

Riviera Maya, Mexico



The Riviera Maya, south of Cancun, has white sandy beaches, coral reefs, Mayan ruins, and lush tropical foliage set against the brilliant blue-green Caribbean. The area offers swimming, snorkeling, and diving. If you prefer dry land, the platforms above the shore of Xel-Ha (Shell-ha) provide an excellent view of the sealife. Playa del Carmen has restaurants and open-air shops along the waterfront. Xcaret (Sh-kar-et) combines interesting ruins with beautiful coves, inlets, and an underground river. The Riviera Maya is an ideal destination for vacationers who love the outdoors, tranquility, and a quiet vacation alternative to faster-paced Cancun.

Package includes:

- Choice of accommodations
- Hotel taxes and maid gratuities
- Roundtrip transfers between Cancun airport and hotel
- Luggage handling
- Assistance of a local destination representative (Located in Cancun)

Frequently Asked Questions

Who should go?

Honeymooners

Many resorts offer private settings and wedding/honeymoon packages.

Golfers

Play a round at the Playacar Spa and Golf Club or Moon Spa and Golf Club.

Beach Lovers

Find endless stretches of white-sand beach, gentle surf, and coral reefs.

What's the climate like?

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

Riviera Maya's year-round average temperature is 80°F.

How do I get around town?

Transfers

Roundtrip transfers between the Cancún International Airport and hotels are included with your air and hotel or land-only vacation package. Cancún International Airport is located 9 miles southwest of Cancún and approximately 40 miles from the Riviera Maya.

Car

Alamo car rentals are available as an optional add-on with your vacation package.

Taxi

Taxis are available from the Cancún International Airport to the Riviera Maya for a fee, and are available from the lobby of any hotel. To avoid misunderstandings, passengers should settle on a price with the driver before departing.

Bus

Public buses run between the Riviera Maya and Cancún from 6am to 12am daily and are very affordable.

What kinds of dining and nightlife are available?

All-inclusive resorts offer several dining options and many offer on-site discos as well. Playa del Carmen offers numerous restaurants and nearly every restaurant is located directly on 5th Avenue or 1-2 blocks away. Choose from Italian, French, Thai, Mediterranean, Chinese, Japanese, American, and Mexican. Many restaurants seamlessly transform into nightclubs in the evening after the dinner hour has passed.

- **Babe's Noodles and Bar**
Great Thai food, including spring rolls with veggies and peanut sauce, and sesame noodles, made with chicken or pork, veggies, lime, green curry, and ginger. The mojitos are great, too. Playa del Carmen.
- **La Cueva del Chango**
A lovely little spot to have breakfast, just off the main thoroughfare in Playa del Carmen.
- **The Glass Bar**
Located on the corner of 5th Avenue and 12th Street and serving up outstanding Italian cuisine and superb people watching. One of the top restaurants in town. Playa del Carmen.
- **Palapa Hemingway**
Delicious grilled shrimp, fish, and steaks, as well as fresh salads, pastas, and chicken dishes. Located at the quiet north end of 5th Avenue and a great place to sit, enjoy a cocktail, and people watch. Playa del Carmen.
- **Turtle Bay Café & Bakery**
Inexpensive and delicious. Enjoy smoothies and baked goods as you sit in a beautiful garden. Akumal.
- **Yaxche**
One of Playa del Carmen's best restaurants serving authentic Mayan food. Try the superb halach winic, chicken in a spicy 4-pepper sauce. Playa del Carmen.
- **Zamas**
A festive, social place in a neat cove at Kilometer 5 where you can relax and enjoy delicious fresh seafood.

Where should I go shopping?

In the Riviera Maya, you will find a variety of shopping options. Browse the outdoor markets packed with traditional Mexican crafts and shop the interesting boutiques along the main avenues. Expect to bargain at the markets; stores, however, usually have fixed prices. Shopping hours are generally weekdays 10am - 2pm and 4pm - 7pm, but many stores choose to stay open during the siesta hours from 2pm - 4pm. On Saturdays and Sundays, many shops are only open in the mornings. Good finds in the Riviera Maya include Mayan pottery reproductions, baskets, woven blankets, hammocks, and silver. When shopping for silver, check for the .925 stamp to ensure the product is indeed sterling silver.

- **Akumal**
Here you'll find small boutiques that offer attractive clothing for women and interesting shops featuring native Mexican crafts from around the country.
- **Colonial Shopping Town**
Approximately 5 stories high and filled with small boutiques, bars, and restaurants. Take an escalator to the top and then wind your way down past all the stores.
- **Puerto Aventura's Marina**
For very upscale shopping, visit Puerto Aventura's Marina where you will find several stylish boutiques and art shops.
- **Quinta Avenida (5th Avenue)**
One of the largest shopping areas in the Riviera Maya is on 5th Avenue in Playa del Carmen. This pedestrian street feels more like a boardwalk where you can find quaint shops, restaurants, and cafés.
- **Tulum**
At the entrance to the ruins, you will find a large market. However, better deals can be found in the town of Tulum along the main avenues.

When are the local events?

Carnaval

February/March. A week long celebration before Lent with outlandish parades, floats, dance contests, fireworks, and outdoor dances. Known for its flamboyant parades.

Cinco de Mayo

May. Celebrates the Mexican Army's victory over the French in 1862 with parades, fireworks, and more.

