



PROJECT DOSSIER AND PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

RUTA DE MAYA

CANCUN to CANCUN
16 days
2,900 kms

Mexico, Belize, Guatemala

Itinerary Guideline

Note: This project may operate in either direction.

Day 1: Depart Cancun to Mayan ruins at Chichen Itza. Overnight Merida.

Day 2: Ruins of Uxmal.

Day 3: Quintana Roo

Day 4: Into Belize and boat to Caye Caulker.

Days 5 & 6: Caye Caulker, swimming, snorkeling or scuba diving..

Days 7 to 8: Fly to Guatemala and visit ruins of Tikal.

Days 9 & 10: Return to Belize and camp at San Ignacio, canoeing down the Macal River and exploring the jungle.

Day 11: Wildlife Sanctuary.

Day 12: Swimming at Cenote Azul.

Day 13: Beach and ruins at Tulum.

Day 14 to 16: Camping on the Caribbean coast. Trip ends in Cancun

N.B. This project operates in association with **Trek America of the USA.**



PLEASE NOTE

The above is intended as a guide only and to indicate a typical itinerary and its highlights. While our intention is to adhere to this, it should be understood that group interests and wishes together with the constraints of weather, road & river conditions and local restrictions can alter our exact route, its activities and timings.

Highlights & Route

From the islands, clear waters & lagoons of Cancun, we travel to the major centres of ancient Mayan culture, the fabled jungle ruins of 6th century Chichen Itza, an unsettling city & temple complex etched in the symbols of the plumed & open mouthed serpent. The high priest's throne is a red painted jaguar with eyes of jade & fangs of flint and there are numerous sacrificial altars &

wells. Climb El Castillo pyramid and gaze beyond the largest ball court in Meso-America for a fantastic glimpse into the Mayan past. The city was suddenly abandoned in the 10th century and lay empty for a hundred years, until the arrival of descendants from the great Toltec tribes. To the northern Yucatan & Merida's fabulous palaces, cathedrals & plazas of the 16th century Conquistadors. The city is built on the site of the Mayan city of Tihoo; Indian markets sell arrays of hammocks & sandals, beautiful Mayan blouses, Panama hats & shady sombreros. From here we travel south to another important centre of Mayan culture, Uxmal. Here you can survey the views from the top of a 30 metre high pyramid, topped with two temples. Intricately carved temple facades pay homage to Chac, the Mayan rain god. Then south via Quintana Roo, through Creole villages & sugar plantations to Belize City, a low rise city of wooden buildings, stilt houses & lateen sailed sand-lighters plying the river mouth & foreshore. We motor out to the Cayes & magnificent Barrier Reef, the longest in the western hemisphere and sea home to shipwrecks, underwater treasures & brilliant coral formations where there is the opportunity to dive or snorkel. Next we fly into Guatemala where the ancient metropolis of Tikal, greatest of all the Mayan sites, sits deep in the Peten jungles, a tropical paradise of giant tubroos trees & orchids. Steep sided pyramids, palaces, temples, squares & hundreds of smaller buildings have stood alone in the dense jungles for 2,300 years. Their deserted impact is staggering, the highest achievements of civil engineering executed before most of the world had discovered the written word. Many place Tikal along with the masterworks of ancient Egypt, Greece & Rome. Returning to Belize we camp at San Ignacio and canoe down the Macal River through spectacular jungle scenery. Here you may see iguanas in the trees and bats asleep on the rock walls, howler monkeys & the flash of brilliant birds. Then back into Mexico, pausing for a swim at the 70 metres deep Cenote Azul, before travelling up the Caribbean coast to Tulum. Here on the white cliff top is the Maya-Toltec Temple of Frescoes dedicated to the Falling God - the setting tropical sun. Our last three days are spent relaxing under this tropical sun in our camp on the coast. We swim, snorkel and scuba dive the turquoise waters and coral reefs of this tropical paradise, or simply

watch the world go by from a hammock under palm trees at the edge of a white sandy beach. Our Mayan adventure then ends where it started, in Cancun.

GROUP SIZE

10 - 14 including staff.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

An easier project with no significant physical demands other than full days and the camping lifestyle. The tropical heat & humidity of the jungles can also be difficult at times.

THE LOCAL PAYMENT

This is the payment made to the Project Leader at the point of departure. This payment must be made paid in US\$ dollars in cash notes. This payment completes the total inclusive price of the project. This amount will be utilised by the Project Leader to cover the cost of all camp meals.

INCLUDED IN PROJECT COST

All transport including flight to Tikal, food (except as noted under Meals, Cooking & Food below), camping equipment & supplies, camping fees, entrance fees, as detailed from Day 1 until arrival back in Cancun on day 16. There are no kitties or similar en route payment funds.

