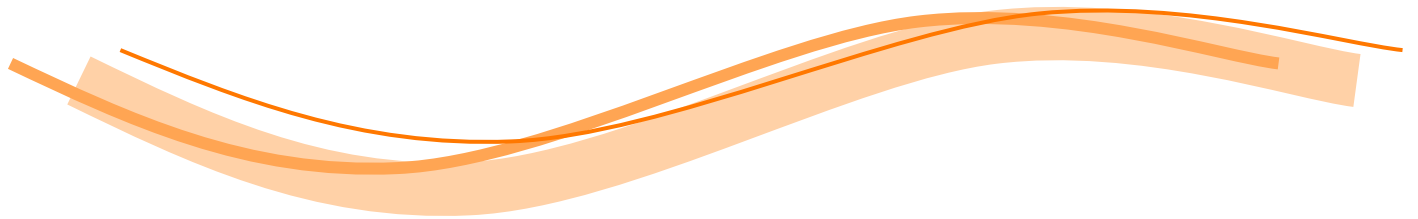




BARCELO HOTELS & RESORTS





TRAVEL NOTES SECTIONS	To help you find what you are looking for, these Travel Notes are organized in the following order: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Barcelo Hotels and Resorts2. Los Cabos, Mexico3. Riviera Maya, Mexico
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BARCELO RESORTS	<p>Barceló Hotels and Resorts are particularly known for the spectacular locations of their resorts – expect top all inclusive resorts in premium beachfront locations.</p> <p>For instance, the Barceló Bávaro Beach resort complex in Punta Cana is right on Bávaro Beach - arguably the best beach in the Dominican Republic and one of the 10 best beaches in the world. The Barceló Maya Beach Resort is in front of the best beach in the Mayan Riviera on Mexico's Caribbean coast, with over 2 km of fine white sand, crystal clear water and a stunning coral reef. And the Barceló Grand Faro Los Cabos Resort is a Premium category resort located seafront on the stunning Sea of Cortés in Cabo San Lucas in Pacific Mexico.</p> <p>Another feature of Barceló Resorts is their exceptional cuisine - with the chance to sample local flavours. For example, at the new Barceló Grand Faro Los Cabos Resort, the Las Jícamas Restaurant offers delicious, authentic Mexican food. There are 5 restaurants and 3 bars in the hotel offering a wide-range of gastronomy, including an extraordinary selection of international, Mexican and Italian cuisine.</p> <p>Barceló Hotels and Resorts continue to invest in their properties to maintain the highest standards – the newly renovated Barceló Maya Beach has improvements including a new reception and lobby, new restaurants and bars and a new pool. Some Barceló Resorts give you the best of both worlds, when individual resorts form part of a larger complex and they share facilities like restaurants and spas. The Barceló Maya Beach is part of a complex of five luxurious all inclusive Barceló Resorts in the Mayan Riviera and the renovation program will continue to improve other hotels in the complex.</p> <p>The Family Club at Barceló Bávaro Palace Deluxe forms part of the Barceló Bávaro Beach Resort complex in Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic. The resort comprises of the following magnificent properties: Family Club at Barceló Bávaro Palace Deluxe, Club Premium Deluxe at Barceló Bávaro Palace Deluxe, Barceló Bávaro Palace Deluxe and Barceló Bávaro Beach - Adults Only.</p> <p>The spectacular settings, exquisite dining and huge range of facilities</p>
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	<p>also make Barceló Resorts a great choice for weddings and honeymoons. Barceló have experienced wedding planners and over 50 wedding packages across 18 wonderful resorts – so you can be sure that your special day is exactly as you want it to be.</p>
<p>Barcelo History</p>	<p>The name of Barceló, which began as a small transportation company, is today associated with one of the most prestigious holiday groups. Behind this lies the determination and hard work of three generations for seventy years.</p> <p>1931: Creation of Autocares Barceló (a transport company), founded by Simón Barceló in Felanitx (Majorca, Spain).</p> <p>1962: First hotel of the chain opened in Majorca, Spain. This stage culminates in 1965, with the development of a new concept of hotel: the Barceló Pueblo Palma</p> <p>1985: The international hotel operations begin: opening of the first hotel in the Caribbean (Barceló Bávaro Beach Resort, Punta Cana, Dominican Republic). Thus, Barceló becomes the pioneer Spanish hotel company in the area</p> <p>1999: Opening of the Barceló Maya Resort complex, in the Mayan Riviera in México, and purchase of two hotels (Ixtapa and Huatulco) on Mexico's Pacific coast</p> <p>In 2014 they have more than 140 resorts in 17 countries. Barcelo believe that they have a great responsibility that includes social and environmental aspects, so Barceló Hotels & Resorts has explicitly confirmed its commitment to society and the environment by signing the United Nations Pact on Human Rights and the Environment. They have nearly 25,000 staff worldwide.</p>
<p>Barcelo Club Premium</p>	<p>When you book your Barceló Resort – consider booking Club Premium. You'll benefit from the all inclusive plan plus receive lots of extras like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the best rooms with the best views - exclusive Club Premium Lounge with Premium Brand Beverages, snacks and more - personalized Concierge - preferred à la carte reservations - upgraded bath amenities - nightly turn down service - pool towels in the room - free WiFi access - room service free of charge

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - exclusive check-in and welcome gift - Spa discounts - plus much more!
Websites	<p>Have fun exploring: www.barcelo.com www.barcelobrochures.com www.barceloweddings.com Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/barcelohotels Twitter: https://twitter.com/barcelohoteles Youtube: http://www.youtube.com/barcelohoteles</p>
Special Offers for 2014	<p>Have you made plans yet for Family Day and Easter? It's never too soon to book a great holiday and Barceló brings you the best offers to make it happen: Los Cabos, Riviera Maya, Puerto Vallarta and Manzanillo in Mexico; or Bavaro Beach and Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic. Book in advance at the best price!</p> <p>MEXICO LOS CABOS Barceló Grand Faro Los Cabos *Offer valid for stays until May, from 238 USD The Barceló Grand Faro Los Cabos is well-known as one of the best All Inclusive hotels in the area thanks to the quality and added value it offers its guests.</p> <p>RIVIERA MAYA Barceló Maya Beach *Offer valid for stays until May, from 285 USD Completely Refurbished!The hotel, designed and built in a Mayan-inspired style, is surrounded by lush tropical gardens, beautiful paths and trails that are ideal for enjoying long walks or jogging.</p> <p>PUERTO VALLARTA Barceló Puerto Vallarta *Offer valid for stays through May, from 230 USD AI Apart from enjoying the beautiful beach with its tropical waters, you can also make the most of all the facilities at the hotel which include 4 swimming pools, 2 outdoor Jacuzzis, a beautiful tropical jungle, gym, games room...</p> <p>MANZANILLO Barceló Karmina Palace Deluxe *Offer valid for stays until May, from 225 USD AI The Barceló All Inclusive programme at Barceló Karmina Palace Deluxe hotel has been designed to ensure your complete satisfaction, enabling</p>

