

# Directory

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## ACCOMMODATIONS

Accommodations in the Yucatán range from hammocks and *cabañas* to hotels of every imaginable standard to world-class luxury resorts. This book divides accommodations into three price ranges: budget (where a typical room for two people costs less than M\$550), midrange (M\$550 to M\$1200) and top end (more than M\$1200).

Rooms in Quintana Roo, especially in Cancún and the Riviera Maya, generally cost a bit more than in the rest of the peninsula. But by heading to the internet, you can often find good deals, especially in the off-season.

Budget options include camping grounds, hammocks, palm-thatched *cabañas*, backpacker hostels, guesthouses and economical hotels. Recommended accommodations in this category will be without frills but generally clean. Hotel rooms, even in the budget range, usually have a bathroom containing hot shower, toilet and washbasin. (In this book rooms are assumed to have a bathroom unless otherwise stated.)

Midrange accommodations are chiefly hotels. In some areas of the Yucatán M\$550 can get you a cozy, attractively decorated room in a friendly small hotel. Many of the region's most appealing and memorable lodgings are in the midrange bracket – small or medium-sized hotels that are well cared for, with a friendly atmosphere and personal attention from staff. In some areas you'll also find apartments, bungalows and more comfortable *cabañas* in this price range.

Top-end hotels run from classy international hotels in cities to deluxe coastal resorts and luxurious smaller establishments catering to travelers with a taste for comfort and beautiful design, and the funds to pay for them.

Room prices given in this book are high-season rates unless otherwise stated. In the Yucatán, high season runs from Christmas right through to Easter, plus most of July and August. Outside the high season, many midrange and top-end establishments in tourist destinations cut their room prices by 10% to 40%. They may also have special offers and low weekend rates. Budget accommodations are more likely to keep the same rates year-round. The hotels in the developed resort areas – such as Cancún and Playa del Carmen – tend to publish their rates in US dollars,

### BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at [www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels). You'll find the true, insider low-down on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

**PRACTICALITIES**

- All international visitors (including US and Canadian citizens) need a valid passport to enter Mexico.
- Mexico's only English-language daily is the *Herald*, an international edition of the *Miami Herald*, with a Mexico insert. It's available in some upmarket hotels in Mérida and Cancún and at some Sanborns stores.
- Mérida's *El Diario de Yucatán* ([www.yucatan.com.mx](http://www.yucatan.com.mx), in Spanish) is one of the country's most respected newspapers. *Yucatán Today* ([www.yucantoday.com](http://www.yucantoday.com)) offers good English-language info on Yucatán state.
- Local TV is dominated by Televisa, which runs four of the six national channels; TV Azteca has the other two. A growing number of viewers have multichannel cable or satellite systems, such as Cablevision or Sky TV.
- Electrical current is 110V, 60Hz, and most plugs have two flat prongs, just like in the USA and Canada.
- Mexicans use the metric system for weights and measures.
- DVDs are encoded for Zone 4, the same as for Australia and New Zealand, though most use the NTSC image registration system, which usually make them incompatible with the PAL system used in most of Western Europe and Australia. Many DVDs sold in Mexico are illegal copies.
- As a rule, don't drink the tap water. Cancún has potable tap water.

meaning a flux in the peso-to-dollar exchange rate can mean a big swing in actual on-the-ground price. In the rest of the peninsula, most places stick with the peso, sometimes moving their prices to follow the swings of the almighty greenback.

In this book we use 'single' (abbreviated 's') to mean a room for one person, and 'double' ('d') to mean a room for two people. Mexicans sometimes use the phrase *cuarto sencillo* (literally, single room) to mean a room with one bed, which is often a *cama matrimonial* (double bed). Sometimes one person can occupy such a room for a lower price than two people. A *cuarto doble* often means a room with two beds, which may both be *camas matrimoniales*.

In popular destinations, at busy times it's best to reserve a room in advance, or seek a room early in the day. Many places take reservations via their websites or by email. If a place is not booked out, a simple phone call earlier in the day, saying what time you'll arrive, is usually sufficient. A few places are reluctant to take reservations, but don't worry: you should end up with a room somewhere.

Accommodations prices are subject to two taxes: *impuesto de valor agregado* (IVA, or value-added tax; 15%) and *impuesto sobre hospedaje* (ISH, or lodging tax; 2% in most states). Many budget and some midrange establishments only charge these taxes if you require

a receipt. Generally, though, IVA and ISH are included in quoted prices. In top-end hotels a price may often be given as, say, 'M\$1000 *más impuestos*' (M\$1000 plus taxes), in which case you must add 17% to the figure. When in doubt, you can ask '*¿Están incluidos los impuestos?*' (Are taxes included?). Prices given in this book are those you are most likely to be charged at each place, around high season unless stated otherwise, with or without the taxes according to the establishment's policy.

Mexico has instituted a policy in which foreigners leaving by boat or air can get a refund on their IVA for individual purchases totaling more than M\$1200. The program is being operated by **Yvesam** (☎ 998-866-0952; [www.yvesam.com.mx](http://www.yvesam.com.mx)). There is a Yvesam kiosk in the Cancún, Puerto Vallarta, Los Cabos and Mexico City airports. You'll need to have your receipts with you.

**Apartments & B&Bs**

In some places you can find *departamentos* (apartments) for tourists with fully equipped kitchens. Some are very comfortable and they can be good value for three or four people. Tourist offices and advertisements in local newspapers (especially English-language newspapers) are good sources of information, as are [www.locogringo.com](http://www.locogringo.com) and [www.tacolist.com.mx](http://www.tacolist.com.mx).