

Mexico

Mexico is a vast country which encompasses everything from arid deserts to lush tropical rainforest, and its culture is equally diverse, influenced by the ancient Mayan and Aztec civilisations, the Spanish conquistadors and modern globalisation.

The Yucatán Peninsula is home to idyllic white-sand beaches and a turquoise sea, picturesque haciendas and impressive Mayan ruins, the most famous of which has to be Chichén Itzá. The central highlands are dotted with colonial towns, indigenous churches and relics from the country's silver mining past. The sprawling metropolis of Mexico City is a chaotic, lively and colourful city, built by the Spanish on the site of the Aztec capital and still a city of contrasts.



Mexico Travel Tips

- **Time:** GMT -6.
- **Flying Time from UK:** Approx. 11.5 hours.
- **Language:** The official language is Spanish. English is spoken in most of the larger hotels and tourist areas. 66 regional Indian languages are still spoken.
- **Currency:** Mexican Peso (MXN) £1 = MXN 20.29.
- **Visa Requirements:** Visa not required by UK Citizens for tourist stays of up to 180 days. A blue tourist card needs to be filled in when flying in.
- **Festivals, Events & Busy Times:** The Día de los Muertos, celebrated after All Saints Day on 02 Nov, is Mexico's most traditional festival. Christmas, New Year's, Carnival, Easter and the national holiday period Jul-Aug are very busy for domestic travel.
- **Departure Tax:** Approximately US\$40 for international flights, subject to change. This tax is often prepaid as part of an international ticket.
- **Tourist Office:** Contact the Mexico Tourism Board for more details: Wakefield House, 41 Trinity Square, London EC3N 4DJ. Tel: 00800 1111 2266 or www.visitmexico.com.

For more useful information, see pages 96-97.

Mexico City

Mexico City is truly massive, but the city is a fun, fascinating and rewarding place to visit. Founded by Spanish conquistadors, the city was literally built on top of the conquered Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán. The enormous Constitution Square or 'El Zócalo' is the city's focal point with its giant national flag, beautiful baroque cathedral, ruined Aztec temple and impressive Diego Rivera murals in the Royal Palace. Other attractions include the colourful 'floating gardens' of Xochimilco, the massed mariachi bands of Plaza Garibaldi and the impressive pre-Aztec site of Teotihuacan, famous for its giant Sun and Moon Pyramids.

Yucatán Peninsula

Once the centre of the powerful Mayan Empire that dominated much of Central America, the Yucatán Peninsula is famous for its fabulous beaches and impressive ruined cities and temples. The best known Mayan sites include Chichén Itzá, Uxmal and Tulum, which can all be visited from Cancun, as well as the jungle-cloaked ruins of Palenque in the misty hills of Chiapas. Other highlights are the historic and well preserved colonial cities of Mérida, Campeche and San Cristóbal de Las Casas, with San Cristóbal and the wider Chiapas state also a centre for indigenous culture and language.

Caribbean Coast

Stretching from Cancún to the border with Belize, the Yucatán's Caribbean coast offers an amazing variety of accommodation and activities, with white sand, palm-fringed beaches, beautiful coral reefs and great watersports.

Acapulco

Iconic Acapulco, the original Mexican resort with its stunning bay side setting and mountain backdrop, has long been a favourite holiday destination. The Acapulco of today offers sophisticated accommodation, gourmet restaurants, endless entertainment, world class scuba diving, snorkelling and sports fishing.

Essential Mexico

13 Days from £1075 (excludes flights)

Highlights Include

- Enjoy a historical tour of Mexico City and visit the impressive Pyramids of Teotihuacan
- Marvel at the magnificent ruins of Monte Alban and Mitla (Mixtec/Zapotec), and jungle-cloaked Palenque (Mayan)
- Explore Indigenous villages near San Cristóbal de las Casas
- Take an exhilarating boat ride through the Sumidero Canyon
- Admire the picturesque Agua Azul waterfalls
- Visit colonial Villahermosa and Mérida
- Discover the impressive Chichén Itzá ruins, one of the new 'Seven Wonders of the World'

Departures: Daily

Day 1: Arrive Mexico City

On arrival in Mexico City you will be transferred to your chosen hotel for a three-night stay.

