

Directory

CONTENTS

Accommodations	247
Activities	250
Business Hours	250
Children	250
Climate Charts	251
Courses	251
Customs	251
Dangers & Annoyances	252
Discount Cards	253
Embassies & Consulates	253
Festivals & Events	253
Food	254
Gay & Lesbian Travelers	255
Holidays	255
Insurance	255
Internet Access	255
Legal Matters	256
Maps	256
Money	257
Photography & Video	258
Post	258
Shopping	259
Solo Travelers	260
Telephone & Fax	260
Time	262
Toilets	262
Tourist Information	262
Travelers with Disabilities	262
Visas	262
Women Travelers	264
Work	265

ACCOMMODATIONS

Two storms in 2007 hit the region hard, devastating tourist infrastructure in Tabasco, parts of Chiapas and southern Quintana Roo. Hurricane Dean (see boxed text, p133) wiped out the southern Quintana Roo town of Mahahual, destroying the port and leveling most hotels. We were on the ground just weeks after the disaster and were unable to complete our research, so we did the next best thing and arranged for American expat Kevin Graham to update as much as possible closer to press time. Dean also affected some hotels and restaurants around Laguna Bacalar and Chetumal, but all were up and

BOOK ACCOMMODATIONS ONLINE

For more accommodations reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at www.lonelyplanet.com. You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

running – though a bit windswept – by the time we passed through. The other big storm of the year (see boxed text, p228) buried 80% of Tabasco under water, and caused several landslides in Chiapas. In order to get the most up-to-date info, we did a phone update of our Tabasco material after the flooding subsided.

The good news is that the Yucatán Peninsula has finally recovered (for the most part) from 2005's Hurricane Wilma (see boxed text, p59), which wiped out many Caribbean coastal destinations, including Cancún, Isla Cozumel, Isla Holbox, Puerto Morelos and, to a lesser extent, Playa del Carmen.

Accommodations in the Yucatán range from hammocks and cabanas to hotels of every imaginable standard to world-class luxury resorts. This book divides accommodations into three price ranges: budget (where a typical room for two people costs under M\$400), midrange (M\$400 to M\$900) and top end (above M\$900).

Budget accommodations include camping grounds, hammocks, palm-thatched cabanas, backpacker hostels, guesthouses and economical hotels. Recommended accommodations will be without frills but generally clean. Hotel rooms, even in the budget range, usually have a private bathroom containing hot shower, toilet and washbasin. (In this book rooms are assumed to have private bathroom unless otherwise stated.)

Midrange accommodations are chiefly hotels. In some areas of the Yucatán M\$400 can get you a cozy, attractively decorated room in a friendly small hotel. Many of the region's most appealing and memorable lodgings are in the midrange bracket – small or medium-sized hotels, well cared for, with a friendly

PRACTICALITIES

- All international visitors (including US and Canadian citizens) need a valid passport to enter Mexico.
- Mexico's only English-language daily is the *Herald*, an international edition of the *Miami Herald*, with a Mexico insert. It's available in some upmarket hotels in Mérida and Cancún and at some Sanborns stores.
- Mérida's *El Diario de Yucatán* (www.yucatan.com.mx, in Spanish) is one of the country's most respected newspapers. *Yucatán Today* (www.yucantoday.com) offers good English-language info on Yucatán state.
- Local TV is dominated by Televisa, which runs four of the six national channels; TV Azteca has the other two. A growing number of viewers have multichannel cable or satellite systems, such as Cablevision or Sky TV.
- Electrical current is 110V, 60Hz, and most plugs have two flat prongs, just like in the USA and Canada.
- Mexicans use the metric system for weights and measures.
- DVDs are encoded for Zone 4, the same as for Australia and New Zealand, though most use the NTSC image registration system, which makes them incompatible with the PAL system used in most of Western Europe and Australia. Many DVDs sold in Mexico are illegal copies.
- As a rule, don't drink the tap water. Cancún has potable tap water.

atmosphere and personal attention from staff. In some areas you'll also find apartments, bungalows and more comfortable cabanas in this price range.

Top-end hotels run from classy international hotels in cities to deluxe coastal resorts and luxurious smaller establishments catering to travelers with a taste for comfort and beautiful design, and the funds to pay for them.

Room prices given in this book are high-season rates unless otherwise stated. In the Yucatán, high season runs from Christmas right through to Easter, plus most of July and August. Outside the high season, many midrange and top-end establishments in tourist destinations cut their room prices by 10% to 40%. They may also have special offers and low weekend rates. Budget accommodations are more likely to keep the same rates year-round.

