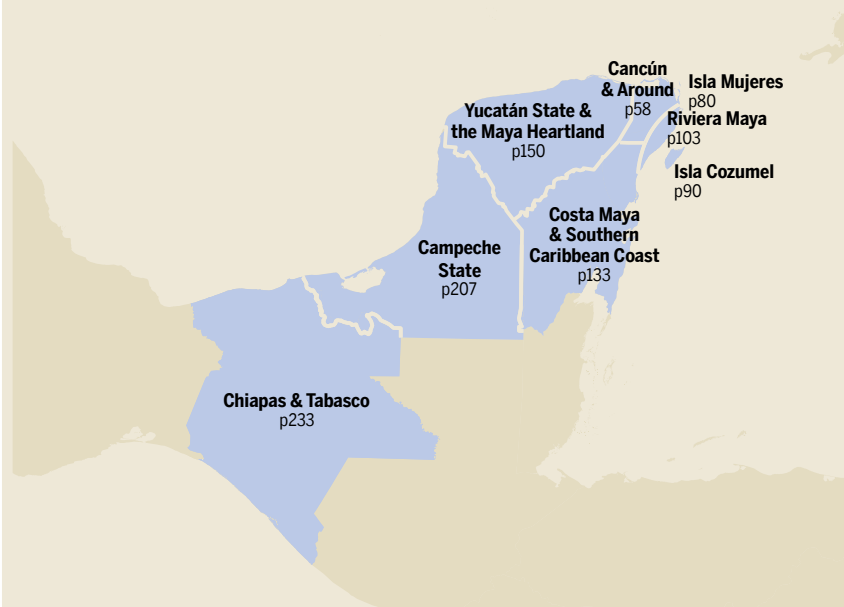




Cancún, Cozumel & the Yucatán



Ashley Harrell, Ray Bartlett, Stuart Butler, John Hecht

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Plan Your Trip

Itineraries



Cancún & the Riviera Maya

The road from Cancún to Cobá is chock-full of surprises. Along the way you'll find fun-filled cenotes (limestone sinkholes), astonishing Maya ruins and sweet little beach towns with sugar-white sands.

Get things started with a dip in the sapphire waters along the Zona Hotelera (hotel zone) of **Cancún** or hit the secluded beaches north of downtown on Isla Blanca, then return to town for dinner, drinks and perhaps some salsa dancing.

After a day or two in Cancún, make your way south about 30km and stop in **Puerto Morelos** to duck out to the beach, browse for handmade crafts and get in some snorkeling or diving.

Next, spend a little time beach-bumming and partying in uberchic **Playa del Carmen**, a large city with a dizzying array of restaurants, bars and discos.

Playa, as it's called, is a good jumping-off point for **Isla Cozumel**, where you can enjoy some of the best diving in the world, quiet beaches on the island's windswept side and a pleasant town plaza. Frequent ferries run between Playa and Cozumel.





Puerto Morelos (p105)

Back on the mainland, you'll definitely want to make time for **Tulum**, where Maya ruins are perched atop a spectacular cliff overlooking the Mexican Caribbean. While at the site, take the stairs down to the beach and have a refreshing swim to cool off. Stay the night in Tulum's town, where the main drag is lined with happening bars and restaurants, or head 3km south to the coast and get a bungalow in Tulum's hip and happening Zona Hotelera.

With an early start, take off for the Maya ruins of **Cobá** (find the road to Cobá at Tulum's north end). Once inside this archaeological site, rent a bicycle

and marvel at jungle ruins connected by ancient paths. Stop for lunch at a lakeside restaurant in Cobá, then on the way back to Tulum, drop by the **Gran Cenote** for a swim or snorkel in a large sinkhole with small fish.

This easy 170km trip stays close to Cancún and there's frequent transport to all of these destinations, or you can just rent a car.

10
DAYS

Maya Country

The architectural and artistic achievements of the Maya are prominently displayed across the peninsula. Though the ancient cities are long abandoned, the Maya people and their traditions are still very present. One can spend weeks, even months, visiting all the ruins, archaeological museums and small Maya towns.

For background, visit the shiny Museo Maya de Cancún in the heart of the Zona Hotelera in **Cancún**, where admission includes access to adjoining Maya ruins.

Hit the road the next day and spend a day or two in the colonial town of **Valladolid**, a former Maya ceremonial center with a climbable pyramid near the town square. For some respite from your Maya itinerary, drop by **Cenote X'Kekén y Samulá** on your way out of town and take a plunge into a spectacular limestone cavern pool.