Standard: Holiday Inn Zócalo

Deluxe: Camino Real

Day 2: Mexico City Tour

Today you will be collected from your hotel for a half day tour of Mexico City. Visit the Zócalo, the main square flanked by the large baroque Metropolitan Cathedral, the National Palace and the ruined Aztec temple. Continue to the Anthropological Museum, one of the world's best and most extraordinary museums with a rich collection of Pre-Columbian art (closed on Mon). Afternoon at leisure. **(B)**

Day 3: Shrine of Guadalupe & Pyramids of Teotihuacan

After breakfast, you will be met for a tour of nearby historical sites. Stop first at the Guadalupe shrine before continuing to the vast Aztec ceremonial site of Teotihuacan. Climb the Sun and Moon Pyramids for amazing views. Enjoy lunch before you return to Mexico City. **(BL)**

Day 4: Mexico City – Oaxaca

This morning, enjoy a private tour to the town of Cholula to see the great pyramid of Quetzalcoatl, and the large church built on its top. Continue to the colonial city of Puebla for a brief sightseeing tour before driving to Oaxaca for a two-night stay. **(B)**

Standard: Hacienda La Noria

Deluxe: Hostal de La Noria (Junior Suite)

Day 5: Mitla & Monte Alban

After an early breakfast you will be driven to the magnificent Mixtec/Zapotec ruins at Mitla, adjacent to the present-day town. On your return to Oaxaca visit several villages known for their handicrafts. This afternoon, your guide will meet you for a tour of Monte Alban, capital of the Zapotec civilisation, with its notable observatory,



Oaxaca

temples and ball courts. **(B)**

Day 6: Oaxaca – San Cristóbal de las Casas

Transfer to the airport for a flight (not included) to Tuxtla. Continue to Chiapa de Corzo for a boat trip through the majestic Sumidero Canyon where 800m walls tower spectacularly above the narrow river, stopping only to see one of the huge crocodiles if you are lucky. Transfer to San Cristóbal de las Casas in the highlands of the Chiapas region, and your overnight hotel. **(B)**

Standard: Diego de Mazariegos

Deluxe: Casa Mexicana

Day 7: San Cristóbal de las Casas

Today, enjoy a sightseeing tour of this picturesque colonial city to discover a world of cobbled streets, fine plazas and Indian craft markets, spiced up with bohemian restaurants and lively bars. Visit the Indian communities of San Juan Chamula and Zinacantan in the surrounding highlands. **(B)**

Day 8: San Cristóbal de las Casas – Palenque

This morning, leave for Agua Azul waterfalls, a place of surreal beauty where translucent blue water cascades down over travertine flowstone that has built up here over thousands of years. Continue to your hotel in Palenque. **(B)**

Standard: Misión Palenque

Deluxe: Chan-Kah Palenque

Day 9: Palenque – Villahermosa

Explore the jungle-choked ruins of Palenque, one of Mexico's most beautiful and impressive Mayan sites.



Highlights include the central palace and its detailed stone carvings. After lunch in a local country restaurant, continue to Villahermosa for an overnight stay. **(BL)**

Standard: Hotel Cencalli

Deluxe: Camino Real Villahermosa

Day 10: Villahermosa – Mérida

Tour Villahermosa this morning, starting with a visit to the giant Olmec heads in La Venta Park and also visit La Venta museum. This afternoon, take a short flight (not included) to Mérida, and transfer to your chosen hotel. **(B)**

Standard: Hotel Los Aluxes

Deluxe: Intercontinental Presidente Villa Mercedes

Day 11: Uxmal & Kabah Sightseeing

Today enjoy a full-day Mayan ruins tour. At Uxmal, see the elaborately decorated Pyramid of the Sorcerer and the House of the Governor. After lunch in a local restaurant, visit Kabah's fascinating palace and its impressive carvings before returning to Mérida. **(BL)**

Day 12: Chichén Itzá Sightseeing

Enjoy a full-day tour of Chichén Itzá, dominated by the giant El Castillo pyramid and featuring a ball court with reliefs of human sacrifice. Lunch will be included in a local restaurant before your return to Mérida. **(BL)**

Day 13: Depart Mérida

Transfer to the airport for your onward flight, or extend your stay and spend a few nights relaxing on the beach (not included, see page 83 for hotels).



