

## Cozumel, Mexico



Located just off the coast of Playa del Carmen on the Riviera Maya, Cozumel is known for its fantastic water sports and a laid-back lifestyle that makes for an ideal island getaway.

During Mayan times, Cozumel was a sacred island covered with temples and shrines to the goddess Ixchel. Today it's renowned as an underwater paradise. Even Jacques Cousteau raved about the spectacular coral reefs that ring the island, including Palancar Reef, a mountainous underwater formation 6 miles long and 300 feet high that attracts scuba divers and snorkelers from around the world.

Fishing trips can be chartered for anglers who want to try their hand at catching sailfish, swordfish, and marlin. In addition, the town of San Miguel offers excellent shopping and waterfront cafes, and there are several Mayan ruins close by to explore.

### Package Includes:

- Choice of accommodations
- Hotel taxes and maid and bellman gratuities
- Assistance of a local destination representative

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### Who should go?

#### Snorkelers and Divers

Cozumel is one of the top 3 dive destinations in the world, with the second largest barrier reef.

#### Golfers

Enjoy the 18-hole Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course.

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### What's the climate like?

	Winter	Spring	Summer	Autumn
<b>Average High</b>	81° F	84° F	89° F	87° F
<b>Average Low</b>	67° F	71° F	78° F	74° F
<b>Average Rainfall</b>	3.5"	1.5"	7.0"	8.5"

Cozumel's year-round average temperature is 80°.

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### How do I get around town?

#### Transfers

Transfers between the airport and hotels are included with your air and hotel vacation package. The airport is located 5 miles from San Miguel.

### **Taxi**

A taxi is the best way to get around Cozumel, when walking won't get you to where you need to go. The driver's union has set fares, so there is no need to bargain. Taxis are numerous around town and the hotels.

### **Car**

The island is rather small with few roads, so renting a car can be an easy way to explore at your own pace and get you to some of the more remote beaches.

### **Walking**

San Miguel is compact and is easily navigated on foot. The streets are lined with shops and small restaurants and the main square is the center of activity.

### **Ferry**

Passenger ferries run between Cozumel and the pier at Playa del Carmen on the mainland just about every hour, all day long. In Playa del Carmen, the ferry docks are just over a block from the main square. Make sure to check the departure times, especially the time of the last departure returning to Cozumel.

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## **What kinds of dining and nightlife are available?**

Seafood is the highlight of the dining experience on Cozumel. From lobster to the fresh catch of the day, you'll never go wrong. Traditional favorites can be found, too. Here are a few options:

- **Coco's Cozumel**  
Serving the largest breakfast menu on the island, including all your Mexican and traditional American favorites.
- **Del Museo**  
A delightful café set atop the museum's roof. Feast on dramatic views of the water as you dine on traditional Mexican or American cuisine for breakfast or lunch.
- **Ernestos's Fajitas**  
Their specialty is what its name implies. Come for the amazing fajitas and stay for the excellent chips, guacamole, and margaritas.
- **La Choza**  
Excellent mesquite chicken and perfectly prepared fish dishes form a good base for the large, low-priced drinks.

Nightlife is rather subdued around Cozumel, as divers and other active vacationers tend to dine early and go to bed early. Most of anything happening will be at your hotel or downtown San Miguel at Señor Frogs and Carlos 'n Charlies.

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## **Where should I go shopping?**

Cozumel is a big stop for cruise ships and therefore the waterfront area of downtown is lined with jewelry stores and souvenir shops. Sterling silver is especially predominant, but make sure its stamped "925" to ensure you're getting the real deal. A number of stores also offer Mexican folk art. The main shopping area is along Avenida Rafael Melgar and on the side streets around the plaza. Around Avenida 5a is a good place to look for nicer craft stores. Forum Shops offers a new experience known as the Caribbean Shopping Style, where the customer will be able to save 50% from what is customary in the United States and Canada for exclusive items, such as those found in the fine jewelry shops. For a good one-stop shopping experience, head to Los Cinco Soles. Stretching almost a full block, the store has fairly priced glassware, brass, tablecloths and place mats, embroidered clothing, beads, and other souvenirs. Another good place to look for a great assortment of handicrafts is the Mercado de Artesanías (Handicrafts Market), located a few blocks from the main square. There are 4 department stores in Cozumel — Fama, Pama, Prococo, and Viva Mexico.

