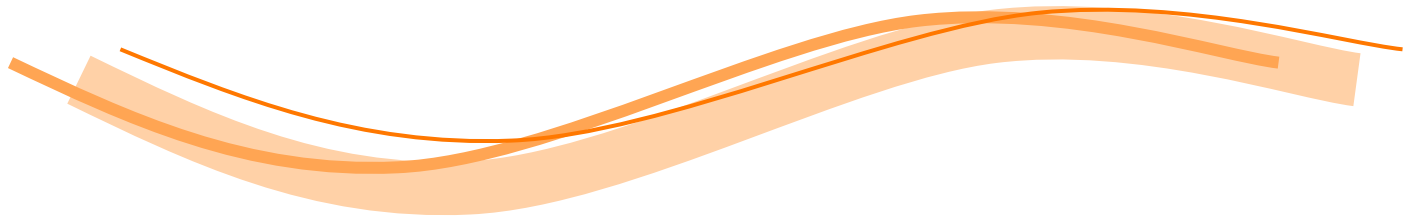




KARISMA HOTELS & TRANSAT HOLIDAYS





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| Travel Notes | <p>These notes are arranged in three sections:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Karisma Hotels & Resorts – your home 2. Transat – your hosts 3. The Riviera Maya – your playground |
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| KARISMA HOTELS & RESORTS | <p>Go “Gourmet Inclusive” with Karisma Resorts and Transat on your next vacation!</p> <p>These great partners take care of every detail of your winter getaway – from the moment you check in at the airport to the champagne reception when you check in at the hotel. Imagine unlimited a la carte dining – with no need to make reservations. How would you like a swim up suite, or a romantic Aguas del Amor outdoor shower? Close your eyes and relax – the Beach Butler will be right back with your cocktail.....</p> |
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| KARISMA HOTELS & RESORTS | <p>Karisma operates a premier collection of award-winning properties throughout the Riviera Maya, Mexico, where guests savour a Gourmet Inclusive experience that fosters togetherness. Dedicated to providing exceptional services, Karisma has received worldwide recognition for its creative approach to hospitality management and product innovations including resorts with private swim-up and Infinity balcony pool suites, beach butlers, Beachfront Sky Massages, experiential dining, and cash-free transactions.</p> <p>Karisma’s Gourmet Inclusive portfolio includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the adults-only El Dorado Spa Resorts & Hotels, which cater to romance with Jacuzzis in every suite, truly beachfront wedding chapels and Aguas del Amor—private, outdoor showers - the family-friendly Azul Hotels, offering extensive children’s programs through partnerships with Fisher-Price and My Gym Children’s Fitness Centre. <p>Properties have been honoured with the industry’s top accolades including, Conde Nast Traveler’s “Top 100 Hotels in the World,” Conde Nast Traveler’s “Gold List,” Forbes’ “Top 10 Most Romantic Hotels,” TUI Travel PLC’s “Hotel of the Year,” AAA’s “Four Diamond Award” and Wine Spectator’s “Award of Excellence.”</p> <p>Website: http://www.karismahotels.com .</p> |
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| El Dorado Spa Resorts | <p>El Dorado Spa Resorts & Hotels caters to couples, offering the ideal settings for romance, weddings, honeymoons, anniversaries or romantic getaways. You will love the In-suite Jacuzzis, the private outdoor shower, the full service concierge, and the pool and beach butlers. These Gourmet Inclusive luxury resorts lie along the Riviera Maya’s shore line, each one offering beautiful stretches of white sand beachfront.</p> |
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| | <p>El Dorado Spa Resorts are leaders for romance within the Riviera Maya and cater to adult-only couples. Honeymooners love the romantic in-room atmosphere (think 4-post bed, Jacuzzi for two and hammock on the balcony), soon-to-be-weds love the free and the à la carte wedding package options (El Dorado Royale even offers a traditional Catholic wedding package and beachside chapel) and couples looking to re-connect love the romantic Spa treatments (especially the moonlight massages!).</p> <p>Insider tip: for the ultimate romantic experience, reserve your stay at the El Dorado Casita Royale. A private and upgraded section of the El Dorado Royale, the Casitas redefine luxury. Romantically decorated and just steps from the beach, the over-sized Suites offer large bathroom with 'his' and 'hers' sinks, outdoor roofless showers, private balcony or terrace with outdoor beds and more.</p> |
| <p>Spa Services</p> | <p>Experience the most relaxing and romantic Spa treatments prepared to heal, purify and sooth your senses with nature's special ingredients and traditional techniques.</p> <p>Allow the energy and exquisite aromas flow through your body as you enjoy a magnificent selection of massages with the ocean's breeze, under the stars or in a magical intimate atmosphere designed especially for your own delight.</p> <p>Immerse in a wonderful variety of body treatments that nourishes your skin and pampers you to an extraordinary level of relaxation and bliss. Rediscover you inner and outside beauty during your stay at El Dorado Spa Resorts & Hotels, and engage in your own personal journey of well-being with an exclusive array of fresh and reinvigorating Facials, Massages, Romantic Couple Spa Packages, Body Wraps, Baths, Salon services and Fitness Centre amenities.</p> <p>Try these Spa Services in the El Dorado Seaside Suites; El Dorado Royale, a Spa Resort; and El Dorado Maroma, a Beachfront Resort.</p> |
| <p>Weddings</p> | <p>Getting married at one of these resorts means experiencing a lifetime moment under an oceanfront gazebo with the most gorgeous Caribbean landscape, holding hands with your loved one barefoot in the soft white sand or with the sunset charm under a magical set of palm trees. A truly romantic atmosphere for the most special day of your life.</p> <p>Picture yourself saying "I do" by the soothing sounds of the ocean breeze and with the most spectacular sunset backdrop. Start a new chapter with your loved one on the shore of the Mexican Caribbean and surround yourself with all the magic. Choose your favorite Wedding Package and Wedding Location, and start planning the most important day of your life, remember it will be your own dreamlike creation.</p> <p>Mexico is one of the most romantic destinations in the world and getting married here will make your Wedding Day even more memorable. The</p> |

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| | <p>Riviera Maya is perfect for a dreamlike Wedding followed by an unforgettable Caribbean Honeymoon. There are many fun activities and incredible sites to explore; you can choose to be active or just relax by the beach in each other's arms. Weddings performed in Mexico are legally recognized. The cost of your fantasy Wedding & Honeymoon at one of these resorts will still be only a fraction of a wedding reception back home.</p> <p>El Dorado offer a fabulous collection of luxurious All Inclusive Adult-Only resorts located throughout the most beautiful sites and exclusive beaches of the Riviera Maya in Mexico, providing a breathtaking view of the Caribbean. Their resorts specialize in Weddings & Honeymoons with the most exquisite romantic details, intimate atmospheres and luxurious suites. Their group of professional local Wedding Coordinators in the resort will take care of every detail for your special Day according to your needs and desires: from the location, decoration, documentation, flower arrangements and wedding cake.</p> |
| <p>Gourmet Inclusive</p> | <p>Food A la carte options for breakfast, lunch and dinner. A la carte restaurants to mouthwatering food displays to 24hr room service Often no reservations required and unlimited access to a range of high class restaurants offering cuisine as varied as Asian to Peruvian Skilled chefs use only the best, fresh ingredients – proud partners with Canadian Beef. Have our own 70,000 sq ft greenhouse in the Riviera Maya growing fresh vegetables and spices. Can take good care of you if you have dietary restrictions eg Gluten Free</p> <p>Wine and beverages Partners with Jackson Family Wines. Known for crafting award-winning wines of distinct character and quality, the Jackson Family Wines portfolio comprises more than 40 wineries in California, France, Chile, Italy and Australia. Extensive Wine Spectator award-winning wine list crafted by sommeliers and paired with chefs. Bartenders freely pour top shelf brands Tequila, mezcal, and wine tastings Themed bars such as the Mojito Bar, Gin Bar, Mexican Cantina, and many more</p> <p>Service Every vacationing need will be fully catered by friendly, attentive staff. Full service concierge Hospitality Desk</p> |

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| | <p>Beach butlers and pool butlers Sommeliers Romance Maître D Signature Wedding Designers</p> |
| <p>Included Services at El Dorado</p> | <p>Gourmet a la carte wining & dining Accommodations (Infinity Pool Suites and 1, 2 and 3 bedroom suites) Welcome glass of Champagne All meals and Gourmet Bites Unlimited local and selection of international premium brands / alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages Minibar with beer, water, soft drinks refilled once a day Daily and nightly activity program Full service concierge Use of Kids Club and Teens Club Non-motorized water sports: paddleboats, kayak and snorkelling gear Scuba clinics in the pool Hospitality Desk Tennis courts, with rackets and balls provided free of charge Taxes and gratuities included Live music and shows Shopping tours to Cancun and Playa del Carmen. Fitness centre Sauna and Steam Room 24 Hrs. Room Service</p> |
| <p>Additional Services at El Dorado</p> | <p>In addition to all the included services listed above, El Dorado also has many other options available at an extra cost: Scuba diving trips, certificates, rental equipment and deep-sea fishing Gift Shop & Logo Shop Car rental / Tour desk Telephone service / Internet services / Fax services Wave runners & Parasailing Candle light dinner from 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm Exquisite wine list Use of video games and internet cafe Laundry service Money Exchange Medical services available 24 hours Special wedding, honeymoon and anniversary packages Tennis lessons, group clinics, private lessons, events & more Optional in room amenities & packages Spa services: massages, relaxing & anti-stress, Swedish, sports, reflexology & shiatsu and beachfront sky massage Facials: deep-cleansing, moisturizing, nourishing, revitalizing & oxygenating</p> |

