

Yucatan

Yucatan is a State located in the southeast of Mexico, in the peninsula with the same name that includes 2 more States: Campeche and Quintana Roo. You can get to Yucatan by the different Highways connected with the State, or by airway, through the Merida International Airport. **If you travel overland from Cancun or Riviera Maya it takes approximately 2 hours 15 minutes to arrive to Valladolid (the second most important city in the State) and 4 hours to arrive to Merida, the capital of Yucatan, founded in 1542 by the Spanish Francisco de Montejo.**



Yucatan is full of culture, nature, archaeology, mysticism and generally, history. The reason is all the important events that have been place along the time, from the Pre-Columbian Era where the Maya civilization flourished and they leave us a legacy in their archaeological vestiges and temples, passing to the Spanish Conquest and the combination of both cultures to get the mixed races in the Colonial Era.

Thanks to the geographic location, Yucatan has a tropical climate that accommodates a great range of flora and fauna, as well the famous “cenotes” that are sinkholes or underground rivers located around the Yucatan Peninsula and were sacred places for the Mayas. Around Yucatan are at least 12 archaeological sites from the Maya culture and 4 Protected Natural Areas, including 2 Biosphere Reserves and 2 National Parks.



Tourist Attractions

Merida

Merida is the capital and the most important city of the State of Yucatan. It is a cultural center, featuring multiple museums, art galleries, restaurants, movie theatres and shops. Mérida retains an abundance of beautiful colonial buildings and is a vibrant cultural center with music and dancing playing an important part in day-to-day life. At the same time it is a modern city boasting a comprehensive range of shopping malls, auto dealerships, top quality hotels, restaurants and leisure facilities. The famous avenue, **Paseo de Montejo**, is lined with original sculpture.



Valladolid

The colonial city of Valladolid, in the State of Yucatan, is the second most important city after Merida (the capital). This city is full of pre-hispanic and colonial history during the Spanish Conquest. Most of the buildings and streets preserve their glorious past and colonial style, including The Cathedral located in the Main Plaza and their convents around the city. Nearby the Historic Downtown of Valladolid is a market, where you will have chance to interact with the local people, meet their habits, traditions and gastronomy. A few places around the city you can visit are **Saint Bernardino de Siena Convent** (built in 1552 by the Franciscans Orde), **The Main Plaza**, **The Saint Gervasio Cathedral**, **The Government Palace**, **The Saint Roque Museum**, and **The Zaci Cenote** (underground cave or sinkhole). This wonderful city is recommended for those travellers who like history, local culture and appreciate architectural structures.

Chichen Itza

This sacred site was one of the greatest Mayan centers of the Yucatan Peninsula. Throughout its nearly 1,000-year history, different peoples have left their mark on the city. The fusion of Mayan construction techniques with new elements from central Mexico makes Chichen Itza one of the most important examples of the Maya-Toltec civilization in Yucatan. This wonderful place, full of culture is a **UNESCO's World Heritage** and last July 7th, 2007 was named as a **New 7 Wonders of the World** during the Official Declaration ceremony in Lisbon, Portugal. During the visit to this awesome archaeological site you will enjoy and learn about the Maya Culture, you will visit handcraft shops and you will lunch and feel the flavor of the Yucatan dishes.





Izamal

Izamal is a small city located in the State of Yucatan and it is known as "The Yellow City", because most of its buildings are painted yellow and is considered a colonial jewel. As well, it is known as "The City of Hills" considering as "hills" the ancient Maya temples located inside the city, because the Yucatan Peninsula is a flat zone without hills or mountains.



Izamal could be the most ancient colonial city where we can find five pyramids, the main of them is "Kinich Kak Moo" and there are other structures as "Itzamatul", "Kabul", "Hun Pik Tok" and "Tuul" (the rabbit). Izamal main attractive is the convent that was built over the Maya pyramids using the stones of them for its construction. Its founder was Friar Diego de Landa, famous for burning the Maya codex. Izamal is a very catholic city of Yucatan, for that reason in August 1993 Pope John Paul II visited Izamal and performed a mass for the Native Americans.

