



## Beaches, Castles and Caves of Mexico

### TRIP AT-A-GLANCE

Dates: February 26-March 5, 2011  
 Location: Mayan Riviera, Mexico  
 Cost: \$ 1820  
 Rating: \*2  
 Activities: snorkeling, kayaking, cultural exploration  
 Meeting Place: Cancun Airport (CUN)  
 Arrive: by 4pm February 26th  
 Depart: 11 am at Cancun airport, fly out anytime after 1pm on Mar.5

\* Deduct 5% for being one of the first 5 to register (by 11/26/10) and 3% of the entire trip fee when the balance is paid by check.

### WHAT'S INCLUDED

- guide services and instruction
- seven nights double occupancy lodging, two nights in a hotel and five nights in tent cabins at CESiaK
- all meals from dinner on Saturday thru breakfast the following Saturday
- all activities on the itinerary, including kayaking, visits to ruins, swimming in cenotes, and snorkeling
- van transportation during the trip

### WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- alcoholic beverages
- guide gratuities
- transportation to Cancun from home

### Trip Highlights

- Sea kayaking in the Sian Ka'an Reserve ("where the sky begins") , 5000 sq. km of tropical jungle, marsh, mangroves, and islands
- Exploring the Mayan ruins of Tulum and Coba
- Snorkeling among the brightly colored fish that inhabit the barrier reef
- Visiting the amazing limestone cave system of Aktun Chen
- Relaxing at CESiaK, an eco-lodge right on the ocean that overlooks an amazing, beautiful stretch of isolated beach
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### Trip Overview

Explore Mayan ruins, Mexican culture, and abundant marine life! Although many people visit Cancun to lie on the beach, there is way more to see and do in this land that has been the home of the Mayan people for centuries. Evidence of their elaborate architecture and complex social structure are still apparent in the many ruins found on the Yucatan peninsula. The peninsula itself, a huge low lying limestone shelf that is quite isolated from the mainland, is also known for its plentiful and diverse flora and fauna, superb snorkeling, tropical jungles, and cenotes. If you want to combine lots of activity with fun, relaxation, and the opportunity to learn more about Mexico while spending time in a warm and beautiful place, this is the trip for you.

### Our Itinerary

As is true for all adventure travel, we may follow the itinerary exactly or we may modify it based on weather, group interests, or other considerations.

**February 26:** Arrive Cancun by 4:00 pm. We will meet you at the airport and transport you to our hotel in Puerto Morales. If you decide to arrive early, there are direct airport transfers available and you can meet at our hotel. Puerto Morelos has a great accessible beach, easy walking, and nice shopping. We will also

## CANCELLATION POLICY

In the unfortunate event that you must cancel your trip, your refund will be determined by the following formula:

Days Prior to Trip	Refund
90 + days	All but \$50
90 – 61 days	50% of deposit
60 – 30 days	50% of trip fee
29 days or less	No refund

Adventures in Good Company reserves the right to cancel or alter a trip due to unforeseen weather, unsafe conditions, low registrations or other circumstances.

On the rare occasion when Adventures in Good Company must cancel a trip, all payments received to date will be refunded, including the non-refundable portion of your deposit.

Adventures in Good Company is not responsible for expenses incurred in preparation for any canceled trips, including airplane tickets.

## TIPPING GUIDELINES

Tipping at the end of the trip is optional. If you feel your guide(s) did an outstanding job and would like to reward them for their efforts, a suggested rule of thumb is US \$7 to \$12 per person, per day.

Oftentimes, trip members organize a group envelope (this makes it anonymous) and present it at the last shared meal.

## Our Itinerary Continued

end the trip here, so there will be time later if you aren't arriving early. We'll plan to gather at 5:30 for introductions and a trip orientation, and then go out to enjoy our first dinner together.

**February 27:** This morning we'll pack up the van and start our two hour drive along the "Mayan Riviera", the strip of land from Cancun to Tulum. Development here has been fairly intensive and will give us a true appreciation for the work being done by CESiaK. Along the way we will stop at the Xaxx Che Botanical Gardens. The gardens include interpretive information of Mayan culture, a typical house, and the chicle camps where chewing gum was initially made. Our visit is a good introduction to Mayan culture and demonstrates how ecotourism supports scientific research and the only undeveloped/natural acreage between Cancun and Playa del Carmen.