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| | <p>Special body treatments: exfoliating body scrub, milk bath, thermal mud massage, royal deluxe</p> <p>Beauty salon: manicure, pedicure, braids, hairstyling</p> |
| <p>Wellness Vacations at El Dorado</p> | <p>For a tropical vacation that extends beyond the sun, sand and surf, take time for yourself with a Destination Wellness Vacation by David Pritchard. A leader in the health and fitness industry for the last 20 years, David Pritchard has created Destination Wellness, a customized wellness vacation program designed to bring the balance back to your life and help you reach your individual fitness goals.</p> <p>Whether your ideal wellness getaway consists of a few Yoga classes between swims in the pool; a high octane wellness regimen from sunrise to sunset; or something that falls delightfully in between, Destination Wellness will help you rejuvenate your mind, body and soul.</p> <p>Catering to your mind, body and soul, the My Destination Wellness program includes unique offerings like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Personalized training program set-ups •Specialized Wellness Classes •Individual time with trainers •Nutrition consultations •Customized meal plans |
| <p>El Dorado Royale, a spa resort, by Karisma</p> | <p>A Conde Nast Traveler Readers' Top 100 Hotels in the World and a AAA Four Diamond Resort, El Dorado Royale is an adults-only (18 and over) destination that provides the ultimate in service in the ultimate setting. El Dorado Royale offers an escape like no other. All the luxuries you can imagine, combined with personal attention to your every need, make this an ideal location for especial getaways, romantic weddings, honeymoons and anniversaries.</p> <p>Revel in the pleasures of the Gourmet Inclusive experience. Relax on your own elegant suite that includes 24-hour room service and a private Jacuzzi. Enjoy gourmet dining at seven exceptional restaurants. Bathe on 13 swimming pools and get pampered with spa services, including the popular couples massage lessons. After that, get ready to enjoy the exciting nightlife.</p> |
| <p>Location</p> | <p>El Dorado Royale, a Spa Resort is located in the heart of the Riviera Maya and facing the beautiful Mexican Caribbean.</p> <p>Only 25 minutes south of Cancun International Airport, 15 minutes north of Playa del Carmen, 20 minutes away from Playacar Golf Club, 5 minutes south of Puerto Morelos and 35 minutes south of Downtown Cancun, it provides perfect distances to the main tourist attractions and sightseeing places of the destination.</p> <p>Settled on 450 acres of tropical jungle, El Dorado Royale, a Spa Resort lies within a mile of unspoiled Punta Brava Beach and surrounded among hundreds of palm trees.</p> |

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| <p>Accommodation</p> | <p>Oversized Jacuzzi Suites with 24-hour room service and a variety of other amenities make El Dorado Royale the ideal place to indulge every desire. Each suite includes a private Jacuzzi for two and a luxurious, romantic atmosphere with every personal touch you can imagine. It also includes a large terrace with a hammock, four post bed, ceiling fan, private bath or shower, cable TV, daily stocked minibar, and other amenities. Choose from:</p> <p>Jacuzzi Jr. Suite With tropical garden views, these suites give a magical romantic getaway. Drench in the in-suite Jacuzzi or relax in a hammock with the great surroundings from the balcony or terrace. Let the breeze wrap you.</p> <p>Ocean View Jacuzzi Jr. Suite Offering open views of the amazing Caribbean Sea, these suites show the waters of the Caribbean as romance backdrops for every memorable day. Roll up in your hammock on your terrace or balcony and take it all in, or enjoy the in-suite Jacuzzi for two.</p> <p>Ocean Front Jacuzzi Jr. Suite Just steps away from the beach with views of the Caribbean this suites allows you to step out and enjoy the white sandy beach and warm waters of the Caribbean right in front of you. Step back and relax in your suite Jacuzzi. Everything is just where you need it.</p> <p>Swim Up Jacuzzi Jr. Suite The Swim-Up Jacuzzi Junior Suites offer convenient luxury in full measure. The inviting waters of the lazy river are just off your terrace, ready for a trip to the main pool and swim-up bars. Enjoy your indoor Jacuzzi and surround yourself with elegance of your romantically oversized suite.</p> <p>Presidential Suite The Presidential Suite is our most exclusive, spacious and impressive choice of accommodations.</p> |
| <p>Activities</p> | <p>There's a variety of activities in El Dorado Royale, Spa Resort like beach volleyball, romantic hikes, massages, snorkeling, kayaking, scuba clinics in the pool, swimming in fresh water pools, tennis courts with free rackets and balls, gym, steam and sauna baths, aquarobics, salsa lessons, low impact aerobics and mucho more. Try something new every day. Here's an idea of what's on offer: Air Rifle Shooting Archery</p> |

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| | <p>Beach Volleyball Bike Tour Bocce Game Cooking Lessons Darts Tournament Fitness Centre Horseshoe Kayak Race Kayak Tour Kayak Towing Latin dance lessons Mini Boat Race Mini Golf NFL Shots Paper Plane contest Ping Pong Pool Volleyball Sauna Soccer Spanish lessons Steam Baths Tennis Lessons Tequila Tasting Water Aerobics Water Olympics Water Polo Yoga Classes</p> |
| <p>Restaurants</p> | <p>Cocotal Restaurant At Cocotal, guests' appetites are met with enjoyable tastes from all over the world served à la carte. With a great chef's menu, Cocotal offers something for everyone in an elegant air-conditioned atmosphere. Cocotal serves both a continental breakfast and an International à la carte breakfast as well as a gourmet dinner. Cuisine: International</p> <p>D'Italia With a five-star service D'Italia offers lovers the perfect intimate dining experience. Allow the soft, enchanting sounds of a string quartet wrap you as you enjoy an exquisite Italian meal prepared by gourmet chefs. D'Italia takes on traditional dishes-with all time favorites, like the lobster lasagna-challenges the creations of the world's finest culinary laws. A visit to El Dorado Royale is not complete without spending a romantic evening here. Cuisine: Contemporary Italian</p> |

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**Kampai**

Enjoy the attractive ocean views as you delight the best of the Pacific Rim cuisine from India, Vietnam, China and Japan. Don't miss the regions freshest sushi or the genuine spring rolls. Buddha statues make the mood for the captivating Thai-inspired decor.

Cuisine: Pacific Rim

La Isla

Open air palapa serving à la carte International Cuisine. Features both a continental breakfast and an international breakfast, lunch and a Mediterranean Cuisine Gourmet Dinner.

Cuisine: International

JoJo's Seaside Grill

A real seaside grill, JoJo's offers authentic, fresh Caribbean cuisine in a delightful setting. Fresh sea breeze and relaxing sounds of the waves rolling in, the Caribbean Sea provides all the ambiance guests could ask for in this open-air restaurant. The menu is updated every day with just-off-the-boat fresh fish; JoJo's is a seafood lover's Eden. From authentic ceviche to traditional fish and chips, each dish is really fresh.

Cuisine: Caribbean Food

Fuentes-Culinary Theatre

A gastronomes dream come true, Fuentes is the best for dining and entertainment. Five opened kitchens under a 90-foot domed thatched roof. Fuentes has a bon vivant adventure to please all your appetites and curiosities. Flat-screens display our Michelin-trained chefs' cooking specialties and Mexico's vast culinary heritage.

Cuisine: Culinary Arts

La Fondue

For a fresh, fun, flavourful—and scenic dining experience come to the Fondue. La Fondue elevates this cuisine to gourmet levels with spectacular ocean views and a vast selection of fondues accompanied by a premium wine list.

Cuisine: Fondue

To ensure total comfort and maximum flexibility, none of the restaurants requires reservations and all restaurants are non smoking.

GOURMET CORNERS

For those afternoon cravings, Gourmet Corners are the perfect answer.

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| | <p>La Cabaña Pizzeria Come enjoy wood fired oven pizzas served to order, a selection of Angus burgers, gourmet bites and other succulent Mexican “botana” preparations.</p> <p>Healthy Corner Healthy corner serves fruit, whole-wheat sandwiches and smoothies made fresh to order.</p> <p>Rincon Mexicano This gourmet corner serves delicious and authentic Mexican delicacies.</p> |
| <p>Azul Fives by Karisma</p> | <p>Mexico’s premier Gourmet Inclusive boutique property is located on the beach of Bahia Petempich in Riviera Maya. Ideal for families and couples, the intimate award-winning boutique hotel has two new restaurants, a Grand Salon banquet room and Sky Wedding rooftop terrace, and theatre.</p> <p>Azul Beach Hotel fuses Mexican architecture with contemporary interiors, modern conveniences and spectacular Gourmet Inclusive dining for an unparalleled getaway experience. Details on the hotel’s specific dining, entertainment, wedding, accommodation, and Azulitos Kid’s Club renovations include:</p> <p>Revamped Suites The renewed collection of guest suites at Azul Beach Hotel includes three categories - Honeymoon Suites, Wedding Suites and Jacuzzi Junior Suites - each of which are available as swim-up suites and cater to either families or couples. All suites have been expanded significantly, affording guests a spacious setting to relax and spend quality time together. As a part of the complete transformation, suites feature new architecture, décor, luxury furnishings, state-of-the-art amenities, and expansive private terraces. Suites are designed in a contemporary Caribbean style with dark wood accents, canopy beds, spacious sitting areas, and marble bathrooms complete with hydro-jet Jacuzzis, rainforest showerheads and double vanities. Each suite comes equipped with a 32” plasma TV, DVD player, an iPod docking station, amenity kit, once daily stocked mini bar, deluxe bathrobes, and an oversized outdoor terrace.</p> <p>New Dining Options As a part of the Gourmet Inclusive vacation experience, guests at Azul Beach Hotel enjoy a la carte gourmet meals, premium alcoholic beverages and non-alcoholic beverages, 24-hour room service, and full service concierge. This summer, two new restaurants join the property’s</p> |

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extensive suite of delicious dining options, each of which present guests with fresh produce from the 100,000-square-foot Greenhouse at El Dorado Royale, a sister property of Azul Beach Hotel:

Roma – Celebrating the flavours of Northern Italy, Roma uses the freshest ingredients to serve dishes that are prepared in its open granite kitchen with wood burning stove. Choose from family and individual pizzas, as well as other world-renowned Italian favorites. Guests can dine in style at the well-appointed new restaurant which features sleek décor elements such as curvilinear booths, neoclassical metal screens, Lucite wine storage “walls,” and an oversize blackboard highlighting Roma’s daily specials.

Latino – For casual dining, this Latin-style bistro specializes in culinary preparations from the southern tip of the Americans to the northern part of Mexico. Refreshing and unpretentious, Latino is the perfect place for couples or family celebrations with enticing dinner selections including an impressive kids menu.

Elegant Event Spaces

With a wide array of wedding and vow renewal packages, Azul Beach Hotel provides brides-to-be with affordable Gourmet Inclusive weddings that can be customized to reflect individual style. The intimate Azul Beach Hotel is ideal for couples seeking attention and exclusivity while the stunning natural beauty of white sand beaches and turquoise waters serves as their backdrop.

