



TRAVEL THE UNKNOWN

TAKE THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

ARCHAEOLOGY OF MEXICO

19 days



Countries visited

Mexico

Tour Highlights

- Vibrant Mexico City
- Amazing pyramid complex of Teotihuacan
- Archaeological complex of El Tajin
- Magnificent Monte Alban in Oaxaca
- Ancient cities of the Zapotecs
- Gaze into the dramatic Sumidero Canyon
- Multi-coloured lakes of Montebello
- Jungle pyramids of Chichén Itzá

Places visited

Mexico City • Xochicalco • Malinalco • Atlantes of Tula • Teotihuacán • El Tajin • Xalapa • Veracruz City Tour
• Oaxaca • Cantona • Monte Albán • Mitla • San Cristóbal de las Casas • Sumidero Canyon • San Cristóbal •
Lakes of Montebello • Yaxchilan • Palenque • Templo Olvidado • Campeche • Uxmal • Merida • Chichén Itzá

What's included

- Airport transfers
- Ground transport, drivers and guides
- Accommodation

- Entrance fees to sites & parks
- Some meals (as per itinerary)

All accommodation subject to availability. Final accommodation choices will be confirmed after booking.



Your Itinerary Map



Your Itinerary Explained

Date	Place visited	Meals
	<p>The first part of the text in each day is the itinerary schedule and will explain what you will normally see/do during this day of your itinerary.</p> <p>---</p> <p><i>The part of the day's text in italics (and comes after the three dashes "---") is background information on the places or sites on that day of your itinerary. It is not part of your itinerary and may mention places that will not be visited on your itinerary. If you have any questions please ask us. Travel times where noted are only meant as a guideline.</i></p>	<p>B: Breakfast</p> <p>L: Lunch</p> <p>D: Dinner</p>

Tour Itinerary

Day 1	Arrival	Meals
 <p>Flight</p>	<p>Arrive at Mexico City airport where you will be met by your Travel the Unknown representative and transferred to your hotel. Overnight in Mexico City.</p> <p>---</p> <p><i>Overnight in Zócalo Central Hotel, Mexico City</i></p>	<p>N/A</p>
Day 2	Mexico City	Meals
 <p>Museo Nacional de Antropología</p>	<p>Spend the day exploring Mexico City including visits to Templo Mayor and the National Anthropology museum. Overnight in Mexico City.</p> <p>---</p>	<p>B</p>

*When humans arrived in the Mexico valley in 30,000 BC, the valley floor was a chain of lakes. The water has been receding ever since and agriculture became an important way of life. The Aztecs arrived from northwest Mexico and settled in the Chapultepec region. The tribe were forced to flee however and in 1325 arrived on an island on the western shore and built their city there - Tenochtitlán. This was to rule over most of Mexico in the 15th and early 16th centuries before the Spanish conquest in 1519. Tenochtitlán was almost completely destroyed before being rebuilt on Spanish orders as the capital of Nueva España (New Spain), later becoming **Mexico City**. Today it is the third largest city in the World and the country's main hub for the Arts. Since the Mesoamerican classical period, the inhabitants of the settlements around Lake Texcoco have been creating complex works of art. In the 20th Century, many artists immigrated to Mexico City from other regions of the country, resulting in the city becoming the home of the avant-garde movement of muralism.*

*The **Museo Nacional de Antropología** has 12 exhibition halls, each of which is dedicated to a different pre-Columbian civilisation of Mexico. Among others, discover the cultures of the Toltecs, Aztecs and Maya.*

*The **Museo del Templo Mayor** opened in 1987. It owes its existence to the find, in 1978, of the 8-tonne stone disk with the image of the moon goddess Coyolxauhqui. The museum focuses on the cult of human sacrifices in Tenochtitlán, the cultivation of cereals and corn in the floating gardens, and the history of the old Aztec temple district.*

Overnight in Zócalo Central Hotel, Mexico City

Day 3

Mexico City

Meals



Coyoacán

A second day exploring Mexico City, including the archaeological site of Coyoacán, the floating gardens of Xochimilco and Plaza de las Tres Culturas. Overnight in Mexico City.

