

Contents at a Glance

Introduction	1
Part I: Introducing Cancún and the Yucatán	7
Chapter 1: Discovering the Best of Cancún and the Yucatán	9
Chapter 2: Digging Deeper into the Yucatán	17
Chapter 3: Choosing Where to Go	40
Chapter 4: Deciding When to Go	50
Part II: Planning Your Trip to Cancún and the Yucatán	55
Chapter 5: Managing Your Money	57
Chapter 6: Getting to the Yucatán	69
Chapter 7: Booking Your Accommodations	75
Chapter 8: Catering to Special Needs or Interests	81
Chapter 9: Taking Care of the Remaining Details	89
Part III: Discovering Cancún	105
Chapter 10: Settling into Cancún	107
Chapter 11: Exploring Cancún	146
Part IV: Traveling Around Isla Mujeres and Cozumel	163
Chapter 12: Isla Mujeres	165
Chapter 13: Cozumel	185
Part V: Exploring the Yucatán	209
Chapter 14: Playa del Carmen and the Riviera Maya	211
Chapter 15: A Taste of the Maya: Nearby Ruins	239
Part VI: The Part of Tens	255
Chapter 16: Ten Ways to Avoid Looking Like a Gringo	257
Chapter 17: Ten (or So) Top Myths and Misconceptions about Mexico	260
Chapter 18: Ten Most Delicious Yucatecan Dishes	264
Appendix: Quick Concierge	267
Index	277

Maps at a Glance

Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula	44
Where to Stay in Isla Cancún (Hotel Zone)	109
Where to Stay in Ciudad Cancún (Cancún City)	117
Cancún Orientation Map.....	119
Where to Dine in Isla Cancún	133
Where to Dine in Ciudad Cancún (Cancún City)	135
Isla Mujeres.....	167
Cozumel Island.....	187
San Miguel de Cozumel.....	189
The Riviera Maya Region	213
Playa del Carmen	215
The Yucatán Peninsula's Major Ruins	241
Chichén Itzá Ruins	243
Tulum Ruins	251
Cobá Ruins	253

Table of Contents

***Introduction*..... 1**

About This Book.....	2
Conventions Used in This Book	2
Foolish Assumptions	4
How This Book Is Organized.....	4
Part I: Introducing Cancún and the Yucatán	4
Part II: Planning Your Trip to Cancún and the Yucatán.....	5
Part III: Discovering Cancún	5
Part IV: Traveling Around Isla Mujeres and Cozumel	5
Part V: Exploring the Yucatán	5
Part VI: The Part of Tens	5
Quick Concierge appendix.....	6
Icons Used in This Book.....	6
Where to Go from Here.....	6

Part I: Introducing Cancún and the Yucatán.... 7

Chapter 1: Discovering the Best of Cancún and the Yucatán.....9

The Best Beach Vacations.....	9
The Best Luxury Resorts.....	10
The Best Good-Value Accommodations	11
The Most Unique Places to Get Away from It All	12
The Best Restaurants.....	13
The Best Activities and Attractions	14
The Best Archaeological Sites	15
The Best Shopping	15
The Best Nightlife.....	16

Chapter 2: Digging Deeper into the Yucatán17

Introducing the Yucatán	17
The Land.....	18
History 101: The Main Events.....	19
Pre-Hispanic civilizations.....	19
The Pre-Classic Period (1500 B.C.–A.D. 300).....	19
The Classic Period (A.D. 300–900)	20
The Post-Classic Period (A.D. 900–1521)	20
The Conquest	21