Independence Day

September. The year's biggest celebration. Two days of festivities include fireworks, traditional food, a parade, and more. Every village and city throughout Mexico re-enacts the famous historic speech, known as the grito. At 12am people gather to ring the bell of freedom and shout "Viva Mexico" over and over.

Day of the Dead

November. A festive celebration honoring deceased relatives and friends.

International Caribbean Cultural Festival

November. The state of Quintana Roo hosts this cultural festival when the Riviera Maya and other regional cities sponsor a series of events. Performers come from all over the Caribbean to participate in this annual event of poetry, dance, and song. The main attraction is the variety of salsa music from all major salsa groups.

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

- **The Moon Palace Spa and Golf Club**
This course takes you through native Mayan vegetation, as well as numerous wetlands and strategically placed bunkers. Designed by Jack Nicklaus — Signature Design.
- **The Playacar Spa and Golf Club**
Carved through dense Mayan jungles. Requires an accurate tee shot to reach the greens in regulation. Designed by Robert von Hagge.

One round of daily golf is included at these courses when the Golf Option is purchased at the following hotels:

- Aventura Spa Palace
- Beach Palace
- Le Blanc Spa Resort
- Cancún Palace
- Moon Palace Golf & Spa Resort
- Sun Palace
- Xpu-Há Palace
- Playacar Palace

Sport fishing

Sport fishing is one of the biggest attractions in the area and the waters off the coast of the Riviera Maya are famous worldwide as one of the best hotspots for sailfish and marlin. Peak fishing season runs from early March through early July when sailfish and marlin are migrating through the deep-water channel between the Yucatan Coast and the island of Cozumel. Mackerel and amberjacks can be found during the beginning months of the year; dolphin, wahoo, and bonito are generally found from February to September; and blue and white marlin are abundant from May to September. Year-round fishing includes barracuda, snapper, grouper, and even shark.

Snorkeling + Scuba Diving

Bordered by the second largest reef in the world, and home to more than 500 species of fish and many turtles, the Riviera Maya's Great Maya Reef offers some of the most spectacular reef diving in the Western Hemisphere. Its 13 marked dive sites beckon novice and experienced divers alike. The Riviera Maya's underground rivers are accessed by cenotes and span more than 250 miles, showcasing impressive rock formations and plant and fish life. Cenotes are unique to the Riviera Maya; 52 of more than 100 have been identified as good for diving and snorkeling, including Gran Cenote, Taj Mahal, Choc Mool, and Dos Ojos. Other popular snorkeling spots include the small bay and beach of Paamul, with its easy access to the reef; Xpu-há, a large beautiful bay and beach with calm waters and spectacular underwater visibility; and Kantenah, a secluded palm-fringed beach. Akumal, known as 'the place of turtles,' is also a favored site, as is the soft, white-sand beach of Soliman Bay. More remote locations include Tulum and Punta Allen, located on a small peninsula within the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve.

Travel tidbits

Money-Saving Golf

Golf balls can be expensive in Mexico, so pack some of your own, since they are typically less expensive in the U.S.A. and pack easily. You may also want to plan on playing in the afternoon and taking advantage of discounted twilight rates.

Golf Clubs

Be sure to verify with your air carrier as to their policy regarding checking golf clubs (e.g. insurance, weight, number of bags allowed, etc.).

Taxis

There are 2 rates with taxis — the more expensive one is for taxis hired at the door of your hotel and the less expensive rate is for taxis flagged down along the street.

Limes

Not only does lime juice taste great on chicken, in salsa, and with other Mexican food, it also helps keep any bacteria in balance. So, when a lime is served with your food, squeeze it on.

Driving

While you don't necessarily need a car while staying at an all-inclusive resort in the Riviera Maya, the main road south of the airport is a modern, 4-lane highway that is easily driven. However, watch for vehicles passing on your left and move over for them, onto the shoulder if necessary. Also, be aware that most turning lanes are on the right-hand side of the road, not the left.

Authentic Mexican Food

In Playa del Carmen, on 30th Avenue between 2nd Street and 14th Street, you'll find many casual eateries with inexpensive tacos, seafood, and more.

Use Your American Currency

Typically, Mexicans love the U.S. dollar. Before leaving on your vacation, stock up on plenty of \$1 and \$5 bills. Spread them out into different pockets and use this as a bartering tool at the markets. If the vendor is asking 100 pesos (about \$10 USD) for something, pull your cash from the pocket that only has \$6 USD in it then promptly say, "this is all I have." You will be amazed how low a vendor will go to make the sale. When using American currency, always be aware of the exchange rate and by using small U.S. dollars, you can keep from getting pesos in return.

Good to Know:

Airport Name: 3-letter Code:	Cancún International Airport (approximately 40 miles from the Riviera Maya) CUN
Best Weather:	December – April
Best Values:	April – December
Currency:	Mexican Peso
Language:	Spanish; English is understood and spoken by most employees in the tourism industry.
Time Zone:	The Riviera Maya is in the Central Standard Time Zone and adjusts for Daylight Saving Time.
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 Entry Requirements .
Tipping:	Leave 10% - 15%, but make sure the tip hasn't already been added to the bill.
Dress:	Riviera Maya is very casual. Shorts are allowed at most restaurants, except fine dining establishments. Bring a sweater, as some of the air-conditioned places can be quite cool. Some of the all-inclusive resorts have dress codes for men at the fine dining restaurants. Typically, long pants and closed-toe shoes for men.