this is harmless, they can't come through your computer to you, and it could help us, so everybody speak up! 🐦

But if other cruise ships go the way of the Holland America line, it looks like that \$5 tax will backfire big time, hurting many local businesses in the process. 🐦

HOLIDAY ALERT. Banks, government offices, and many Mexican businesses will be closed on Monday, March 17 for the birthday of Benito Juarez. On Thursday, Friday and Saturday, closures will resume for Semana Santa. (Easter) So if you need cash this week, make sure you get to the bank on Tuesday or Wednesday. And if we didn't tell you this, you would think, boy they sure celebrate St Patty's day big time, here. 🐦

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