B

***Xochimilco** is best known for its canals, which are left from what was an extensive lake and canal system which connected most of the settlements of the Valley of Mexico. These canals, along with artificial islands called chinampas attract tourists and other city residents to **ride on colorful gondola like boats called "trajineras" around the 170 km of canals**. This canal and chinampa system, as a vestige of the area's pre-Hispanic past, has made Xochimilco a World Heritage Site; however, environmental degradation of both the canals and the chinampas is severe and ongoing, putting that status in question for the future.*

***Coyoacán** is a southern suburb of Mexico City, literally meaning "place of coyotes". Settled for more than 3,000 years it was the place where the first known statue of the Fire God was found and the earliest indications of the Mesoamerican calendar systems. Its central feature is a circular pyramid with a diameter of 150m, from the top of which you can appreciate the full scale of the archaeological site.*

*Next to the historic and picturesque centre of Coyoacán, is the **Museo Frida Kahlo** at Casa Azul (the blue house), with its stunning testimony to the artist's life and work. Nearby is a small house which served as the hiding place for Russian exile Leon Trotsky.*

*Once the trade centre of the Tlatelolco civilisation **Plaza de las Tres Culturas** unites architectural elements from Aztec, Spanish and Mexican periods. The site includes the foundations of an Aztec pyramid, a colonial church and a grisly "skull rack".*

Overnight in Zócalo Central Hotel, Mexico City

Day 4

Mexico City - Xochicalco - Malinalco

Meals



Xochicalco

After breakfast, take a 2 hour bus ride from Mexico City to Xochicalco to see its ancient ruins. Then from Xochicalco travel to Malinalco, where you will discover one of the most impressive sites of Aztec civilisation. Return by bus to Mexico City and spend the evening at your leisure.

The ruins of the temple town of **Xochicalco** lie about 34 km southwest of Cuernavaca, situated across several levels. Among the ruins is a sun observatory which the priests used to determine the summer and winter solstices. The highest level of the town is crowned by the pyramid of Quetzalcóatl with its impressive inscriptions and figures.

Malinalco is one of the finest sites of the Aztec civilisation, once serving as a fortress for the warriors of the elite Eagle and Jaguar Orders. Unique among the structures of Malinalco, the main temple - with its stairs, base and decorative statues - was carved directly from the rock. There are also some partially monolithic buildings and temples in Malinalco. The archaeological site overlooks the colonial town of the same name and is reached via hundreds of steps.

Overnight in Zócalo Central Hotel, Mexico City

B

Day 5

Atlantes of Tula - Teotihuacan - Poza Rica

Meals



Teotihuacán

Excursion from Mexico City to the Atlantes of Tula, Next, travel to the ancient 'New World' of Teotihuacán. Later in the day, travel to Poza Rica for an overnight stay.

Founded in 856 BC, the **Atlantes of Tula** was once the Toltec capital, and today it houses the remains of the Temple of Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli and the Temple of Quetzalcoatl - which is also known as the 'Pyramid of the Morning Star'. On the platform of the five-step pyramid, which stands at around 10m high, you can see the ancient warrior figures, each of which is a staggering 5m high, intended to carry the roof of the pyramid.

The huge pyramid complex of **Teotihuacán** was the first city in the "New World". Built between 250 BC and 700 AD, at the peak of its civilisation the area boasted a population of some 125,000-250,000 people spread over 2,300 apartment complexes. Only walking the mighty "Avenue of the Dead" will you understand the dimensions of the site. This fabulous archaeological zone of Teotihuacan lies in a mountain-ringed offshoot of the Valle de México. For centuries Teotihuacán was the capital of largest pre-Hispanic empire in Mexico. However, unable to sustain its burgeoning population, it fell in the 8th century. The earliest Mexican murals are found at Teotihuacán and depict what awaited those who were killed by Tláloc, the water god. The Teotihuacán buildings were simple but grand in scale. Teotihuacán is known for its two pyramids – the sun and moon pyramids. The Sun Pyramid was completed by 150 AD and the rest of the city between 250 and 600 AD. The Sun Pyramid (Pirámide del Sol) is the world's third-largest pyramid whose base is 222m on each side and is 70m in height. The Moon Pyramid (Pirámide de la Luna), completed in 300 AD, is smaller but built on slightly higher ground.

B

Overnight in La Quinta Inn, Poza Rica

Day 6	El Tajin - Xalapa	Meals
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El Tajin

After breakfast, travel to El Tajin and explore its ruins. Later, journey to Papantla. After exploring the site, travel to Xalapa for an overnight stay.