We'll continue up the coast to Akumal and the Yal Ku Lagoon. This is a very protected area so it is a good place to learn how to snorkel if you've never tried it before. Turtles, rays, parrot fish and other interesting fish can all be seen here. It is also a great place for our picnic lunch!

After we're finished with swimming and lunch, we'll arrive at CESiaK and get situated in our tent cabins. There may be time to explore the area before dinner, but if not, there will be time later. After dinner we can go for a walk on the beach or enjoy an early bedtime in the peace and quiet of the reserve.

**February 28:** We'll get up early this morning in order to beat both the heat and the crowds at the Tulum Ruins. These ruins are one of the best-preserved Mayan coastal sites. Although the complex is much smaller than some, its location on a cliff overlooking the turquoise sea is truly spectacular.

Following a guided tour of the ruins we'll return to CESiaK and have some free time before gathering later in the afternoon for kayaking. In addition to the innate pleasures of kayaking, it is the best way to see the birds and wildlife of the Sian Ka'an Reserve. Accompanied by our expert bilingual guides, we will explore the wetlands inside the biosphere reserve and go bird watching around the beautiful bird nesting-island. In 2010 we saw pelicans, cormorants, herons, osprey, frigates, egrets, and flamingos. There is no problem if you have never kayaked before; you'll receive the instruction you need to fully enjoy it.

**March 1:** There are many things to do right near CESiak, and today we leave open so we have time for them. Perhaps another kayak, a hike along the beach, or maybe this will be the day to rent boogie

## Our Itinerary Continued

boards and see why they have become so popular. Of course, if you think any vacation should include some unstructured downtime, this is the perfect day just to relax.

One option we highly recommend is a canal tour at CESiak, to see the diverse ecosystems, plants, and birds in the lagoons. You start with a trip in an open-air boat with an outboard motor, traveling through a natural canal used by the ancient Maya as a trade route and exploring Mayan temples. Getting out of the boat you float in the fresh water canal and relax as the current takes us downstream. The tour ends with lunch.

After lunch you can choose some downtime or a visit to a cenote at the entrance to the reserve for a refreshing swim. There is also a short interpretative trail and a large map of the area. We will then meet up in town for dinner and the chance to wander or shop.

**March 2:** We'll spend the morning getting a tour of the Coba ruins. These ruins are one of the most important archaeological sites in the area. Built between two lakes during the Classic Period (600-900 A.D.), at its height it covered over 80 square kms and contained nearly 50,000 people. It is home to the Nohoch Mul pyramid, at 138 feet the highest pyramid in the Yucatan; you are welcome to climb the 122 steps to the top if you choose. We'll also visit other temples and learn the importance of ball games.

Following our exploration of the ruins, we'll visit Otoch Maax Yetel Kooh National Protected Area in Punta Laguna. In addition to seeing spider and black howler monkeys, we'll also learn more about the native plants. This is also your opportunity to try ziplining, a low risk and high adrenaline activity where a secure harness keeps you attached to an overhead line as you zip across a small lagoon and then paddle canoes back across the lagoon. On the way back we'll stop at a small ecotourism project, a house where a Mayan family lives and has set up to show traditional Mayan life.

**March 3:** We'll spend our last full day here visiting the Punta Allen peninsula. Having escaped much of the recent development, it has a laid-back ambience characteristic of life in the area as it was years ago. On our drive there we'll see coconut palm trees lining pristine white beaches along undisturbed dunes on one side of the road, and brackish and freshwater lagoons on the other. We pass the colorful estuary of Boca Paila, and see more remote portions of Sian Ka'an. But the real high point of the day is the snorkeling. Sea turtles, star fish and dolphins swim alongside our boat, as it takes us out to the coral reef barrier. This is one of the most undisturbed coral reefs and we'll see thousands of colorful fish and other marine animals that live in this fragile ecosystem. We'll finish this magic day with a final farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

