



Costa Maya & Southern Caribbean Coast

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Why Go?

The Southern Caribbean Coast, or the Costa Maya if you will, is the latest region to get hit by the development boom. But if you're looking for a quiet escape on the Mexican Caribbean, it's still the best place to be.

For those looking to get away from it all, Laguna Bacalar, aka the 'lake of seven colors,' provides mesmerizing scenery thanks to the water's intense shades of blue and aqua-green. East of Bacalar, the tranquil fishing towns of Mahahual and Xcalak offer great beach-bumming, birding and diving opportunities along a relatively pristine stretch of coast.

In the interior, the seldom-visited ruins of Dzibanché and Kohunlich seem all the more mysterious without the tour vans. For both the ruins and trips down south to Belize, Quintana Roo's state capital Chetumal is a great jumping-off point.

When to Go

- Don't miss the Caribbean-flavored Carnaval (p134) street festival in February in the Quintana Roo state capital, Chetumal. It's definitely one of the best fiestas of the year on the southern coast.
- Featuring pre-Hispanic music, dance and culinary events, the Jats'a Já (p130) has emerged as one of the region's most interesting annual festivals; it's held on the third weekend of August in the fishing town of Mahahual.
- A visit between mid-November and mid-December has several advantages: hurricane season has passed, the weather has cooled considerably and many great hotel deals can be found ahead of the holiday season.



Costa Maya & Southern Caribbean Coast Highlights

1 Dive at **Banco Chinchorro** (p129), the largest coral atoll in the northern hemisphere and a fascinating ship graveyard

2 Take a refreshing dip in the 90m-deep Cenote Azul, then bask on **Laguna Bacalar**

(p132), one of the most beautiful lakes that you'll ever set your eyes on

3 Go snorkeling, fishing or birding in **Mahahual** (p129), or simply chill at a boardwalk bar or restaurant in this laid-back coastal town

4 Escape to the remote beach village of **Xcalak** (p131) for quality beach-bumming, diving and fishing

5 Beat your own path to the remote ruins at **Dzibanché** (p136) and **Kohunlich** (p138), west of Chetumal.