

Quintana Roo



You'd think that as one of Mexico's most visited states, it'd be impossible to find a bit of solitude in Quintana Roo (kin-tah-nah *roh*). But beyond the thumping clubs of Cancún and crowded theme parks of the Riviera Maya, you just might find your own quiet piece of paradise.

There are talcum-powder beaches stretching all the way from Cancún to the Belize border, unassuming Caribbean islands protected by the world's second-largest barrier reef, and impressive Maya sites throughout this long-arching sliver of limestone, salt and sea.

It's the peninsula's superstate, highly developed, heavily touristed, easy to get around and chock-full of adventure opportunities – whether exploring the depths of the region's numerous cenotes (limestone sinkholes filled with fresh water) and world-class dive sites or beating your own path to seldom-visited ruins in the Maya heartland, such as Dzibanché and Kohunlich.

Most trips to Quintana Roo will begin and end in Cancún. Chicer-than-thou Playa del Carmen, Cozumel (truly a diver's delight) and Isla Mujeres round out the not-at-all-off-the-beaten-track-but-still-a-pretty-damned-good-place-to-spend-your-vacation fairylands of Quintana Roo.

Further down the coast, Tulum boasts an immaculately preserved Maya ruin, plus a laid-back vibe that'll have you extending your travel plans for at least another week. Continue your trip down from there, and you'll find more beaches along the Costa Maya, waterfront camping at Laguna Bacalar and plenty of small Maya villages still lost to time.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Set out for a morning bird-watching mission from the remote Costa Maya beach town of **Xcalak** (p133), heading out a bit later for a dive at **Banco Chinchorro** (p132)
- Stay out till dawn in one of the happening beachfront clubs in **Playa del Carmen** (p103), taking the ferry across to **Isla Cozumel** (p104) the next day for a snorkel and a swim
- Take a whale-shark excursion from **Isla Holbox** (see boxed text, p92)
- Go iguana-spotting among the mysterious, spectacularly situated ruins of **Tulum** (p120)
- Marvel at Jurassic-like jungles amid the mysterious ruins of **Kohunlich** (p142) and **Dzibanché** (p141)



■ POPULATION: 1.14 MILLION

■ AREA: 50,351 SQ KM