Situated in the northern part of the state of Veracruz are the ruins of "El Tajin". The archaeological complex covers more than 60 hectares (150 acres) and dates back to a pre-Columbian civilisation in 5,600 BC known as the Classical era of Mesoamerica. Originally a myriad of temples, palaces and ball courts, Europeans only discovered the city in the 18th century. El Tajin's most spectacular building is undoubtedly the 25-metre-high (82 ft.) pyramid of the niches (Pirámide de los Nichos).

*Discover the **Xanath eco-park**. Since 1872, the estate has been owned by the family of José Luis Hernández, who has transformed the hacienda into a lemon orchard with a small vanilla plantation over the past 22 years. The vanilla orchid is artificially pollinated, and you can gain an impression of the Totonacs' history while walking along the fields lined with authentically built huts built by this civilisation.*

Overnight in Holiday inn Express Xalapa, Xalapa

B

Day 7	Xalapa - Cempoala	Meals
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Cempoala

After breakfast explore the Anthropological Museum of Xalapa. Then travel to Cempoala, one of the largest cities of pre-Columbian times. Journey on to Veracruz and city tour of Veracruz on arrival. Overnight in Veracruz.

In 1519, Hernán Cortés landed near the place where today lies Veracruz and named the new city Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz. Make a tour through the historic centre with the picturesque Plaza de la Constitución. Part of the Zócalo is barred to car traffic so that you can enjoy an undisturbed view of the prominent colonial buildings from the 18th century.

***The Anthropological Museum of Xalapa** has a significant collection of archaeological finds spanning three millennia. Olmec culture is well represented by huge statue-heads of the Olmec rulers and gods made from basalt and weighing up to 20 tonnes each. Particularly interesting are the smaller sculptures of jade and obsidian.*

*Originally built by the Totonacs, only a small part of the old city of **Cempoala** has been excavated to date. With more than 50,000 residents, the city was one of the largest settlements of pre-Columbian times. It witnessed the arrival of the Spaniard Cortés who the Totonacs joined forces with to fight the Aztecs.*

Overnight in Emporio Veracruz, Veracruz

B

Day 8	Cantona - Zapotitlan Salinas - Oaxaca	Meals
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After breakfast, travel towards Oaxaca, stopping to see the archeological site of Cantona. Then, continue to Zapotitlan Salinas to explore its magnificent gardens. Arrive in Oaxaca for an overnight stay.

B



Cantona

The ancient archaeological site of **Cantona** sits on the foothills of the Jalapasco volcano, spanning an impressive 13 km square. With approximately 85,000 inhabitants and the largest number of ball courts (24) of all known ruins, Cantona was an important city in its time, whose name literally means, 'House of the Sun'. Situated between the Gulf of Mexico and the mountain ranges of Sierra Madre Occidental and Sierra Madre Oriental, Cantona was a significant military and trade centre, and its impressive defence facilities protected its ancient settlements and ceremonial complexes for centuries.

Zapotitlán Salinas houses the spectacular "**Jardín botánico**" - a large area of unspoiled landscape that can be explored by stairs and winding paths. Surrounded by high columnar cacti, palms, and elephant-foot trees, the area makes an excellent picnic spot, and there are wonderful views of the surrounding environment from the top of the hill.

Overnight in Casa Conzatti, Oaxaca

Day 9	Oaxaca	Meals
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Oaxaca - Church of Santo Domingo

In the morning visit Monte Albán. In the afternoon visit Oaxaca City, including the Church of Santo Domingo and the Museo Regional de Oaxaca. Evening at your leisure. Overnight in Oaxaca.

B

Oaxaca is at the heart of all things indigenous in Mexico with more indigenous groups than anywhere else in the country and this is clearly visible on its streets. At the centre of Oaxaca lies the city's famous traffic-free square known as the Zocalo. This is a fantastic place to people watch with cafes lining the edges of the square and a constant flow of people weaving in and out of the square or sitting enjoying its shady benches. A colonial city, Oaxaca oozes character and boasts a vast range of crafts and contemporary art. Surrounded by famous archaeological sites, the city itself also has a fascinating history - with Aztecs, the Spanish invasion and the city's growing importance in the life and trade of southern Mexico. Earthquakes in 1854 and 1931 left much of the city in ruins and effectively uninhabitable. Oaxaca has seen the largest expansion in the last 25 years however, as migration from rural areas has increased.