Chichén Itzá

Prices Include

- Accommodation as shown in itinerary
- Meals as specified (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch)
- All transfers & sightseeing as detailed
- Services of an English-speaking guide whilst touring

Prices Exclude

- All flights and local airport taxes
- Porterage, gratuities and items of a personal nature

Tour Prices

Prices per person, in £'s from	Essential Mexico			
	Standard		Deluxe	
	Twin	Single	Twin	Single
Regular Tour				
01 Jan 09–30 Nov 09	1075	1285	1299	1659
01 Dec 09–31 Mar 10	1149	1375	1389	1775
Private Tour				
01 Jan 09–30 Nov 09	1649	1859	1879	2239
01 Dec 09–31 Mar 10	1769	1995	2009	2395

Tour operates with a minimum of two passengers.

Mexico City & Acapulco

Essential Mexico City

3 Nights from £114



Zócalo Square

Day 1: Arrive Mexico City

On arrival in Mexico City you will be met and transferred to your chosen hotel for a three-night stay.

Standard: *Holiday Inn Zócalo*

Superior: *Galería Plaza*

Deluxe: *Camino Real Mexico City*

Day 2: Mexico City Tour

Today enjoy a comprehensive six-hour Mexico City tour. Visit the Zócalo, the city's main square, flanked by the large baroque Metropolitan Cathedral, by the National Palace with its Diego Rivera murals, and by the ruins of the Great Teocalli, one of the main temples of the Aztecs. Then visit one of the world's best and most extraordinary museums, the Anthropological Museum with its rich collections of Pre-Columbian art (closed on Mondays). The afternoon is at leisure. **(B)**

Day 3: Shrine of Guadalupe & Pyramids of Teotihuacan

A drive through Mexico City's northern suburbs will take you to the Basilica de Guadalupe, the most revered shrine to millions of Mexicans. Proceed to San Juan Teotihuacan to inspect the awe-inspiring pyramids of the Sun and the Moon, the majestic 4km Road of the Dead flanked by temples, palaces and platforms, and the impressive Temple of Quetzalcóatl. Free afternoon. This evening why not enjoy dinner in one of the fashionable restaurants in the neighbourhoods of Zona Rosa or Polanco. **(B)**

Day 4: Depart Mexico City

Transfer to the airport for your onward flight. Alternatively continue with our Taxco & Acapulco tour, followed by a relaxing beach stay at the Pacific Coast (see below). **(B)**



Prices Include

- 3 nights at your chosen hotel including breakfast
- Return airport/hotel transfers as specified
- Half-Day Mexico City tour as detailed
- Half-Day Guadalupe & Teotihuacan tour as detailed

Tour Prices

Prices per person, in £'s from					
	Twin	Single	Camino Real	Twin	Single
Holiday Inn Zocalo					
01Jan09-30Nov09	114	174	<i>Fri-Sun</i>		
01Dec09-31Dec09	117	178	01Jan09-30Nov09	199	298
Galería Plaza			01Dec09-31Dec09	202	302
01Jan09-30Nov09	182	274	<i>Mon-Thu</i>		
01Dec09-31Dec09	195	293	01Jan09-30Nov09	225	351
			01Dec09-31Dec09	229	354

Holiday Inn Zocalo prices on request 15Sep09 & 31Dec09.

2 Day Taxco & Acapulco



Departures: *Daily*

Day 1: Mexico City – Cuernavaca – Taxco

Early morning departure from your Mexico City hotel to the 'City of Eternal Spring', Cuernavaca, the favourite summer residence of both Conqueror Hernán Cortes and Emperor Maximilian. After a visit to the continent's oldest cathedral, a very imposing fortress-like, solid-stone construction with an ultra-modern main altar, drive through the rugged mountains of the central Sierra Madre to the quaint silver mining town of Taxco. A sightseeing walk takes you through the charming town's cobble-stone streets to the beautiful baroque church of Santa Prisca. There will be plenty of time to browse through the many smart silver shops and workshops, where you may watch the skilled silversmiths at work. Overnight at a charming country inn.