In this book we use 'single' (abbreviated 's') to mean a room for one person, and 'double' ('d') to mean a room for two people. Mexicans sometimes use the phrase *cuarto sencillo* (literally, single room) to mean a room with one bed, which is often a *cama matrimonial* (double bed). Sometimes one person can occupy such a room for a lower price than two people. A *cuarto doble* often means a room with two beds, which may both be *camas matrimoniales*.

In popular destinations, at busy times it's best to reserve a room in advance, or seek a room early in the day. Many places take reservations via their websites or by email. If a place is not booked out, a simple phone call earlier in the day, saying what time you'll arrive, is usually sufficient. A few places are reluctant to take reservations, but don't worry: you should end up with a room somewhere.

Accommodations prices are subject to two taxes: *impuesto de valor agregado* (IVA, or value-added tax; 15%) and *impuesto sobre hospedaje* (ISH, or lodging tax; 2% in most states). Many budget and some midrange establishments only charge these taxes if you require a receipt. Generally, though, IVA and ISH are included in quoted prices. In top-end hotels a price may often be given as, say, 'M\$1000 más impuestos' (M\$1000 plus taxes), in which case you must add 17% to the figure. When in doubt, you can ask '¿Están incluidos los impuestos?' (Are taxes included?). Prices given in this book are those you are most likely to be charged at each place, around high season unless stated otherwise, with or without the taxes according to the establishment's policy.

Apartments & B&Bs

In some places you can find *departamentos* (apartments) for tourists with fully equipped kitchens. Some are very comfortable and

they can be good value for three or four people. Tourist offices and advertisements in local newspapers (especially English-language newspapers) are good sources of information.

In Yucatán B&Bs are generally upmarket guesthouses, often aimed at foreign tourists; they are usually comfortable and enjoyable places to stay.

Camping & Trailer Parks

Most organized campgrounds are actually trailer parks set up for people with camper vans and trailers (caravans) but are open to tent campers at lower rates. They're most common along the coast. Some are very basic, others quite luxurious. Expect to pay about M\$50 to pitch a tent for two people, and M\$100 to M\$200 for two people with a vehicle, using full facilities.

The beach is public property in Mexico, and you can basically pitch a tent anywhere you can access. Of course, you'll need to make sure your luggage is secure and that you're well above the high-tide line. Some restaurants and guesthouses in beach spots or country areas will let you pitch a tent on their patch for a couple of dollars per person.

Casas de Huéspedes & Posadas

Inexpensive and congenial accommodations are often to be found at a *casa de huéspedes*, a home converted into simple guest lodgings. Good *casas de huéspedes* are usually family-run, with a relaxed, friendly atmosphere.

Many *posadas* (inns) are like *casas de huéspedes*; others are small hotels.

Hammocks & Cabanas

You'll find hammocks and cabanas available mainly in low-key beach spots, such as Tulum. A hammock can be a very comfortable place to sleep in hot areas (but mosquito repellent or a net often comes in handy). You can rent a hammock and a place to hang it – usually under a palm roof outside a small guesthouse or beach restaurant – for M\$60 to M\$130. With your own hammock, the cost comes down a bit. It's easy enough to buy hammocks in the Yucatán (see boxed text, p163); Mérida specializes in them, and you'll find hammocks for sale all along the Riviera Maya.

Cabanas are usually huts – of wood, brick, adobe and stone – with a palm-thatched roof. Some have dirt floors and nothing inside but

a bed; others are deluxe, with electric light, mosquito net, fan, fridge, bar and decorations. Prices for simple cabanas cost M\$100 to M\$350. On the Caribbean some luxury cabanas can cost over M\$1000.

Hostels

Hostels exist in many of the towns and cities where backpackers congregate. They provide dorm accommodations (for M\$80 to M\$120 per person), plus communal kitchens, bathrooms, living space and sometimes some private rooms. Standards of hygiene and security vary, but aside from being cheap, hostels are generally relaxed and good places to meet other travelers. **HostelWorld** (www.hostelworld.com) has listings.

There are a handful of hostels affiliated with Mexico's HI, **Hostelling International Mexico** (www.hostellingmexico.com). If you're an HI member, you get a dollar or two off the nightly rates at these places.

Hotels

Yucatán specializes in good midrange hotels where two people can get a comfortable room with private bathroom, TV and often air-con for M\$400 to M\$900. Often the hotel also has a restaurant and bar. Among the most charming lodgings, in both the midrange and top-end brackets, are the many old mansions, inns and even convents turned into hotels. These can be wonderfully atmospheric, with fountains gurgling in flower-bedecked stone courtyards. Some are a bit spartan; others have modern comforts and, consequently, are more expensive.

