

# MEXICO



Think Mexico and an image of a large country 1.9million sq km with a population of 111,211,789, over-commercialised beach resorts like Cancun full of Americans on ‘spring break’, comes to mind. That was my image before I recently travelled to the gorgeous Riviera Maya located on the Yucatan Peninsula in the heartland of the ancient Mayan Civilisation. Here world class hotel companies like One & Only, Orient Express, Banyan and Rosewood Hotels along with many other hotels have been operating for several years. Riviera Maya not only has wonderful hotels, soft white sands and crystal clear waters, which are home to the second largest reef in the world, it still holds the charm and history of the ancient Mayans.

Riviera Maya is accessed from Cancun International Airport. Flights from the UK are from London Gatwick direct with either Charter airlines or Scheduled Virgin or British Airways both of which offer economy, premium economy or upper class. I flew Virgin premium economy going out and economy coming back. Personally I think premium economy is worth every penny as the supplement is not very expensive approximately £199.00 per person each way and it is in a class of its own. Enjoy dedicated check-in, priority boarding and disembarkation, relax with a pre-flight drink, in a spacious 38” seat pitch, choose from a dedicated menu and the meal is served with stainless steel cutlery. Both classes have seat back screens with a wide range of on demand

entertainment, complimentary meals and drinks. The flight time is 10 hours 45minutes going and 9 hours on the return.

Mexico is GMT -6 hours

Mexico has mainly a warm climate overall, the period from December to May is the best time to visit. Between July and the end October the Yucatan Peninsula can be affected by tropical storms or occasional hurricane.

There are no compulsory vaccinations required to enter Mexico.

British passport holders do not require a visa. The currency is Mexican Peso, although US Dollars and credit cards are widely accepted.

I personally feel Mexico has something for everybody, couples, families and those who don't like just sitting on the beach, are able to spend a few days exploring Mexico's fascinating ancient history on a cultural Mexico Tour. Visit Merida and get a feel for the real Mexico by spending time in the cultural city which still has the colonial architectural style of years gone by with cobbled streets and brightly coloured houses. There are more than 100 archaeological sites scattered across the Yucatan region, including Tulum, Uxmal and one of the 'New Seven Wonders of the World' Chichen Itza.

This is great way to experience the flavours, traditions and culture of this wonderful country where you would stay in the impressive boutique style Haciendas. All of the Haciendas I visited have been restored with comfortable facilities within keeping of its old traditional style of past owners. You really could imagine what it was like many years ago, when the Haciendas were working plantations. Your private English speaking driver will show you the best of the Yucatan on a selection of itineraries tailor-made to your requirements.



I would fully appreciate and understand if the tour wasn't for you, however the wonderful thing about this region is, that is, you are able to tear yourself away from the beautiful sandy beaches, are some fascinating places to visit for the day:



Explore the most important archaeological zone and ancient capital of Mayan Empire a classic day tour of Chichen Itza.

Put your riding hat and boots on for an authentic Mexican cowboy style horseback experience and head out into the mystic jungles of the Mayan Riviera on a mission to get closer to nature.

The Riviera Maya's most popular Eco park is 'Xcaret.' Here you will find some small Maya archaeological sites near a quiet jungle trail, regional wildlife breeding farm, a coral reef aquarium and a butterfly pavilion. There is also an inlet with clear waters for snorkelling, a lagoon for swimming but the most exciting activity is swimming with Dolphins.

Riviera Maya is perfect for Golfers too you will have the option to play 18 holes on the signature Greg Norman 7,000 yard 18 hole course, El Camaleon, and for those that have never hit a ball, why not give it a go as I did at the Jim Mclean Golf School, where they have the latest technology and offer tuition one to one or in a group.



Take a ferry from Playa Carmen to neighbouring island of Cozumel. In 1961 diving legend, Jacques Cousteau declared the island ‘one of the best dive sites in the world’. The crossing takes approximately 45 minutes, Top Tip don’t buy a return ticket as there are two ferry operators and you may wish to return with a different operator. The cost is 7 US Dollars per adult each way – half price for children under 12 years.