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	<p>you to enjoy our 4 restaurants and their varied cuisine from different countries.</p> <p>DOMINICAN REPUBLIC BAVARO BEACH Barceló Bávaro Palace Deluxe *Offer valid for stays until May, from 373 USD AI Enjoy all the facilities on offer at the hotel with an incredible U-Spa, swimming pools, gym, shopping centre and a miniclub for the little ones. And at night you can enjoy the hotel's vibrant nightlife: shows, nightclubs...</p> <p>PUNTA CANA Barceló Punta Cana *Offer valid for stays until May, from 170 USD AI At the Barceló Punta Cana you can enjoy water sports on its fabulous beach or relax in its amazing pools and facilities, all while the children have a brilliant time in the hotel's water park.</p>
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Newstalk 1010 Prize Hotel	Barceló Grand Faro Los Cabos Resort On the Pacific Coast of Mexico, consider the Barceló Grand Faro Los Cabos... A new member of the Barceló family, this hotel is well-known as one the best All Inclusive hotels in the area thanks to the quality and added value it offers its guests.
Location	Situated in chic and exclusive Los Cabos, the hotel is 2.5 km away from San José de Los Cabos, a colonial town well-known for its culture, ambience and gastronomy
Accommodation	The resort boasts 350 luxurious rooms and suites distributed over 3 buildings. All the rooms have a private balcony with views over the Sea of Cortés
Services	4 swimming pools: Central pool; Activity pool; Infinity pool overlooking the sea; Children's Club pool 2 Jacuzzis (one for adults only) Entertainment area Luna Terrace with canopy for wedding ceremonies Estrella Terrace Gym A brand new U-Spa Life with 6 indoor cabins for massage (one with private Jacuzzi), Jacuzzi, wet areas Teenagers family room Sky Sports Bar Seafront Terraces Club Premium Lounge

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	<p>On site shopping area Patio Mexicano</p>
Dining	<p>The Barceló Grand Faro Los Cabos resort has 5 restaurants and 3 bars offering international, Mexican and Italian cuisine.</p> <p>Las Jícamas Mexican Bar and Restaurant</p> <p>If you would like to discover the real essence of Mexican cuisine, you can't miss a visit to Las Jícamas Restaurant. Their staff will advise you on their gourmet Mexican speciality fusion menu. Visit the bar and enjoy a large selection of margarita cocktails.</p>
Kids	<p>Barcy club</p> <p>This is one of the leading family hotels in San José Del Cabo. Children between the ages of 4 and 11 can enjoy the special activities on offer both inside and out of the Children's Club, which is supervised by qualified staff. The activities include:</p> <p>Games patio Children's pool Films; Video games; Puppet theatre; Karaoke Football and other sports Birthday parties</p> <p>The Barcy club opens every day from 10.00 to 13.00 and 14.00 to 18.00 Teenagers are welcome in the Family Room.</p>
Activities	<p>Daily Activities Programme Racquetball Court Paddle tennis and Tennis Fitness Centre Shopping area on property Terraces and wedding gazebo, which provide excellent venues for romantic ceremonies on the beach front Daily Bicycle tour Family Game Room featuring table and video games</p>
Club Premium	<p>Upper category suites enjoying the best views of the Sea of Cortes Personalized check-in and check-out in the Club Premium exclusive lounge area Petit Fours and a bottle of sparkling wine in your room upon arrival Club Premium Lounge with Premium Brand Beverages, newspaper, hors d'oeuvres, personalized Concierge Early Check -in –Late Check-out (Subject to availability) Local Phone calls free of charge Unlimited a la Carte dining Preferred seating in a la Carte restaurants 15% discount in Spa services Express Laundry service at regular cost Upgraded Deluxe bath amenities Nightly turn down service</p>

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	<p>Pool Towels in the room In room Bathrobes & Slippers 24 –Hours Room Service free of charge WIFI Internet at no charge Mini fridge stocked with a wide variety of water, sodas, beers, juices and snacks. Bottle of select Tequila or Damiana(4 night stay or more)</p>
Deals	Currently (Jan 2014) there's deals up to 25% off the room night rate!

CJAD 800 Prize Hotel	<p>Barceló Maya Beach Resort On the Caribbean Coast of Mexico, consider the Barceló Maya Beach. Enjoy an extraordinary vacation in this recently renovated tourist complex, set on its own extensive, 2 km long beach. Within the Barceló All Inclusive program enjoy a daytime and night time entertainment program, activities program, children's club (4-12 year-olds), fitness centre, sauna and jacuzzi. There is also the U Spa boasting 25 massage rooms, a flotation room, a hydrotherapy room, 3 Vichy rooms and a Swiss treatment room. The hotel offers 3 restaurants including the Beach buffet with a new innovative design inspired by the Mayan culture, the spectacular "México Lindo" offering Mexican specialities and the "Rancho Grande" beach restaurant with views of the Caribbean; as well as 3 bars strategically located throughout the hotel. In addition, with the Barceló All Inclusive programme, you can access all the restaurants, bars, swimming pools and beach facilities of the Barceló Maya Caribe Resort. There is an upscale section called Barcelo Maya Palace</p>
Location	<p>Situated on an almost private beach 2kms long, protected by a coral reef. It's ideal for families with children The resort is close to Playa del Carmen (shopping, restaurants, clubs) Mayan ruins (Tulum, Coba) and theme parks (Xcaret, Xelha).</p>
Accommodation	Recently finished renovation of hotel (new room types, restaurants, lobby bar, pool area)
Services	<p>Club premium concept (exclusive room location, concierge service, lounge) There are several prime locations for weddings, such as a gazebo, chapel, and the beach.</p>
Dining	Large choice of restaurants (specialty and buffet) and bars at the complex, some 24 hours
Kids	Kids and teen clubs at all hotels, kids buffets, kids menus in specialty restaurants
Activities	Large choice of activities day and night (sports, watersports, evening shows, disco)
Deals	Currently (Jan 2014) there's deals up to 35% off the room night rate!

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<p>LOS CABOS, MEXICO</p>	<p>Discover the Pacific Coast destination of Los Cabos in Mexico!</p> <p>The area of Los Cabos is made up of two small and very different towns - San José del Cabo to the northeast, Cabo San Lucas at the southern tip. Between the two cities lies a thirty kilometre seacoast with splendid countryside, breathtaking scenery and a range of elegant hotels. Along with nice beaches, Los Cabos is known for its championship golf courses, whale watching (from January to April) and deep sea fishing.</p> <p>Here are some of the attractions and things to do in the Cabo San Lucas Area:</p> <p>Explore the Mission Route More than 28 missions were established in Baja California South, dating as far back as the late 1600s. Many of them were built by Father Junipero Serra as part of a mission route that extends into Northern California. With San Jose del Cabo as your starting point, you can trace the Mission Route throughout Baja California.</p> <p>Go to Land’s End The distinctive landmark of Cabo San Lucas is the rugged taffy-colored El Arco (The Arch) rock formation that erupts from the sea at the tip of the Baja Peninsula. It’s called Land’s End because, if you followed a line south from here, you would not touch land again until you reached the South Pole. Playa del Amour (Lover’s Beach) at the base of the rock formations is a perfect spot for a leisurely stroll, some sunbathing, snorkeling, swimming and a picnic. While the Baja Peninsula today is a major migration route for whales, Cabo San Lucas was once an important trade route for Spanish galleons in the 1500s. Pirates would hide behind the protection of El Arco as they waited for Spanish fleets loaded with treasure.</p> <p>Seek Adventure Ecotourism enthusiasts and adventure seekers will find no lack of things to do. Hike, mountain bike or horseback ride above rock canyons and along deserted beaches. ATV through the desert, whale watch in season, fish, dive, snorkel, golf – and lot’s more!</p>
<p>Location</p>	<p>Los Cabos is located at the tip of the Baja Peninsula on Mexico’s northwest coast and comprises two towns, San Jose del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas, that are linked by a 33 km Corridor lined with world-class resort properties and championship golf.</p>