Nearly every town has its cheap hotels, though substantially fewer are found on the Yucatán Peninsula than in other regions of Mexico. There are clean, friendly, secure ones, and there are dark, dirty, smelly ones where you may not feel your belongings are safe. Expect to pay up to M\$400 for a decent double room with private shower and hot water, more in Cancún, Cozumel or Playa del Carmen, and perhaps if you arrive during a popular time.

Yucatán has plenty of large, modern luxury hotels, too, particularly in the coastal resorts and in some former haciendas south of Mérida. They offer the expected levels of luxury – with pools, gyms, bars, restaurants and so on – at prices that are sometimes agreeably modest (and sometimes not!). If you like

to stay in luxury but also enjoy saving some money, look for a locally owned hotel.

Fortunately for families and small groups of travelers, many hotels in all price ranges have rooms for three, four or five people that cost not much more than a double.

ACTIVITIES

There's absolutely no shortage of things to do on the Yucatán Peninsula: some of the best scuba diving and snorkeling in the world is available here, beach lovers will find plenty of powdery white sand on which to sunbathe, and the ancient Maya cities that dot the landscape of the Yucatán are a thrill to explore.

Good sources on active tourism in Mexico include **Amtave** (Mexican Association of Adventure Travel & Ecotourism; ☎ 55-5688-3883, 800-654-4452; www.amtave.org), based in Mexico City with 60 member organizations and companies around the country, and **Ecoturismo Yucatan** (www.ecoyuc.com.mx), **GORP** (www.gorp.com), **Planeta.com** (www.planeta.com) and **Mexonline.com** (www.mexonline.com).

For more details on the major activities, check the page references below and also the destination chapters of this book.

- bird- and wildlife-watching (p68)
- cycling (p68)
- diving and snorkeling (p64)
- fishing (p69)
- hiking (p67)
- kayaking (p66)
- kiteboarding and windsurfing (p67)
- ziplining (p69)

BUSINESS HOURS

The siesta tradition wisely lives on in this hot climate, with shops generally open from 9am to 2pm, then reopening from 4pm to 7pm Monday to Saturday. Some may not be open on Saturday afternoon. Shops in malls and coastal resort towns often open on Sunday. Supermarkets and department stores usually open from 9am or 10am to 10pm daily.

Government offices have similar Monday-to-Friday hours to shops, with a greater likelihood of having the 2pm to 4pm lunch break. Tourism-related offices usually open on Saturday, too, from at least 9am to 1pm.


Banks are normally open 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, and some from 9am to 1pm Saturday. In smaller towns they may close earlier or not open on Saturday. *Casas de cambio* (money-exchange offices) are usually open from 9am to 7pm daily, often with even

longer hours in coastal resorts. Post offices typically open from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday, and 9am to 1pm Saturday.

In this book we only spell out opening hours where they do not fit the above parameters. See the Quick Reference inside this book's front cover for further typical opening hours.

Most museums have one closing day a week, typically Monday. On Sunday nearly all archaeological sites and museums offer free admission for Mexican nationals, and the major ones can get very crowded.

CHILDREN

Snorkeling in caves, playing on the beach, hiking in the jungle...kids will find plenty of ways to keep busy in the Yucatán. And as elsewhere in Mexico, children take center stage – with few exceptions, children are welcome at all kinds of hotels and in virtually every café and restaurant. In this book you'll find especially child-friendly places identified with the  icon.

Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* has lots of practical advice on the subject, drawn from firsthand experience.

For details on documents required for under-18 travelers, see p263.

Practicalities

Cots for hotel rooms and high chairs for restaurants are available mainly in midrange and top-end establishments. If you want a rental car with a child safety seat, the major international car-rental firms are the most reliable providers. You will probably have to pay a few dollars extra per day.

It's usually not hard to find an inexpensive babysitter – ask at your hotel. Diapers (nappies) are widely available, but if you depend on some particular cream, lotion, baby food or medicine, bring it with you. Public breastfeeding is not common and, when done, is done discreetly.

Sights & Activities

Apart from the ruins, beaches and swimming pools, you'll find excellent special attractions, such as amusement parks, water parks, zoos, aquariums and other fun places on the peninsula.