As part of its wedding and event offerings, the Grand Salon is an indoor banquet room accommodating up to 140 for dinner and 288 theatre style. The flexible space allows for a variety of seating options and state-of-the-art technology facilitates seamless event execution.

For couples looking to wed in style, Azul Beach Hotel now offers a new **Sky Wedding** ceremony setting. Offering spectacular 360-degree ocean views, the private rooftop terrace features a white gazebo and accommodates up to 60 people. Beachfront wedding locations are also available, as well as romance elements such as champagne check-ins, rose petals on the bed, Beachfront Sky Massages, and more. As a part of its wedding packages, Azul Beach Hotel features services that guarantee the bride, groom, and wedding party will be stress-free and personally pampered including the hotel’s wedding guest concierge, a personal in-room attendant for the bride-to-be and a groom’s personal dressing room.

Entertainment

Ideal for couples and families alike, Azul Beach Hotel’s new theatre

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| | <p>offers an exciting entertainment venue for guests. The theatre can seat up to 150 guests and offers nightly entertainment for the whole family including theme nights, live shows, and music.</p> <p>Azulitos Kid's Club Already the ultimate destination for families with young children, featuring a host of amenities to make traveling with little ones a breeze, Azul Beach Hotel recently unveiled a new Azulitos Kid's Club in alliance with Fisher-Price. The 1,600-square-foot facility is open from 9am – 5pm and 8 – 9pm with a complete full-day activity program. The Azulitos Kid's Club includes a Fisher-Price Toy Lending Library and play sessions by Fisher-Price, Lego Corner, Doll Corner, Nap Room, video games, play area and My Gym Children's Fitness Centre for kids ages 6-12 years. Further, parents can leave baby gear at home knowing the resort will have everything from cribs, changing tables and monitors to bottle warmers, baby spa robes, strollers and Gourmet Gerber as a part of its Pack & Play and Baby & Toddler Inclusive program.</p> <p>For parents, the frozen top bar at Agavero Tequila Lounge with 30 types of tequilas and complimentary babysitting services during happy hour twice weekly, provide adults the opportunity to reconnect.</p> |
| <p>Nickelodeon Hotels Punta Cana by Karisma</p> | <p>This resort is not in Mexico, but is situated on the Caribbean island nation of the Dominican Republic in the popular resort area of Punta Cana Nickelodeon Hotels & Resorts Punta Cana, is a Karisma Gourmet Inclusive Resort, located on Uvero Alto Beach in Punta Cana. This upscale property offers 208 spacious suites, restaurants providing the Karisma Gourmet Inclusive Experience, and facilities for all ages, including the Aqua Nick playground for children and a luxurious spa for adults.</p> <p>This recently opened resort (2016) with 208 rooms has accommodation for families of 5 and 4 room types including 1 bedroom Swim Up Flat. 9 restaurants (a la carte dinner: International x2, Pizzeria, Dominican, Asian, Italian, American, Meat & Seafood, Seafood). Unlimited a la carte breakfast, lunch and dinner.</p> <p>Spa, evening entertainment and live music, WiFi entire complex, Shuttle service throughout resort, golf course nearby, butler service at pool and beach, mini-disco, Waterpark, Nickelodeon Character Breakfast, Kids' Club (ages 4 to 12).</p> |

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| <p>TRANSAT WITH KARISMA HOTELS & RESORTS</p> | <p>Transat and Karisma Hotels and Resorts have come together to create the perfect antidote to the Canadian winter! Ask your travel agent for the Transat Sun and Fun 2016/17 brochure and</p> |
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| <p>Karisma Resorts Featured with Transat 2016/17</p> | <p>go to www.transat.com</p> <p>Transat features nine of the Karisma Hotels in its 2016/17 program:</p> <p>In Riviera Maya, Mexico Azul Beach, a Gourmet Inclusive Resort, by Karisma Azul Fives, a Gourmet Inclusive Resort, by Karisma El Dorado Casitas Royale, a Gourmet Inclusive Resort, by Karisma El Dorado Maroma, a Gourmet Inclusive Resort, by Karisma El Dorado Royale, a Gourmet Inclusive Resort, by Karisma El Dorado Seaside Suites, a Gourmet Inclusive Resort, by Karisma Generations Riviera Maya, by Karisma Hidden Beach Au Naturel Resort, by Karisma</p> <p>In Punta Cana Dom Rep Nickelodeon Hotels Punta Cana by Karisma</p> |
| <p>Transat Background</p> | <p>For thirty years, Transat has been offering a large selection of vacation options in Europe, Florida and the South, as well as cruises sailing the seven seas. In addition to hundreds of south hotels available in the form of all-inclusive packages, Transat also offers a wide range of flights, packages, tours and à la carte holidays. Their packages are flexible and tailored to stays of varying lengths.</p> <p>Transat A.T. Inc. is an integrated tour operator that specializes in holiday travel and offers more than 60 destination countries. Transat, which was created in Canada and has offices in many other countries, is an international company that owns an air carrier, provides destination services, is active in the accommodation industry and operates an extensive distribution network.</p> <p>Air Transat, the group's airline, offers a vast selection of flights to nearly 60 destinations in 25 countries aboard its fleet of Airbus wide-body jets. Families benefit from numerous privileges, such as a dedicated check-in counter and Kids Club advantages. Upgrade to Club Class for a touch of luxury or choose Option Plus and obtain an additional baggage allowance of 10 kg, among other perks.</p> |
| <p>Transat History</p> | <p>Transat came into being in the early 1980's when a handful of passionate people, led by Jean-Marc Eustache, Lina De Cesare and Philippe Sureau, created Trafic Voyages, a wholesaler specializing in travel from Quebec to France.</p> <p>In 1987, the Company made a great leap with the adoption of a forward-looking vision focused on growth and vertical integration. The company, which was then renamed Transat, was listed on the stock exchange through an IPO and used the proceeds to establish its own</p> |

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| | <p>airline, Air Transat. It also embarked on a series of acquisitions in order to solidify its position as an outgoing tour operator in Canada and France, as well as to develop new destination markets.</p> <p>From acquisition to acquisition, Transat expanded across Canada and continued to develop its sun destinations as well as routes from Canada to Europe and many other countries. The company quickly became the leader in sun destinations and services to Europe. It also became the leader in tourist travel from European countries to Canada and offers a wide range of both short- and long-haul destination countries and holiday options departing from France.</p> <p>In 1988, Transat considerably expanded its presence in retail distribution with the acquisition of an interest in the franchisor Consultour. Over the years, it also broke into the airport ground handling services, and also became the largest incoming tour operator in Canada with the acquisition of Jonview Canada.</p> <p>The Company entered the French market very early on with Vacances Transat (France), the largest tour operator offering travel to Canada, and soon expanded within France, the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe. It acquired French tour operator Look Voyages in 1996, Greek incoming tour operator Tourgreece in 2001, British tour operator Canadian Affair in 2006 and French tour operator Amplitude Internationale, specializing in travel to Tunisia, in 2007. At its destinations, the company opened offices in Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Florida in order to be able to provide its customers with complementary services. In 2007, Transat created a 1,600-room joint venture with the major Spanish chain H10 Hotels in Mexico and the Dominican Republic.</p> <p>In Canada, Transat now has some 500 travel agencies and is the largest travel agency network since the acquisition of the Thomas Cook agencies in 2006. Brands include Transat Travel, Club Voyages, Voyages en Liberté, Marlin Travel, TravelPlus and tripcentral.ca.</p> <p>With thousands of tourism service providers in some 60 countries (including about 50 airlines and 1,500 hotels) and more than 5,000 employees catering to the approximately 3 million people who travel every year, Transat is now one of the leaders in the international tourism industry.</p> |
| <p>Vacation Types</p> | <p>Transat has it all: packages, cruises, hotels, flights, tours, car rentals & train travel. With a choice of over 300 hotels located in more than 50 destinations and a complete line of itineraries offered in partnership with</p> |

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| | <p>the most prestigious cruise lines, all products offered by Transat are subject to a rigorous standard review.</p> |
| <p>Transat Collections</p> | <p>Choosing the right resort for your vacation needs is all important and to help you select the right hotel Transat have created 6 different Collections: Luxury, Distinction, Adults, Family, Solo and Sun Savvy.</p> <p>What defines a Collection?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The vacation packages in a Collection match the type of experience you are looking for. Everything from the details of the Air Transat flights to the resort and its facilities suit the needs of a specific type of traveller. <p>Luxury Collection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Designed to cater to your every whim, their prestigious Luxury Collection is the gold standard in upscale travel... with VIP inclusions for a dream vacation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Free access to VIP Lounge at airports o Free upgrade to OPTION PLUS on board Air Transat o Private roundtrip transfers o Unlimited À La Carte gourmet dining o Free WIFI in room and public area <p>Solo Collection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With this new collection Transat put together a group of resorts that people who like to travel alone will enjoy thanks to advantages such as a communal table for sharing meals and no single supplement. And the big news is – no Single Supplement! - Solo Collection Advantages include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o No Single Supplement o Communal table for sharing meals o Weekly Happy Hour welcoming all Transat clients o Free room service and free WI-FI <p>Sun Savvy Collection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transat thinks everyone should be able to enjoy the sun, and they pride themselves on providing you with the quality you want at the prices you love. Hence their new Sun Savvy Collection. <p>Adults Collection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The 18+ crowd will have access to top of the line accommodations, unlimited à la carte dining and free WiFi. <p>Family Collection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Their Family Collection delivers a safe, exciting time for kids - and a |

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| | <p>relaxing holiday for parents. There are a variety of activities, facilities and promotions that suit the needs of different types of family. These range from resorts perfect for families with very young children to resorts perfect for teens and big families. And then there are also Transat's new Multigenerational and Single Parent categories.</p> <p>And lastly – there is the Distinction Collection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distinction Collection offers exclusive perks that range from direct transfers, additional à la carte dinner reservations and complimentary WiFi access - Distinction inclusions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Direct roundtrip transfers between the airport and the resort o Additional guaranteed à la carte restaurant reservations o Free WIFI in the lobby o Mini-bar restocked daily o Unlimited select international drinks o Free in-room safe <p>You will also enjoy, for example, bottle of wine or local specialty in the room upon arrival, turn-down service plus lots more.</p> |
| <p>Distinction Collection and Palladium Hotels</p> | <p>Transat’s Distinction Collection includes several superior Palladium hotels in Jamaica, the Dominican Republic and Mexico that offer exclusive Imperial Club inclusions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct transfers between the airport and complex Unlimited à la carte dinners, or priority reservations for 5 guaranteed dinners / week Unlimited select international and premium brand drinks Separate check-in Fruit platter upon arrival Concierge service with direct phone line Private cocktail party with hot and cold hors d’oeuvres Discounts at the spa |
| <p>Awards</p> | <p>Transat almost routinely picks up numbers of rewards each year. Here are some of the awards they received in 2016:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voted Best North American Leisure Airline five years running - 2016 Skytrax Annual Airline Awards First place in three categories of the Agent’s Choice Awards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> best Tour Operator best Leisure/Charter airline for Air Transat best Overall Supplier for Service and Value |
| <p>Current Brochures</p> | <p>Transat Cruise brochures are available at your local travel agent and cover vacations through to 2017</p> |