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Geography	From an astronaut's perspective, the tip of Baja is one of the most striking geological features on earth, even though its mountains are not exceptionally tall. A series of mountain ranges runs south along Baja Sur to the vicinity just north of Los Cabos. Here are found two rugged mountain ranges, the Sierra de la Victoria and the Sierra de la Laguna.
Name	Los Cabos means "The Capes" in Spanish.
Population	Mexico has a population of around 115 million (2013), making it the most populous Spanish-speaking country in the world. Los Cabos has a population of 204,000 across all the communities.
Language	Spanish – but English is widely spoken in this region. There are 10.1 million Mexicans who speak an indigenous language and claim indigenous heritage, representing 9.8% of the total population
Currency	The Mexican Pesos – although the US Dollar is also widely accepted too, especially in Los Cabos. Currently (Jan 2014) \$1 Cdn = 12 Mexican Pesos.
Tippling	The average tip for service is 10-15% and one or two dollars per suitcase carried. Always check your bill first as tips may already be included.
Government	Democracy: Mexico is a Federal presidential constitutional republic.
Documentation	Passports are needed for Canadian citizens, but no Visa is necessary. Unaccompanied minors traveling to Mexico no longer need a notarized letter from their parent or guardian authorizing the trip as of 2013. The regulation has been suspended for a year by the Ministry of Tourism and National Institute of Migration. Prior to the temporary suspension, anyone under 18 traveling alone or accompanied by a single parent or legal guardian had to carry a notarized letter signed by both parents or by the one not travelling with the minor granting permission to enter/exit the country.
Time zone	The states of Baja California Sur, Chihuahua, Nayarit, Sinaloa, and Sonora fall in the Mountain Time Zone, two hours behind Montreal and Toronto.
Health	There are no special health problems here. Many hospitals have walk-in clinics for emergency cases that are not life-threatening; you may not get immediate attention, but you won't pay emergency room prices. The quality varies, but is often quite high, especially in resort towns.
Safety tips	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. 80% of all murders take place in just 6% of the country...and a part that Canadians are unlikely to go anywhere near. About 50,000 Canadian ex-pats live in Mexico. Mexico's former President Felipe Calderon told the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) summit in Las Vegas in 2011 that the murder rate in Mexico was lower than in much of the US. "The rate of homicide

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	<p>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> <p>Here is a link to an excellent article on the subject from a travel insider that I know well and respect for her balanced judgment: http://travelindustrytoday.com/web/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=14175:mexico-gets-a-bad-rap-time-to-give-it-a-rest&Itemid=64</p> <p>On a more general level – check out my Top Ten Safety Tips: http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/Planning/ChrisTop10Lists/Top10VacationSafetyTips.aspx</p>
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CLIMATE	
General climate	Subtropical desert. During the summer, highs can be in the 30s C with occasional showers. Winter evenings may drop to the teens, with daytime highs near 25 C.
Today’s weather	Today is 25 Centigrade and sunny in Los Cabos (11 Jan 2014)
Best time to visit	The winter season between December and April is perfect for Canadians – almost no rains and warm temperatures from its southerly location. But don’t overlook the summer season too – less Canadian tourists and the weather is generally excellent!

GETTING AROUND	
Getting There	A number of Canadian and US airlines fly from Canada to this destination. Air Canada and Transat have direct flights to Cabo in the winter season. The San José del Cabo International Airport (SJD) has recently enjoyed a number of upgrades and expansions that ensure travellers’ added comfort and safety. It is located just 20 minutes north of San José and welcomes domestic, international and private or charter flights year-round. After passing through the customs and immigration area, you might be greeted by time-share salespeople eager to get your attention. Unless you’ve arranged pickup by your hotel, yellow and white mini shuttles are the best way to reach your destination. They won’t depart unless they’re full, so you might have to wait a few minutes. Fares range from \$8 to \$15 per person, depending on your hotel destination.
Cities	The two towns of Cabo San Lucas and San Jose del Cabo are separated by “The Corridor”. Together they are known collectively as Los Cabos.

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Distances	Distances in Mexico can be huge – for instance, it’s a 24 hour drive and 1,760 kms from the US border near San Diego to Cabo at the tip of Baja California.
Ferries	There is a ferry to Mazatlan from La Paz further north on the Baja Peninsula that departs daily at 3:00 p.m. and arrives in Mazatlan at approximately 8:00 a.m. The ferry departs Mazatlan at 3:00 p.m. daily and arrives in La Paz at approximately 8:00 a.m. The duration of the trip is about 15 to 17 hours depending upon wind, weather and currents.
Trains	There are no passenger train services in this region of Mexico.
Car Rental	Some will tell you the best way to see the sights of Los Cabos is by foot, but no matter where you choose to stay, a car is a must if you want to experience both Cabo San Lucas and San José del Cabo or take a side trip. Car rental agencies can be found at most hotels, in the airport and downtown. The smooth four-lane Corridor highway connecting San José del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas has been improved, now with more safety features. The drive is a breeze from the airport to either town, but surrounding areas are still under development. A government-funded highway patrol — the Green Angels — patrols the Corridor, providing emergency service for people encountering car trouble
Buses	For those who like to do as the locals do, live the adventure of public buses, which run as shuttles between the two towns of San Jose del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas. The ride takes about an hour with highway stops at major hotels along the Corridor. The cost is less than \$2 one way.
Taxis	To get from one town to the other, you can expect to pay about \$36. Red and yellow taxi vans operate in San José; blue and green vans cruise Cabo San Lucas. These vans are available 24 hours a day and are never far away.