Overnight: *Posada de la Misión*



Acapulco

Day 2: Taxco – Acapulco

This morning continue through rugged mountain chains and down into the tropical lowlands to Acapulco, Mexico's world famous playground on the Pacific coast. Your tour ends at the hotel of your choice for an unforgettable beach holiday. **(B)**

Prices Include

- Accommodation as shown including breakfast
- All transfers, sightseeing and touring as specified
- Services of an experienced English-speaking guide

Tour Prices

Prices per person, in £'s from	Taxco & Acapulco	
	Twin	Single
Regular Tour		
01Jan09-30Nov09	79	95
01Dec09-31Mar10	89	105
Private Tour		
01Jan09-30Nov09	299	315
01Dec09-31Mar10	319	335

Private tour operates with a minimum of two passengers.



Private Pool Casita

Las Brisas Acapulco

5★

Set on the site of a former fort, luxurious Las Brisas commands spectacular views across Acapulco Bay. The unique hillside resort is perfect for couples looking for complete luxury and exclusivity but Las Brisas also imbues character and quirkiness - guests are whiskered around the resort in pink jeeps! All casitas have private balconies or terraces from which to enjoy the views, and the majority of rooms have private or semi-private pools. The private beach club offers you two saltwater tide pools, a freshwater pool with swim-up bar and La Concha Restaurant and Bar. Las Brisas is a member of 'The Leading Hotels of the World'.

Facilities 2 restaurants • 2 poolside bars • 3 pools
 • free internet • fitness centre • small spa • beach club
 • beauty salon • shop • laundry • child care

Rooms 251 casitas • mini-bar • satellite TV • air-con
 • 24-hour room service • balcony or terrace

Prices per person per night, including breakfast, in £'s from

Share Pool Castilla	Twin	Single	Private Pool Casita	Twin	Single
01Jan09-24Jan09	56	111	01Jan09-24Jan09	69	138
25Jan09-28Feb09	66	131	25Jan09-28Feb09	84	168
01Mar09-11Apr09	56	111	01Mar09-11Apr09	69	138
12Apr09-31Dec09	49	97	12Apr09-31Dec09	61	122

Supplements apply 26Dec-03Jan. Charge of USD20 per room per night to be paid locally.

The Yucatán - Touring & Hotels

5 Day Essential Yucatán



Departures: Daily

Day 1: Cancún – Mérida

This morning, drive to Chichén Itzá for a tour of the impressive Mayan ruins, dominated by the remarkable El Castillo pyramid and featuring a fascinating ball court. After lunch in a local restaurant (not included) continue your journey to the colonial city of Mérida and your overnight hotel. You will have the opportunity to enjoy an optional evening of folk music and dance.

Overnight: *Intercontinental Presidente Mérida*

Day 2: Mérida – Campeche

Today after a brief tour of Mérida, follow the 'Puuc Route', comprising the ruins of Sayil, Labná, Kabah and Uxmal, where you will enjoy guided tours. The tour then continues to Campeche, Mexico's only walled city, where you will be taken to your hotel. (B)

Overnight: *Hotel del Mar*

Day 3: Campeche – Chicanná

After a short morning tour of Campeche you will drive south and see the ruins of the 'Chen Route', including Xpujil and Calakmul, the largest of the Mayan cities. Continue on to Chicanná, in the heart of the Calakmul Ecological Reserve for an overnight stay. (B)

Overnight: *Eco Village Chicanná*

Day 4: Chicanná – Bacalar

During a morning tour to the ruins of Chicanná, discover carvings of mythological beasts and the home of the rulers of Becán. Becán shows evidence of one of the earliest defence systems in Mesoamerica and a selection of towers, temples and shrines. In the afternoon, transfer to your hotel on the shores of the beautiful freshwater Bacalar lagoon. (B)

Overnight: *Rancho Encantado*

Day 5: Bacalar – Caribbean Coast

After a morning exploring the 18th century Spanish fort or



strolling along the shores of the lagoon, you will travel to Tulum for a guided tour of the Maya-Toltec ruins, which are perched on cliffs overlooking the turquoise Caribbean waters. After the tour, continue to Cancún airport or to a beach resort for a relaxing break (accommodation not included, see below for hotels). (B)

