JOURNEY
LATIN AMERICA



PRIVATE JOURNEYS WITH JOURNEY LATIN

VALUE MEXICO: HIGHLIGHTS OF MEXICO CITY AND THE YUCATÁN

11 days from **£2,335pp**

MEXICO / MEXICO CITY / MÉRIDA, CHICHÉN ITZÁ AND THE YUCATAN / CARIBBEAN COAST: RIVIERA MAYA AND HOLBOX



WHY US

We are the UK's No.1 specialist in travel to Latin America and have been creating award-winning holidays to every corner of the region for over four decades; we pride ourselves on being the most knowledgeable people there are when it comes to travel to Central and South America and passionate about it too.

OUR JOURNEY

As our name suggests, we are single-minded about Latin America. This is what sets us apart from other travel companies – and what allows us to offer you not just a holiday but the opportunity to experience something extraordinary on inspiring journeys throughout Mexico, Central and South America.

WE LOVE LATIN AMERICA

A passion for the region runs through all we do

All our Consultants have lived or travelled extensively in Latin America

Up-to-the-minute knowledge underpinned by 40 years' experience

TRAVEL WITH CONFIDENCE

Fully bonded and licensed

ATOL-protected

On your side when it matters

Book with confidence, knowing every penny is secure

THE REAL LATIN AMERICA

Our insider knowledge helps you go beyond the guidebooks

We hand-pick hotels with character and the most rewarding excursions

Let us show you the Latin America we know and love

OVERVIEW & OUTLINE ITINERARY

This holiday offers excellent value while introducing you to the country's rich history and varied landscapes. Explore Mexico City, the Mayan temples of the Yucatán including Chichén Itzá and relax on a Caribbean beach.

DAY 1	**Arrive in Mexico City. Transfer to hotel in the historic centre.**
DAY 2	**Full day guided city tour and visit Teotihuacán pyramids.**
DAY 3	**Day at leisure in Mexico City**
DAY 4	**Fly to Mérida, transfer to hotel in the city centre.**
DAY 5	**Full day excursion to Mayan ruins of Uxmal and Kabah.**
DAY 6	**At leisure to explore Mérida**
DAY 7	**Visit Chichén Itzá, continue to the Riviera Maya**
DAYS 8-10	**At leisure at Playa del Carmen on the Mayan Riviera.**
DAY 11	**Transfer to Cancún airport for international flight home.**

ITINERARY

This holiday is a great introduction to a huge country with an immense variety of cultural and physical landscapes. There are deserts, mountains and jungles magnificent ruined pre-Columbian pyramids and temples, graceful colonial towns and a timeless indigenous life in the villages and markets. We've picked out a few of the highlights to give you a good value, economical and rewarding holiday.

Mexico City is a huge metropolis, one of the largest cities in the world (you may like to extend your time here) and our guided tour takes you to a few of the top sights. Zip down to Mérida, an agreeable, Mayan and colonial city in the Yucatán Peninsula, from where you will visit a few of the better-known Mayan archaeological sites. Finally head for the Caribbean beach at Playa del Carmen on the Riviera Maya.

DAY 1

Arrive in Mexico City. Transfer to hotel in the historic centre.

Transfer to your hotel in the historic centre of the city. Mexico City was built on the site of Tenochtotlán, the capital of the Aztec Empire, and it lies at 2,250m above sea level. Vast, chaotic and vibrant, this sprawling megapolis of more than 20 million people has a multitude of attractions.

DAY 2

Full day guided city tour and visit Teotihuacán pyramids.

Begin with a guided tour of Mexico City in the morning, when the historical centre is at its least frenetic. Your visit includes the area around the main square (Zócalo) surrounded by prestigious buildings such as the National Palace (with murals by Diego Rivera) and the sixteenth century cathedral. Continue to the archaeological site of Teotihuacán, 50km away. This huge, impressive pre-Columbian city was built on a drained lake floor. Teotihuacán was once one of the largest cities in the world.

It is hugely influential in the historic narrative of modern Mexico and, although it had already been abandoned by the time of the Aztecs, even this great empire held it in awe. Soak up the history as you stroll along the imposing Avenue of the Dead, leading to the vast Pyramid of the Sun, and take the opportunity to climb its vertiginous, ancient steps for a panorama of the ruins and the surrounding countryside.