ACCOMMODATION TYPES	<p>You will find a wide variety of accommodations from rooms for rent, small economy hotels, luxury oceanfront villas, vacation condominiums, bed and breakfasts, along with luxury resorts.</p> <p>Barceló Grand Faro Los Cabos Resort - Our Prize Hotel Situated in chic and exclusive Los Cabos, the hotel is 2.5 km away from San José de Los Cabos, a colonial town well-known for its culture, ambience and gastronomy. The resort boasts 350 luxurious rooms and suites distributed over 3 buildings. All the rooms have a private balcony with views over the Sea of Cortés. A new member of the Barceló family, this hotel is well-known as one of the best All Inclusive hotels in the area thanks to the quality and added value it offers its guests. The Barceló Grand Faro Los Cabos resort has 5 restaurants and 3 bars offering international, Mexican and Italian cuisine. Massage and spa services are available. There is also a children’s club for ages 4 to 11 years.</p>
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LIFESTYLES	
Kids	<p>Swim with the Dolphins There are few experiences in life that compare to swimming with dolphins, so make sure to place a visit to Cabo Dolphins at the top of your vacation wish list. They have conveniently located dolphin centres in San Jose del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas; experience the magic you can only feel by swimming with dolphins. They offer a wide selection of fun and interactive programs, so you are sure to find a dolphin swim that is perfect for you and your children. http://www.cabo-adventures.com/tours/dolphins</p>
Teens	<p>Carisuva is an eco-adventure company, provider of unforgettable activity experiences in Los Cabos Area. They offer tours in Baja that are perfect for teens and older families, from ATV Beach & Desert Tour, Side by Side 4x4 Safari, Pacific Beach Horseback riding, Hiking Burro and Sunset horseback riding Tour, all through private trails that run along the desert lunges, virgin pacific beaches, and amazing ocean side cliffs. Based in Playa Migrino just 12 kms north of Cabo San Lucas, Carisuva Ranch is a typical Baja Californian ranch with 43 horses, a fresh water well, farm animals including goats, chickens, friendly donkeys and cows as well and a traditionally built desert hut. The setting is one of peace and tranquility, where the shade of the mystical mesquites and desert palm trees, alongside the gentle Pacific breeze and soothing ocean-side atmosphere, transports anyone to a complete state of relaxation. The support of a highly trained and committed team guarantees safe learning experiences that have been designed for anyone who wants to have fun exploring the natural environment found in Baja California. Website: http://www.rancho-carisuva.com</p>
Adventure	<p>Skydive El Sol Here's your chance to skydive from 13,000 feet with a 1-minute free fall, then a 5-minute canopy ride to a soft landing on the beach, tandem jumping with USPA certified instructors. Address: Camino Viejo a San José, Cabo San Lucas</p> <p>Sierra Buggies Explore Baja on board a 650 cc Sand Spider within the stunning surroundings of the UNESCO protected biosphere reserve, driving through mountain trails and dry river beds, then swimming in one of the sierra's hidden fresh water ponds. http://sierrabuggies.com</p>
Romance	<p>Pamper yourself in the glow of a romantic Mexican sunset on a luxury yacht. There is nothing more peaceful and romantic than sailing across one of the Bays of the Pacific as the crimson sun dips into the deep blue waters of the Pacific.</p>

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Honeymoons & Weddings	From a beautiful, well decorated occasion at a luxury resort to a small beach ceremony overlooking the arch, Los Cabos has stunning locations for any style of wedding. The day should be grand, emotional and unforgettable, one that will come to mind for decades to come. And don't forget the activities and amenities that abound for family and friends to play, to dine, dance, party and be pampered like never before.
Seniors	Mexico is a favourite retirement destination for many Canadians and is ideal for longer stay vacations in the cold winter months up north. In this region the pretty town of Todos Santos (see below) is fast becoming a retirement favourite for Americans and Canadians.

UNIQUES	The little town of Todos Santos is 73 kms north of Cabo San Lucas and is one of Mexico's designated " Magical Towns ". It's an oasis in a desert peninsula where mango, papaya avocado and sugar cane are grown. It is an artistic town with many galleries and authentic shopping opportunities. The nearby beaches are gorgeous and great for surfing. The restaurants serve up the best Mexican fare. And you can visit the Hotel California of Eagles fame.
Surprising	You can take an Outback & Camel Safari eco-adventure just north of Cabo with Cabo Adventures. In small groups, their off-road Unimogs trucks take you deep into the heart of the Baja outback. Spectacular views, knowledgeable guides, delicious cuisine and an exciting beach camel ride in Rancho San Cristobal make this an exclusive adventure in Baja. During the winter months, keep an eye out for humpback whales as they swim past the ranch.
History	<p>Although the sea of Cortez bears his name, it was not Hernan Cortez, but his navigator, Francisco de Ulloa that was credited with first discovering Cabo San Lucas in 1537.</p> <p>The area was on the sailing route between Acapulco and Asia, however, and therefore made a prime hang out for Dutch and English pirates hoping to intercept the ships of "New Spain" laden with riches. The coves and harbours around the cape provided ideal hideouts for the ones who preyed on the fruitful spoils of passing galleons. Sir Francis Drake came to the area in 1587, and Thomas Cavendish raided the "invincible" galleon Santa Ana off Cabo San Lucas in November 1587, laden with so much gold that its capture depressed the London bullion markets for some time, prompting King Phillip II of Spain to establish a small fortress at Cabo San Lucas to try to rid the waters of "undesirables."</p> <p>With the establishment of a fort, the area was opened up to exploration. Settlements along the Baja began to spring up as pearls were discovered in the Sea of Cortez. In 1730, Nicolás Tamaral, a Jesuit missionary, founded Mission San José del Cabo in an attempt to convert indigenous Pericue tribes and thus end frequent uprisings. The</p>

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	<p>nearby San José estuary was useful to the Spanish as a source of fresh water for galleons traveling en route to and from the Philippines. Those who arrived from the "Old World" suffered from tropical disease, hunger and the wrath of the native Indians. In fact, the church in San Jose del Cabo has a mural above its entrance that shows a Jesuit priest being killed by the Pericues, their hair adorned with pearls and white feathers. The Indian population which was about 75,000 at the time of Cortez arrival dwindled to below 1,000 during the period of Spanish colonization. Somehow, amidst bloody pirate battles, epidemics, hurricanes and famine, Cabo San Lucas managed to survive. Still quite primitive, this coastal area remains as beautiful as it was in the days of Hernan Cortez.</p> <p>Today Los Cabos has evolved from a sleepy hideaway for recluse fishermen and yacht owners into one of Mexico's premier resort destinations.</p>
Books	<p>The Log From the Sea of Cortez by John Steinbeck is a travel classic and is a perfect holiday read for this region of Mexico.</p> <p>Frommer's Mexico 2013 is the bible for travellers to Mexico.</p>
1000 Places to See Before You Die	<p>Whale watching in Baja at the San Ignacio Lagoon, halfway down the long Baja California peninsula. From late January to end March several thousand gray whales come to the safety of these warm, shallow waters to breed.</p>
Must Sees	<p>There are two UNESCO World Heritage Sites in this region of Mexico:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Islands and Protected Areas of the Gulf of California - The Whale Sanctuary of El Vizcaíno

SPORTS ACTIVITIES	
Golf	<p>Golf on the Baja Peninsula is most identified with a wide selection of world-class courses located in Los Cabos. And over the past few years the area has become known as one of the world's premier golf destinations, with increasingly more and more golfers coming here to play.</p> <p>While Cabo's natural terrain is comparable to that found in the Arizona and California desert courses, what sets this destination apart is the Sea of Cortes, which many of the holes on these courses run adjacent to. Here are some suggestions:</p> <p>Puerto Los Cabos Golf Club</p> <p>Nowhere can you play 18-holes of championship golf with each of the nine holes from two great designers Jack Nicklaus and Greg Norman. When completed, Puerto Los Cabos will boast two championship courses designed by Jack Nicklaus and Greg Norman. Today, the course consists of an initial opening 18 holes which is a composite design consisting of 9 holes from the Jack Nicklaus design and 9 holes</p>