**March 4:** It is hard to pack up and leave such an idyllic place but that is what we have to do this morning. Fortunately we have something else to look forward to: visiting the cave system, cenote, wild monkeys, and tropical rainforest of Aktun-Chen. Aktun-Chen, which is Mayan for "the cave with the cenote inside", is the only above-water-level grotto found in the eastern Yucatan. There are two great options here and the only problem is that you need to choose between the two. The first is a tour of the main cave. The cave has a magnificent vault that has been illuminated and paths make it easy to view the many stalactites, stalagmites, and natural sculpture and leads to the crystal clear cenote. Alternatively you can snorkel in another cenote outside the cave. The cenote is full of stalagmites and stalactites with are easily visible in the clear waters.

Following our tours, we'll drive to Puerto Morales where we'll have time for some final shopping before ending with a final farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

**March 5:** Too soon it's time to say goodbye. After breakfast at a beach restaurant, we'll drop you off at the Cancun airport by 11 am.

## Packing List

Temperatures are typically mild: the daily highs are usually in the 80s but the nighttime temps can be cool – in the 50s. And while rain is unusual this time of year, we should be prepared for all variables. We recommend packing your clothing in one large duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Pack at least one small carry-on bag with the "bare essentials" for the first night. Please call us if you have any questions about any of the items on this list.

### FOOTWEAR

- 1 pair of lightweight hiking boots or athletic shoes for sightseeing and walking
- 1 pair of wet shoes for kayaking: sport sandals, dive booties, or other (like Keen or Solomon)
- 1 pair flip flops to wear to the shower, around the tent cabin, etc. (highly recommended)
- 3 pairs of socks

### CLOTHING

- 1 - 2 pairs of comfortable long pants/capris
- 2 pairs of shorts
- 2 lightweight, light-colored, long-sleeved shirts to protect you from the sun
- 3-4 short-sleeved shirts, tank tops and/or T-shirts (a surfing shirt called a rash guard is highly recommended)
- 1 jacket, sweater, or sweatshirt
- 1 lightweight rain parka
- Underwear/nightwear
- 2 Swimsuits
- 1 wide-brimmed hat for sun and high fashion!
- 1+ skirt/sundress/other "fun" clothes (optional, but some enjoy this for wearing out to dinner)

### TOILETRIES (small everything)

- Toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss, shampoo, contact lens paraphernalia, and sanitary supplies
- Sunscreen and lip protection with sunblock of at least SPF 30
- personal "patch kit": Band-Aids, ibuprofen, immodium, personal medications, if any. Individuals allergic to insect bites must bring an anaphylactic kit. Please consult your physician.

### ESSENTIALS

- Passport** and Xeroxed copy
- Sunglasses (100% UV protection) with retention strap
- Insect repellent
- 1 daypack large enough to hold your supplies for the day (water, snacks, raingear, etc.)
- 1 one-quart water bottle (wide-mouthed; you can also buy bottled water)
- Camera (extra battery) and film/memory cards
- Bath/beach towel
- Bandana

### OPTIONAL

- Your favorite snack (we will also provide snacks during the day)
- Book, notebook, journal, pencil/pen
- Ear plugs (for a good night's sleep!)
- Binoculars
- snorkeling equipment (mask, snorkel, fins – these are provided on the days snorkeling is on the itinerary, but some people prefer their own or may want to do more)
- wristwatch with an alarm or travel clock
- Playing cards

## Additional Trip Preparations

### HELPFUL WEBSITES

<http://www.cesiak.org>

This is where the group stays during most of the trip.

[http://wikitravel.org/en/Mayan\\_Riviera](http://wikitravel.org/en/Mayan_Riviera)

Provides basic information about the "Mayan Riviera"

### WEATHER

During the winter months the weather tends to be mild and windy but variations are possible. Days average in the 70's and 80s and can fall into the 50's at night. Rain is infrequent but possible so rain gear is essential. As everywhere in the outdoors, weather conditions may alter the itinerary.

### EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

The number at CESiaK is (52) 984 104 0522. You will need to dial 011 for an outgoing call from the U.S. They will do their best to get a message to you. You should also leave the Adventures in Good Company office number: 877/439-4042. Your cell phone may also work there.