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| Newsletter | Stay up to date on the latest news, travel offers, discount prices, contests and more by signing up to Transat's e-newsletter here: http://www.airtransat.com/en-CA/Newsletter |
| Air Transat Kids Club | <p>To ensure that your family vacations are fun and unforgettable from beginning to end, Air Transat has created Kids Club so that young passengers can really enjoy themselves whilst onboard an Air Transat flight. It is designed to make air travel a fun experience for young travellers (and for their parents!). Even before the doors of the plane are closed following boarding, every child receives a small bag containing all sorts of surprises and games. The more fun they have, the easier the flight. Furthermore, children who are members of Air Transat Kids Club enjoy certain exclusive privileges.</p> <p>Members of the Air Transat Kids Club will enjoy several benefits that the whole family can share. You can check in at a special "Air Transat Kids Club Members" counter. Thanks to these special counters located in major Canadian airports where Air Transat flies, checking-in is quicker than before. At check-in, special tags will be placed on your baggage; as a result, your baggage gets priority treatment.</p> |
| Transat Club Class | <p>Enjoy exclusive privileges such as complimentary seat selection, wider, more comfortable leather seats, a choice of gourmet meals and fine wines, priority check-in, baggage service and boarding.</p> <p>Club Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated Club attendants • Attentive, personalized service • Exclusive, spacious Club cabin <p>Drinks & Snacks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome cocktails • Complimentary non-alcoholic drinks, snacks and bar service <p>Club Privileges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased baggage allowance • 40 kg checked/15 kg carry-on • Exclusive, rapid check-in counter in most airports • Priority boarding • Practical travel items (on Europe flights) • Free headsets • Canadian newspapers <p>Comfort & Refinement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider, more comfortable leather seats • More leg room • Complimentary Seat Selection: call 1-877-872-6728 • Choice of gourmet meals • Choice of wine and more |
| Option Plus | This Economy class option includes many priority privileges and |

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| | <p>services including priority check-in, priority baggage handling, an extra 10kg baggage allowance and even champagne. Here's what you get:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance seat selection on roundtrip flights • Priority check-in at a dedicated counter • Priority baggage handling • Priority boarding • Complete Air Transat travel kit on flights to European destinations • Snacks from the On Board Bistro selection • Alcoholic beverages during drinks service 200ml bottle of champagne (Sun and Europe) • Supplementary baggage allowance up to 10 kg per flight segment • Wine or beer with the meal • Headsets <p>The cost is \$89-\$149 for southbound destinations and \$99-\$209 for European destinations as at Nov 2017</p> |
| <p>Option Flex</p> | <p>Life doesn't always go exactly according to plan. When you book your dream vacation, you want to make sure you enjoy the ultimate level of flexibility should something unexpected happen. Option Flex with Transat gives you just that. Option Flex lets you:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - change your departure date, destination or hotel, up to 3 hours before departure - transfer your vacation package to a friend or family member, up to 7 days before departure - cancel your trip and get a full refund - and you won't be charged any additional fuel or currency surcharges once you've booked. <p>Benefit from these advantages for only \$49 + taxes at time of booking.</p> |
| <p>Transat and Sustainable Tourism</p> | <p>Transat recognizes the prime importance of the environment, host communities, cultural diversity, and their relationships with their employees, customers and partners. Tourism has become one of the world's leading industries. Society and communities reap the benefits, and, each year, hundreds of millions of travellers discover new countries and cultures. Transat is firmly committed to the responsible development of the tourism industry, and has adopted the following definition of sustainable tourism:</p> <p><i>"Sustainable tourism entails respect for nature, as well as for host communities and their values; it combines positive socio-economic benefits for local populations with an enriching experience for travellers."</i></p> <p>The issue of the environment, as far as Transat's own facilities are concerned, is a clear and basic target. Their environment committees have implemented concrete initiatives with regard to recycling, conservation of resources, the disposal of obsolete electronic equipment, and raising employee awareness.</p> |

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| | <p>Air Transat has begun developing an environmental management system that could lead to an ISO 14001 certification in the future. To find out more, consult the Transat and the Environment sections at their website: http://www.airtransat.ca/en/Info/the-environment-its-everyones-business.aspx?ExitID=69&ContentType=voyageur</p> <p>Eco-responsible certified hotels Transat urges its hotelier partners to excel in social and environmental responsibility, and formally recognizes the efforts of accommodations that commit to certification in this area. Certified establishments must maintain performance levels to continue using such labels. The indicators used vary depending on the certification scheme, but many certification organizations have begun aligning their benchmarks with the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria. To help you make an informed choice when you take your next vacation, Transat list six certifications for hotels and beaches. You can also find certified hotels by searching by destination.</p> <p>Certifications for hotels Biosphere Responsible Tourism Green Globe Green Key ISO 14001 Travelife</p> <p>Certification for beaches Blue Flag</p> |
| Gift Certificates | <p>Here's your chance to make a loved one's dream come true. With Transat gift certificates you can offer the beauty, excitement, and wonders of the world: the South with its heavenly beaches and endless sunshine, or just a rental car. Transat gift certificates are valid on all Transat products in their brochures. They can be redeemed at a travel agent's office at the time of reservation. To order your gift certificates call 1-800-322-6649.</p> |
| Groups | <p>Group rates are available – as few as 10 adults make up a group. Talk to your travel agent to check the current details of Transat's group deals.</p> |
| Transat Excursions in Riviera Maya | <p>CHICHEN ITZA Tour the capital of the Mayan Empire, one of the richest ancient cultures in the world. Built in 600 A.D., it was one of the most important ceremonial and religious centres in America. Test the acoustics in the ball court and see the well-preserved artifacts.</p> <p>COBA MAYAN VILLAGE The real Mexican tour! Discover the highest pyramid on the Yucatan Peninsula. Visit a small Mayan village and meet the inhabitants who will</p> |

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show you how they make chewing gum from tree resin.

SNORKELLING TOUR

This full-day tour will allow you to admire the underwater life of the second largest coral reef in the world. Enjoy lunch at a private beach club, then join in some activities or simply relax on a hammock.

ATV

Discover the Mayan jungle on your own ATV and experience the thrill of snorkelling in the crystal clear waters of a cenote. A day to remember!

CAPTAIN HOOK

All aboard – the adventure is about to begin! Enjoy a pirate show as you savour a lobster or steak dinner.

SIAN KAAAN BIOSPHERE

Depart for the Sian Kaan biosphere. Your guide will take you along a dirt road so you can observe the biosphere's natural beauty. Then, return to Punta Allen, a small fishing village. Enjoy a leisurely boat ride. You'll have the opportunity to see dolphins, manta rays, lobsters, sea turtles and many different kinds of birds.

XPLOR

An all-inclusive adventure! XPLOR is a unique underground world, with activities that let you Xplore and rediscover nature. Come and enjoy zip lines, amphibious vehicles, underground rafts, and a stalactite river swim.

XEL-HA AND TULUM

Go swimming at Xel-Ha, one of the most beautiful natural aquariums in the entire Mayan Riviera, followed by a tour of Tulum, the only walled Mayan city. Enter the fortress on the west side of the ceremonial city, which still features ancient paintings.

ISLA MUJERES TOUR

Step aboard and sail the crystal clear waters of Isla Mujeres on a brand new 75 ft maxi catamaran. The friendly crew will guide you on an unforgettable sailing and snorkelling experience. Open bar and buffet

JUNGLE TOUR

Enjoy one of Transat's most popular and exciting tours. Pilot your own two-person speedboat through the mangroves before snorkelling at Punta Nizuc, part of the world's second-largest coral reef.

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| | <p>NIGHTCLUB TOUR The fabulous and unique Party Hopper Tour offers 7 hours of open bar with national drinks. Cover and Express Pass (no waiting in line) at the most popular night clubs in Cancun.</p> <p>RIO SECRETO Discover the secrets of a real underground river, the longest and most spectacular in the region, and travel on a fantastic journey into a world of extraordinary beauty. A wonderful addition to your Tulum visit.</p> <p>COBA MAYAN ADVENTURE A day filled with excitement and adventure! Discover the Yucatan's tallest pyramid. Explore a Mayan village, walk through the jungle and go rappelling, zip lining, swimming in cenotes and canoeing in fresh water lagoons, followed by a delicious traditional meal.</p> <p>DEEP SEA FISHING Go on an incredible journey as you live the world-famous deep sea fishing experience. Have a great catch and get the big ones: kingfish, barracuda, snapper, grouper, sailfish, mackerel, mahi-mahi and more. Catch & Release Policy is enforced by the Mexican Marine Fauna.</p> <p>JUNGLE MAYA Discover the world's longest underground river, before snorkelling in the Nohoch Nah Chiich cavern. Then ride through the rain forest in an all-terrain Mercedes Benz Unimogs to Yaxmuul, a unique natural pool. At Kantenah Natural Reserve go rappelling down a beautiful cenote and zip line over jungle foliage. Then, participate in a traditional Mayan purification ceremony</p> |
| Transat Deals | <p>Look out for special offers from Transat for Karisma Hotels You can see all their deals using this link: https://www.transat.com/en-CA/deals/south</p> |
| To Book | <p>See your Travel Agent or contact the Transat Booking Centre at: 1-877-TRANSAT (1-877-872-6728)</p> |
| Websites & Social Media | <p>Website: www.Transat.com Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/AirTransatCanada Twitter: https://twitter.com/AirTransat You Tube: https://www.youtube.com/user/AirTransatEng</p> |
| RIVIERA MAYA, MEXICO | <p>The Riviera Maya, Mexico is known for white sand beaches and warm tranquil waters, protected by one of the world's largest barrier reefs. Home to ancient Mayan ruins, the destination also offers wonderful snorkeling and scuba diving, an 18 hole championship golf course and endless activities. And the Riviera Maya offers one of the greatest</p> |