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	<p>from the Greg Norman design. This unique opportunity will allow golfers to experience the difference in design philosophies and enjoy a “sneak-peek” of the future work to come.</p> <p>Querencia Golf Club Designed to take its place among the world’s most prestigious private golf communities, Querencia offers a Tom Fazio designed championship golf course nestled within an exclusive 880-acre community along the Sea of Cortes in the Los Cabos Corridor. The landscape is reminiscent of a desert setting but with bold topography and long-range ocean views. Its unsurpassed natural beauty is accented with contoured fairways and imported bullseye Bermuda grasses.</p> <p>Palmilla Golf Resort Any discussion of golf in Los Cabos must include Palmilla. Designed by Jack Nicklaus, and set upon a landscape with a unique blending of desert and sea, it is the only 27-hole course in Los Cabos. The Arroyo Nine, the back Mountain Nine, and the Ocean Nine are traditionally Mexican in flavor. Discussing the Ocean course, Nicklaus said it was like “designing mountains by the sea” with nearly every hole having its own view of the Sea of Cortes.</p>
<p>Fishing</p>	<p>In Los Cabos, sport fishing is an activity that attracts tourists from all over the world. There are over 500 fishing vessels waiting to take you where the Sea of Cortés meets the Pacific, where these two bodies of water join in a tumult of marlin and swordfish, wahoo, dorado and yellowtail, snapper, cabrilla, corvina and roosterfish, and where 12,000 of these creatures of the deep are caught every year, with most released to fight another day.</p> <p>Picante Sportfishing Picante Sportfishing has 18 fully equipped yachts available for sportfishing and cruising. They come with experienced crews and range in size from 24-ft. to 78-ft., accommodating 4-12 guests. Address: Plaza Puerto Paraiso Local 39-A Marina Cabo, Cabo San Lucas http://picantesportfishing.com</p> <p>The Little Beach in San Jose del Cabo is the home of La Playa Sportfishing, the local Panga Fishing Fleet. Although this area is not recommended for swimming, it’s a great place to watch the local fishermen land their catch and the entertainment will be in clear view all day long.</p>
<p>Horse riding</p>	<p>The desert landscape behind the coastal strip is wonderful terrain for horseback riding...</p>

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	<p>Red Rose Riding Stables have a stable of healthy, well trained horses for beach and private trail rides that are suitable for beginners or experts. You have a choice of Western or English saddles, and lessons are also available. Address: Km. 4 Carretera Transpeninsular, Cabo San Lucas</p> <p>Cuadra San Francisco Equestrian Center They accommodate riders of all levels of experience at Los Cabos' premiere riding stable and Equestrian Centre, located very close to Cabo San Lucas. Address: Km. 19.5 Carretera Transpeninsular, The Corridor,</p> <p>Cabo San Lucas Tours can also arrange for you to experience the bliss of riding horseback on the beaches of Cabo San Lucas; feel the wind blowing in your hair as the ocean breeze cools your skin. Tel: (866) 348-6286</p>
<p>Hiking</p>	<p>There are two types of hiking opportunities here. There are the gentle strolls along many of the expansive beaches, some with whale watching opportunities in season. And then there's the rugged hikes in the desert hinterland of Los Cabos where you need to make serious preparations for any longer hike.</p>
<p>Cycling</p>	<p>Whether you are an experienced cyclist or a first-time mountain biker, Cabo Adventures' Mountain Bike Adventure is an enjoyable way to experience the outback of Cabo. With expert guides, you will be set-up on modern, all-terrain bikes, fitted just for you, and taken on an enjoyable ride down cactus-lined tracks to a stunning hidden beach overlooking the Pacific. Your ride ends with an authentic Mexican feast and celebratory drink. http://www.cabo-adventures.com</p> <p>Vela Baja Los Barriles has long sandy beaches, nice hotels, great restaurants, world-class mountain biking with over 70 kms of single and double track trails for all levels, and of course, unbelievably fun windsurfing and kitesurfing. Address: Playa del Sol Los Barriles, East Cape http://velawindsurf.com</p>
<p>Canopy Tours</p>	<p>A popular adventure activity from most of the coastal resorts in Mexico is canopy tours. You glide from perch to perch, getting an up-close-and-personal look at a tropical rainforest canopy or the desert scenery and the trails far below. Expert guides assist you to the special platforms, and you move from one to another using pulleys on horizontal traverse cables, while the guides explain the natural world surrounding you. They also offer assistance - and moral support - as you rappel back down to the floor. Canopy Costa Azul At the Costa Azul canyon you can take part in an exciting cable ride</p>

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	<p>high above the canyon. While suspended safely in a harness, you'll fly across the trails and over the river of this incredible eco park. The fun starts as you get connected to the cable by the instructors then you are off the platform and above the cliffs and canyons, at over 300 feet in the air and at 80 kilometers per hour across several kilometers of cables with only the wind at your side and nothing above you but clear sky, you won't get any closer to flying than this!</p> <p>Address: Playa Costa Azul Km 28.5 Carretera Transpeninsular, San José del Cabo http://www.costaazulziplines.com</p>
<p>Diving</p>	<p>Cabo Adventures – PADI Scuba Diving Cabo Adventures is the only PADI 5 Star Gold palm resort in Los Cabos, offering world class diving experiences. Their 47ft Scuba Adventure boat, complete with bathroom and showers takes you to the best diving spots close to the famous arch of Los Cabos. If you are a first time diver or an experienced underwater expert, their highly qualified dive staff will make sure that your adventure is unforgettable. Address: Av. Paseo de la marina, Lote 7 Col. Centro, Cabo San Lucas http://www.cabo-adventures.com</p>
<p>Surfing</p>	<p>Mike Doyle Surf School Mike Doyle Surf School offers professional surfing instruction with focus on Fun, Fitness, Team Work, Morale Building and Surf Parties! They have private lessons as well as group lessons. If you are a surf enthusiast, you will appreciate the Cabo Surf Shop on the premises of the Cabo Surf Hotel, with its large rental fleet of Surftech boards that include: long boards, short boards, soft boards, boogie boards and Stand Up Paddleboards. No need to fly the boards down and risk damages or mishandling. Address: Cabo Surf Hotel Beachside Playa Acapulquito, Km. 28, San José del Cabo http://mikedoylesurfschool.com</p>

<p>CULTURE</p>	
<p>Arts</p>	<p>Missionaries who were familiar with the cave paintings found in the Sierra de la Laguna mountains above Los Cabos asked the native Cochimi about them and were told they were done by a race of giant people long ago. If you visit these rugged hills set against a backdrop of light, sea, sky, mountains and desert, you will begin to understand how the creative psyche can be awakened, and why Los Cabos has become a mecca for artists and art galleries, such as....</p> <p>Galería- La Grande This is Baja's largest art gallery, with more than 2,000 original paintings from every region of Mexico. It is a perfect place to find art portraying the spectacular beauty of Mexican scenery as well as the warmth of the Mexican people and their culture.</p>