Monte Albán, one of Mexico's most ancient sites and the first urban complex in Mesoamerica, is an ancient Zapotec capital a few kilometres west of Oaxaca city. Meaning "White Mountain", Monte Albán sits on a flat hill top overlooking the surrounding valley. The location of the site gives rise to spectacular 360 degree views of the valley and across the extensive site of Monte Albán. First built around 500 BC, early hieroglyphs found in Monte Albán suggest the Zapotec elite here may have been the first to use writing as well as a written calendar. The buildings of the site are excavated to various degrees, meaning some are well excavated and their purpose well known, whereas others are at an early stage of excavation and their purpose can only be guessed at. In addition, the buildings are spread over an unusually large period of time lasting up until the early 16th Century, when it mysteriously fell into decline. One of the site's most important and most impressive buildings is the Ball Court. Its prominent position is a clue as to the importance of games to the early Zapotecs, games in which the losing captain is believed to have been ritually slaughtered.

The Church of Santo Domingo, as its name suggests, was founded by the Dominican Order in the 16th century, initially as a monastery. Taking an astonishing two centuries to build, the church has an extensive courtyard area, cloisters and rooms which belonged to the original monastery.

The Museo Regional de Oaxaca is located in the former Dominican monastery of the 16th century. Among the most impressive finds are goldsmiths' works from grave 7 (1250-1480) of Monte Albán - outstanding masterworks of Mixtec artists. But not only were precious metals highly valued, jewellery made of jade, serpentine and turquoise was considered to symbolise life.

Overnight in Casa Conzatti, Oaxaca

Day 10

Mitla - Santiago Matatlan - Guiengola

Meals



Mitla

After breakfast, travel from Oaxaca to Mitla by bus. After exploring this mysterious archaeological site, visit a mescal distillery in Santiago Matatlán. Later, continue to Tehuantepec, with a hike to Guiengola on the way. Overnight in Tehuantepec.

B

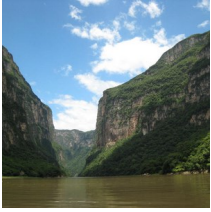
Mitla derives its name from the Nahuatl word "Mictlan", meaning "Place of the Dead". Similarly, the Zapotecs call it "Lyobaa" meaning "Burial Place". This reflects the historic importance of ancient kings and priests tombs within the city structures. Although the city dates back to as early as 200 AD, there is archaeological evidence that it was inhabited from 900 BC. There are structural remains of the city that correspond with the height of Zapotecan rule over the region from Monte Alban (500 BC to 800 AD) although the ruins at Mitla date predominantly from the 13th and 14th Centuries when Mitla would have been the dominant religious centre where human sacrifice would have been a central part of their worship. Of the original fifty two pyramids, only one remains. This ornate pyramid was spared Spanish wrath for one simple reason - it was carved with stone crosses. These crosses had no connection with a Christian crucifixion but the superstitious Spanish were afraid of destroying it. The 52 pyramids were related to a passage of time as were most of their archaeological and mathematical creations here. However, it does not refer to the 52 weeks in a year but rather to do with the alignments of planets where every 52 years, three planets were said to be aligned. Each group of buildings at Mitla was reserved for a specific person. So the high priest stayed in one building, the lesser priests in another, and the king in another.

*Stopover in the small village of **Santiago Matatlán** and visit a mescal distillery. The famous Mexican liquor from the flesh of agaves always contains more than 40% alcohol. It is produced from the heart of the plant after it has blossomed for the first time. The leaves are cut, and the "piña" is cooked and ground; the mash thus obtained is fermented and distilled several times. A mescal tasting is incomplete, of course, without the famous worm (gusano del maguey) - which, strictly speaking, is a caterpillar!*

*The ruins of **Guiengola** (Zapotec - "the big rock") are located about 15km from the town of Tehuantepec in the mountains of the Sierra Madre. The strategic location of the site means it is only accessible by the experienced hiker. The massive rampart, the hidden caves, and a fascinating view of the surrounding mountain ranges make this hike a journey through history.*

Overnight in Hotel Calli, Tehuantepec

Day 11	Sumidero Canyon	Meals
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Sumidero Canyon

After breakfast, travel from Tehuantepec to Chiapa de Corzo. Upon arrival, take a boat trip through the Sumidero Canyon, explore the neighbouring National Park and visit a real functioning workshop to see how a marimba is made. Later, drive to San Cristobal and have a city tour of San Cristóbal de las Casas on arrival. Overnight in San Cristobal.