DAY 3

Day at leisure in Mexico City

Explore the parks, plazas, markets and museums of Mexico City under your own steam. We can offer a range of optional excursions. Possibilities include the magnificent Museum of Anthropology (closed on Mondays). In our view this is one of the continent's best museums, with presentations representing different regions, each featuring exhibits manifesting society in pre-Hispanic history and the colonial period as well as showing how life is lived in contemporary Mexico.

A visit to the 'floating gardens' of Xochimilco, a network of canals lined by fruit and flower gardens and markets, can be great fun – especially at weekends when residents of Mexico City flock to be transported in one of the colourful gondolas where they are serenaded by a mariachi band. You too will have the opportunity to glide through the canals at a lazy pace on one of these 'trajineras'. Xochimilco was once connected to the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City) and was where they grew much of their food. Combined with a visit to Coyoacan and the Frida Kahlo Museum this is a great day out.

DAY 4

Fly to Mérida, transfer to hotel in the city centre.

Fly to Mérida, capital of the Yucatán Peninsula. The city was founded by the Mayan Indians and named Tiho. In 1542 it was conquered by the Spanish conquistadores who dismantled the Mayan pyramids and used the stones as foundations for the cathedral. Mérida then became an immensely wealthy city, described as 'the Paris of the New World'. Its money came mainly from the production of sisal, cactus fibres that are used to make rope, and it was culturally and geographically isolated from the rest of the country until transport infrastructure reached it in the 1950s.

Today, Mérida retains a lovely colonial centre, with a mix of opulent and crumbly buildings but it is a modern, bustling, thriving city, with lots of local character, some excellent places to eat and good shops and markets. The inhabitants, descendants of the Mayans and the colonists, love a good fiesta, and you may well find one going on, with live music and market stalls, while you are there.

DAY 5

Full day excursion to Mayan ruins of Uxmal and Kabah.

Guided excursion to the Mayan temple complex at Uxmal, 80km from Mérida. The site is dominated by the majestic Pyramid of the Magician, alongside which is an elegant nunnery quadrangle with Puuc-style complex stonework pieced together like a jigsaw puzzle. Strolling through the ruins, cradled in dense vegetation shading the visitor from the scorching sun is an almost mystical experience. Continue to Kabah, with its incredible Palace of Masks, with intricate mosaics representing the face of Chac the rain god 260 times.

DAY 6

At leisure to explore Mérida

At leisure in Mérida.

DAY 7

Visit Chichén Itzá, continue to the Riviera Maya

From Mérida drive to Chichén Itzá (3 hrs), the grandest of all the Mayan sites, dominated by the huge, symmetrical, stepped El Castillo pyramid. The origins of the site are mysterious, and appear to have Toltec as well as Mayan influences. It has the largest and best-preserved ball court in the Americas; the venue for an ancient ritual game that was played throughout the continent, but which is still not fully understood.

Archaeologists have not been able to determine whether the losers or winners were decapitated, but judging from the gory carvings along the base of the court's walls, someone certainly came to an unpleasant end. There is also a huge sacred *cenote* (sinkhole) where explorations have revealed human remains, artifacts and valuables leading archaeologists to believe it was used for offerings.

After a guided tour of the citadel, continue by road for 2-3 hours to Mexico's Caribbean coast, known as the Riviera Maya. A backwater until the 1980s, Playa del Carmen is nowadays a fully-fledged international resort with a lively pedestrianised centre overflowing with restaurants and bars.

DAYS 8-10

At leisure at Playa del Carmen on the Mayan Riviera.

Relax at Playa del Carmen. The beaches are gorgeous here and there are loads of activities and excursions, from visits to Mayan ruins to scuba diving. These are easy to book locally. You might even hire a car for a day or two to have more flexibility to explore.

DAY 11

Transfer to Cancún airport for international flight home.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

Services of our team of experts in our London office

Services of Journey Latin America local representatives and guides

All land and air transport within Latin America

Accommodation as specified

Meals as specified

Excursions as specified, including entrance fees

INCLUDED EXCURSIONS

Full day Mexico City tour and visit Teotihuacan pyramids

Full day excursion to Mayan ruins of Uxmal and Kabah

Visit Chichén Itzá ruins – New Seven Wonders of the World

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

Tips and gratuities

Meals other than specified

International flights to Latin America

Airport taxes, when not included in the ticket

Optional excursions

ESSENTIALS

TRANSPORT
One flight (longest 1.5hrs); 3 scenic road journeys (longest 3hrs).