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	<p>Address; Plaza Nautica Local D1, Cabo San Lucas</p> <p>Golden Cactus Gallery</p> <p>As the oldest gallery in Los Cabos, the focus here is on the Romance of Mexico. It continues to be one of its most visited galleries in all of Los Cabos and still functions as an active artist studio.</p> <p>Address: Guerrero y Madero STS, Cabo San Lucas,</p>
Music	<p>Ranchera, Mariachi and Sones are the traditional forms of music that can be heard throughout this part of Mexico.</p>
Films	<p>Films starring Mexico –</p> <p>Elia Kazan's 1952 classic, Viva Zapata!, written by John Steinbeck, stars Marlon Brando as revolutionary Emiliano Zapata. Orson Welles's 1958 film noir Touch of Evil looks at drugs and corruption in Tijuana</p> <p>The adaptation of Carlos Fuentes' novel The Old Gringo (1989), a love triangle set during the Mexican Revolution, was filmed with Gregory Peck, Jane Fonda, and a young Jimmy Smits in numerous locations in five Mexican states.</p> <p>HBO's 2003 flick And Starring Pancho Villa as Himself, with Antonio Banderas, is the true story of how revolutionaries allowed Hollywood to film Pancho Villa in battle.</p> <p>Man on Fire (2004), with Denzel Washington as a bodyguard hired to protect a little girl, is full of great Mexico City scenes.</p> <p>Stephen Soderbergh's Academy Award-winning Traffic (2000), with Benicio del Toro, has powerful scenes focusing on Tijuana's drug war.</p> <p>Mel Gibson's controversial Apocalypto (2006) cast indigenous Maya to depict the Maya empire's waning days; the rainforests of Veracruz state stand in for the lush jungles that must have covered the Yucatán centuries ago.</p>
Museums	<p>Museo de las Californias, Cabo San Lucas</p> <p>This tiny museum has an endearing yet fascinating collection of historical artifacts, including maps, tools and journals going back to the 16th-century expeditions of the legendary conquistador Hernán Cortés. Its main focus, though, is on fossils from the local Sierra de la Laguna range. Look for the huge whale skeleton outside its entrance.</p>
Festivals	<p>Carnival in Mexico</p> <p>In Mexico, thanks to the deeply-ingrained religious tradition, there are colourful carnivals taking place all year long for you to join in with, though above all around Easter week, between March and April.</p> <p>For one week each year, the streets of many towns and cities explode with merry-making. For the duration of the Carnival, the town or city crowns a king and queen, who lead the festivities. Generally the Carnival queen is a beautiful local lady, or an actress or singer, while the king, who is called the “Ugly king” or “King of joy”, is a representation of Momus, the Greek god of madness and mockery.</p> <p>The Carnivals are full of music, food and drinking. The symbolism is</p>

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	<p>made clear from the start, with many Carnivals commencing with the “burning of the bad mood”, in the form of a figure that is set on fire to declare the party has begun.</p> <p>Then there are the celebrations for the Day of the Dead, in November, where the festival, colorful as it is, also shows signs of the syncretism between the different cultures that give Mexico its identity.</p> <p>San José del Cabo celebrates the feast of its patron saint on March 19. The patron saint of San Bartolo, a village 100km north is feted June 19, and the patron of Santiago, 55km north, July 25. They're all occasions for a rip-roaring Mexican country good time, with music, dancing, horse races, rodeos, rides, religious processions, and lots and lots of sweets for sale from streetside booths. San José's fiesta, in particular, is a reason in itself to make the trip, together with thousands of others from all over southern Baja who come to town for a whole week of partying.</p>
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ATTRACTIONS	
Beaches	<p>Dramatic rock formations and crashing waves join forces with wide stretches of soft sand and rolling surf breaks. Start at Playa Palmilla and work your way down the Tourist Corridor to the famed Lover's Beach at Land's End. Some beaches are more appropriate for contemplation than for swimming.</p> <p>In San Jose del Cabo, the Ganzo de Playa is located in the Marina of Puerto Los Cabos. The beach is safe to swim and offers non-motorized activities such as SUP, canoe or kayak. Ganzo de Playa Restaurant offers casual grill fare.</p> <p>Playa San Pedrito on the Pacific coast in the west of the destination is a popular surfing beach now called El Pescadero after the fishing village nearby. In season, whales spout near the shore.</p> <p>Lover's Beach in Cabo San Lucas is a must do, particularly for couples, as it is tucked away on San Lucas Bay, partially secluded, just before El Arco at the Tip of Baja. To reach the shores of Lover's Beach, you'll need to come by way of the sea. Hire a water taxi at the marina, and the captain will take you there, along the way touring the diving areas around El Arco, Neptune's Fingers and Sand Falls.</p>
Wildlife	<p>The waters along Los Cabos' Pacific coast are characterized by ocean swells and upwellings of deep water, and because of the ocean's distant weather patterns, heavy surf can arise for weeks at a time. The California Current keeps water temperatures lower than would be expected, typically between 50 and 75 degrees, gradually warming as the water moves south. Tropical storms called chubascos can bring torrential rains and heavy winds from mid-May to mid-November, peaking in August and September.</p> <p>Plants in the Cape region of Los Cabos consist of cacti, yuccas, and</p>

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	<p>various shrubs and, at low elevations, trees like palo blanco and palo verde. Just south, many familiar desert plants like ocotillo, ironwood, creosote bush, mesquite, agave, and various cacti, including the infamous jumping cholla can be found. While this is a desert environment, there are relatively well-watered areas that support distinctly non-desert vegetation, especially in the mountains where forests of pine, cedar, fir, aspen, and oak can be found. Encounters with coyotes and roadrunners are common here, as well as the not-so-common sightings of mule deer, mountain lion, bighorn sheep, antelope, and smaller animals such as fox, rabbit, bobcat, skunk, badger, raccoon, and a host of others. Many reptile species also inhabit Los Cabos' desert surroundings, including various species of rattlesnake and whiptail, king, and gopher snakes, and numerous iguanids, geckos, and lizards. And with an abundance of deserts, bays, mangrove lagoons, and forested peaks, a diverse mixture of bird life exists.</p>
<p>Parks</p>	<p>Parque Nacional Cabo Pulmo Cabo Pulmo Park is located just 100 kms north of Baja's tourism epicenter, Los Cabos. This jewel of the East Cape region of Baja California Sur stretches 8kms from the northernmost tip, Pulmo Point to the southernmost tip, Los Frailes. Surrounded by undeveloped desert and a stunning mountain range, the pristine beaches of Cabo Pulmo Park give way to a shallow bay that cradles one of three living reefs (the only hard coral reef) in North America. For many years, this precious place went unprotected. But through the tenacious efforts of the Cabo Pulmo community, in 1995, the waters offshore from Cabo Pulmo were designated a National Marine Park by the Mexican government. Cabo Pulmo National Marine Park attracts many visitors for several reasons, it offers clear water and coral reefs below the surface that provide outstanding scuba diving and snorkelling views. Kayakers regularly arrive here and enjoy close sightings of the sea lion colony nearby. Several resorts are in this area if you choose to stay nearby and many watersport guides and tours are available. This is a good spot for whale viewing in January through March.</p>
<p>Historical Sites</p>	<p>Centro Histórico de San José del Cabo Take a walk around San José del Cabo and note the old facades that have been renovated to their original splendour and most restaurants maintain the tradition of colonial courtyards. Recent additions to Historic San José include a newly restored plaza.</p>

<p>OTHER ACTIVITIES</p>	
<p>Shopping</p>	<p>Whether it's handcrafted goods made by locals using centuries-old methods, chic boutiques offering well-known brand names, fine art,</p>