PROJECT COST DOES NOT COVER

Flights from/to home & Cancun, transfers to/from airports & airport taxes, accommodation in Cancun before Day 1 and on Day 16. Hotel stop and meals in Merida, 1 night – allow approx. US\$20. Vaccinations, visas, occasional meals out at your own choice (minimal cost), personal insurance, laundry, snacks, drinks, personal clothing/equipment & items of a personal nature. Some individual entry fees to museums/sights etc. Optional activities including scuba diving and horse riding. Allow minimum US\$100.

EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED

2 person tents camp-mattresses, cooking/domestic equipment, first aid kit.

TRANSPORT

Specialized, expedition minibus, Boats where stated.

ACCOMMODATION

Hotels for 3 nights, 2 in Tikal included in the price, allow US\$20 for 1 night in Merida, otherwise camping throughout.

MEALS, COOKING & FOOD

Camp cooked breakfasts & evening meals, picnic style lunches. Project members are involved in daily fresh food shopping & meal preparation. (Fresh fruit & vegetables, meat, eggs, bread, cereals, cheese, preserves etc.). In centres where there are hotel stops meals are not included. The cost of these is minimal. Vegetarians usually have no difficulty maintaining an adequate diet in Central America, but please inform Encounter in advance.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

You will need a passport that is valid for not less than **6 months** after the end of the project, and which contains not less than **5 blank pages**. Visa requirements and costs vary according to your nationality, and even then are subject to change. At the moment most other nationalities do not require visas for brief visits in this region of Central America. Any visas you may require should be

obtained before your departure to Cancun/Guatemala City. Encounter or your agent can advise you of up to date visa requirements applicable to you, and their costs. We can also help you in obtaining them.

MEXICO: Mexican tourist cards are issued to all nationalities on entry. **South African** passport holders require a visa before entering Mexico. These take two days to issue and are valid for 6 months. They require one photograph, one form and a return or onwards air ticket.

BELIZE: Visas are required by **Swiss** passport holders. Visas are usually issued in 48 hours by any Belize Embassy or Consulate and are valid for entry into Belize for 30 days from the date of issue for a stay of up to 30 days. One passport sized photograph is required and the consular fee is approx. \$10 (equivalent). Please refer to your agent for further current details.

GUATEMALA: Visas are no longer required by most nationalities but visa requirements are constantly changing, so please contact your agent/Encounter before your departure to ensure that you do not require a visa.

INSURANCE

You must have personal Travel Insurance to cover Adventure Travel and it must cover all the aspects described on page 60 of the brochure. Please bring a copy of your policy with you to the pre-departure meeting. If your policy does not cover this minimum level then Encounter will not accept responsibility for the consequences.

MEDICAL & VACCINATIONS

REQUIRED: Yellow Fever (only if arriving from South America, Panama or Equatorial Africa, when you must also be in possession of an "International Certificate of Vaccination" as proof of having been vaccinated.

RECOMMENDED: **Tetanus**
 Typhoid
 Polio Booster
 Gamma Globulin or
 Havrix

If you are a frequent traveller we would recommend that you have the Havrix vaccination against Hepatitis. Two injections spaced 2-4 weeks apart give strong coverage for one year, and a further injection within that year gives you additional protection for up to ten years. The Havrix vaccination is available in the UK but not yet in some countries. If you do not, or cannot, get Havrix you should be vaccinated with Gamma Globulin against Hepatitis.

MALARIA

The Yucatan, Belize & Guatemala are areas of malarial risk. Tropical Disease authorities are currently advising that we use the following anti-malarial tablets:

NIVAQUIN (Chloroquin Sulphate, 200mg)
2 tablets weekly

A course of these tablets should be started 1 week before your arrival in Mexico and continued for 6 weeks after the conclusion of the project. You will therefore need to obtain a 9 week supply of tablets; more if your continuing travels are through malarial areas.

PERSONAL SPENDING MONEY

The Local Payment should be paid to your Project Leader preferably in good quality US\$ cash (in small denomination notes ie. 10's, 20's & 50's.) The US Dollar is virtually the only acceptable and convertible foreign currency in Central America. All other currencies, including Pounds, are difficult or even impossible to exchange outside the main centres.

If you are carrying US Dollars Cash please ensure that they have been issued since 1993 as some countries will not accept the older notes.

As a guideline we suggest that you take around US\$130-140 per week with you; more if you are an avid souvenir collector, less if you have quieter tastes. (This amount includes the cost of occasional lunches in the major centres). Interesting souvenirs and ethnic crafts can be tempting and their costs are usually very reasonable. (Good buys include: silver & jewellery, leather goods, ponchos, shawls & blankets, ceramic tiles & pottery, Mayan tunics, Belize wood carvings). Credit cards are accepted

There is also a good opportunity for diving/snorkelling etc in the Caribbean which will be US \$70.