Kids can also enjoy activities such as snorkeling, riding bicycles and boats, and watching wildlife (see the Yucatán Outdoors

chapter, p64). Archaeological sites can be fun if your kids are into climbing pyramids and exploring tunnels.

CLIMATE CHARTS

Hot, sunny and humid days are the norm for much of the year in the Yucatán, although the season of *nortes* (storms bringing wind and rain from the north) lowers temperatures a bit from November through February or March. During the rainy season, which runs from May through October, you can expect heavy rains for an hour or two most afternoons, but generally clear weather otherwise. The hurricane season lasts from June to November, with most of the activity from mid-August to mid-September. For tips on the best seasons to travel, see p20.

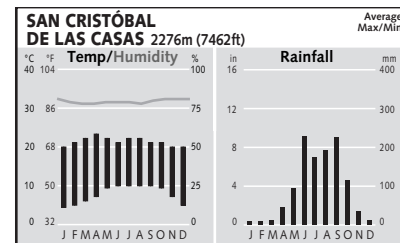
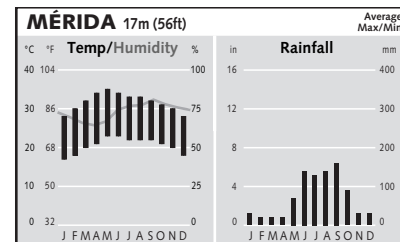
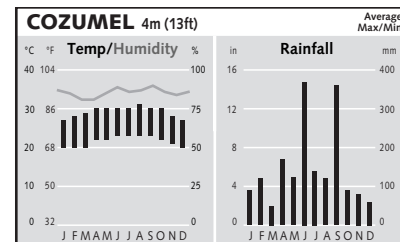
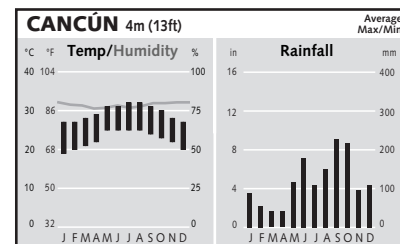
COURSES

Taking classes can be a great way to meet people and get an inside angle on local life as well as study the language or culture. Mexican universities and colleges often offer classes. For long-term study in Mexico you'll need a student visa; contact a Mexican consulate for details. You can also arrange informal Spanish tutoring through most hostels. A good US source on study possibilities in Mexico is the **Council on International Educational Exchange** (www.ciee.org). There are also helpful links on the website of **Lonely Planet** (www.lonelyplanet.com).

Mérida, with its abundance of cultural activities and central location, makes a great place to study Spanish. Among the schools there, **Centro de Idiomas del Sureste** (CIS; ☎ 923-0954; www.cisyucatan.com.mx; Calle 52 No 455 btwn Calles 49 & 51) stands out. Thirty hours of instruction, including a two-week homestay in a local household and three meals a day, costs about M\$7300. Other plans are available.

In Campeche, the **Universidad Autónoma de Campeche Centro de Español y Maya** (CEM; etzna.uacam.mx/cecm/principal.htm; Av Agustín Melgar) offers four- to eight-week summer language courses, and homestays can be arranged.

In Playa del Carmen, **Playa Lingua del Caribe** (☎ 873-3876; www.playalingua.com; Calle 20) has 20-hour-per-week classes for around M\$1850. **International House** (☎ 803-3388; www.ihrivermay.com; Calle 14) offers homestays, a small residence hall and Spanish lessons. Twenty hours of instruction per week costs M\$2000.



CUSTOMS

Visitors are allowed to bring duty-free items for personal use, such as clothing; a camera and video camera; up to 12 rolls of film or videotapes; a cellular phone; a laptop computer; a portable radio or CD player; medicine for personal use, with prescription in the case of psychotropic drugs; 3L of wine, beer or liquor (adults only); 400 cigarettes (adults);

and M\$3000 worth of other goods (M\$500 if arriving by land).

The normal routine when you enter Mexico is to complete a customs declaration form (which lists duty-free allowances) and then place it in a machine. If the machine shows a green light, you pass without inspection. If a red light shows, your baggage will be searched.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Despite often alarming media reports and official warnings for Mexico in general, the Yucatán Peninsula remains a safe place to travel, and with just a few precautions you can minimize the risk of encountering problems.

Enjoy yourself in the ocean, but beware of undertows and riptides on any beach. Women traveling alone, and even pairs of women, should be cautious about going to remote beach and jungle spots. Cocaine and marijuana are prevalent in Mexico. They are both illegal. The easiest way to avoid the problems related with these drugs is by avoiding them. If you get busted using or transporting illegal drugs, your consulate will not help you.