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| | <p>choices of luxury, all-inclusive resorts anywhere in the world.</p> <p>Serviced by the Cancun International Airport, the Riviera Maya is a destination not to be missed. Flights are available with Transat from airports right across Canada.</p> |
| Location | Southeast Mexico, facing the Caribbean. |
| Geography | The Yucatán's Caribbean coast is 380km long, stretching from Cancún all the way to Chetumal, at the border with Belize. The northern half of the coast has been dubbed the "Riviera Maya"; the southern half, the "Costa Maya." In between is the large Sian Ka'an Biopreserve. |
| Name | The Mexican name for the Atlantic coastal region of the Yucatan Peninsula is "Riviera Maya", named after the Mayan People. The English use is either Maya Riviera or Mayan Riviera. Cancun comes from "Kankun" (a single word written with the two "k's"), which means "pot of snakes" or "nest of snakes" in Maya. |
| Language | Spanish, but English is widely spoken in the resort areas |
| Currency | One Canadian Dollar = 14 Mexican Pesos (28 th Oct 2016) |
| Tipping | 10-15% |
| Government | Democracy |
| Documentation | Passports are required for Canadian citizens, but no Visa is necessary. |
| Time zone | Central Time |
| Health | No inoculations needed; drink bottled water to avoid 'turista', an upset stomach. |
| Safety tips | <p>Car break-ins are just about the only crime here. Despite concerns about safety in Mexico which have been largely created by lurid media reporting, Mexican tourist destinations remain as safe as most other major destinations.</p> <p>For instance the murder rate in this part of Mexico – the Yucatan – is the same as the rate in Canada.</p> <p>Mexico's President Felipe Calderon told the 2011 World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) summit in Las Vegas that the murder rate in Mexico was lower than in much of the US. "The rate of homicide is 15-16 per 1,000 – lower than in Washington DC, in Pittsburgh or in New Orleans," he said. "It is lower than in Puerto Rico. Yucatan has a rate of less than two per 1,000 – similar to places in Europe." The president also suggested the US bore a responsibility for the increasing violence. He said: "There are 8,000 gun shops along the US side of the border with Mexico. We seized more than 100,000 guns from criminals and 85% were bought in the US." A sobering thought...</p> |

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| CLIMATE | |
| General climate | The average annual temperature of the Riviera Maya is 25.5 degrees Celsius, with fluctuations of 5 to 7 degrees. Occasional hurricanes |

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| | (e.g.Emily and Wilma in 2005) |
| Today's weather | 28 degrees with sun and cloud in Playa del Carmen (28 th Oct 2016) |
| Best time to visit | Year round (the hurricane season is July-Nov, but you would be very unlucky to encounter one of these storms) |

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| GETTING THERE | |
| Flying time | 4.25 hours from Montreal and Toronto |
| Cities and Towns | <p>Cancun</p> <p>Cancun is situated on the south-east coast of Mexico in the state of Quintana Roo in the Yucatan Peninsula. Warm white powdery sand beaches and turquoise crystal clear waters together with the famous Mexican hospitality make this a place like no other.</p> <p>There are a thousand and one things to do in Cancun. There are many world-class luxury hotels dotted all along the edge of the beautiful Caribbean Sea, and on the other side you have the Nichupte Lagoon with many romantic waterside restaurants and trendy bars. Add a full range of water sports, including some of the world's most exquisite snorkeling and scuba diving, plus championship golf courses and you have a location that will delight even the most discerning traveler.</p> <p>For water sports enthusiasts, Cancun offers some of the best scuba diving, snorkeling and fishing in the world, owing to the Great Mesoamerican Reef just off the coast of Cancun. This is the second largest reef in the world – second only to the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.</p> <p>In Cancun you have such a varied choice of cuisine, with everything from downtown traditional Mexican restaurants to ultra-chic bistros. You will find something to suit all tastes and budgets and will get fantastic service with a smile wherever you go. Cancun's Hotel Zone is renowned for its nightlife, boasting some of the best nightclubs in the world playing everything from salsa to disco to R & B and live music venues. You will find something to suit all ages and tastes.</p> <p>Downtown Cancun offers a captivating mixture of tradition and modernity. If you like to enjoy a real local atmosphere in a safe and friendly environment then this is the place to come! In downtown Cancun you will find hotels for all budgets- many small local restaurants offering regional and specialty cuisines and some really cool bars and live music venues. There is a wide choice of shopping venues from the Mercado 28 – a handicrafts market – to the super modern shopping mall Plaza Las Americas.</p> <p>The Cancun Aquarium located near Cancun's hotel zone boasts a large numbers of fascinating Marine life exhibits. There is also an area to get up close to various marine life including star fish and sea cucumbers.</p> |

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Playa Mujeres – This is a newly developed destination a little to the north of Cancun and features an endless beach, a brand new marina and some luxurious resorts. It's the perfect spot for a quieter vacation but it's still very close to the bright lights of Cancun. The Isla Mujeres is just offshore and makes for a lovely excursion by small boat.

Puerto del Carmen - Playa, as it is called, is the most happening place on the coast - a delightful beach (especially when the wind and currents are flowing in the right direction), hotels for every budget, a good choice of restaurants, and an active nightlife, most of which is on or around Quinta Avenida (Fifth Ave.), Playa's well-known promenade. In the last few years the town has grown quickly, and local residents and the tourism board are working to keep it from becoming a smaller version of Cancún.

Puerto Morelos - This town between Playa and Cancún remains a little village affectionately known by the locals as "Muerto Morelos" (muerto means "dead") for its phenomenally quiet low season. It has a few small hotels and rental houses, and nearby are a few secluded spa resorts. The coast is sandy and well protected by an offshore reef, which means good snorkeling and diving nearby, but the lack of surf means sea grass and shallow water. If you're looking for good swimming, head farther down the coast. If you're looking for a relaxing seaside retreat with a clean beach in an easygoing community, this will work for you.

Puerto Aventuras - The first major town south of Playa is a modern condo-marina development with a 9-hole golf course, several restaurants, and a few hotels. You might come here to go deep-sea fishing or swim with dolphins.

Akumal - A bit farther south is Akumal and Half Moon Bay. The community is relatively old for this shore, which means that it's already built up and doesn't have the boomtown feel of Playa and Tulum. Akumal has a strong ecological orientation and is a prominent scuba and snorkeling center. The locals are a mix of Americans and Mexicans, who enjoy the unhurried lifestyle of the Tropics, making this a good place to relax and work on your hammock technique. There are a few hotels; most of the lodging is rental houses and condos. Consequently, the town is a favorite with families who enjoy the calmness of the place and can save money by buying groceries and cooking for themselves.

Tulum - The town of Tulum (near the ruins of the same name) has a hotel district of about 30 palapa (palm-leaf roofed) hotels, which stretch down the coast of the Punta Allen peninsula. A few years ago it was

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| | mainly a destination for backpacker types, but with some of the most beautiful beaches on this coast and many improvements in hotel amenities, it now attracts people with big budgets. Construction is booming, both in the town and along the coast. Here you can enjoy the beach in relative solitude and quiet. |
| Distances | The tranquil paradise of the Mayan Riviera stretches more than 100 km south of Cancun offering stunning beauty with ruggedly beautiful beaches, lush vegetation and a charming Mexican atmosphere. Cancún – Tulúm130 km Cancún – Cobá167 km Cancún – Chichén Itza193 km Cancún – Puerto Morelos ...32 km Cancún – Xcaret72 km Cancún – Xel-Há124 km |
| Ferries | You can take a ferry to Cozumel , which you catch in Playa del Carmen. There are two ferry lines transporting passengers now. The ferries leave every hour. The ride is approximately 45 minutes, depending on the sea conditions The island of Isla Mujeres is located off the coast and is accessible by boat from Puerto Juárez. |
| Car Rental | All major companies are represented here. |
| Buses | A colectivo is a mini-bus that runs up and down the coast along highway 307 from Cancun to Tulum. It is an inexpensive way to travel up and down the Riviera. |

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| ACCOMMODATION TYPES | All Inclusive resorts predominate here, but there are smaller, pension type properties in Playa del Carmen. |
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| LIFESTYLES | |
| Kids | Xcaret is a developed Nature Park, eighty kilometers south of Cancún and 10km south of Playa del Carmen. Xcaret (pronounced "ish-cah-ret") is an ecological and archaeological theme park that is one of the area's most popular tourist attractions. It's the closest thing to Disneyland that you'll find in Mexico, with myriad attractions in one location, most of them participatory. Signs throughout Cancún advertise Xcaret, which has its own bus terminal to take tourists there at regular intervals. Plan to spend a full day. Tres Rios ecoadventure park 25 minutes south of Cancún is actually a nature reserve on more than 60 hectares of land. Tres Ríos (tel. 998/887-8077 in Cancún; www.tres-rios.com) offers families a beautiful natural area for kayaking, canoeing, snorkeling, horseback riding, or biking along jungle trails. It's definitely less commercial than the other eco-theme parks and is essentially just a great natural area for |

