

The Departamento de Transito (Guardia Civil) requires the registration of your vehicle immediately upon arrival to Guatemala City. The permit is issued and must be renewed every month. If not so renewed your vehicle will be impounded. Only after delay and a payment of a substantial fine (especially Americanos) will the car be relinquished. As I remember, three days were required to renew my permit for the month of January as this period was the beginning of the fiscal year and they had not as yet received authorization or had established a new procedure for the coming year! If, unfortunately, you apply at the end of the month you can anticipate standing in line for at least two or three hours.

The Civil Guard, Department of Defense, Secret Service and Customs Officials independently have the power to inspect your car at any time. These inspections invariably are made without your knowledge or consent. Your equipment is not respected--I remember one occasion when they released fifteen bales of cotton which I had sealed under pressure and it was all they could do to get the door of the car closed again.

If you are, from time to time, expected to receive packages from the States always remember that a full day and considerable expense generally is required to get them through customs in Guatemala City. Customs in Guatemala are hopelessly confused with military red-tape and if every administrative cog is not smoothly meshed, a days delay is inevitable. Note that in the example, seven authentications are required--each authentication requiring a waiting period of at least a half an hour.

To freight a car by rail from Guatemala City to Puerto Barrios which, incidently is the only route possible between these two cities, cost me \$89.94 which included securing the car to the flat car of the train. "Conis" in Guatemala City and "Matton" in New Orleans are two firms which show some degree of efficiency and integrity, but firms which must be continually rejuvenated to get the job done. For example, you will note that in his letter he states that the car was shipped April 13 which was already a week delayed but actually the car did not leave Guatemala until April 21. This delay of 21 days which would spell disaster to a short period expedition, is not uncommon when shipping freight or equipment by rail or steamship. Always allow at least one week for more for this type of inconvenience.