Foreign affairs departments can supply a variety of useful data about travel to Mexico: **Australia** (☎ 61-2-6261-1111; www.dfat.gov.au) **Canada** (☎ in Canada 800-267-8376, outside Canada 613-944-4000; www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca) **UK** (☎ 020-7008-1500; www.fco.gov.uk) **USA** (☎ 888-407-4747; www.travel.state.gov)

Theft & Robbery

As a rule, Mexicans are extremely honest and are unlikely to steal anything from you. However, the rare individual may target tourists likely to be carrying cash or valuables. Thus, pickpocketing and bag-snatching

remain minor risks in crowded buses and bus stations, airports, markets or anywhere frequented by large numbers of tourists.

Mugging is less common than purse-snatching, but more serious: resistance may be met with violence (do *not* resist). Usually these robbers will not harm you: they just want your money, fast.

To minimize the chances of being a victim, think about the following:

- Don't go where there are few other people in the vicinity; this includes camping in secluded places. A simple rule: if there are women and children around, you're probably safe.
- Don't leave any valuables unattended while you swim. Run-and-grab thefts by people lurking in the woods are a common occurrence on the Caribbean coast.
- Leave most of your money, important documents and smaller valuables in a sealed, signed envelope in your hotel's safe, unless you have immediate need of these items. Virtually all hotels, except the very cheapest, provide safekeeping for guests' valuables.
- Leave valuables in a locked suitcase or backpack in your hotel room, or a locker in a hostel dorm, rather than carry them on the street.
- Carry only a small amount of money – enough for an outing – in a pocket. If you do have to carry valuables, keep them hidden (preferably in a money belt, shoulder wallet or pouch underneath your clothing).
- Don't keep money, credit or debit cards, wallets or bags in open view any longer than you have to. At ticket counters, keep a hand or foot on your bag at all times.

HIGHWAY ROBBERY

Though it's rare on the Yucatán Peninsula, bandits occasionally hold up buses and other vehicles on intercity routes, especially at night, taking luggage or valuables. Sometimes buses are robbed by people who board as passengers. Roads linking the peninsula with Chiapas state are sometimes the scene of such robberies. These routes are also notorious for frequent thefts from luggage on 2nd-class buses, whose many stops and sometimes-crowded conditions (and sleepy passengers) afford miscreants the opportunity to unzip or slash open bags. Highway holdups were once weekly occurrences on Hwy 199 between Ocosingo and Palenque, but an increased military and police presence has made this route pretty safe now.

The best way to avoid highway robbery is to travel by day, preferably by toll highway. Deluxe and 1st-class buses use toll highways, where they exist; 2nd-class buses do not.

- Use ATMs only during working hours and choose ones in secure locations, not those open to the street.
- Do not leave anything valuable-looking in a parked vehicle.
- Be careful about accepting drinks from overly social characters in bars, especially in tourist-heavy zones; there have been cases of drugging followed by robbery and assault.
- Be wary of attempts at credit-card fraud. One method is when the cashier swipes your card twice (once for the transaction and once for nefarious purposes). Keep your card in sight at all times.

DISCOUNT CARDS

The ISIC student card, IYTC card for travelers under 26 years, and ITIC card for teachers can help you obtain discounted air tickets to/from Mexico at student- and youth-oriented travel agencies. Reduced prices for buses, museums, archaeological sites and so on are usually only for those with Mexican education credentials, but the aforementioned cards will sometimes get you a reduction. The ISIC card may also get you discounts in a few hostels.

The HI card will save you about M\$10 in affiliated hostels in the Yucatán.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

It's important to understand what your own embassy – the embassy of the country of which you are a citizen – can and can't do to help you if you get into trouble. Generally speaking, it won't be much help in emergencies if the trouble you're in is remotely your own fault. Remember that you are bound by the laws of the country you are in.

In genuine emergencies you might get some assistance, such as a list of lawyers, but only if other channels have been exhausted.

Mexican Embassies & Consulates

Updated details can be found at **Secretaría Relaciones Exteriores** (www.sre.gob.mx, in Spanish) and **Embassyworld.com** (www.embassyworld.com).

Embassies & Consulates in Mexico

Many embassies or their consular sections are in Mexico City; Cancún is home to several consulates, and there are some diplomatic outposts in Mérida as well.