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## **When are the local events?**

### **Carnaval**

Late February/Early March. An annual event that includes a week full of colorful dance competitions, parades, beautiful costumes, music, floats, local food, and much more.

### **Cedral Fair**

May. The anniversary of the first Catholic mass in Mexico and honoring the safe passage of the 11 founding families who escaped the mainland in 1848. Celebrate at a fair with with dances, games, and food stands.

### **Mexican Boat Rodeo**

May. Annual sport fishing tournament fishing for marlin, wahoo, dorado, tuna, barracuda, and other game fish.

### **The Fiesta of San Pablo**

June 29. San Pablo is the patron saint of San Miguel and a celebration, including dances and a fair, takes place every year.

### **Independence Day**

September 15-16. On September 15, residents and visitors gather around City Hall to participate in the traditional "grito," or cry for independence, followed by fireworks. September 16 is marked with a parade, games, and dancing.

### **Fiestas de San Miguel Arcangel**

September. Religious festival honoring Saint Michael, patron saint of Cozumel. Celebrated with a parade and lively food and craft fairs.

### **Day of the Dead**

November. A festive celebration honoring deceased relatives and friends.

### **Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe**

December. The most important holiday in Mexico, in which pilgrims converge at the city's churches.

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## **What are my golf and recreation options?**

### **Golf**

Customize your vacation with discounted greens fees and gain access to hotel-affiliated golf courses with a stay at select hotels.

#### *Hotel-Affiliated Courses*

- **Cozumel Country Club**  
This forgiving course is carefully sculpted from the Mayan jungle. Designed by Jack Nicklaus.
  - Unlimited golf is included at this course when staying at the Meliá Cozumel Resort (when purchasing the Golf Option) or the Playa Azul Golf & Beach Resort.

### **Sportfishing**

Fishing is a popular sport in Cozumel due to the many types of fish found here. The best months for successful fishing trips are April - September when blue and white marlin, sailfish, tarpon, swordfish, dorado, wahoo, tuna, and red snapper are often caught. Note that it is against the law to kill certain fish, including billfish, so you are required to catch and release.

### **Scuba Diving**

Cozumel is an outstanding destination for snorkelers and scuba divers, being ranked among the top 5 dive destinations in the world and the number 1 dive destination in the Western Hemisphere. Divers will find a unique ecosystem to explore, with tall reefs and clear waters, as well as many different diving experiences: deep dives, drift diving, short dives, wall dives, and night dives, as well as dives to sunken ships. Make sure to bring proof of your dive certification. The island has 4 decompression chambers, if needed. Here are some of the more popular dive sites:

- **Palancar Reef** — The most famous of all the reefs in Cozumel, with caves, canyons, and tons of fish. A favorite spot is the Horseshoe, at the edge of a drop-off. The reef actually offers 40 different dive spots. Visibility ranges from 150 to 250 feet. One mile offshore.
- **Chankanaab Reef** — A great place for beginners and only 350 yards off shore, just south of Chankanaab Park. Lots of fish and at 55 feet there are often crab, lobster, and angelfish in the coral.
- **Columbia Reef** — For experienced divers who want some deep dives. In the underwater canyons and ravines and near the ledges, divers can spot large grouper, eagle rays, and maybe even a couple of sea turtles.
- **Maracaibo Reef** — One of the most difficult dives, with a ledge at 121 feet down and strong currents. Located south of the island and not on regular dive trips.
- **Paraíso Reef** — A great beginner and night dive spot, being only 330 feet from shore with the reef at 30 - 50 feet. A good amount of star and brain coral, sea fans, sponges, and other marine life.
- **Paseo El Cedral** — Just northeast of Palancar Reef, this flat reef is at a depth of 35 - 55 feet and features a variety of fish, moray eels, eagle rays, and sea turtles.
- **Plane Wreck** — Sunk in 1997, just 300 feet from La Ceiba pier and in only 9 - 30 feet of water, this airplane is now a favorite training site for beginning divers. Lots of coral and sponges.
- **San Francisco Reef** — Cozumel's shallowest wall dive at only 35 - 50 feet, this half-mile reef has numerous types of reef fish.
- **Santa Rosa Wall** — Just north of Palancar, this site is for experienced divers only and is renowned for its sensational drop-off and coral overhangs. There are huge sponges, angelfish, groupers, rays, and possibly sharks.
- **Tormentos Reef** — A reef with a maximum depth of 70 feet, plus an abundance of marine life against a backdrop of beautiful colors, makes this a favorite for underwater photographers.

