



Cancún & Around

📍 998 / POP 628,300

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Why Go?

Cancún is a tale of two cities. There's the glitzy hotel zone with its famous white-sand beaches, unabashed party scene and sophisticated seafood restaurants. Then there's the actual city itself, which gives you a taste of local flavor at, say, a neighborhood bar or taco joint.

That's what keeps Cancún interesting. Had your fill of raucous discos in the hotel zone? Escape to a downtown salsa or jazz club. Tired of lounging around the pool in Ciudad Cancún? Simply hop on a bus and head for the sapphire waters of the hotel zone. Or even better, venture out and explore more of Quintana Roo state. Just a day trip away from Cancún, the pristine national park of Isla Contoy beckons with a fascinating variety of bird and plant species. And up north awaits low-key Isla Holbox, where swimming with massive whale sharks has become all the rage.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Checándole (p63)
- ➔ El Paisano del 23 (p61)
- ➔ Lorenzillo's (p65)
- ➔ Viva Zapata (p73)
- ➔ Los Peleones (p74)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Hotel El Rey del Caribe (p61)
- ➔ Hostel Mundo Joven (p59)
- ➔ Le Blanc (p64)
- ➔ Casa Takywara (p72)
- ➔ Hotel Arena (p72)

When to Go

- ➔ A visit to Cancún in April/May, in the wake of spring break madness, shows you a relatively quiet side of the resort city, plus many accommodations offer great online deals.
- ➔ Don't miss the thrilling opportunity to snorkel with whale sharks off the coast of Isla Holbox; the gentle giants congregate around the island from mid-May to September.
- ➔ Four species of sea turtles flock to the shores of Parque Nacional Isla Contoy for nesting season from April to October; the uninhabited island is also home to more than 150 bird species.



Cancún & Around Highlights

- 1 Dive among life-size sculptures at the one-of-a-kind **Museo Subacuático de Arte** (p57)
- 2 Swim with massive whale sharks and enjoy laid-back island living on **Isla Holbox** (p71)
- 3 Snorkel and get in some birding at the uninhabited island of **Isla Contoy** (p70), a wildlife refuge that receives only 200 visitors a day
- 4 Grab dinner and drinks in **Ciudad Cancún** (p61), then shake your booty to live salsa music
- 5 Chill on the soft sands of the **Zona Hotelera** (p56), take a dip in the Caribbean blue, then check out the city's new Maya museum