



# Mexico's Yucatán & Chiapas

52 / POP 8.9 MILLION

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Nohoch Kay (p70)
- ➔ Kiosco Verde (p55)
- ➔ Yerba Buena del Sisal (p71)
- ➔ Tierradentro (p85)

## Best Places to Sleep

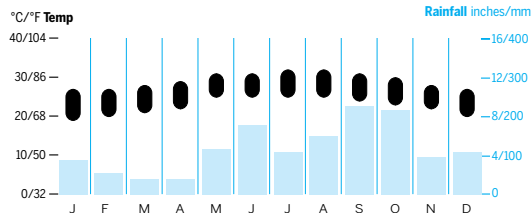
- ➔ Poc-Na Hostel (p57)
- ➔ Hotel El Rey del Caribe (p50)
- ➔ Hotel López (p81)
- ➔ Madre Sal (p89)
- ➔ L'Hotelito (p67)

## Why Go?

Flanked by the turquoise waters of the Caribbean and the wildlife-rich Gulf coast, the Yucatán Peninsula wows visitors with its Maya ruins, 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 tranquil fishing villages, observe a wide variety of nature, and 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 gorgeous highland colonial city surrounded by pine forest, while in Palenque it's all about the extraordinary ruins set in a celestial jungle. No matter where the road takes you, life is pretty darn sweet in this corner of Mexico.

## When to Go

### Cancún



**Jan** Cultural capital Mérida hosts a month-long festival featuring concerts, art and dance.

**Jun–Sep** Swim with ginormous whale sharks near 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. Frequent buses run from Chetumal's Nuevo Mercado Lázaro Cárdenas to various destinations in Belize. The best way into Guatemala is at 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 p98.

### ITINERARIES

#### 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 and Isla Blanca, which arguably boast the most beautiful beaches in the Mexican Caribbean. Return to the mainland and head south for Playa del Carmen, where you can catch a ferry to Isla Cozumel, a world-famous diving destination. Next, head on down to Tulum, known for its spectacular oceanfront Maya ruins, and, if time allows, head further south to Mahahual, a laid-back fishing village with excellent dive sites.

#### Two Weeks

At the start of your second week, return north to catch the turnoff 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 Yucatecan cuisine and enjoying the city's ample entertainment offerings. From there 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, drop by Palenque, where unforgettable Maya structures sit pretty in a dreamlike forest. For the last leg of the trip, hit San Cristóbal de las Casas, a highland colonial town surrounded by Maya villages.

## Essential Food & Drink

- ➔ **Cochinita pibil** Slow-cooked pork marinated in citrus juices and annatto seed spice.
- ➔ **Panuchos** Fried tortilla filled with beans and topped with chicken, lettuce and pickled red onion.
- ➔ **Mezcal** An alcoholic agave drink that packs a mighty punch.
- ➔ **Sopa de lima** Soup with shredded turkey, lime and tortilla strips.
- ➔ **Papadzules** Diced hard-boiled eggs wrapped in tortilla and topped with pumpkin seed and tomato sauces.

### AT A GLANCE

**Currency** Mexican peso (M\$)

**Language** Spanish and Maya

**Money** ATMs in most towns

**Visas** Not required for many countries

**Time** GMT minus six hours

**Area** Yucatán Peninsula and Chiapas 220,700 sq km

**Emergency** ☎ 066

## Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	M\$13.59
Belize	BZ\$1	M\$9.15
Canada	C\$1	M\$14.29
Euro zone	€1	M\$20.67
Guatemala	Q\$1	M\$2.37
Japan	¥100	M\$16.96
New Zealand	NZ\$1	M\$12.92
UK	UK\$1	M\$26.29
USA	US\$1	M\$18.11

## Set Your Budget

- ➔ **Hostel bed/budget room** M\$170/M\$550
- ➔ **Evening meal** M\$100
- ➔ **Bus ticket** M\$190 (three-hour trip)
- ➔ **Ruins admission** M\$50 to M\$220

## Resources

- ➔ **Yucatán Today** ([www.yucatanoday.com](http://www.yucatanoday.com))
- ➔ **Caribe Mexicano** ([www.caribemexicano.gob.mx/en](http://www.caribemexicano.gob.mx/en))
- ➔ **Turismo Chiapas** ([www.turismochiapas.gob.mx](http://www.turismochiapas.gob.mx))