ACCOMMODATION
At all levels, we prefer smaller hotels with some local character; whether one of a local chain or independent. On the odd occasion where we use an international chain, we choose properties with some historic or unique features. Here we use small, friendly hotels, colonial or modern in style with well-equipped rooms, private bathroom and heating.

MEALS
Breakfast daily. Lunch day 7. Dinner days 7-10.

GUIDES
We carefully select our local partners, some of whom we have worked with for over 25 years. Their English-speaking guides understand the expectations of our clients very well, and are consistently singled out for praise by the latter on their return.

SUMMARY OF NIGHTS
11 days, 10 nights: Mexico City 3; Mérida 3; Playa del Carmen 4.

CURRENCY
The unit of currency in Mexico is the Mexican peso.

HOW TO TAKE IT
Cash machines are available in all major cities and towns, and so taking a debit or credit card with a PIN number is the most convenient way of withdrawing money while on your trip, and in most shops and restaurants you can also pay by card. However, since cards can get lost, damaged, withheld or blocked, you should not rely exclusively on a card to access funds. We recommend that additionally you take a reasonable quantity of US dollars cash (no more than is covered by your insurance), which you can exchange into local currency, and possibly some travellers' cheques (American Express are the most widely accepted), though these are gradually falling out of use. Dollar bills should be in good condition, soiled or torn bills may be refused. You can take sterling, but the exchange rate is not always competitive or even available, restricting the number of places where you can change money.

DAILY SPEND
It is very difficult to give a guideline for essential expenses but a budget of around US$35 per day should cover the cost of meals not included in the holiday itinerary, drinks and the odd souvenir. Eat at the best restaurants and you will pay considerably more.

TIPPING
Tips are expected and local guides often rely on their tip as a significant proportion of their income. We recommend approximately $10 per person for a half day and $20 for a full day for guides and half that for drivers.

Most service industry workers will expect a tip of some kind and so it is useful to have spare change for hotel porters, taxi drivers and the like. It is common to leave 10 – 12% in restaurants.

Tipping guidelines can be found in our Briefing Dossier.

INSURANCE
Travel insurance is essential. Details of our recommended policy can be found on our Travel Insurance page.

AIRPORT TAXES
If you have purchased your flights through Journey Latin America, the international departure tax is usually included in

the ticket.

TRIP SUITABILITY

Generally this holiday is suitable for all able, reasonably fit visitors, including families. If you or anyone in your party has a disability please contact us.

VISAS

Holders of a full British passport do not require a visa, although passports must be valid for at least 6 months after the trip begins. Anyone with a different nationality should enquire with us or check with the relevant consulate.

If flying to the US, or via the US you will need to fill in your online ESTA application.

CLIMATE

In Mexico City and the mountains towns the climate is temperate all year round and, because of the altitude it never gets too hot.

The wet/rainy season lasts through June to August, which usually means a couple of hours of rain in the afternoon. Temperatures can drop to freezing in Mexico City over the winter months.

The Yucatán Peninsula is hot (around 30°C) and humid all year round. October through April are the driest months. The hurricane season runs from July to November.

CLOTHING AND SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Bring plenty of light cotton clothing and good, comfortable walking shoes. Some warm items and good waterproof jackets are also necessary. We suggest that you plan to 'layer' your clothing; it is easier and more efficient to put on a couple of light layers than one thick jumper, and sensible to have long sleeves for areas where mosquitos may be a problem. Sandals are a good informal option for evenings. Protection against the sun (sunblock, sun hat) and mosquito repellent are essential and you should bring swimwear. A daypack is useful for carrying around
sunblock, guidebook, water and any extra layers.

Please get in touch with the office before departure if you have any doubts. Good equipment is very important and hard to come by in Mexico.

VACCINATIONS

Preventative vaccinations are recommended against the following; typhoid; polio; tetanus; hepatitis A. For specific requirements you must consult your GP.

You can also find helpful information on the Masta Travel Health website.

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GET IN TOUCH WITH US...

Our friendly, knowledgeable team of travel experts are always happy to chat about holiday ideas and share helpful advice. Give us a call today and begin planning your perfect trip to Latin America.

GIVE US A CALL

We'd love to chat

0208 747 8315

OPENING HOURS

Monday – Friday: 9am – 6pm
Saturday & Sunday: Closed

SEND US AN EMAIL

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