

leather

Mexico's artists use cattle, goat, lamb, deer, fox, ocelot, sable, and badger skins to make a range of leatherwork. Using different tanning techniques, they produce a variety of beautiful leather finishes, such as suede.

tanning

Before leather products can be made, the skin must be tanned. The skin is first immersed in a mixture of water and quicklime, then left in a chemical solution for several days. Later it is stretched on a frame. When dry, it is rubbed with grease or oil.

decorating leather

Several techniques are used to decorate tanned leather:

- The specialty of embossing (or chiseling) involves smoothing leather with a wooden mallet. Then, a pattern is drawn on the reverse side of the skin. This technique is used to make saddles, chaps, belts, handbags, footwear, leather pants, and jackets.
- Embroidered floral or geometric designs, using pita fibers (fibers from several types of agaves, especially the maguey *piteado* found in central Mexico) or wool yarns, are also used to decorate leather.

products

The *cueras* from Tamaulipas merit special attention. These jackets, which are part of the regional dress of the area, are made from suede or *timbre*, soft leathers with no imperfections.

The Kikapú Indians from northern Coahuila (related ethnically and culturally to Native Americans from the Great Lakes region, now living in Texas, Oklahoma, and Mexico) do exquisite leatherwork, making moccasins, chaps, and deerskin vests.