Next set aside a day for **Chichén Itzá**, a Maya archaeological site that was named one of the 'new seven wonders of the world.' Get an early start to beat the tour-bus crowds. Head slightly further south for a bird-watching or cultural tour with Yucatán Jay Expeditions & Tours in their local community.

A route then leads to **Oxkutzcab** and **Tekax**, offering glimpses of traditional Maya life. While in Oxkutzcab, check out the nearby **Grutas de Loltún**, the largest cave system on the peninsula.

The following day move on to **Santa Elena**, which makes a fine base for exploring the impressive ruins of **Uxmal**, Kabah and several other archaeological sites tucked away in the rolling Puuc hills.

After crossing the Yucatán-Campeche border, stop at **Hopelchén**, where in a nearby village, you can see the tradition of beekeeping.

Make your way to the walled city of **Campeche**, a good base for visiting **Edzná**, a formidable Maya site with a five-story temple. The peninsula's south harbors numerous fascinating but scarcely visited remnants of classic Maya civilization ensconced in the vast **Reserva de la Biosfera Calakmul**.

Extend your explorations for several days to the ruins of **Palenque** and the contemporary Maya domain of **San Cristóbal de las Casas**, both in Chiapas.

Most destinations on this route are reachable by bus or shared transport vehicles, but for some you'll need to hire a car, taxi or go with a tour operator.

PEW/SUTTERSTOCK ©



JOHN MITCHELL/LAAM STOCK ©



Top: Grutas de Loltún (p176)

Bottom: Jade mask, Museo Maya de Cancún (p60)



Off the Beaten Track: Cancún, Cozumel & Yucatan

DZILAM DE BRAVO & SANTA CLARA

The white-sand beaches are so quiet here and the pace so slow that you wonder if *mañana* will ever come – the ultimate escapist's retreat. (p187)

OXKUTZCAB

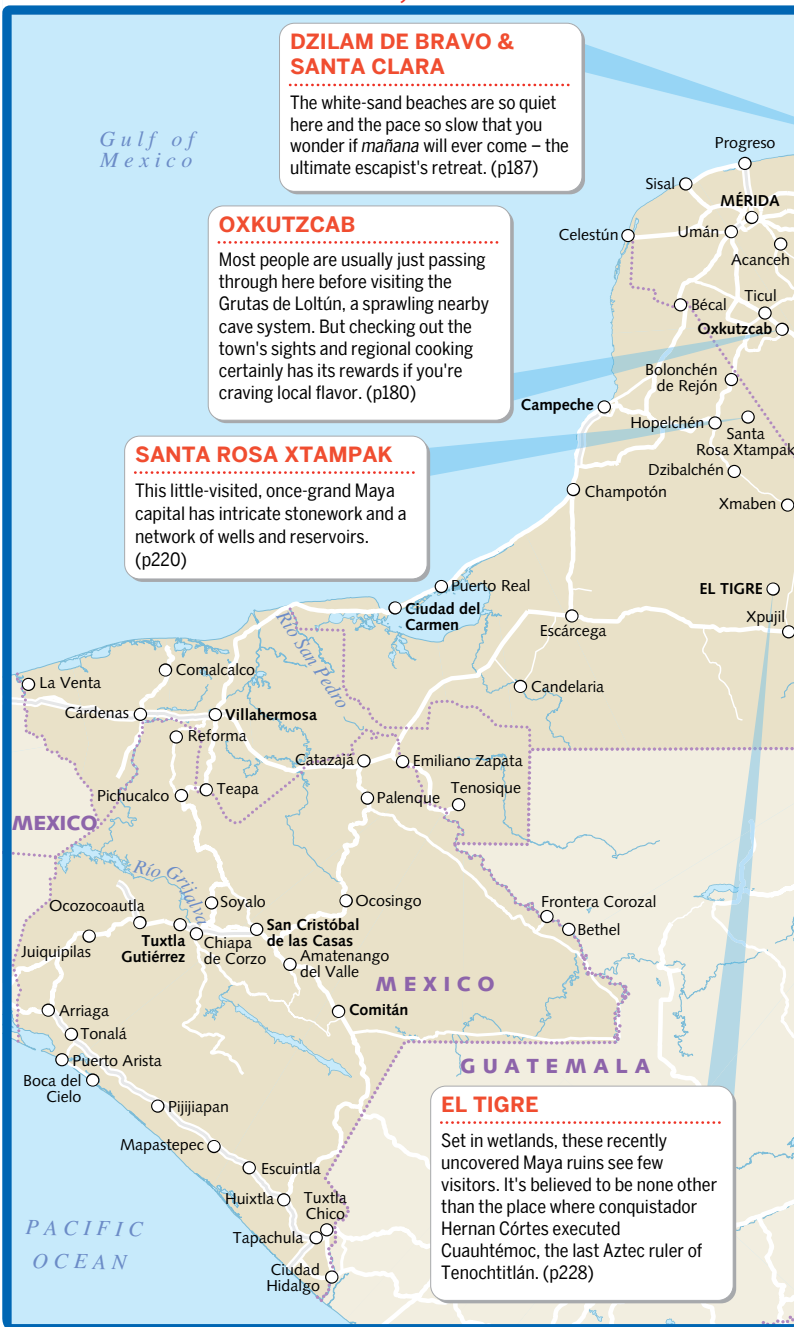
Most people are usually just passing through here before visiting the Grutas de Loltún, a sprawling nearby cave system. But checking out the town's sights and regional cooking certainly has its rewards if you're craving local flavor. (p180)