The Colonial Period	22
Independence	22
The Porfiriato and the Revolution	23
Modern Mexico	23
Building Blocks: Local Architecture	24
Pre-Hispanic forms.....	24
Spanish influence.....	25
Religion, Myth, and Folklore	26
Taste of the Yucatán: Local Cuisine	27
Word to the Wise: The Local Lingo	29
Background Check: Recommended Books and Movies	38
Books	38
Movies	39
Chapter 3: Choosing Where to Go	40
Introducing the Yucatán	40
Picking the Right Beach Resort	41
Choosing Cancún	41
Contemplating Isla Mujeres	42
Diving into Cozumel.....	43
Considering Playa del Carmen	46
Exploring the Riviera Maya.....	47
Visiting More Than One Resort	49
Chapter 4: Deciding When to Go	50
Forecasting the Weather	50
Unlocking the Secret of the Seasons	51
Yucatán's Calendar of Events	51
January, February, and March.....	51
April, May, and June	52
July, August, and September	53
October, November, and December	53
Part II : Planning Your Trip to Cancún and the Yucatán	55
Chapter 5: Managing Your Money	57
Planning Your Budget	57
Calculating your hotel cost.....	58
Totaling transportation costs.....	58
Estimating dining dollars	59
Getting tipping tips	60

Sightseeing.....	60
Shopping	61
Catching the nightlife	61
Cutting Costs — But Not the Fun	61
Making Sense of the Peso.....	63
Choosing Traveler’s Checks, Credit Cards, or Cash.....	64
ATMs and cash	64
Credit cards	65
Traveler’s checks	66
Taxing Matters	66
Dealing with a Lost or Stolen Wallet	67
Chapter 6: Getting to the Yucatán.....	69
Flying to Cancún and the Yucatán	69
Getting the Best Deal on Your Airfare.....	70
Researching and Booking Your Trip Online.....	71
Understanding Escorted and Package Tours	72
Chapter 7: Booking Your Accommodations.....	75
Getting to Know Your Options.....	75
Finding the Best Room at the Best Rate.....	77
Finding the best rate.....	78
Surfing the Web for hotel deals.....	78
Reserving the best room.....	80
Chapter 8: Catering to Special Needs or Interests	81
Traveling with the Brood: Advice for Families	81
Making Age Work for You: Tips for Seniors.....	82
Accessing the Yucatán: Advice for Travelers with Disabilities.....	84
Following the Rainbow: Resources for Gay and Lesbian Travelers.....	85
Traveling Solo	86
Planning a Wedding in Mexico.....	87
Chapter 9: Taking Care of the Remaining Details.....	89
Arriving in and Departing from Mexico	89
Getting a Passport.....	90
Applying for a U.S. passport.....	90
Applying for other passports	91

Clearing U.S. Customs.....	92
Playing It Safe with Travel and Medical Insurance	92
Staying Healthy When You Travel	94
Staying Safe	95
Renting a Car.....	97
Finding the best car-rental deal	97
Remembering that safety comes first	98
Packing for the Yucatán.....	99
Staying Connected by Cellphone or E-Mail.....	101
Accessing the Internet Away from Home	102
Keeping Up with Airline Security Measures	103

Part III: Discovering Cancún 105

Chapter 10: Settling into Cancún 107

Arriving in Cancún	108
Navigating passport control and Customs	108
Getting to your hotel	108
Getting Around Cancún	111
Taking a taxi.....	113
Catching a bus.....	113
Zipping around on a moped	113
Choosing Your Location	114
Staying in Style	115
Dining Out	131
Cancún's Best Restaurants	132
Fast Facts: Cancún	143

Chapter 11: Exploring Cancún 146

Enjoying the Sand and Surf	146
Combing the beaches	147
Playing in the surf	147
Exploring on Dry Land.....	151
The top attractions	151
Keeping active	152
Guided tours.....	153
Shopping the Local Stores	153
Living It Up After Dark	155
Partying at a club.....	155
Enjoying a cultural event	158
Going Beyond Cancún: Day-Trips	158
Day-trips to Isla Mujeres	159
Scenic boat trips	160
Seeing the archeological sites	160
Exploring an ecotheme park.....	160

***Part IV: Traveling Around
Isla Mujeres and Cozumel 163***

Chapter 12: Isla Mujeres165

- Settling into Isla Mujeres166
 - Arriving at Isla Mujeres by ferry166
 - Getting from the ferry dock to your hotel168
 - Getting around.....168
- Staying in Isla169
- Dining in Isla Mujeres174
- Fun On and Off the Beach in Isla Mujeres176
 - Isla's best beaches177
 - Deep blue explorations in Isla177
 - Sightseeing and shopping in Isla.....180
 - Isla Mujeres after dark.....182
- Fast Facts: Isla Mujeres.....183