Prices Include

- Accommodation as shown, including daily breakfast
- All transfers & sightseeing on private basis
- Services of an English speaking guide whilst touring

Tour Prices

Prices per person, in £'s from	Essential Yucatan	
	Deluxe	
	Twin	Single
01Jan09-30Nov09	795	955
01Dec09-31Mar10	849	1025

Tour operates with a minimum of two passengers



Ambiance Villas & Club, Cancún 3★

Located right on Bahía Mujeres, one of Cancún's best beaches, the Ambiance Villas are a short walk away from the shops and restaurants of Cancún, whilst also being in a good location to explore the Mayan archaeological sites of the Yucatán Peninsula. The hotel has an intimate feel and its low-rise whitewashed buildings are set in lush gardens. Enjoy fine food and ocean views from the main restaurant's terrace, or pick up a snack from the beach bar. The hotel also has a large swimming pool overlooking the Caribbean and is surrounded by lush tropical gardens.

Facilities 2 restaurants • bar • internet access • large outdoor pool • laundry

Rooms 130 rooms, studios & suites • cable TV • air-con • balcony/terrace • shower only

Prices per person per night, including breakfast, in £'s from					
Standard	Twin	Single	12Apr09-10Jul09	Twin	Single
01Jan09-02Jan09	65	130	11Jul09-14Aug09	34	68
03Jan09-06Feb09	38	76	15Aug09-21Dec09	36	72
07Feb09-03Apr09	42	84	22Dec09-31Dec09	29	58
04Apr09-11Apr09	65	130			

Prices on request 22-31Dec09.



Las Palapas, Playa del Carmen 4★

Set right on the stunning white-sand beach at Playa del Carmen, 50km from Cancún and surrounded by lush tropical gardens, the thatched bungalows of Las Palapas offer peace and tranquillity. The wellness centre provides a range of treatments, and there is a watersports club catering for the more active guest. Enjoy traditional Mexican and International specialities in the Acuario restaurant to the accompaniment of live music and mariachi bands.

Facilities 2 restaurants • bar • beach bar • café • internet access • reading room • gym • free-form outdoor pool • watersports • health club • gift shop • laundry

Rooms 75 rooms • fan or air-con (on request) • balcony/terrace • shower only

Prices per person per night, including breakfast, in £'s from					
Standard	Twin	Single	01Jul09-20Aug09	Twin	Single
01Jan09-28Feb09	69	117	21Aug09-30Sep09	61	101
01Mar09-30Apr09	66	112	01Oct09-31Oct09	48	80
01May09-31May09	54	89	01Nov09-31Dec09	54	89
01Jun09-30Jun09	48	80		70	120

Supplement of £5 per room per night applies 05-12Apr09.



Dreams Tulum Resort & Spa 5★

A luxurious all-inclusive resort near Tulum, 130km from Cancún, Dreams is surrounded by tropical forest and the finest white sand. Designed in tasteful colonial style, the hotel offers spacious accommodation, excellent service facilities, and a fantastic spa which specialises in traditional Mayan treatments. The restaurants cater to all tastes, as do the hotel's various bars.

Facilities 7 restaurants • 6 bars • fitness centre • 2 pools • spa • boutique • kids' pool • kids' club

Rooms 458 rooms & suites • mini-bar • cable TV • internet access • CD/DVD player • air-con • tea & coffee • 24hr room service

Offers 10% discount 01Nov-20Dec08 - book by 31Oct08 • 10% discount 08Mar-30Apr09 - book by 31Jan09 • 10% discount 01May-31Oct09 - book by 30Apr09 • 10% discount 30Aug-31Oct09 - book by 31Jul09 • 10% discount 01Nov-19Dec09 - book by 31Oct09

Prices per person per night, all inclusive, in £'s from					
Deluxe Grdn View	Twin	Single	12Oct09-19Dec09	Twin	Single
01Jan09-18Apr09	95	139	20Dec09-03Jan10	70	114
19Apr09-30Apr09	69	113	04Jan10-31Mar10	101	145
01May09-29Aug09	74	118			
30Aug09-11Oct09	64	107			

Min 7nt stay & supp of £35 per person per night applies during Christmas & New Years, please call for details.