



Isla Cozumel

📍 987 / POP 77,200

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Best Places to Stay

- Hotel B Cozumel (p92)
- Hotel Flamingo (p91)
- Casa Mexicana (p92)
- Hostelito (p90)
- Guido's Boutique Hotel (p92)

Best Places to Eat

- Kinta (p93)
- La Cocay (p93)
- Pepe's Grill (p93)
- Restaurant La Choza (p93)
- Taquería El Sitio (p93)

Why Go?

Cozumel is too resilient, too proud to let itself become just another cheesy cruise ship destination. Leaving the tourist area – and the gringo-friendly souvenir shops behind – you still see an island of quiet cool and genuine authenticity. Garages still have shrines to the Virgin, there's a spirited Caribbean pathos, and of course there are some tourist things to do – such as diving down to some of the best reefs in the world.

While diving and snorkeling are the main draws, the pleasant town square is a nice place to spend the afternoon, and it's highly gratifying to explore the less-visited parts of the island on a rented scooter or convertible bug. The coastal road leads to small Maya ruins, a marine park and captivating scenery along the unforgettable windswept shore.

When to Go

- The festive Carnival celebration in February brings live music acts and dancers festooned with feathers out into the streets. It's not Rio de Janeiro, but it sure is a hoot.
- In late April and early May folks in the town of El Cedral pay tribute to Caste War refugees with a fun-filled fair featuring rides, rodeos and traditional dance, including the time-honored Dance of the Pigs' Heads.
- If you're planning a trip around diving and snorkeling you might want to visit in April or May when you don't have to worry about hurricanes or strong winter winds.

History

Maya settlement here dates from AD 300. During the Postclassic period, Cozumel flourished as a trade center and, more importantly, a ceremonial site. Every Maya woman living on the Yucatán Peninsula and beyond was expected to make at least one pilgrimage here to pay tribute to Ixchel,

the goddess of fertility and the moon, at a temple erected in her honor. Archaeologists believe this temple was at San Gervasio, a bit north of the island's geographical center.

At the time of the first Spanish contact with Cozumel (in 1518, by Juan de Grijalva and his men), there were at least 32 Maya building groups on the island. According to



Isla Cozumel Highlights

- 1 Plunge into the deep blue and explore some of the world's best **dive sites** (p91), offering the likes of drift diving and imposing underwater walls that descend deep into the Caribbean
- 2 Rent a scooter, bike or car to cruise the coastal road to **Maya ruins** and **beaches**

along Cozumel's wild, windswept southeastern side (p89)

- 3 Spend an evening hanging out at a bar or sidewalk restaurant in the buzzing town plaza of **San Miguel de Cozumel** (p93)
- 4 Learn all kinds of interesting tidbits about the

island's geology and Maya history at the **Museo de la Isla de Cozumel** (p86)

- 5 Take the kids to see turtles, crocs and sea lions at **Parque Chankanaab** (p89) and while you're there get in some snorkeling or enjoy a relaxing *temazcal* (steam bath)