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| | <p>participating in these activities. The entrance fee includes canoe trips; the use of bikes, kayaks, and snorkeling equipment; and the use of hammocks and beach chairs once you tire yourself out. Extra charges apply for scuba diving, horseback riding, and other extended, guided tours through the preserve and its estuary. You can also opt for an all-inclusive package that covers admission, diving, horseback riding, and all food and beverages.</p> <p>The ecopark at Xel-Ha (tel. 998/884-9422; www.xelha.com), 13km south of Akumal, attracts throngs of snorkelers and divers with its warm waters and brilliant fish. The beautiful, calm cove is a perfect place to bring kids for their first snorkeling experience. Xel-ha (shell-hah) also offers dolphin swims and has food and beverage service, changing rooms, showers, and other facilities.</p> |
| <p>Teens</p> | <p>In Cancún, the Parque Nizuc marine park offers guests a chance to swim with dolphins and view them in their dolphin aquarium, Atlántida. The price of the dolphin swim includes admission to the park. It's a fun place for a family to spend the day, with its numerous pools, waterslides, and rides. Visitors can also snorkel with manta rays, tropical fish, and tame sharks. It's at the southern end of Cancún.</p> <p>Xplor: Xplor is a unique underground world, with four activities that invite you to Xplor and rediscover your emotions and senses immersed in nature. This unique place is found in the heart of the Riviera Maya on the highway to one side of Xcaret. Xplor offers you the chance to dive deep into the entrails of the Earth in way that would previously have been unimaginable, submerging yourself in a sea of stalactites and stalagmites, navigating on an underground raft, after a fantastic flight through the jungle, or like a modern Xplorer, driving an amphibious vehicle that can travel equally on water and underground and also through the intricate paths filled with thick foliage.</p> <p>Selvatica: the adventure kingdom is strategically located in between Cancun and Playa del Carmen (only 30 minutes away from either town). With over 330 acres of jungle, their 3 high-rope circuits including the "Aventura" zipline circuit (11 cables), plus its brand new "Extremo" course (12 ziplines), and America's first A.C.C.T. fully certified Aerial Trek (high ropes course with over 20 elements), Selvatica offers adventures for everyone, from 6 to 96 year olds.</p> |
| <p>Honeymoons & Weddings</p> | <p>The Riviera Maya is a popular destination for weddings and honeymoons. These are best arranged through the tour operator with the resort itself.</p> |

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| <p>UNIQUES</p> | <p>Coba: Set inland, deep in the jungle, surrounded by shallow lakes and</p> |
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| | <p>accessed by "sac-be's", a network of formal limestone roads built by the Mayans over a 1000 years ago, awaits the ancient city of Coba, located about 25 miles west of Tulum, Coba served as a Ceremonial center that flourished during the Classic Period (300-1000 A.D.), with 50,000 inhabitants. Coba, the capital of the largest Late Classic Empire in the Northern Lowlands, the city's most important structure is the Nohoch Mul, which is the tallest pyramid in the Yucatan Peninsula, stands 138 feet tall. The road to Cobá begins in Tulum and continues for 65km; there are also buses to Coba from Puerto Del Carmen</p> |
| <p>Surprising</p> | <p>Cenotes The Sacred Waters of the Riviera Maya</p> <p>The natural wonders of the Yucatan Peninsula are countless, but some of the most unique to the area are the cenotes. Cenotes are created by an underground river system and are fresh water sink holes that the Maya considered to be sacred. In addition they were an incredibly important resource as a fresh water source, and the Mayans also believed they were the entrance to the underworld. Cenote, (say-NOH-tay) called dzonot (ZO-note) by the ancient Maya were defined by the Motul dictionary, a dictionary of Mayan hieroglyphics, as "abysmal and deep" or "hole filled with water".</p> <p>Millions of years ago, the Yucatan Peninsula was covered by the ocean. Some 15,000 years ago, during the last Ice Age, the sea level descended approximately 250 feet.</p> <p>For thousands of years, the porous land surface, formed by fossilized coral and limestone, has filtered rainwater, which dissolved parts of the subsoil. This process created a system formed by flooded underground rivers and caves. This phenomenon is truly unique, and makes up the largest network of caverns in the world.</p> <p>Cenotes are formed when the roof of a cavern collapses due to erosion. The level of the water also contributes to the creation of cenotes: if it is too low, it does not provide enough support, which causes the roof to weaken and cave in.</p> <p>The depth of each cenote depends of the amount of natural debris that has accumulated through erosion in addition to the remains of the roof that collapsed. The water that gathers in these amazing natural wonders is a crystal clear turquoise color with a very pleasant temperature.</p> <p>The stalactites and stalagmites that form inside the cenotes are true natural works of art. In many, holes in the ceiling allow the sunlight to filter into the cenotes, giving the scene a magical feeling. The cenotes of the Yucatan Peninsula should be seen by all, but keep in mind that they should be protected so that they are here for generations to come. You can do your part in local conservation by not using any lotions, sunscreens, perfumes, or repellents prior to swimming in a cenote. Many cenotes provide showers that you can use to rinse off before going in.</p> <p>There are four different types of cenotes - those that are completely</p> |

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| | <p>underground, those that are semi-underground, those that are at land level like a lake or pond, and those that are open wells. Some of them are accessible for swimming and cave diving, some of them are not accessible at all, and some are actually dry cave systems that can be explored.</p> <p>Sizes and shapes of the cenotes differ according to their location. Some cenotes have been found to hold quantities of ancient offerings and jewelry, apparently thrown in the depths by the Mayas who once inhabited the area.</p> <p>Currently, an estimated six thousand cenotes have been found in the Mexican states of Yucatan and Quintana Roo. In the Riviera Maya, many cenotes have become famous, for their individual features offer different types of amusement for their visitors.</p> <p>In most cases, cenotes offer basic facilities such as bathrooms, dressing rooms and parking. Entrance can run anywhere from free to 100 pesos depending on where you go. Here are a few names to Google:</p> <p>Tres Bocas Cristalino Cenote Azul El Jardin de Eden Chemuyil Dos Ojos Yax Mul Casa Cenote Gran Cenote</p> |
| <p>History</p> | <p>Tulum: A popular excursion combines a visit to the ruins at Tulum with the ecological water park Xel-Ha . A wall surrounds the site on three sides, which explains the name (tulum means fence, trench, or wall). Its ancient name is believed to have been Záma, a derivative of the Maya word for "morning" or "dawn," and sunrise at Tulum is certainly dramatic. The wall is believed to have been constructed after the original buildings, to protect the interior religious altars from a growing number of invaders. It is considered to have been principally a place of worship, but members of the upper classes later took up residence here. Between the two most dramatic structures - the Castle and the Temple of the Wind - lies Tulum Cove. A small inlet with a beach of fine, white sand, it was a point of departure for Maya trading vessels in ancient times. Today it's a playground for tourists, and you can enjoy a refreshing swim.</p> <p>168km SW of Cancún</p> <p>Coba: Older than most of Chichén Itzá and much larger than Tulum, Cobá was the dominant city of the eastern Yucatán before A.D. 1000. The site is large and spread out, with thick forest growing between the temple groups. Rising high above the forest canopy are tall and steep pyramids of the Classic Maya style. Of the major sites, this one is the least reconstructed. But the structures themselves and the surrounding jungle and twin lakes</p> |

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| | make the experience enjoyable. This is not a cenote area, and the water has nowhere to go but stay on the surface. The forest canopy is also higher than in the northern part of the peninsula. |
| Books | <p>Lonely Planet's Mexico Travel Guide</p> <p>Maya Roads by Mary Jo McConahay see my review of this lovely book: http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/Planning/ChrisBookPicks.aspx#18</p> |
| 1000 Places to see before you die | Chichen Itza , 2.5 hours drive from Cancun is the Granddaddy of Mayan ruin sites in the Yucatan Peninsula and one of the most grandiose in the Mayan world. What also makes this a wonderful site to visit is there has been much restoration done, the grounds are manicured and there are tourist services including restaurants, small museum, and stores selling items not found in Playa del Carmen or Cozumel. |
| Must Sees | <p>Xcaret: Hanging out on the beach, scuba and snorkeling, cavern diving, visiting ruins, taking a siesta in a hammock under a grove of palm trees, hiking through tropical forest, meeting native Maya peoples - Xcaret has all that plus handicraft exhibitions, a bat cave, a butterfly pavilion, mushroom and orchid nurseries, and lots of wildlife on display (the park has several conservation programs for endangered species), native jaguars, manatees, sea turtles, monkeys, macaws, flamingos, and a petting aquarium. Children love it.</p> <p>What probably receives most of the comments is the underground river (a natural feature of the park and common in much of the Yucatán) that's been opened in places to allow snorkelers to paddle along with the current. There are also a number of tours and shows, including charros (Mexican cowboys) from the state of Jalisco, and the Totonac Indian voladores ("flyers" who do a daring pole dance high above the ground) from the state of Veracruz. Xcaret is 10km south of Playa del Carmen. It's open daily from 8:30am to 9pm.</p> <p>www.xcaret.com</p> |

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| SPORTS ACTIVITIES | |
| Golf | <p>Currently this region features 10 quality golf courses, created by world class designers such as Robert Trent Jones, Jr., Robert von Hagge, Jack Nicklaus, Greg Norman and P.B. Dye. The Mexican Caribbean will generate more than 200,000 rounds of golf a year.</p> <p>This new Golf Paradise has already been host to International tournaments like The Mayakoba Golf Classic Riviera Maya - Cancun (the first PGA Tour Event to be held outside of the United States or Canada). Perhaps the best known is the Pok-Ta-Pok Club, a Robert Trent Jones designed course.</p> <p>The golf courses in Cancun and the Riviera Maya feature challenging fairways that present players with distinctive curves and gentle hills, all</p> |

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framed by colorful tropical vegetation. Some are even built around ancient Mayan temples. From tee to green, views of the Caribbean's turquoise waters and pure white beaches stretch out in the distance with an abundance of wildlife in view.

Cancun Golf Club at Pok Ta Pok - Robert Trent Jones Jr

Cancun Golf Club at Pok Ta Pok, designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr. in 1976, is considered a leader in golf in this region. Those who visit Cancun know that playing a round of golf on this course is a must.

Hilton Cancun Golf Club

The 18-Hole, Par 72 Championship golf course at Hilton Cancun Golf Club is set within 150 acres of tropical paradise. With lush fairways tended with the utmost care meandering through ancient Mayan Ruins, this challenging, yet fair golf course is enjoyable for golfers of all handicaps

Moon Spa & Golf Club – Jack Niklaus Signature Golf Course

Moon Spa & Golf Club is one of the Nicklaus Signature Golf Courses in Cancun and the Riviera Maya and was designed with a unique concept of environmental conservation. It is surrounded by a beautiful landscape, natural mangroves and exotic animals. This 27-hole course will be an unforgettable experience.

Riviera Cancun – Jack Niklaus Signature Golf Course

Two brand new golf courses can be found at the Riviera Cancun with the famous Jack Niklaus Signature design. With Par 72 and undulating fairways at the edge of the turquoise Caribbean sea it will be an exhilarating experience for any golfer.

Mayan Palace Riviera Maya – Jack Niklaus

This is another Niklaus Design golf course found at the Mayan Palace Riviera Maya between Cancun and Playa Del Carmen. It features traps of radiant, white sand, lakes surrounded by natural rocks and the intense color of the greens .The extraordinary natural landscape featuring lakes and native Mayan vegetation all make for a challenging yet beautiful golf course.