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	<p>tee-shirts, sombreros, silver, ceramics and more, shoppers are welcome anywhere throughout Land's End.</p> <p>Necri For gorgeous hand-painted pieces, visit Necri, where you will find authentic Talavera, not imitations as may be found in other shops and markets. This type of pottery is a proud inheritance from the country's Spanish roots. The store showcases the craftsmanship and beauty of Mexican handicrafts while reflecting the warmth of Mexico and an expert knowledge of the stories behind the art. Shipping is available back to Canada. http://necri.com.mx</p>
Markets	<p>If you fancy a lively bargaining session, visit the Flea Market at the Marina on the marina in Cabo San Lucas.</p>
Nightlife	<p>As the song goes, "night life is the right life" And in Los Cabos, the locals put those lyrics into practice. As the sun slips into the horizon, the sizzle you hear is the sound of the nightlife heating up in Cabo San Lucas... at Billygan's Island, Las Palmas, Mango Deck or The Office. Later, it's Cabo Wabo Cantina, The Giggling Marlin, The Hard Rock Cafe, or El Squid Roe, then the Body Shot Night Club, Mambo Cafe, Nikki Beach or Zoo Bar & Dance. Down the road in San Jose del Cabo head to Tropicana and the Iguana Bar & Grill.</p> <p>Also new to Cabo's long list of fantastic dining and nightlife options, KISS rock legends Paul Stanley and co-founder Gene Simmons joined forces to open the first international location of Simmons restaurant venture, Rock & Brews, in Los Cabos. The restaurant will feature a unique, concert-themed atmosphere and offer al fresco dining, taking advantage of Cabo's near perfect, year-round weather.</p>

CUISINE	
Food	<p>Mexican cuisine is known for its intense and varied flavors, colorful decoration, and variety of spices. Most of today's Mexican food is based on pre-Columbian traditions, including the Aztecs and Maya, combined with culinary trends introduced by Spanish colonists.</p> <p>The conquistadores eventually combined their imported diet of rice, beef, pork, chicken, wine, garlic and onions with the native pre-Columbian food, including maize, tomato, vanilla, avocado, guava, papaya, pineapple, chili pepper, beans, squash, sweet potato, peanut, and turkey.</p> <p>Mexican food varies by region, because of local climate and geography and ethnic differences among the indigenous inhabitants.</p> <p>In modern times, other cuisines of the world have become very popular in Mexico, thus adopting a Mexican fusion. For example, sushi in Mexico is often made with a variety of sauces based on mango or tamarind, and very often served with serrano-chili-blended soy sauce,</p>

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	<p>or complemented with vinegar, habanero and chipotle peppers The most internationally recognized dishes include chocolate, tacos, quesadillas, enchiladas, burritos, tamales and mole among others. Regional dishes include mole poblano, chiles en nogada and chalupas from Puebla; cabrito and machaca from Monterrey, cochinita pibil from Yucatán, Tlayudas from Oaxaca, as well as barbacoa, chilaquiles, milanesas, and many others.</p>
Mescal	<p>Mezcal, or mescal, is a distilled alcoholic beverage made from the maguey or agave plant that is native to Mexico. The word “mezcal” comes from Nahuatl “mexcalmetl,” which means agave or maguey. This plant grows in many parts of Mexico but most mezcal is made in Oaxaca. There is a saying attributed to Oaxaca regarding the drink: "para todo mal, mezcal y para todo bien también" (for everything bad, mezcal, and for everything good, too.)</p>
Wine	<p>Although relatively unknown in Canada, there is a thriving wine industry in northern Baja California. The Guadalupe Valley just northeast of Ensenada is at the forefront of the Baja wine movement and has over 50 wineries – artisan, boutique, and commercial, both large and small who are producing some remarkable wines. The wine producing regions of Baja, like wine itself, have gotten better with age. In the past few years there has been an explosion of creative juices flowing south of the border as new and exciting wineries and wines are popping up seemingly overnight. Some have called it the “renaissance of Baja’s wine country” and the excitement is growing. You should definitely sample some of these local wines while in Cabo.</p>
Restaurants	<p>Don Emiliano (San José del Cabo; www.donemiliano.com.mx): Don Emiliano wields farm-fresh ingredients laced with Mexican tradition and emerges from the kitchen with modern delights such as stepped-up chile en nogada for Día de Independencia and lemon atole with candied pumpkin for Day of the Dead. Don't miss the regular menu, which combines the likes of locally made cheeses with roasted tomatillos and dried hibiscus flowers with beef tenderloin.</p> <p>Don Sanchez Restaurant Don Sanchez can best be described as “Contemporary Baja Fusion” offering a vast selection of steaks and local seafood complemented by farm fresh organic produce coupled with a fine wine selection of over 300 labels. Address: Blvd. Mijares s/n Edificio Eclipse Int 3, San José del Cabo, Baja California Sur, Mexico, San Jose del Cabo http://www.donsanchezrestaurant.com</p>

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	<p>Mi Casa de Mariscos</p> <p>As the name suggests, this is very much a “seafood home” and the warm Mexican decor goes well with a long menu of savory dishes, from a whole fried red snapper to a special shrimp steak with bacon over fried onions.</p> <p>Address: Camino Viejo a San José s/n Col. El Medano, Cabo San Lucas</p>
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MORE INFO	
Website	Websites: www.visitmexico.com http://visitloscabos.travel Mexico on Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/WeVisitMexico Follow Mexico on Twitter: https://twitter.com/%21/WeVisitMexico For my Pinterest photos on Mexico: http://pinterest.com/travelshow

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES	<p>I broadcast live and on-location from Cabo for the Travel Shows on July 20th, 2013 so check out the travel blog and Pinterest board on this destination:</p> <p>Travel Blog: http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/Blog/tabid/400/EntryId/80/Los-Cabos-Mexico.aspx</p> <p>Pinterest: http://www.pinterest.com/TravelShow/los-cabos-mexico/</p>
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RIVIERA MAYA, MEXICO	<p>It starts with a special location - the Riviera Maya is mystical, mesmerizing and magnificent... The Mayan coast is a favourite spot around the world for vacationers seeking beauty combined with Mexican hospitality.</p> <p>The area boasts intriguing Mayan ruins, spectacular scuba diving, eclectic towns & villages and adventurous eco-tour options - not to mention upscale shopping, sizzling nightlife and tantalizing cuisine. Serviced by the Cancun International Airport, the Riviera Maya is a destination not to be missed. Flights are available with a range of airlines 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	<p>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.</p> <p>Cancun comes from "Kankun" (a single word written with the two "k's"), which means "pot of snakes" or "nest of snakes" in Maya.</p>
Language	Spanish, but English is widely spoken in the resort areas
Currency	One Canadian Dollar = 12 Mexican Pesos (11 th Jan 2014)
Tipping	10-15%
Government	Democracy. Enrique Peña Nieto was elected President in the Federal election of 2012.
Documentation	<p>Passports are required for Canadian citizens, but no Visa is necessary.</p> <p>Unaccompanied minors traveling to Mexico no longer need a notarized letter from their parent or guardian authorizing the trip as of 2013. The regulation has been suspended for a year by the Ministry of Tourism and National Institute of Migration. Prior to the temporary suspension, anyone under 18 traveling alone or accompanied by a single parent or legal guardian had to carry a notarized letter signed by both parents or by the one not travelling with the minor granting permission to enter/exit the country.</p>
Time zone	Central Time
Health	No inoculations needed; drink bottled water to avoid 'turista', an upset stomach.
Safety tips	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. 80% of all murders take place in just 6% of the country...and a part that Canadians are unlikely to go anywhere near. About 50,000 Canadian ex-pats live in Mexico