B

*At an altitude of 2,133 m [6,998 ft.], **San Cristóbal de las Casas** offers a pleasant climate to its visitors. Since 1844, the name of the city has commemorated the important Father Bartolomé de Las Casas. From the Zócalo, you walk through the historic centre to the Cathedral and to the most beautiful building of San Cristóbal, the church Iglesia del Convento Santo Domingo.*

*The magnificent **Sumidero Canyon** leads to the deep gorge carved by the Río Grijalva. Its steep cliffs, rising up to 1,000 m (3,280 ft.), are reminiscent of Nordic fjords. The area is composed of high waterfalls and rocks copiously overgrown with fern and moss. Next door is the Sumidero National Park, which boasts tropical vegetation and exotic animals, such as little alligators, toucans, pelicans, and herons.*

Overnight in Mansion del Valle San Cristobal, San Cristóbal

Day 12	Chinkultic - Lagos de Montebello	Meals
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Chinkultic

Travel to Chinkultic, and after exploring the area, make a trip to the Lagos de Montebello. In the afternoon, continue to Las Guacamayas for an overnight stay.

B

*The ruins of **Chinkultic** are located 48km east of Comitán in the Lake District of the Lagos de Montebello. The largest and highest pyramid, the Acropolis, is the result of heavy earthwork made in the limestone soil and offers stunning views. On one side lies Cenote Azul, on the other side are views towards the colourful Lakes of Montebello.*

*In a hilly forest area on the border of Chiapas and Guatemala, you come across the **Lakes of Montebello** - formed from collapsed cretaceous caves. In the park there are about 70 large and small lakes, which are partly connected by surface or underground channels. A scenic area, with some outstanding viewpoints, here you can truly enjoy the unique colours of the Lagos de Montebello.*

Overnight in Las Guacamayas Centro Ecoturistico, Las Guacamayas

Day 13	Yaxchilan - Lacandon rainforest	Meals
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Yaxchilan

From Las Guacamayas travel to the Frontera Corozal where you will take a boat trip to Yaxchilan and explore the city. Later, explore the Lacandon rainforest and see the ruins of Bonampak. Travel to Palenque for an overnight stay.

B

Yaxchilán is reached via the Usumacinta River. In its golden age, the Mayan city controlled Palenque as well as Tikal and Copán in Honduras. Situated in the rain forest on the border with Guatemala, this ancient city is famous for its stelaes, reliefs, and sculptures. Prominent buildings are the Acropolis, the Royal Palace, and the hieroglyphic stairs with panels illustrating ball game scenes.

Among the most interesting sights of the ruins of Bonampak in the **Lacandon rain forest**, are the fascinating murals in the "Temple of the Paintings". They show scenes from the classic period of the Mayan Empire and were restored by a disciple of the famous painter Frida Kahlo.

Overnight in Chan-Kah, Palenque

Day 14	Palenque	Meals
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Palenque

Spend the day exploring the lost world of Palenque, and discover its ancient ruins. Overnight in Palenque.

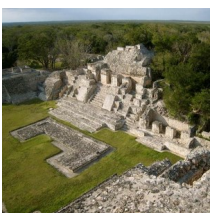
Close to the village of **Palenque** are the most beautiful ruins in all of Mexico. Founded around 300 BC, Palenque flourished in the 7th and 8th centuries AD. All buildings that are still visible date from this period. Among them are the "Temple of Inscriptions", with more than 620 hieroglyphs depicting King Pacal's history, the Grand Palace, the Temple of the Sun, and the North Temple with its stucco remains and military scenes.

The **Templo Olvidado** was built by the Mayan king K'inich Janaab Pakal in 647 AD. Its name literally means, "lost temple", and relates to its hidden location in the subtropical jungle.

Overnight in Chan-Kah, Palenque

B

Day 15	Edzna - Campeche	Meals
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Edzna

Journey to Edzná to explore the ruins of these early settlements. Then take a tour of the city of Campeche. Overnight in Campeche.

The ruins of **Edzná** are located about 60 km from the capital Campeche. The early settlement grew rapidly from about 400 BC, eventually becoming a centre of power, which ruled large parts of Yucatán. The "Edificio de los Cinco Pisos" is one of the most interesting buildings in the entire Maya culture.

The city of **Campeche** is surrounded by a wall originally constructed to defend this prosperous city against pirates. The narrow streets of this major port city are lined with restored colonial buildings, of which the Zócalo and the Cathedral of La Concepción date to the time of the Spanish conquistadores.