Cozumel Country Club – Jack Niklaus

The Cozumel Country Club has been carefully crafted from the surrounding mangrove marshlands and tropical rainforest to preserve its environmental integrity, as well as providing attractive challenges for players of every skill level.

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| | <p>El Camaleon Mayakoba – Greg Norman El Camaleon Mayakoba designed by Greg Norman stretches from the jungle to the mangroves and on to the most beautiful ocean views. El Camaleon Mayakoba is the first golf course in Mexico to be chosen by the PGA. They now hold the PGA Tour, and have committed to carry out the PGA event during the third week of February for the next several years.</p> <p>Playacar Spa & Golf Club – Robert Van Hagge Playacar Spa & Golf Club was designed and constructed under the supervision of the famous architect Robert Von Hagge. This magnificent golf course surrounded by a diversity of lakes and exuberant vegetation, is considered to be one of the most challenging golf courses in Cancun or the Riviera Maya.</p> <p>Iberostar Playa Paraiso Golf Club – P.B. Dye Iberostar Playa Paraiso Golf Club, located about 30 minutes south of Cancun, is the latest creation of world-renowned golf course architect P.B. Dye. The vertical movement and distinctive rock work are signatures of a typical P.B. Dye design. This world-class layout features conditions seen only at the best golf destinations around the world.</p> <p>Cancun Country Club Cancun Country Club consists of two 18-hole courses – one designed by Tom Fazio, considered to be one of the world’s great golf design architects and one by Nick Price.</p> |
| <p>Fishing</p> | <p>Sportfishing Riviera Maya is one of the best sport fishing hotspots in the world... Sport fishing in Cancun is on a ‘catch and release’ basis and goes in seasons. From February to April the top catches are kingfish, barracuda, small shark, grouper and blue marlin. From April to August you will find blue marlin, sailfish, tuna and mahi-mahi. Then from September to February catches include barracuda, snapper and mackerel. Book a sport fishing excursion and you are guaranteed an exhilarating day out!</p> <p>Fly fishing The lagoon system around Cancun offers the angler all year round opportunities to catch and release a great variety of species such as tarpon, bonefish, barracuda, sea trout, and red snapper. Fly fishing can be done in the sea, lakes, lagoons or rivers and is done in shallow, clear waters using artificial bait called a fly. You can book fly fishing lessons with one of the many tour operators. The fishing is best March to August; you can arrange a day of deep-sea fishing at one of the numerous piers or travel agencies for around \$220 to \$360 for 4 hours, \$420 for 6 hours, and \$520 for 8 hours</p> |

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| | for up to four people. Marinas will sometimes assist in putting together a group. Charters include a captain, a first mate, bait, gear, and beverages. |
| Horse riding | Rancho Loma Bonita: 30 minutes south of Cancun has a 5 hour package riding through mangrove swamps to the beach for a swim |
| Hiking | The long stretch of beach by the resorts is ideal for strolls by the ocean |
| Cycling | Bikes are available for rent in Puerto del Carmen and Cancun |
| Diving | <p>Riviera Maya offers an unimaginable world of underwater beauty and is one of the best places in the world for scuba diving; it's famous because of its shallow reefs alive with the dazzling colours of fish and coral. Scuba diving in Cancun is so popular largely because of the Great Mesoamerican Reef (the Gran Arrecife Maya). This is the largest reef in the Western Hemisphere and the second largest coral reef in the world. The Great Mesoamerican Reef stretches from Punta Nizuc, which it at the tip of the Cancun Hotel Zone, all the way to the Bay of Islands in Honduras. Cancun's coastline is home to nearly 100 coral species, 350 molluscs and 164 species of reef dwelling fish.</p> <p>The Riviera Maya is also the home to the hawksbill sea turtle, crocodiles, lemon sharks and manatees.</p> <p>There are many fascinating scuba diving venues for both the novice as well as the more experienced diver. You have a choice of open water diving along the reef and there are also several sunken boats to add to the adventure. If you go inland along the Cancun – Tulum corridor you will find many caverns and cenotes, also known as "sink holes".</p> <p>Cyan-Ha Diving Centre arranges reef and cavern diving. Many of the hotels have free introductory dives and dive shops.</p> |

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| CULTURE | <p>Mayan Culture</p> <p>The Mayan civilization was among the original cultures of the New World and spanned more than 3,000 years. The Mayans lived mainly on the Yucatan Peninsula in the eastern one third of Mesoamerica and at its peak had one of the most densely populated and culturally dynamic societies in the world. Mayan culture is known for its spectacular art, impressive architecture, and sophisticated mathematical and astronomical systems which were all way ahead of their time.</p> <p>Mayan Architecture</p> <p>Mayan architecture spans many thousands of years. The most dramatic and easily recognizable are the fantastic stepped pyramids in places such as Chichen Itza and Coba to name but a few. A year ago Chichen Itza was named as one of the seven wonders of the world, and has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site for 20 years.</p> |
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| | <p>The Mayan Calendar The Mayan Calendar was not the original Mesoamerican calendar, but with the refinements the Mayans made, it became the most sophisticated. The Mayan calendar along with the Aztec calendar are the best documented and most completely understood of all the Mesoamerican calendars.</p> <p>Mayan Scripture and Mayan Art Mayan scripture is the only known fully developed written language of the pre-Columbian Americas. Mayan art is considered by many to be the most sophisticated and beautiful of the ancient New World.</p> <p>Mayan Tree of Life The Mayan civilization recognised the four primary compass directions and each was associated with a colour – East with red, North with white, West with black and South with yellow. They also had a fifth ‘direction’ which was the center and this was a blue-green colour. The center was represented by a great ceiba tree known as the Mayan tree of life. This tree connected the center of the Earth with both the underworld and the heavens.</p> <p>Mayan Gods There were thirteen Mayan gods belonging to the thirteen of heavens of the Mayan religion and nine gods from the nine underworlds. Natural elements such as the stars and the planets, crops, numbers, days and periods of time each had their own gods. The mood of the Mayan gods changed according to the days in the Mayan calendar or the position of the sun, moon and stars. Some of most notable gods are Chaac – God of Rain and Thunder, Ixchel – jaguar goddess of midwifery, Ah Puch – God of Death.</p> <p>Today, the Mayan civilization and their descendants form sizable populations throughout the Maya area known as the Mundo Maya and maintain a distinctive set of traditions and beliefs. Over 500 different Mayan languages continue to be spoken today.</p> <p>To visit some of these sites and experience the beauty of the Mayan civilization really is an opportunity not to be missed during your Cancun vacation. There are many tours available from your hotel or tour operator.</p> |
| <p>Museums</p> | <p>Museo de Arte Popular Mexicano, located at on the second floor of the El Embarcadero Marina, Bulevar Kukulcán Km 4. It displays a representative collection of masks, regional folkloric costumes, nativity scenes, religious artifacts, musical instruments, Mexican toys, and gourd</p> |

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| | <p>art.</p> <p>Shipwreck Museum, Puerto Aventuras - a fascinating display of wreckage and artifacts collected from shipwrecks along the eastern coastline. Exhibits include 16th century breech-loading cannons and an elephant tusk from the wreckage of a 17th century ship carrying African slaves and ivory.</p> |
| Festivals | <p>Santa Semana: Holy Week is a huge celebration in Mexico with colourful street processions...but be sure to book early as everywhere is sure to be very busy.</p> <p>Spring Equinox is celebrated with parades to welcome the spring and at Chichen Itza's main pyramid, the shadows align and the plumed serpent moves slowly from the top of the building to its base...</p> <p>Winter Equinox will be another major event and most Maya sites, as this is the day when their 5,000 year Long Cycle ends.</p> <p>Riviera Maya Jazz Festival November The annual Riviera Maya Jazz Festival attracts an enthusiastic crowd to Mamitas Beach in Playa del Carmen to enjoy free performances by national and international acts. http://www.rivieramayajazzfestival.com</p> |

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| ATTRACTIONS | <p>Beautiful lagoons and bays full of colorful fish & sea turtles Fascinating Mayan ruins at Tulum, Coba and Xel-Ha Second-largest barrier coral reef in the world Miles of white sand beaches Unique "eco-archeological" theme parks, Xcaret & Xel-Ha Lots of Cenotes - natural pools of clear water- amazing to swim in Aktun Ha [giant caves on road to Coba] Playa del Carmen - the fastest growing city in Latin America Cozumel Island (diving and snorkeling) Magnificent resorts and hotels Unbelievable shopping Fabulous food</p> |
| Beaches | <p>Almost the whole length of the Mayan Riviera is bordered by beautiful white sand beaches. These beaches have recently been considerably enhanced with additional sand to make them broader and better than ever after recent coastal erosion.</p> |
| Wildlife | <p>The Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve Down the Riviera Maya a few kilometers south of the Tulum ruins, you'll pass the guardhouse of the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve. The reserve is a tract of 500,000 hectares (1.2 million acres) set aside in 1986 to preserve tropical forests, savannas, mangroves, coastal and marine habitats, and 110km of coastal reefs. The area is home to jaguars; pumas; ocelots; margays; jaguarundis;</p> |

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| | <p>spider and howler monkeys; tapirs; white-lipped and collared peccaries; manatees; brocket and white-tailed deer; crocodiles; and green, loggerhead, hawksbill, and leatherback sea turtles. It also protects 366 species of birds -- you might glimpse an ocellated turkey, a great curassow, a brilliantly coloured parrot, a toucan or trogon, a white ibis, a roseate spoonbill, a jabiru (or wood stork), a flamingo, or one of 15 species of herons, egrets, and bitterns.</p> |
| <p>Wildlife – Whale Sharks</p> | <p>Swimming with Whale Sharks Whale sharks are the gentle giants of the ocean. They are the largest fish in the world measuring up to 40 feet (12 meters) and weighing up to 15 tons. Fortunately for those of us that want to swim with the whale shark they are totally harmless and peaceful. During your vacation in Cancun you have the once in a lifetime opportunity to get up close to one of these amazing creatures.</p> <p>Whale Shark Facts The whale shark is a fascinating creature to behold, with its wide mouth extending to 5 feet when open. The whale shark swims with its mouth open, close to the surface of the water, and just sucks in the plankton. It then closes its mouth and forces all the unwanted water out of its gills and only the plankton remains. The whale shark has a unique checkerboard pattern on its back made up of creamy white spots and pale horizontal and vertical stripes with a white underbelly so is easily distinguishable. This pattern is why it is also often known as the Domino.</p> <p>Whale Shark Season If adventurers want to take advantage of this phenomenon, you must bear in mind that the whale sharks are usually found around the islands of Holbox and Contoy from May until September, although mostly during the months of July and August. They gather here due to the nutrient -rich water around these shores. In fact, 30th August has now been formally established as the Mexican Day of the Whale Shark.</p> <p>Tours to Swim with Whale Sharks You can book tours to swim with the whale sharks leaving Cancun from Punta Sam, which last about 5 hours, or you can take a trip to Isla Holbox and book it while you are there. If you choose to experience swimming with the whale shark you will be accompanied by experts who will provide you with all the necessary information to better understand the behaviour of these wonderful creatures. Take a look at some of our recommended tour operators. If you would like to swim with a whale shark just remember there is nothing to fear... they feed exclusively on plankton and are therefore completely harmless to humans. The experience is truly amazing and one you will never forget.</p> |

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Parks

There is a plethora of beautiful nature reserves and protected areas you can visit near Cancun. You will get the opportunity to observe monkeys, flamingos, whale sharks, marine turtles, crocodiles and many more creatures in their natural habitat. The flora and fauna is also incredible! You can arrange guided tours lasting from one day to several days where you can pursue activities such as kayaking, hiking, snorkeling and diving.