Chapter 13: Cozumel185

- Getting to Cozumel.....185
 - By air.....185
 - By sea186
- Getting around Cozumel.....188
- Fast Facts: Cozumel191
- Staying in Cozumel.....192
 - Finding the place that's right for you192
 - Checking out Cozumel's best hotels.....193
- Dining in Cozumel197
- Having Fun on the Beach and in the Water201
 - Scoring quality beach time201
 - Going deep: Scuba diving.....202
 - Enjoying snorkeling203
 - Visiting the nature parks204
 - Cruising the seas205
 - Catching the big one.....205
 - Swimming with dolphins.....205
- Keeping Your Feet on Dry Land.....205
 - Hitting the links206
 - Seeing the sites.....206
 - Exploring Maya ruins on Cozumel206
 - Day-tripping off to the mainland207
 - Looking at the island's natural history207
- Shopping in Cozumel207
- Enjoying Cozumel's Nightlife208

***Part V: Exploring the Yucatán*209**

**Chapter 14: Playa del Carmen
and the Riviera Maya211**

Exploring the Riviera Maya Region.....	211
Playa del Carmen.....	214
Settling into Playa	214
Staying in Playa	216
Dining in Playa.....	220
Having fun on and off the beach	222
Fast Facts: Playa del Carmen	224
The Riviera Maya.....	224
Puerto Morelos and environs	225
Tres Ríos	229
Xcaret	229
Xpu-Ha	231
Akumal.....	232
Xel-Ha.....	234
On the way to Tulum	235
Tulum.....	236

**Chapter 15: A Taste of the Maya:
Nearby Ruins.....239**

Deciding Which Ruins to Visit	239
Chichén Itzá	241
Getting there.....	242
Where to stay	242
Where to dine	244
Exploring Chichén Itzá	245
Other highlights of Chichén Itzá	247
More cool things to see and do.....	248
Fast Facts: Chichén Itzá.....	249
Tulum: Fortress City	250
Cobá (“Water Stirred by Wind”)	252
Ek Balam (“Dark Jaguar”).....	253

***Part VI: The Part of Tens*255**

**Chapter 16: Ten Ways to Avoid
Looking Like a Gringo257**

Wake Up and Ask for the Coffee . . . Correctly.....	257
Practice Your Check Etiquette.....	257
Be on the Lookout for the Bus.....	258

Go to the Pharmacy for Advice258
 Beware the Jewelry Scams.....258
 Know the Truth about the “Flower Girls”258
 Say Hello Like a Local259
 Distinguish between a Catcall and a Compliment....259
 Recognize the Sign of the Cross259
 Mind the Macho Manner259

**Chapter 17: Ten (or So) Top Myths and
 Misconceptions about Mexico260**

Don’t Drink the Water260
 Mexicans Who Don’t Speak English
 Are Hard of Hearing.....261
 Mexico Is the Land of Sombreros and Siestas261
 All Mexican Food Is Spicy.....261
 Mexico Has No Drinking or Drug Laws262
 A Jeep Rental Is Really \$10 a Day262
 If in Trouble, Pay a Mordida.....262
 You Can Go Everywhere Wearing
 Just Your Swimsuit263
 Mexico Is a Desert, and It’s Hot Everywhere263

**Chapter 18: Ten Most Delicious
 Yucatecan Dishes264**

Pescado Tikik-Chik.....264
 Pibil264
 Tamales.....265
 Panuchos265
 Salbutes265
 Huevos Motuleños266
 Ceviche266
 Puchero266
 Liquados266
 Café de Olla266

Appendix: Quick Concierge.....267

Toll-Free Numbers and Web Sites272
 Where to Get More Information274
 Health information.....275
 Local sources of information.....275
 Mexico on the Web275
 Other Internet travel resources276

Index.....277

