

Mayan Yucatan without the Cruise Crowds!

January 16-22 2020

Double Occupancy \$1795 Single +\$350 Deposit \$500

We begin our adventure in Cancun. We quickly leave the cruise crowds to enter the real Mayan Yucatan where we visit 4 UNESCO Heritage sites. We station ourselves in one of the most interesting cities in Mexico: Merida. Merida has the 3rd largest preserved historic center in the Western Hemisphere, surpassed only by Havana and Mexico City. Carved Mayan stones are still visible in colonial buildings. Merida is also a center of indigenous life; 60% of its population is of Mayan ethnicity.

We stay in ***the perfect hotel in Merida. Casa de Balam***, a restored Art Deco mansion, with pool, garden dining, air conditioning, free wifi in public areas, hairdryers, mini bar, tv, etc. Its central location means easy access to shops and restaurants.

January 16 Cancún

After landing, claim luggage and meet our representative, transfer to our Cancun hotel. We leave the airport at 1:30PM. Enjoy the amenities of our hotel until dinner in its restaurant. Tonight welcome dinner together. *Note: many airlines fly to Cancun: American, United, JetBlue, Aeromexico, Delta etc. There are official taxis at the airport with a 'starter' who controls them.* If you arrive at a different time, there is an organized taxi line at the airport, with a flat fee paid at a desk. Cancun is small and the ride is short to the hotel. **Welcome dinner- all dinners include a bottle of water and a glass of wine.**

Jan 17 Cancun to Merida Casa del Balam, for 4 nights.

Before leaving, we visit the excellent "Museo Maya". The Mayas developed one of the most important MesoAmerican civilizations lasting 3,000 years. We proceed to the archaeological "San Miguelito". Now we drive to the major site Chichén Itzá. Only about 30 of many buildings overgrown by jungle have been uncovered and restored. "El Castillo," is the most impressive (98 ft. high). We leave the crowds continuing to the real Yucatan. Drives are on modern roads.

Breakfast and Dinner.



Jan 18 Mérida

Founded in 1542, Mérida is the cultural capital of Yucatán with colonial charm, narrow streets, and horse-drawn carriages. The influence of Spain and France is everywhere. The Champs-Élysées, for example, became a model for the Paseo de Montejo. See the cathedral, Palacio Municipal, and Casa de Montejo. We learn about Mexican cooking on a market tour with a local chef, who will talk about local specialties, and we taste some of the food! We continue sightseeing to the small fishing village of Celestun.

Here we take a boat to the colonies of pink flamingos and other birds in natural habitat. We then visit the most historic hacienda in the area, Yaxcopoil (17th century). The ruins are set in beautiful landscape; you feel the legacy of European wealth. Bring binoculars for tropical birds. Dinner at the restaurant “La Chaya Maya” in the historic center of

Mérida with fine Yucatan cuisine in colonial ambiance. **Breakfast and Dinner**

Jan 19 Mérida, Uxmal, Mayan villages + Chocolate

The name **Uxmal** means “built three times.” Built 600 to 950 AD, the site is impressive, with decorated façades, vast terraces, squares, columns, and archways. Last time our group was the only visitor here so had the whole complex to ourselves.

We visit the chocolate museum, “Ecomuseo del Cacao,” for history of cocoa and its mystical connection with Mayans. Nestled in a beautiful garden with orchids and indigenous fauna, are Mayan houses filled with information about chocolate! Try the traditional Maya drink made from cocoa beans and spices and enjoy the sweet and spicy taste of the “black gold.” You will want to bring home local chocolate.

We finish with a visit to a traditional Mayan village, untouched by tourism. Studied by archaeologists, Santa Elena is unchanged. Here is first hand insight into the everyday life of villagers. Breakfast and Dinner Restaurant Pigua Merida



Jan 20 Edzna and Campeche

Often overlooked, Edzná ruled large parts of The Yucatán. The most beautiful building “Edificio de los Cinco Pisos”, is one of the most interesting buildings in the entire Maya culture. Now we enter the life of the Conquistadors in Campeche. Set on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, Campeche is one of the most perfect cities in Mexico. Campeche is walled (against pirate attacks), with



narrow streets, restored colonial buildings, plazas, markets, the Zócalo and Cathedral of La Concepción. **Breakfast and Dinner Restaurant Apola.**

Jan 21 Free Day

A full free day in Merida. This was requested by our earlier groups so here it is. Merida is full of shops, from cheap markets to quality jewelry and clothing. It is walkable and we will make suggestions for this day. **Breakfast and Dinner**

Jan 22 Mérida – Cancún

We leave this morning for Cancun Airport, arriving around 1PM where our transfer ends. **Do not book your flight earlier than 3PM. Breakfast**

Extend your stay in Cancun at charming Hotel Beachscape Kin-Ha Villas and Suites, \$140 at writing, with breakfast/ taxes. Extra nights can be booked pending availability.

Included One transfer Cancun Airport to Hotel and from Merida to Cancun Airport, meals as noted, accommodations for 6 nights as noted, all entrance fees as in the program, English speaking guide Day 1-7, 1 piece of luggage portorage per person, tips to maids, 1 bottle water per person per day on the bus, modern air conditioned Mercedes sprinter vehicle.

Not Included meals not included, drinks at meals, any personal items, tips to driver and guide, airfare, extra overnights in Cancun, and any other services not mentioned in the itinerary. Meals in Mexico are about \$10+ for lunch and \$20+ for dinner + drinks. All our trips are non refundable a minimum of 90 days before departure unless noted differently.

Our Hotel Upon a beautiful beach at the Zona Hotelera Cancún, rests the hotel Beachscape. Spend an unforgettable holiday under the sun of the Mexican Caribbean and enjoy the resort's carefully landscaped tropical garden. In addition, the spacious outdoor pool invites you to into cool waters. Pure relaxation awaits you in the spa area, which offers a delicious chocolate treatment. A fully equipped gym is also available. The two restaurants offer international dishes along with Mexican specialties and seafood. The entire interior design is inspired by colonial style. In the 130 rooms you find numerous rattan and wood elements. Private balconies offer views towards the Caribbean Sea or the palm trees of the garden.