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	<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 former President Felipe Calderon told the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) summit in Las Vegas in 2011 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> <p>Here is a link to an excellent article on the subject from a travel insider that I know well and respect for her balanced judgment: http://travelindustrytoday.com/web/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=14175:mexico-gets-a-bad-rap-time-to-give-it-a-rest&Itemid=64</p> <p>On a more general level – check out my Top Ten Safety Tips: http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/Planning/ChrisTop10Lists/Top10VacationSafetyTips.aspx</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 (e.g.Emily and Wilma in 2005)
Today’s weather	28 degrees with sun and cloud in Playa del Carmen (11 th Jan 2014)
Best time to visit	Year round (the hurricane season is July-Nov, but you would be very unlucky to encounter one of these storms)

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</p>

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have a location that will delight even the most discerning traveler. 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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 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.</p>
<p>Distances</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Cancún – Tulúm130 km Cancún – Cobá167 km Cancún – Chichén Itza193 km Cancún – Puerto Morelos ...32 km Cancún – Xcaret72 km Cancún – Xel-Há124 km</p>
<p>Ferries</p>	<p>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 \$11</p>

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	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.

ACCOMMODATION TYPES	All Inclusive resorts predominate here, but there are smaller, pension type properties in Playa del Carmen.
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LIFESTYLES	
Kids	<p>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.</p> <p>Tres Rios ecoadventure park 25 minutes south of Cancún is actually a nature reserve on more than 60 hectares of land. Tres Ríos 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 participating in these activities. The entrance fee - \$22 for adults, \$19 for children - 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. It costs \$75 per adult, \$62 for kids under 12.</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>
Teens	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 (\$135) includes admission to the park. It's

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	<p>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 Explorer, 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>

<p>UNIQUES</p>	<p>Coba: Set inland, deep in the jungle, surrounded by shallow lakes and 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 40kms west of Tulum, Coba served as a Ceremonial centre 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 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</p>

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dictionary, a dictionary of Mayan hieroglyphics, as "abysmal and deep" or "hole filled with water".

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.

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.

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.

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.

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. There are four different types of cenotes - those that are completely 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.

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.

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.

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.

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	<p>Here are a few names to Google: Gran Cenote</p> <p>Tres Bocas Cristalino Cenote Azul El Jardin de Eden Chemuyil Dos Ojos Yax Mul Casa 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. Admission to the site without a tour is \$3.50 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 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.</p>
<p>Books</p>	<p>Frommer's Cancun, Cozumel & the Yucatan</p> <p>Maya Roads by Mary Jo McConahay see my review of this lovely book: http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/Planning/ChrisBookPicks.aspx#18</p>
<p>1000 Places to see before you die</p>	<p>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</p>

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	<p>items not found in Playa del Carmen or Cozumel. This is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site.</p>
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.</p> <p>Xcaret is 10km south of Playa del Carmen. It's open daily from 8:30am to 9pm. Admission prices are \$54 for adults, \$28 for children 5 to 12. www.xcaret.com</p> <p>Sian Ka'an biosphere reserve is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is a wonderful place to spend a day if you love wild, natural landscapes. In this case it's all about low, partially submerged coastal limestone plain that is home to a rich diversity of both marine and terrestrial life such as jaguars, margays, pumas, ocelots, tapirs, monkeys and anteaters.</p>

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 where a round will cost \$105 including cart.</p> <p>The golf courses in Cancun and the Riviera Maya feature challenging fairways that present players with distinctive curves and gentle hills, all framed by colorful tropical vegetation. Some are even built around ancient Mayan temples. From tee to green, views of the Caribbean's</p>

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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.

El Camaleon Mayakoba – Greg Norman

El Camaleon Mayakoba designed by Greg Norman stretches from the

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	<p>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 sportfishing hotspots in the world... Sportfishing 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 sportfishing 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 for up to four people. Marinas will sometimes assist in putting together a</p>

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	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 \$54
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>

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. This year, 2012, the Maya Long Cycle of over 5,000 years ends on December 21st and there has been much written about what this portends...</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</p>

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	<p>representative collection of masks, regional folkloric costumes, nativity scenes, religious artifacts, musical instruments, Mexican toys, and gourd 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>
<p>Festivals</p>	<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>

<p>ATTRACTIONS</p>	<p>Beautiful lagoons and bays full of colorful fish & sea turtles Fascinating Mayan ruins at Chichen Itza, Tulum, Coba and Xel-Ha Second-largest barrier coral reef in the world Miles of white sand beaches National Park and UNESCO Site: Sian Ka'an 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 for diving and snorkeling Magnificent resorts and hotels Diverse shopping Fabulous food</p>
<p>Beaches</p>	<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>
<p>Wildlife</p>	<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</p>

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	<p>preserve tropical forests, savannas, mangroves, coastal and marine habitats, and 110km of coastal reefs.</p> <p>The area is home to jaguars; pumas; ocelots; margays; jaguarundis; 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</p> <p>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</p> <p>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</p> <p>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</p> <p>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</p>

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	<p>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>
<p>Parks</p>	<p>There are many beautiful nature reserves and protected areas you can visit in this region. You will get the opportunity to observe monkeys, flamingos, whale sharks, marine turtles, crocodiles and many more creatures in their natural habitat. You can arrange guided tours lasting from one day to several days where you can pursue activities such as kayaking, hiking, snorkeling and diving.</p> <p>Cozumel Reef National Park In 1996, an 11,988-hectare 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 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.</p> <p>Isla Contoy National Park The island, covering 5,126 sq. hectares, 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.</p> <p>Puerto Morelos Reef National Park The 9,066 square-hectare park was set up in 1998. The barrier reef borders the Isla Mujeres West Coast, Punta Cancún and Punta Nizuc National Park.</p> <p>Chinchorro Bank Biosphere Reserve The Chinchorro Bank Biosphere Reserve was created in 1996. The country's best-preserved reef system covers 144,360 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 heritage (there are more than 20 shipwrecks here).</p> <p>Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve</p>

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	<p>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>
<p>Historic Sites</p>	<p>Chichen Itza was once the capital of the Maya people in this region and is one of the new Seven Wonders of the World as well as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is simply stunning!</p> <p>Tulum Ruins is a relatively small site. It has an excellent beach for swimming and cooling off, shopping and food. This makes an easy half-day excursion and is simple 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>

<p>OTHER ACTIVITIES</p>	
<p>Shopping</p>	<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</p>

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	<p>boutiques in 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>Also, Fifth Avenue in Playa del Carmen is 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>

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 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 Perto 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>

<p>MORE INFO</p>	
<p>Brochures</p>	<p>Mexico Tourism Board, 2 Bloor Street West, Suite 1502, Toronto, ON M4W 3E2 Tel: 416-925-0078</p>
<p>Websites</p>	<p>www.rivieramaya.com for destination information www.visitmexico.com</p>
<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 Chichen Itza, Tulum, Muyil and Coba; the national park of Sian Ka'an; and the cenotes of Gran Cenote and Sammula.</p>

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