Cozumel Reef National Park

In 1996, an 11,988-hectare (29 acres) area of sea and coral reefs, was declared the Cozumel Reef National Park. Cozumel is the Caribbean's premier dive spot with 85% of the region's dive sites. Isla Mujeres West Coast, Punta Cancun and Punta Nizuc National Park. It covers 8,673 hectares (21 acres) of reefs that are part of the Mesoamerican Reef System. The estimated age of the base coral is 125,000 years and the reef consists of a chain of coral formations of varying sizes. The park protects a triangle of reefs off the west coast of Isla Mujeres, Punta Cancún and Punta Nizuc.

Isla Contoy National Park

The island, covering 5,126 sq. hectares (12.667 sq. acres), was declared a National Park on February 2, 1998. The coral reefs within the park's perimeter -called an "islet"- are located south of the island and mark the beginning of a 389-kilometer barrier reef running along the coast of Quintana Roo. This is the birthplace of the Mesoamerican Reef System. For more information visit:

www.contoy.org

www.islacontoy.org

www.kolumbustours.com

www.birdingcontoy.com

Puerto Morelos Reef National Park

The 9,066 square-hectare (22.402 sq. acres) park was set up in 1998. The barrier reef borders the Isla Mujeres West Coast, Punta Cancún and Punta Nizuc National Park.

Chinchorro Bank Biosphere Reserve

The Chinchorro Bank Biosphere Reserve was created in 1996. The country's best-preserved reef system covers 144,360 square hectares. A platform reef, it has the largest commercial population of pink conch and Caribbean lobster and is important for the fishing industry. It is also a sea turtle nesting ground and at least 93 bird species live in the area's mangroves. The reef is a fantastic spot for divers. It is also a magnet for scientists who study its biodiversity and underwater archaeological

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| | <p>heritage (there are more than 20 shipwrecks here).</p> <p>Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve Declared a United Nations World Heritage Site, the Biosphere Reserve was created on January 20, 1986 and the Uaymil Flora and Fauna Protected Area and the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reefs Reserve were created in 1994 and 1998, respectively. The three reserves cover an area of 650,000 square hectares. They incorporate areas of the principal ecosystems found in the Yucatán Peninsula and the Caribbean, where both Mesoamerican and Antillean species flourish. The barrier reef extends for some 120 kilometers and covers approximately 15,000 hectares</p> |
| Castles/Forts | <p>Tulum Ruins is a relatively small site. It has an excellent beach for swimming and cooling off, shopping and food. This makes an excellent half-day excursion and is easy to get to anywhere on the Mayan Riviera from Tulum to Playa del Carmen. You can use a tour company or go there yourself via colectivo.</p> <p>Coba is deep in the jungle a 45 minutes drive off of Hwy 307 just before Tulum. There is a lot more to see here than Tulum including large temples/pyramids. Taking a colectivo here can be done but it's not recommended; better to rent a car and drive yourself in or take a tour.</p> |

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| OTHER ACTIVITIES | |
| Shopping | <p>As one of the world's premier tourist destinations the shopping in Cancun is as impressive as one would imagine. You will find everything from ultra-chic designer stores and famous brand names, to flea markets and souvenir shops selling Mexican local handcrafts. Cancun shopping is duty free so you can find some real bargains on cosmetics and fine jewellery. There are many shopping malls in Cancun: here is a list of just some of the great places to go if you fancy shopping in Cancun whether it be for a new designer outfit for yourself or a gift to take home to your loved ones</p> <p>La Isla Shopping Village, Cancun La Isla Shopping Village is a glittering, ultra-trendy shoppers' paradise on the banks of the Nichupte Lagoon in the Hotel Zone Cancun. You will find over 150 shops here all under a giant canopy with a series of canals and small bridges designed to create a Venetian look. There is an amazing aquarium here as well as fabulous restaurants and cinemas showing movies in English and Spanish.</p> <p>Kukulcan Plaza & Luxury Avenue Kukulcan Plaza & Luxury Avenue are adjacent to each other in the Hotel Zone. Between them they boast more than 250 shops and boutiques in</p> |

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| | <p>exclusive and luxurious surroundings including world famous brands such as Louis Vuitton and Cartier. There are many specialty restaurants, bars and cafes and even a bowling alley if you are looking for something fun to do.</p> <p>Plaza Caracol Plaza Caracol is situated just north of the Cancun Convention Center. There are over 200 shops and boutiques where you will find everything from Ralph Lauren and Sunglass Island to chic perfumeries such as Ultrafemme to souvenir and silver jewellery stores. There is also a great choice of restaurants and cafes if you need to take a rest from shopping in Cancun.</p> <p>Plaza Las Americas Plaza Las Americas is found in downtown Cancun. There are three large department stores as well as more than 50 stores – fashion shops – bookstores – sportswear – just about everything you might need. There are also two fantastic cinemas here showing movies in English and Spanish as well as a choice of restaurants.</p> <p>Fifth Avenue in Playa del Carmen is also a good shopping street.</p> |
| Markets | <p>Market 28: Also known as the Mercado 28 this is a huge flea market situated in the heart of downtown Cancun. It is a fun place to buy your souvenirs, Mexican handcrafts and silver jewelry at half the price of the Hotel Zone. Next door you will find Plaza Bonita, built to resemble a small Mexican village with colourful architecture and shops selling good quality Mexican handcrafts and pieces of art.</p> |
| Nightlife | <p>For a night out, Playa del Carmen is the place to go. Almost all activity take place around Playa's 5th Avenue which is a pedestrian walk way filled with restaurants, sidewalk cafes, bars, handicraft stores where people from all over world get together giving this town its cosmopolitan atmosphere - The Blue Parrot is particularly well known.</p> |

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| CUISINE | |
| Food | <p>The annual Mexico-Caribbean Food Festival, featuring special menus of culinary creations throughout Cancun, is held each year over the first two weeks of November.</p> |
| Drink | <p>Tequila! Tequila is a blue agave-based spirit made primarily in the area surrounding the city of Tequila, 65 kilometres northwest of Guadalajara, and in the highlands (Los Altos) of the western Mexican state of Jalisco. Try the different varieties available.</p> <p>Beer: Many think that as long as it is cold and being imbibed anywhere in Mexico... whatever it is, it IS the best beer. Bohemia, Negro Modelo,</p> |

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| | <p>Modelo Especial, Dos Equis, Dos Equis Amber, Pacifico, Montejo, Victoria, Tecate Light, Sol, Leon and the ubiquitous Corona are all well liked and satisfying. Carta Blanca is also an old, satisfying beer. Barriardo Lessardo is pretty good as well.....</p> <p>When touring off of the resort find a small convenience shop. They will give you a few options other than the norm. Try the Corona Familiar (a huge quart) which cannot be bought in Canada. It tastes a bit stronger but is more pleasant tasting than the regular corona. Also, try the Corona Cerveza de Barril. (They look like little "Mickey" Bottles.) It is also much better than Corona regular. If you have the opportunity to be in Mexico over the Christmas season, try the Noche Buena by Dos Equis. It is a darker full flavored brew that is not exported either and can only be found in Mexico.</p> |
| <p>Restaurants</p> | <p>The resort located restaurants are often first class in this area. U.S.-based franchise chains, which really need no introduction, dominate the Cancún restaurant scene. These include Hard Rock Cafe, Rainforest Cafe, Tony Roma's, TGI Friday's, Ruth's Chris Steak House, and the gamut of fast-food burger places.</p> <p>La Cueva del Chango in Puerto del Carmen is recommended: Good food in original surroundings with a relaxed "mañana" attitude. True to its name ("The Monkey's Cave"), the place suggests a cave and has little waterways meandering through it, and there are two spider monkeys that hang about in the back of the place. You'll enjoy great juices, blended fruit drinks, salads, soups, Mexican specialties with a natural twist, and handmade tortillas. The fish is fresh and delicious.</p> <p>Yaxche: The menu in this Puerto del Carmen eatery makes use of many native foods and spices to present a more elaborate regional cooking than the usual offerings at Yucatecan restaurants. Excellent examples are a cream of chaya (a native leafy vegetable), an xcatic chili stuffed with cochinita pibil and the classic Mexican-style fruit salad with lime juice and dried powdered chili. There are several seafood dishes that are fresh and well prepared.</p> |

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| <p>MORE INFO</p> | |
| <p>Websites</p> | <p>Website: http://www.visitmexico.com/en/mayan-riviera</p> |

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| <p>PERSONAL</p> | <p>I have visited the Mayan Riviera, Puerto del Carmen and Cancun many times. I have also explored the atmospheric archaeological sites of Tulum and Coba.</p> <p>Travel Blog: http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/Blog/tabid/400/EntryId/81/Riviera-Maya-Mexico.aspx Pinterest: https://www.pinterest.com/TravelShow/riviera-maya-yucatan/</p> |
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