### CONDITIONING

Additional aerobic conditioning is unnecessary for anyone who already exercises regularly. If you don't, you will probably find that you have more energy during the trip if you start a moderate exercise program a couple of months before your trip. For example, you might start walking 3 or 4 times a week for half an hour, at a pace that is brisk enough to make you breathe deeply. Hills are good for this. Other options are working out at a health club on a stairmaster or treadmill, aerobics classes, cross country skiing or any activity that makes you breathe deeply.

What if you don't have time to start an exercising program? Don't worry, you'll be fine – just a little more tired than usual at the end of the day!

### RECOMMENDED PRE-TRIP READING

The following are easy and informational, and will serve to whet your appetite.

#### **A Tourist in the Yucatan** by James McNay Brumfield

A good book to read on the beach. It's a mysterious and suspenseful tale that offers a view of what it's like to travel around Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, near the popular tourist areas of Cancun, Playa del Carmen and the Riviera Maya. Brumfield paints a clear picture of the Mayan ruins and takes you to the inner caverns that aren't included on any tourist visit to Tulum or Chichen Itza.

#### **The Maya (Ancient Peoples & Places)** by Michael D. Coe

Michael Coe tells the story of the Maya civilisation in his usual vivid and captivating style.. Great for anyone interested in finding out the basic facts about the Maya of Mexico and Central America.

#### **Where the Sky is Born: Living in the Land of the Maya** by

Jeanine Lee Kitche. Author Kitche and her husband moved to the Yucatan in 1985. This is a memoir of their experiences there.

## Special Considerations for International Trips

### PASSPORT

A valid passport is required for travel in Mexico. You will need to present it at the airports before and after your flights. Be sure to carry a photocopy of your passport in a separate location, for security's sake. It is also a good idea to leave one with somebody at home. If you already have a passport, check to make sure it is still current (they expire every 10 years). Passports can be renewed through the mail. If you are getting a passport for the first time, you must submit your application in person.

For information on how to obtain a passport, download an application from [travel.state.gov/passport/passport\\_1738.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html), ask your travel agent, or call the Passport Office at 202-647-0518. Allow at least 6 weeks.

### VISA

You do not need a visa for traveling in Mexico if you are coming from the United States or Canada (or most European countries). You do need a Mexican tourist card, which is usually given out aboard your plane en route to Mexico. The card costs \$23 and is typically included in your plane fare.

### MONEY

Mexico's monetary unit is the peso. Note: places often use the \$ to indicate the price in pesos. The exchange rate of the pesos can fluctuate a lot. Currently, 1 USD = about 11 pesos.. Dollars and traveler checks in small denominations are accepted almost everywhere.

Small-denomination bills and coins are hard to come by, so start collecting them early in your trip. Shopkeepers everywhere always seem to be out of change and small bills; that's doubly true in markets. In general, avoid carrying the U.S. \$100 bill, the bill most commonly counterfeited in Mexico and therefore the most difficult to exchange

ATMs are common in Cancun and even some smaller towns in the Yucatan. They typically have the best exchange rate. Check with your bank before leaving home to make sure you can use it in Mexico. There may be a service fee charged, but the rate is still the best exchange.

You can also exchange money at banks or *casa de cambio* (money exchange houses). Some, but not all, banks charge a service fee of about 1% to exchange traveler's checks.

There is a *casa di cambio* that the group will stop at on the way to CESiaK. We recommend you have cash or traveler's checks to exchange. Your trip fee covers all your expenses from dinner on February 7 through breakfast on February 14, except alcoholic beverages. Other options for spending money would be for shopping (some stores may take credit cards), additional activities not specified on the itinerary, or other items of a personal nature.

### TECHNOLOGY

Sian Ka'an is an ecology-conscious enclave in the jungle. Electricity is provided by generators. Running water is available with the usual conservation recommendations. In nearby Tulum wireless Internet access is broadly available. Cell phone reception has been good in Tulum, but may be unavailable at CESiaK. Check with your carrier for exchange rates and service.