- **Yucab Reef** — Close to shore and 55 feet deep, this 400-foot-long reef is a great spot for beginners. The current is strong, however, so it's only for strong swimmers. Masses of angelfish make it rewarding.

### Snorkeling

Snorkelers can probably just go off from their hotel and catch sight of some beautiful fish and marine life. Another great place for a day of snorkeling and lounging around is Chankanaab National Park. There is a natural aquarium to look at and a palapa for renting snorkeling gear. There is also a restaurant, snack bar, bathrooms, lockers, and a beautiful beach for sunbathing. Punta Sur Ecological Reserve has some interesting snorkeling as well as a beautiful natural beach, but you'll have to bring your own equipment and rent a car or moped to get there.

### Water Activities

For non-divers, the island has something for everyone (in fact, only 30% of visitors to Cozumel are divers). Check out the wonders of the deep without getting your hair wet on an Atlantis Submarine. Dive in safety and comfort to depths of 150 feet! Other pursuits can be found on an exciting waverunner ride or high above the waves on an exhilarating parasailing adventure.

## Travel tidbits

### Diving

If planning on diving, don't forget to bring proof of your diver's certification. As many of the dives are for more advanced divers because of strong currents and steep reef drops, local dive companies won't take you out unless you can verify that you are experienced. Most of Cozumel's diving sites are located within the Cozumel Reefs National Marine Park, a protected underwater environment, whose authority has implemented a conservation program funded by \$2 fee donations by divers.

### Non-Divers

Although Cozumel is known for great diving, in actuality, 70% of visitors to Cozumel are non-divers. If you want to see the underwater sights but don't want to get wet, hop on board the Atlantis Submarine and dive in safety and comfort to depths of up to 100 feet, or stay above the water line and peer into the depths on a glass-bottom boat tour.

### Bring the Family

Cozumel is great for those seeking a fun-filled family getaway. Kids will love playing in the ocean or building sandcastles on the beach. Cozumel also features Discover Mexico, a cultural theme park about Mexico where the entire family can truly experience the rich culture and history of Mexico through pre-Hispanic, Colonial, and modern times.

### Take the Ferry

At various times of year, air service to Cozumel is limited; however, flights are always heading in and out of Cancún. Travelers who want to visit Cozumel in those off times can still reach the island by hopping on the ferry from Playa del Carmen. The ferry is also convenient for day trips to Chichén-Itzá or Xel-ha.

### Good to Know:

Airport Name:	Cozumel International Airport
3-letter Code:	CZM
Best Weather:	November – April
Best Values:	May – September
Currency:	Mexican Peso, but the U.S. dollar is often accepted
Language:	Spanish, but at the hotels and in San Miguel, most people speak some English
Time Zone:	Cozumel is in the same time zone as the United State's Central Time Zone. Daylight Saving Time is observed in Cozumel, just as in the United States.
Proof of Citizenship:	Government legislation requires all people traveling via air to and from the United States and Canada to have a valid passport. For details on passports, visas, and health requirements, see <a href="#">Entry Requirements</a> .
Tipping:	Some restaurants, especially in the resort areas, will add a 10-15% service charge to your check. If in doubt if it has been added, be sure to ask. It isn't necessary to tip taxi drivers unless they have helped you with your bags.
Dress:	Very casual. A true beach resort.