Travellers cheques (in US Dollars) should be those of an international and well known organisation such as Thomas Cook or American Express. Cash dollars are sometimes more useful and easily negotiable than travellers cheques, but obviously much less safe. Take only as much cash as you, personally, feel safe carrying and have some of your cash and travellers cheques issued in small denominations. The currency of one country sometimes cannot be easily exchanged into the currency of the next and you could be left with a suddenly worthless collection of bank notes if you had recently changed a large denomination travellers cheque or note. Credit cards are not widely recognised outside the main centres.

Some form of secure money belt, sold by most camping supply shops, is strongly recommended for carrying your passport and money.

YOUR SUGGESTED CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT LIST

You may find it useful to interpret this list in conjunction with the climate charts in the brochure page 58, which will show you the range of temperatures and rainfall likely to be encountered en route.

- 1 large bag
- 1 small daypack
- 1 medium weight sleeping bag
- 1 inner sheet
- 1 torch and spare batteries
- 1 medium towel
- 1 Swiss Army type knife
- Personal toiletries (*including toilet paper*)
- Water bottle
- Money belt
- Sunglasses, sunhat, & sunscreen (*factor 15+*)
- Insect repellent (*with Di-ethyltoluamine*)
- Bandana or old cotton headscarf
- 1 pair strong walking shoes/lightweight boots
- 1 pair tennis shoes
- 1 water & windproof lightweight outer jacket
- 2-3 pairs of lightweight cotton trousers
- 1 pair good trousers & shirt or dress
- 1 pair of shorts
- 1 swimming costume
- 2-3 T-shirts
- 2-3 long sleeved lightweight cotton shirts
- 1 warm sweater
- 1 lightweight sweater or sweat shirt
- 5 changes underwear
- 1 pair wool socks
- 4 pairs light socks
- Plastic bags for storing clothes
- (*A lightweight tracksuit may also be found useful, suggested optional items – binoculars, pocket calculator, snorkel and mask*)

If you have a diving certificate bring it along! Good opportunities for diving in Mexico and Belize.

LUGGAGE

There is a luggage weight limit of 20kgs on some international flights to and from Mexico & Central America. Please use this airline limit as a guide when packing. You will need to restrict your luggage to one main bag, plus a small daypack or airline type bag and a sleeping bag.

Suitcases should measure approximately 66cms x 47cms x 14cms. A canvas or nylon grip or sausage-bag is really the most suitable type of luggage to withstand the considerable wear. If you are bringing a frame rucksack please ensure that the frame is detachable or flat internal as projecting metal parts will damage other luggage on the roof rack (and be damaged themselves). Don't buy expensive luggage for this journey!

FILM

Standard daylight film will cover most conditions, but you may like to bring a few rolls of slow speed film (60-100 ASA) for the high light levels and glare of the coastal regions, plus a few rolls higher speed (400-1000 ASA) for the darker, foliage-shaded light of the jungles.

JOINING INSTRUCTIONS

There will be a pre-departure meeting at our Cancun hotel at 19.30 hrs on the evening before Day 1. Ideally we suggest that you try and arrive a day or two earlier to allow yourself time to rest & acclimatise after your intercontinental flights. If you are arriving earlier: Cancun is a thriving holiday resort & town, with plenty of beaches and every kind of watersport on the lagoon & the Caribbean side of the narrow island. An equally large variety of cafes, restaurants and lots of after dark activity. Boat trips to the reef, ferries to Isla Mujeres.

JOINING HOTEL

Hotel Caribe International
Avenue Yaxchilan con Sunyaxchen No 3
Cancun
Quintana Roo
Mexico
Tel: (52 98) 84 39 99
Fax: (52 98) 84 19 93

Transport to joining hotel: Cancun International Airport to Hotel Caribe International. There is a Taxi shuttle in operation from the airport. You purchase a taxi voucher (cost approx. US\$7) at the desk outside the terminal building. A receipt will be issued which you give to the taxi driver. Do not pay the driver direct.

Rates at this hotel are US\$40 per person per night on the basis of 2 sharing. Please inform reception on arrival that you are part of the Trek America group.

LEAVING AT END OF PROJECT

Arrangements end on arrival in Cancun at around 1700-1800 on the afternoon of Day 16. Late evening/night flight connections could safely be made this same day.

INTERESTING READING

A History of Mexico – Henry Parkes
The Labyrinth of Solitude – Octavio Paz
Mexico – Penguin Travel
Mexico & Central American Handbook – Footprint
Guatemala & Belize – Rough guides
Under the Volcano – Malcolm Lowry
The Rise & Fall of Mayan Civilisation – Eric Thompson
Mosquito Coast – Paul Theroux

MAPS

Mexico, 13,000,000 – Hildebrand
America, Central - Bartholomews

OTHER COSTS/EXPENSES

Local Payment

Return flights.....

Visas.....

Vaccinations.....

Insurance.....

Personal Spending Money.....

Total _____

The information in this dossier has been compiled with care and is provided in good faith. However, it is subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and Encounter Overland Ltd.