### WATER

Drinking water used on trips will be from a local purified water outlet. You can also buy bottled water. If you are concerned about the possibility of an intestinal disorder, we suggest a daily dose of acidophilus for one to two months before travel. Be sure to buy the kind that needs no refrigeration, and remember to keep taking them before, during, and for a short time after your trip.

## Getting There

### OUR TRAVEL AGENT

If you need assistance with making your travel plans, call Sara Schuitemaker at Scan East West Travel. Her toll-free number is 800-727-2157 and her email is [sara@scaneastwest.com](mailto:sara@scaneastwest.com).

### TRAVEL INSURANCE

We highly recommend travel insurance. We know that women never want to cancel their trips, and the reasons for doing so are always excellent. Occasionally it's a sudden illness; even more frequently it's the illness of someone they care about. Trip insurance at least minimizes the disappointment and expense during what is often a difficult time. In addition insurance covers the cost of lost baggage; medical expenses during your trip, including emergencies, repatriation, and evacuation; and trip delay. If you decide to purchase insurance, you can secure a policy through your own insurance company or enroll with the company we use, Travelex Insurance. Call 1-800-228-9792 or visit [www.travelexinsurance.com](http://www.travelexinsurance.com). The location code is 20-0016.

### TRAVEL

We will be meeting at the airport in Cancun on the first day of the trip at 4:30 pm. Many of the major airlines fly into Cancun including: American, Delta, Sun Country, Spirit, US Air and Continental. Please make sure you arrive in Cancun with enough time to get luggage and go through customs (not later than 4 pm).

One good way to get cheap tickets to Cancun is to call your local travel agent because there are often charter flights and deals close to you that they will know about. Another way is to read the ads in the travel section of the paper - there are always deals to Cancun. If you see an ad that advertises a hotel and flight package, but you want to travel independently and forgo the hotel, call them anyway. Sometimes they will sell you an air only package.

You can leave anytime after 1pm on March 5<sup>th</sup>.

### LODGING

If you are arriving early or planning to stay after the tour is over, check out the list of possible accommodations in Cancun.

#### **Holiday Inn Express**

Paseo Pok-Ta-Pok #21 & 22

Phone: 888/465-4329

Prices: \$120-\$164

#### **15 miles from the airport**

**Amenities:** satellite TV, Wireless Internet, Complimentary buffet breakfast, free local phone calls, Beach Club 5 minutes away w/transportation available, swimming pool

#### **The Royal Sands**

Blvd Kukulcan Lote 32, Section A

Cancun, Quintana Roo 77500 Mexico

Phone: 998-881-0100

Prices \$89 - \$140

Beachfront resort located in the heart of the Hotel Zone.

**Amenities:** Swimming Pool, Spa/Massage, , Broadband Access, Restaurant in Hotel, Kitchen, Tennis, Snorkeling, Bicycling, Beach

#### **Cancun Inn El Patio**

Bonampak 51 esq Cereza

Cancun, Quintana Roo 77500 Mexico

Average price \$50

Charming Inn with an 'old hacienda' atmosphere. Only 15 rooms surrounding a beautiful courtyard full of plants. **Amenities:** Air

## Getting There Continued

Conditioning, Television, maid service. 2km to beach

### **The Imperial Las Perlas**

Bldv Kukulcan km 2.5

Cancun, Quintana Roo 77500 Mexico

Average price: \$30

The Imperial Las Perlas is situated across from Isla Mujeres, approximately two miles from downtown Cancun and 20 miles from Cancun International Airport.

**Amenities:** Swimming Pool, Kitchen, Scuba Diving, Snorkeling, Water Skiing, Fishing, Boating/Sailing, Beach, Air Conditioning, Television

### **Flamingo Cancun Resort and Plaza.**

Bldv. Kukulcan km. 11, Hotel Zone

Cancún, Q. Roo , México

Ph: (998) 848-88-70

Average price: \$170 european/\$200 all inclusive

In the center of the hotel zone, this resort fronts 183 meters (200 yards) of white-sand beach on Cancun's Caribbean shore. **Amenities:** 2 pools, fitness center, restaurants, public bus, high speed internet