

Travel Facts

ACCOMMODATION

Virtually all of the hotels on or near the beach cater to divers. Condominiums are also available, and tend toward luxury.

The most expensive hotels are located along the waterfront as you would expect. They generally have every amenity usually found in similar international facilities around the world, including swimming pools, air-conditioned rooms, restaurants and gift shops. Many luxury hotels have dive shops on the premises, most with easy entries and exits (such as concrete steps) at the waterline so you can go diving right in front of the hotel.

More simple, no-frills (or few-frills) hotels are within several blocks of the plaza, near the center of San Miguel. Some are air-conditioned, some have restaurants (and are within easy walking distance to dozens of other restaurants), and all are much less expensive than the luxury hotels. The simpler hotels usually do not have dive shops on the premises, but nearly all have some working arrangement with dive shops, so you can organize equipment rental and boat diving through them.

Because all the reefs mentioned in this book are south of town, hotels to the north of town are decidedly less desirable for divers. The boat rides are longer the farther north you go, and a few operators will not pick up guests staying north. That means worrying about missing the boat in the morning and salty, wet taxi rides at the end of the day.

A few problems seem to crop up again and again for divers on Cozumel. Most are related to lodging. Making reservations in Mexico has always been a bit tricky. Although most hotel owners are honest and try to do a good

The hotel row south of town is popular with divers because of the convenient dive sites just off the beach



job, we've heard enough stories about rooms going to the highest bidder – or dive boats suddenly being too full to accommodate everyone in a group – that we feel compelled to offer some advice on the matter.

Reservations made from the US by a dive store, reputable dive travel specialist, or tour wholesaler nearly always work out. These higher-volume purchasers account for a lot of business and have much more leverage than an individual traveler does. Furthermore, dive packages are usually prepaid. Dive operators and hotels who work with larger purchasers are assured that they will suffer no financial loss even if the client doesn't show up, so have no need to 'overbook' (sell more rooms or boat slots than they have available).

On the other hand, people sometimes don't show up when they're expected. Their plans change, they miss their flights or taxis, and so forth. Overbooking has been one strategy for dealing with the potential loss of revenue. At worst, giving away an individual traveler's room or failing to provide a dive package is unlikely to cost the resort more than a shouting match at the front

desk, and perhaps a protracted squabble with a credit card provider.

If you prefer to make your own reservations, ask around first to select a decent dive operator and a hotel with a good reputation. Confirm your reservations by fax, email, or registered mail. Pay with a credit card so that you can dispute the charges if the worst happens, but expect the best and you'll most likely get treated fairly and with respect.

Above all, it is important to bring copies of all replies and/or receipts with you to present to the hotel and dive operator. This will help you avoid getting into an argument about who said what, and when.

TRANSPORTATION

Air

Cozumel has a surprisingly busy international airport, with numerous direct flights from other parts of Mexico and the US. Flights from Europe are usually routed via the US, Mexico City or Cancún, an even busier airport with frequent connections to Cozumel. If you're having a hard time getting a good deal on a flight to Cozumel from Europe or the United States, look for a bargain fare to Cancún and then catch a commuter flight to Cozumel from there.

Once you land, take one of the many shuttle vans from outside of the Customs area to your hotel; taxis are not allowed to pick up incoming tourists. In 2006, a ride to town cost \$10.

Ferry

It is easy to get from the mainland to Cozumel or vice versa. Passenger ferries make many runs daily from Playa del Carmen to Cozumel. A one-way trip takes about 30 minutes. Car ferries depart from Puerto Morelos daily (times subject to the season and weather conditions).



Several beach sites south of town are popular lunch stops for sunning, swimming, and volleyball