Charming Playa Carmen has a young and hip cosmopolitan ambience, it boasts its own 5th Avenue which is a busy street lined with all kinds of shops, art, crafts, galleries, cafes, restaurants and bars.



Riviera Maya area has a number of large all-inclusive chain resorts. There are also a number of smaller boutique-style hotels, ranging from the exclusive to simple cabana-style cottages.

If you are looking for the perfect hideaway to escape, re-energise and enrich your soul, tucked between a lush mangrove forest and secluded beach you will find the:

**Esencia** is not a typical hotel it's a small luxury hotel that introduces you to the Mayan world and its deep connection to the earth all ingredients are grown on site and all spa oils are mixed in front of the client at the organic spa.



**Viceroy Riviera Maya** formerly the Tides Riviera Maya, guests are personally welcomed upon arrival and led through the tropical forest paths to their villa, along the route you will find painters and writers corner.



**Banyan Tree** lagoons surrounding the property combined with Asian touches creates an atmosphere of enchantment. Feel at home in a unique pool villa

tastefully decorated with handcrafted Mayan furnishings. Guests can dine in the Fairmont or Rosewood and charge it back to Banyan Tree.

**Maroma Resort & Spa** was formerly a coconut plantation and private hacienda. Maroma has been lovingly transformed into an exquisite Orient – Express boutique hotel.

**Rosewood Mayakoba** is up with the very best, an all-suite property contemporary yet still authentic perfectly with its back to nature setting amidst freshwater lagoons, mangrove forests and pure white sand beaches. Lovely gesture is the complimentary snacks brought to you around the pool and on the beach.



**Fairmont Mayakoba** is created within 45 acres of mangroves and canals, it is a magical haven where luxury and nature exist side by side. Note hotel charges for internet connection and use of gym unless you register to the Fairmont's Presidents Club, it is free to register. Guests can dine in Banyan Tree or Rosewood and charge it back to the Fairmont.



Luxurious All Inclusive properties: which include breakfast, lunch and dinner, 24 hour room service, unlimited premium brand drinks by glass non-motorised sports.

**Zoetry Paraiso De La Bonita** there is nothing standard about this hotel, suites here are all oceanfront and the beds have been thoughtfully elevated so that guests can wake to wonderful views of the sparkling Caribbean Sea.

**Royal Hideaway** is like stepping into a Grand Colonial Home, all rooms are elegantly decorated. This hotel is a foodie's paradise with excellent a la carte dining options. Don't miss the regular 'Chef's Table' this gives guests the opportunity to interact with the executive chef whilst he creates a tasting menu designed exclusively for the occasion – an extra charge applies.



**Secrets Maroma Beach** is exclusively for adults, it is ideal for couples, single travellers or groups of friends – it's a sociable place so there's always an opportunity to join the fun and be active.

**Paradisus La Perla & Paradisus La Esmeralda** are two sleek and sophisticated sister hotels offering contemporary facilities in stylish surroundings: Paradisus La Perla is exclusively for adults, whilst neighbouring Paradisus La Esmeralda welcomes guests of all ages and is particularly child-friendly. Both deliver a high standard of service, quality accommodation and boast excellent restaurants, entertainment and bars.



Did you know? The Western calendar is based on the one invented by the Mayans? The Pyramid of Kukulkan at Chichen Itza was built as their calendar, with four stairways each 91 steps and a platform at the top, making a total of 365 - the number of days in our calendar year.

My overall opinion of Mexico is one of fascinating colonial history, fantastic cuisine, hotels and resorts that are amongst the best in the world. With impeccable service, seriously stunning beaches with turquoise waters, and great value for money and it's easy to see why the Mayan Riviera is the new hot destination of the Caribbean.

For more information please do not hesitate to call Cyan 01702 588555.