

# PHOENIX Business Journal

## How a Valley startup is boosting tourism in Mexico with its travel app



Brian Krupski, co-founder of GrinGO, which created a travel and safety app for tourists to Mexico. GrinGO

By [Amy Edelen](#) - Reporter

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A Phoenix-based startup is looking to make travel to Mexico easier through a new partnership with the country's tourism officials.

GrinGO signed an agreement last month with the Angeles Verdes — a free roadside assistance program that operates under Mexico's Secretary of Tourism — to provide information and resources to U.S. travelers.

GrinGO's mobile app offers travel, safety and tourism resources, including hotel reservations, a language translator, currency exchange, information for medical and legal aid and roadside assistance.

“It's an important critical program for tourism and commerce in Mexico. It's not easy to earn the signature of a president's cabinet member,” Brian Krupski, founder and CEO of GrinGO, said. “You've got to go through a process, including a judicial review to eventually to get approved by Congress. On December 12th, during an MOU signing ceremony, we earned the signature from Mexico's National Secretary (of Tourism), which was a big day for us.”

Through the partnership, travelers using GrinGO's app can receive travel advisories, welcome messages from Mexican city officials and information about points of interest.

“The integration of the Angeles Verdes operating system with the GrinGO platform aims to empower U.S. tourists with comprehensive information and another gateway to access the program’s roadside service, ensuring a safer and more enjoyable journey from the moment they enter Mexico until they reach their final destination,” Miguel Torruco Marqués, Mexico's secretary of tourism, said in a statement.

Krupski previously served as a staff advisor to former Arizona Govs. Jane Dee Hull and Janet Napolitano at the Arizona-Mexico Commission. During that time, he gained insight into cross-border issues, including transportation.

He saw a market opportunity for auto insurance in Mexico and launched Ammex Global Assurance in 2008 with his brother, Robert. Krupski operated the e-commerce auto insurance business as a side hustle while working as director of membership services for the Arizona Technology Council.

By 2018, the insurance business evolved into a mobile app with helpful travel and safety resources for visitors to Mexico, sparking the idea for GrinGO.

“I cashed out my 401(k) from the Arizona Technology Council when I left, and I started building a prototype before I even approached my first investors, who were friends and family,” Krupski said.

GrinGO raised \$100,000 in a friends-and-family round and launched in 2019. Soon thereafter, Amadeus — a global distribution system for the travel industry — accepted GrinGO into its startup program.

“At that point, we became a true travel company and split our slogan to 'a travel and safety app,'” Krupski said.

The company, however, was forced to innovate as the pandemic caused travel disruptions worldwide, coinciding with its one-year anniversary.

GrinGO raised another \$100,000, built new communications infrastructure and partnered with U.S. Consulates in Mexico to send real-time area travel and health advisories to travelers via the company's app. That led to several agreements with Mexican officials as the tourism industry began to bounce back, Krupski said.

“We kept our chins up and a positive mindset to embrace the challenge by looking back as history repeats itself,” Krupski said. “They say in times of crisis the strongest companies are built.”

GrinGO now has more than 25,000 users. The company primarily generates revenue through hotel reservations, advertising, Mexico auto insurance and lead generation services through traveler data, Krupski said.

The company plans to add more integrations into its app, including ride-hailing and telehealth options.

GrinGO is also looking to raise \$2.5 million in a growth capital round to expand its team, form additional partnerships, advance its app, and launch aggressive marketing campaigns to grow its user base to 1 million people by the end of the year, Krupski said.