

FREE DESTINATION GUIDE

CANCUN

Mexico



Turquoise water, Mayan ruins, and cenotes, the full Riviera in one guide.

SAFETY: US State Dept: Level 2 (Quintana Roo)

Travelling with ActorTonyB & Nala The Shih Tzu

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Top Sights

- **Hotel Zone Beaches.** Playa Delfines is the public star: big sand, strong color, and the famous Cancun sign for photos.
- **Isla Mujeres.** A 20 minute ferry to golf carts, Playa Norte's calm water, and grilled fish on the sand.
- **Chichen Itza.** The great Mayan city. Arrive at the 8 am opening, hire a guide at the gate, swim in a cenote after.
- **Tulum Ruins.** A walled Mayan port on a cliff above the sea; go early, then beach club the afternoon away.
- **Cenotes.** Gran Cenote and Dos Ojos near Tulum: clear, cool sinkhole swims that feel unreal.
- **Cozumel.** Ferry from Playa del Carmen for reef snorkeling and a laid back island town.
- **Xcaret Park.** Underground rivers, wildlife, and a big night show on Mexico's history; a full easy day.
- **Playa del Carmen.** Fifth Avenue dining and nightlife, 45 minutes south; a good base for ruins and cenotes.

Local Tips

- Use prebooked airport transfers or official taxis and agree the fare before you ride; ride apps are limited at the airport.
- Carry small pesos for tips and small purchases; dollars work in the Hotel Zone but pesos stretch further.
- Book Chichen Itza and cenote tours for weekday mornings to dodge the biggest crowds and the midday heat.
- Use reef safe sunscreen near reefs and cenotes; several parks require it and check bags.
- ADO first class buses link Cancun, Playa, Tulum, and the airport cheaply and comfortably.
- Hurricane season runs June to November; flexible bookings and travel insurance earn their keep then.
- Beat the airport gauntlet: the walk from customs to the exit at Cancun airport is lined with timeshare desks styled to look like official information or transport points. Real officials never stop you there. Say no gracias and keep walking to the official exit and your ride.
- Book your ride before you land: prebook your airport transfer, save the confirmation and meeting point as screenshots, and you will walk past the curbside price games entirely.

Customs & Etiquette

Do

- Greet with buenos dias and a smile; a little Spanish goes a long way in Mexico.
- Tip 10 to 15 percent in restaurants and a few dollars a day for housekeeping.
- Bargain warmly in markets; it is expected there, just keep it friendly.
- Try the local food beyond the resort: cochinita pibil and sopa de lima are Yucatan classics.

Please Don't

- Do not drink tap water; hotels provide bottled or purified water for brushing too.
- Do not photograph locals, especially Mayan families, without asking first.
- Do not buy tours from random beach sellers; book through your hotel or a known operator.
- Do not swim under red flags; currents on the Hotel Zone's east side are strong.

Things to Know Before You Go

Currency. Mexican peso (MXN). US dollars are widely accepted in the Hotel Zone, usually at a soft exchange rate; pesos win elsewhere.

Language. Spanish. English is common in resorts, tours, and the Hotel Zone; basic Spanish helps everywhere else.

Best time to visit. December to April: dry, sunny, and warm. May to June is hot with better prices before storm season peaks.

Getting around. Hotel Zone buses (R1 and R2) run every few minutes for about a dollar. ADO buses and prebooked transfers handle day trips.

Five phrases that open doors

Hola	Hello
Gracias	Thank you
Por favor	Please
Cuanto cuesta?	How much does it cost?
Donde esta la playa?	Where is the beach?

What to Bring

- Reef safe sunscreen; regular sunscreen is restricted in cenotes and eco parks.
- A dry bag or waterproof phone pouch for boats, cenotes, and beach days.
- Light, breathable clothing plus a layer for over air conditioned buses and restaurants.
- Small peso bills for tips, buses, and beach vendors.
- Insect repellent for ruins and cenotes, especially at dawn and dusk.
- A copy of your passport on your phone; leave the original in the hotel safe.

What to Expect

Weather: warm year round, 80s F. December to April is dry; summer is hot and humid with afternoon showers, and hurricane season runs June to November.

Pace: beach time rules. Tours start early to beat the heat, afternoons slow down, and nightlife starts late.

Costs in practice: the Hotel Zone runs on resort prices while downtown Cancun (El Centro) eats and shops at local prices, often half as much.

How tourists are received: tourism is the region's lifeblood and visitors are welcomed warmly, especially with a few Spanish phrases and fair tipping.

What NOT to Bring

- Vapes and e-cigarettes: Mexico bans their import and sale, and travelers have had them confiscated at customs. Leave them home.
- Drones without a permit; recreational drone use requires Mexican registration and permits, and foreigners face strict limits. Most visitors should leave the drone home.
- Large amounts of cash or flashy jewelry for excursions; the hotel safe exists for a reason.
- Your US driver's sense of the roads: do not rent a car for night driving outside the main corridors.

Safety Rating

US State Dept advisory level: Level 2: Exercise Increased Caution (Quintana Roo state)

Mexico's advisories are set state by state. Quintana Roo, home to Cancun, Tulum, and Playa del Carmen, is Level 2 on the US State Department scale, citing crime. Millions visit safely each year; incidents are rarely aimed at resort areas, and normal big trip awareness covers most of the risk.

Three practical safety moves

- Stick to well traveled areas at night and use hotel arranged or prebooked transport after dark.
- Keep valuables in the hotel safe and take only what you need to the beach.
- Enroll in the free STEP program at step.state.gov and check the state level for any side trips.

Advisory levels change. Check the current rating for your destination at travel.state.gov before you book and again before you fly. Summary reflects the advisory in effect in October 2026.

Budget Snapshot

Rough per person daily ranges in US dollars, including lodging, food, local transport, and activities. Airfare not included. Treat these as planning estimates, not quotes.

Tier	Per day (USD)	What it looks like
Budget traveler	\$70 to \$110 per day	Downtown hotel or hostel, local buses, beach days, one ruins trip by ADO bus.
Mid range	\$150 to \$230 per day	Beachfront hotel, a catamaran day, Chichen Itza tour, dinners on Fifth Avenue.
Comfort	\$300 plus per day	All inclusive resort, private cenote tour, spa days, and premium dining.

Ready to Go?

You have the sights, the tips, the customs, and the budget. Now put dates on it. Compare flights, stays, cars, and activities for Cancun in one place, with live prices and traveler reviews.

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