



Mexico's Yucatán & Chiapas

52 / POP 8.9 MILLION (YUCATÁN, QUINTANA ROO, CAMPECHE AND CHIAPAS STATES)

Includes →

Cancún	43
Isla Mujeres	49
Valladolid	50
Chichén Itzá	51
Mérida	54
Playa del Carmen	59
Isla Cozumel	61
Tulum	64
Campeche	68
San Cristóbal de las Casas	72
Palenque	79

Best Places to Eat

- La Chaya Maya (p58)
- La Cueva del Chango (p59)
- Conato 1910 (p51)
- Mañana (p50)
- Tierradentro (p77)

Best Places to Stay

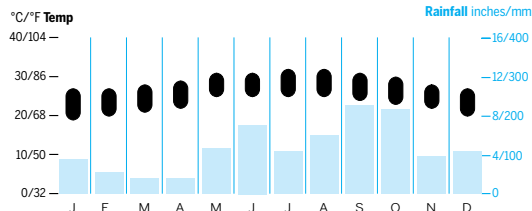
- Poc-Na Hostel (p49)
- Nómadas Hostel (p55)
- Hotel López (p69)
- El Jardín de Frida (p65)
- Posada La Media Luna (p75)

Why Go?

Flanked by the turquoise waters of the Caribbean and the wildlife-rich Gulf coast, the steamy Yucatán Peninsula is a wonderland of Maya jungle ruins, picturesque limestone swimming holes, colorful coral reefs and soulful colonial cities. Sure, the Yucatán is Mexico's busiest tourist destination – and, not surprisingly, its most expensive – but you can still score affordable sleeps and eats, even in apparently pricey tourist centers. Exploring the Yucatán pays big rewards: you can delve into Maya culture, chill in out-of-the-way fishing villages, observe nature on a boat tour, or simply enjoy some of Mexico's finest regional cuisine. Down south in Chiapas, home to the Zapatistas, you'll love San Cristóbal de las Casas, a lovely highland colonial city surrounded by pine forest, while in Palenque it's all about the extraordinary Maya ruins set in a celestial cloud forest. No matter where the road takes you, life is pretty darn sweet in this corner of Mexico.

When to Go

Cancún



Mar Don't miss the shadowy serpent's appearance in Chichén Itzá at vernal equinox.

May-Sep Swim with gigantic whale sharks at Isla Holbox.

Oct-Nov Cooler climes and cheaper accommodations make low season an ideal time to visit.

Connections

From Mexico you can loop into Guatemala – from San Cristóbal de las Casas to Quetzaltenango, or to Tikal via Palenque – and into Corozal, Belize, from Chetumal, south of Tulum. The best way into Guatemala is from Ciudad Cuauhtémoc, near La Mesilla, Guatemala. Another option is crossing into Guatemala from the Mexican border town of Tapachula, further southwest. For more detailed information, see Survival Guide on p90.

FIRST TIME IN MEXICO'S YUCATÁN AND CHIAPAS

One Week

Greet the first day with a splash in the turquoise waters of **Cancún's** Zona Hotelera, then hit downtown for affordable eats and some nocturnal mischief. Cancún makes a good base to visit nearby **Isla Mujeres**, which arguably has the most beautiful beaches in the Mexican Caribbean. Return to the mainland and head south for **Playa del Carmen**, an ultrachic party town and the jumping-off point for **Isla Cozumel**, a world-famous diving destination. Next, check out **Tulum**, known for its spectacular oceanfront Maya ruins, and if time allows, head inland to **Cobá**, a Maya archaeological site set in the jungle.

Two Weeks

From Cobá head to **Valladolid**, a colonial city with a small-town feel. West of Valladolid awaits **Chichén Itzá**, the mother of all Maya ruins. Continue on to the peninsula's cultural capital, **Mérida**, and spend several days indulging in yucateco cuisine and taking in the city's ample entertainment offerings. Then go south to the immaculately preserved walled city of **Campeche**. Stop at the archaeological sites of **Edzná** and **Calakmul** as you make your way down to the southern state of Chiapas. Even if you're all ruined-out at this point, still drop by **Palenque**, where unforgettable Maya structures sit pretty in a dreamlike cloud forest. For the last leg of the trip, hit **San Cristóbal de las Casas**, a pleasant highland colonial town.

Essential Food & Drink

- **Cochinita pibil** Slow-cooked pork marinated in citrus juices and a spice made from annatto seed.
- **Sopa de lima** Soup with shredded turkey, lime and tortilla.
- **Papadzules** Diced hard-boiled eggs wrapped in tortilla and topped with pumpkin seed and tomato sauces.
- **Panuchos** Fried tortilla filled with beans and topped with chicken, lettuce and pickled red onion.

AT A GLANCE

Currency Mexican Peso (M\$)

Language Spanish and Maya

Money ATMs in most towns

Visas Not required for many countries (see p89)

Time GMT minus six hours; minus five hours during daylight-saving time

Fast Facts

- **Area** Yucatán Peninsula and Chiapas 220,700 sq km
- **State capitals** Chetumal (Quintana Roo), Tuxtla Gutiérrez (Chiapas), Campeche (Campeche), Mérida (Yucatán)
- **Emergency** ☎066

Set Your Budget

- **Hostel bed/budget room** M\$150/M\$500
- **Evening meal** M\$100
- **Bus ticket** M\$180 (three-hour trip)
- **Ruins admission** M\$50 to M\$180

Resources

- **Yucatán Today** (www.yucatanoday.com) Covers Yucatán and Campeche
- **Yucatán Tierra de Maravillas** (www.yucatan.travel) All things Yucatán
- **Campeche Travel** (www.campeche.travel) Campeche tourism board