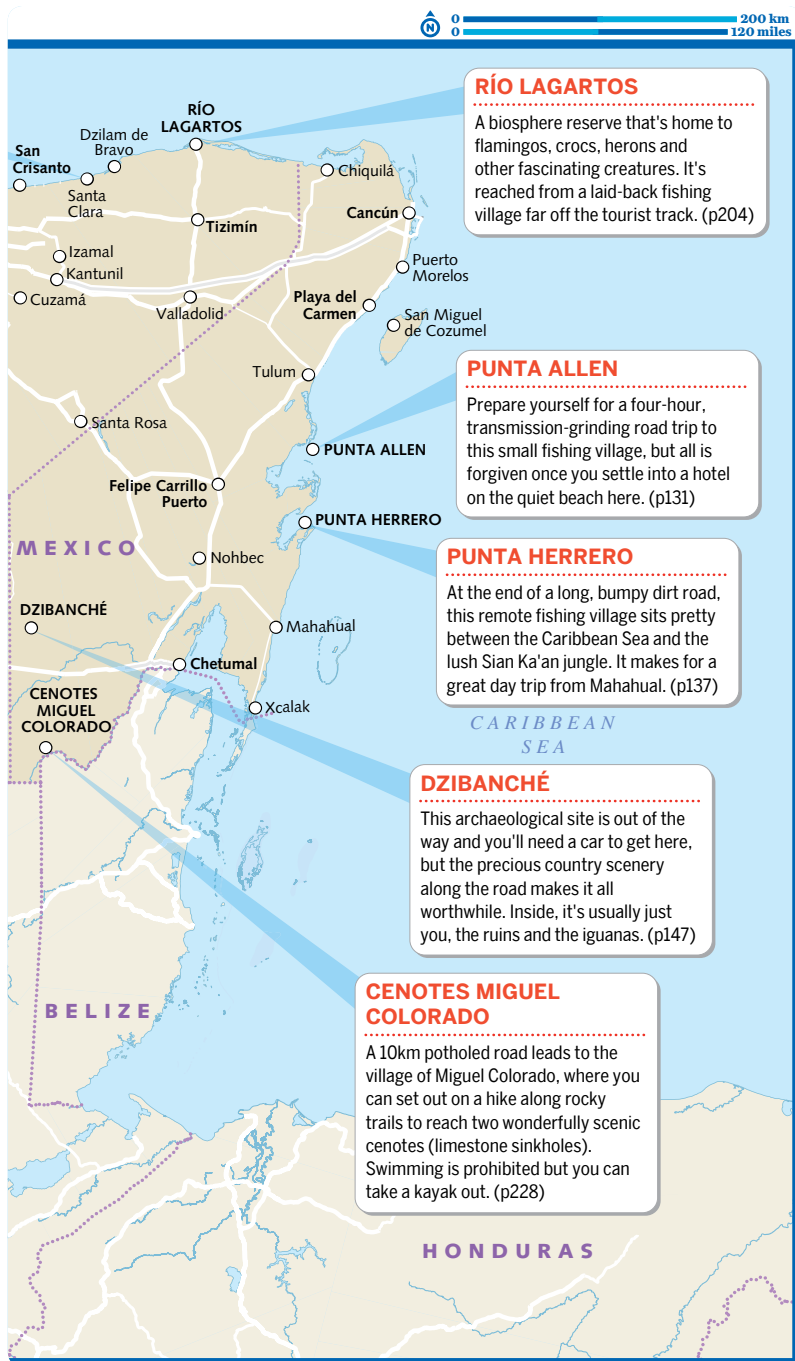
SANTA ROSA XTAMPAK

This little-visited, once-grand Maya capital has intricate stonework and a network of wells and reservoirs. (p220)