Puuc Route and Loltun Caves

An hour away from Merida, a great range of tours about the Maya civilization awaits you. Known as the "Puuc Route", ("Puuc" means "small hills" or "mounds" in Maya language) includes visit to Labna, Sayil, Xpalak archaeological sites, plus a visit to Loltun Caves. **Labna** means "Old House" in Maya language. This place is one of the most smallest and important archaeological sites in the Yucatan Peninsula. "El Palacio" (The Palace), "El Arco" (The Arch) and "El Mirador" (The Scenic Viewpoint) are the most representative structures.



The site of **Xpalak** ("Old Walls" in Maya language) is the less-restored site of the Puuc Route, which consists of 14 structures in its decayed form, 3 pyramids under restoration and the dominant palace with rich frieze decoration of Chaac masks and geometrical ornaments dated to late classic period. **Sayil** means "the place of the ants" in Maya language. In this place the Mayas built a lot of underground deposits or cisterns because the water absence on the surface. The most representative structures are "The Palace of Three Floors" and "The Observatory".

Loltun means "Stone Flower" in Maya language. In these caves you will find interesting Maya murals. In fact, the Loltun Caves are the largest caves on the Yucatan Peninsula and the most studied by speleologists.



Celestun

Celestun is a town located in the northwest side of Yucatan, just north of the border with the State of Campeche, on the Gulf of Mexico coast. Surrounding the town is the **Celestun Biosphere Reserve**, a wetland reserve that is the winter home to vast flocks of pink flamencos, as well as many herons and other bird species.

Celestun's ecosystem is unique because of a combination of fresh water from **Celestun Ria** and salt water from Gulf of Mexico. Celestun's flamencos are the pinkest in the world due to high concentration of carotene in the water.



Celestun has a **petrified forest** (salt deadened), mangrove swamps and "water eyes" (fresh water springs). Celestun Biosphere Reserve was declared **World Heritage** in 1986 by the United Nations. In this place you will find hundreds of pink flamencos in their natural habitat, don not lose this unique opportunity.

Uxmal & Kabah

Uxmal is a large pre-Columbian city located **73km south of Merida**. The Maya architecture here is considered matched only by that of Palenque in elegance and beauty. The Puuc style of Maya architecture predominates. Thanks to its good state of preservation, it is one of the few Maya cities where the casual visitor can get a good idea of how the entire ceremonial center looked in ancient times.



Uxmal has a **Spectacular Light & Sound Show** at night, where the colorful of the lights combined with the ancient Maya sounds create an unforgettable atmosphere with a starry sky.

Nearby Uxmal we will find **Kabah** archaeological site. The most famous structure at Kabah is the "Palace of the Masks", the facade decorated with hundreds of stone masks of the long-nosed rain god Chaac, it is also known as the Codz Pop, meaning "Rolled Matting", from the pattern of the stone mosaics. This massive repetition of a single set of elements is unusual in Maya art and here is used to unique effect. If you come to Yucatan and if you want to learn more about the Maya Culture, you have to visit both sites, where the culture and the archaeology are mixed to have a complete experience.



Sotuta de Peon Hacienda & Dzul-Ha

Sotuta de Peon Hacienda is the restoration project of a landmark located in the heart of the ancient henequen zone in the State of Yucatan and gives a true glimpse of what was once a fully operational Henequen Hacienda in the grand style and tradition of this period. When touring Sotuta de Peon, our visitors will literally travel back in time, transported on wooden platforms called "trucks" which are pulled by mules over rails, as were originally used by the workers.



Here, you will witness the step by step process of the transformation of the **Henequen** (called "Green Gold" as it was known throughout the region), from plant to fiber and from fiber to finished products.



For an unforgettable experience, we invite you to swim in the water of "Dzul-Ha", an underground river located in the Hacienda. Dzul-Ha means "gentleman of the water", always refreshing and never disappointing. This will be a lifetime experience, where you will interact with the people from the Hacienda.