The fortress **Fuerte de San Miguel** was built between 1688 and 1706. It is still in good condition and has been listed as a UNESCO Cultural World Heritage site. The old cannon stations, once used to shoot pirate ships, now form the archaeological museum which houses a large collection of finds from Mayan times, including valuable jade masks from Calakmul.

B

Overnight in Plaza Colonial, Campeche

Day 16

Kabah - Uxmal - Labna - Merida

Meals



Kabah

Visit Kabah and see the Palace of the Masks. Explore the Mayan City of Uxmal, and then journey to Labna. Overnight in Merida.

Kabah is one of the most spectacular cities built in the Puuc style. It is thought to have been an affiliate city of Uxmal, which was connected by a *sacbé* (Maya road). The city is particularly famous for the Palace of the Masks, which is also called 'Codz Poop' (rolled-up mat). The facade and the sides of the building are completely covered by 260 Chac masks (the number of days in a holy year).

The name **Uxmal** means "built three times," being re-modeled and added to between the years of 600-950 AD and thus showcasing an extraordinary variety of architectural styles as well as testifying to the glory of the Classical Maya Period. The buildings are a myriad of decorated *façades*, vast terraces, squares, columns, and archways.

Labná was built in the Puuc style and is less well known than the big archaeological excavations in Yucatán. Set within beautiful, unspoilt surroundings, the city boasts ornate *façades* and a spectacular relief of the rain god Chaac. One of the last preserved *sacbé*s, which leads from the large palace to the "El Mirador" temple, is located on a pyramid (total height almost 20m), to the superb archways. *Sacbé*s, the Maya roads, once connected Labná with neighbouring Sayil, Kabáh and Uxmal.

Overnight in Casa del Balam, Merida

B

Day 17

Oxkintok - Xcambo - Merida

Meals



Oxkintok

Travel from Mérida to the ruined site of Oxkintok. From there, continue to Xcambo, before returning to Mérida for an evening at your leisure. Overnight in Mérida.

The buildings of the ruined site of **Oxkintok** are divided into several groups and were erected in the famous Puuc style. Learn about the numerous phases of construction of pyramids, its altar platforms, stelaes, and other buildings. Explore how this Mayan architectural style changed over the course of time. The earliest inscriptions date back to the period between 476 and 507 AD.

Visit **Xcambó**, sometimes referred to as "the heavenly crocodile". The Mayan ruins of the formerly important salt trading town present very different architectural styles, with the stepped-pyramids and the buildings decorated with large stucco masks reflecting the traditional style. One of the foundation walls was used to erect a church in honour of the Virgin Mary which remains a local pilgrimage site to this day.

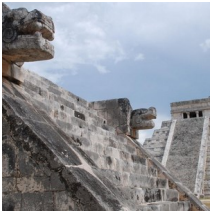
Overnight in Casa del Balam, Merida

B

Day 18

Yucatan - Chichen Itza

Meals



Chichén Itzá

From Merida travel to Izamal and visit the town of Yucatan. Continue on to Chichén Itzá to see the jungle buildings. Return to Merida for an overnight stay.

*To date, only about 30 of the many buildings of **Chichén Itzá** buried and overgrown by the jungle have been uncovered and restored. "El Castillo," the most impressive building (30m high), reaches towards the sky, while "El Caracol" resembles a snail shell. The observatory was used by the Maya to observe Venus and her orbit.*

***Mérida**, the "city of 5 hills", is one of the oldest towns in Yucatán state. Once the religious centre of the peninsular Mayan population, the city boasts the pyramid temple of Kinich Kakmó, the god of the Sun, while the monastic church San Antonio de Padua in the town centre has one of the largest church forecourts in all of Mexico.*

Overnight in Casa del Balam, Merida

B

Day 19

Dzibilchaltun - Departure

Meals



Dzibilchaltún

Travel from Mérida to Mayapan, and explore the ruins of Dzibilchaltún. Return to Merida and transfer to the airport for your return flight.

*Composed of more than 8000 structures, the ruins of **Dzibilchaltún** are one of the oldest and biggest sites of Mayan culture. Many academics think the position of the city was chosen deliberately to provide easy access to the coastal salt production facilities just 22km away. The fresh water supply in the centre of the site was guaranteed by the Xlacah cenotes - and today you can swim in it, surrounded by the ancient pyramids. The "Temple of the Seven Dolls" is the most interesting architecturally, designed to produce an interplay of light and shadows both during the day and at night.*

B