EL TIGRE

Set in wetlands, these recently uncovered Maya ruins see few visitors. It's believed to be none other than the place where conquistador Hernan Cortés executed Cuauhtémoc, the last Aztec ruler of Tenochtitlán. (p228)





Behind the Scenes

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OUR READERS

Many thanks to the travelers who used the last edition and wrote to us with helpful hints, useful advice and interesting anecdotes:

Kirsten Aitken, Sieska Bervoets-Martens, Ryan Crawford-Emery, Rikke Hald, Anna Iwanek, Liv Kirk, Patrice Racine, Madeline Ravesloot, Jimmy Seymour, Ellen van Steen, Karen Wallace, Ken Woods

WRITER THANKS

Ashley Harrell

I'd like to thank a few wonderful people (and one enthusiastic dog) for accompanying me through various parts of Mexico. Stacey Auch and Erin Morris, let us be friends and road-trip warriors forever. Amy Guthrie, Carlos Andrade, Savannah and Nico, you are fabulous hosts and people. Adam Williams and Isabella Cota, we'll always have Patrick Miller. Matt Levin, you're a joy to eat tacos with. And Dad, you're a gentleman and a champion. Love you.

Ray Bartlett

Thanks first and always to my family and friends, for letting me go on these adventures and still remembering me when I get back, or

for joining me whenever possible. Huge thanks to Sarah Stocking for the editorial wisdom and advice, to my co-author John, and the rest of the LP staff. To all people I met or who helped me along the way, especially Naomi, Vivian, Odile, Ale, Ezequiel, Fabiola, Selena, Yuli, Alex, and so many others. Thanks so much. Can't wait to be back again soon.

John Hecht

Very special thanks to Jesus Navarrete, Ursula Reischl, Chicken Willy, destination editor Sarah Stocking, co-author Ray Bartlett and to all the *quintanarooenses* for their generous support and the good times. As always, my heartfelt gratitude to Lau for taking care of the kitties and everything else.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Climate map data adapted from Peel MC, Finlayson BL & McMahon TA (2007) 'Updated World Map of the Köppen-Geiger Climate Classification', *Hydrology and Earth System Sciences*, 11, 1633–44.

Chichén Itzá illustration pp190–1 by Michael Weldon

Cover photograph: El Castillo, Chichén Itzá, Vincent St Thomas/Alamy ©

THIS BOOK

This 8th edition of Lonely Planet's *Cancún, Cozumel & the Yucatán* guidebook was curated by Ashley Harrell and researched and written by Ray Bartlett, Stuart Butler and John Hecht. The previous edition was researched and written by John Hecht and Lucas Vidgen with contribu-

tions by Mauricio Velázquez de León. This guidebook was produced by the following:

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Thanks to Vicky Smith

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Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkeling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping
- Hut/Shelter

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Subway/Subte station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Ashley Harrell

After a brief stint selling day-spa coupons door-to-door in South Florida, Ashley decided she'd rather be a writer. She went to journalism grad school, convinced a newspaper to hire her, and started covering wildlife, crime and tourism, sometimes all in the same story. Fueling her zest for storytelling and the unknown, she traveled widely and moved often, from a tiny NYC apartment to a vast California ranch to a jungle cabin in Costa Rica, where she started writing for Lonely Planet.



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Yucatán State & the Maya Heartland, Campeche State Ray has been travel writing for nearly two decades, bringing Japan, Korea, Mexico, Tanzania, Guatemala, Indonesia and many parts of the United States to life in rich detail for top-industry publishers, newspapers and magazines. His acclaimed debut novel, *Sunsets of Tulum*, set in the Yucatán, was a Midwest Book Review 2016 Fiction pick. Among other pursuits, he surfs regularly and is an accomplished tango dancer.



Stuart Butler

Chiapas & Tabasco Stuart has been writing for Lonely Planet for a decade, and during this time he's come eye to eye with gorillas in the Congolese jungle, met a man with horns on his head who could lie in fire, huffed and puffed over snow-bound Himalayan mountain passes, interviewed a king who could turn into a tree, and had his fortune told by a parrot. When not on the road he lives in Southwest France with his wife and two young children.



John Hecht

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Published by Lonely Planet Global Limited

CRN 554153

8th edition – July 2019

ISBN 978 1 78657 487 9

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in China

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