

# Welcome to Cancún, Cozumel & the Yucatán

*Few Mexican destinations can dazzle you with ancient Maya ruins, azure Caribbean waters and colonial cities all in one fell swoop. Actually, there's only one – the Yucatán.*

## Life's a Beach

Without a doubt, this corner of Mexico boasts some of the most beautiful stretches of coastline you'll ever see – which explains in large part why beaches get top billing on the peninsula. On the east coast you have the famous coral-crushed white sands and turquoise waters of the Mexican Caribbean, while up north you'll find sleepy fishing villages with sandy streets and wildlife-rich surroundings. For the ultimate beach-bumming experience you can always hit one of several low-key islands off the Caribbean coast, where life moves at a refreshingly slow pace.

## Maya Ruins Galore

You can't help but feel awestruck when standing before the pyramids, temples and ball courts of one of the most brilliant pre-Hispanic civilizations of all time. Yes, those Maya certainly knew a thing or two about architecture and they were no slouchers when it came to astronomy, science and mathematics either. Witnessing their remarkable achievements firsthand leaves a lasting impression on even the most jaded traveler. The peninsula is chock-full of these mind-blowing Maya archaeological sites, several of which were built right on the coast.

## Nature's Playground

The Yucatán always keeps nature enthusiasts thoroughly entertained. With colorful underwater scenery like no other, it offers some of the best diving and snorkeling sites in the world. Then you have the many biosphere reserves and national parks that are home to a wide array of animal and plant life. Just to give you an idea of what's in store: you can swim with whale sharks, observe crocodiles and monkeys, help liberate newborn sea turtles, and spy hundreds upon hundreds of bird species in mangroves and jungles.

## Culture & Fun

Those who need more than just pretty beaches and ancient ruins will be glad to know that cultural and recreational activities are plentiful in the Yucatán. On any given day you may come across soulful dance performances, free concerts, interesting museums and art shows – especially in Mérida, the peninsula's colonial cultural capital. For some fun in the sun, the Yucatán is one big splash fest after another, with thousands of underground natural pools, parks with subterranean rivers and all kinds of thrilling boat tours.



## Why I Love Cancún, Cozumel & the Yucatán

By John Hecht, Writer

Above all, I love the colors. Maybe I've been living in smog-choked Mexico City *waay* too long, but every time I visit the peninsula I find myself asking: can an ocean or lake really have that many shades of blue, and can jungles and mangroves really look so chlorophyll green? Also, it's just great to be in a place with so many outdoorsy things to do. Had your fill of Maya ruins? No problem, have a dip in a limestone sinkhole or explore coral reefs. And don't even get me started about the Yucatán's wonderful regional cuisine.

**For more about our writers, see page 320**