Australia Mexico City (☎ 55-1101-2200; www.mexico.embassy.gov.au; Rubén Darío 55, Polanco)

Belize Mexico City (☎ 55-5520-1274; embelize@prodigy.net.mx; Bernardo de Gálvez 215, Lomas de Chapultepec)

Canada Mexico City (☎ 55-5724-7900; www.canada.org.mx; Schiller 529, Polanco); Cancún (Map p75; ☎ 998-883-3360; Plaza Caracol II, 3rd fl, Local 330, Blvd Kukulcán Km 8.5, Zona Hotelera)

Cuba Mexico City (☎ 55-5280-8093; www.embacuba.com.mx; Av Presidente Masaryk 554, Polanco); Cancún (Map p77; ☎ 998-884-3423; Pecari 17); Mérida (☎ 999-944-4215; Calle 1-D No 32, Colonia Campestre)

France Mexico City (☎ 55-9171-9700; www.francia.org.mx; Campos Elíseos 339, Polanco); Cancún (Map p77; ☎ 998-883-9816; Calle Pargo 24 SM3); Mérida (☎ 999-930-1500; Calle 60 No 385)

Germany Mexico City (☎ 55-5283-2200; www.mexico.diplo.de; Horacio 1506, Losw Morales); Cancún (Map p77; ☎ 998-884-1898; Punta Conoco 36, SM24)

Guatemala Mexico City (☎ 55-5540-7520; emba.guatemala@gob.gt; Av Explanada 1025, Lomas de Chapultepec)

Ireland Mexico City (☎ 55-5520-5803; embajada@irlanda.org.mx; Cerrada Blvd Ávila Camacho 76, 3rd fl, Lomas de Chapultepec)

Italy Mexico City (☎ 55-5596-3655; www.ambcitta.delmessico.esteri.it/Ambasciata_Cittadelmessico; Paseo de las Palmas 1994, Lomas de Chapultepec); Cancún (Map p77; ☎ 998-884-1261; Alcatrazes 39, SM22)

Japan Mexico City (☎ 55-5211-0028; www.mx.emb-japan.go.jp; Paseo de la Reforma 395, Lomas de Chapultepec)

Netherlands Mexico City (☎ 55-5258-9921; www.paisesbajos.com.mx; Av Vasco de Quiroga 3000, 7th fl, Santa Fe); Cancún (off Map p77; ☎ 998-886-0070; Martinaire, Planta Alta, Terminal 2, Aeropuerto Internacional de Cancún); Mérida (☎ 999-924-3122; Calle 64 No 418)

New Zealand Mexico City (☎ 55-5283-9460; kiwimexico@prodigy.net.mx; Jaime Balmes 8, Level 4, Los Morales)

Spain Mexico City (☎ 55-5282-2974; www.mae.es/embajadas/mexico/es/home; Galileo 114, Polanco)

UK Mexico City (☎ 55-5242-8500; www.embajada.britanica.com.mx; Río Lerma 71, Colonia Cuauhtémoc); Cancún (Map p75; ☎ 998-881-0100; The Royal Sands, Blvd Kukulcán Km 13.5, Zona Hotelera)

USA Mexico City (☎ 55-5080-2000; mexico.usembassy.gov; Paseo de la Reforma 305); Cancún (Map p75; ☎ 998-883-0272; 2o Nivel No 320-323, Plaza Caracol Dos, Blvd Kukulcán, Zona Hotelera); Mérida (☎ 999-942-5700; Calle 60 No 338-K, btwn Calles 29 & 31)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Mexico's frequent fiestas are highly colorful affairs that often go on for several days and add a great deal of spice to everyday life. In addition to the major national festivals listed below, each town has many local saint's days,

LOCAL FIESTAS

In addition to national celebrations, every town and city on the Yucatán Peninsula holds its own fiestas, often in honor of its patron saint. Street parades of holy images, special costumes, fireworks, dancing, lots of music and plenty of drinking are all part of the colorful scene. Sometimes bloodless bullfights are on the program as well, or the *Danza de la Cabeza de Cochino*. This dance, rooted in Maya tradition, takes place around an altar holding a pig's head decorated with offerings of flowers, ribbons, bread, liquor and cigarettes. A likely time to catch it is at the *Fiesta de la Inmaculada Concepción*. Though Yucatecos also celebrate the Festival of the Immaculate Conception on December 8, with the rest of the Catholic world, many towns on the peninsula hold nine days of devotions leading up to the last Sunday in January when the pig is ritually slaughtered and put to cooking.

Other lively patron-saint festivals and Yucatán-specific celebrations are mentioned in the destination chapters.

regional festivals and so on (see destination chapters for information on these). There's also a national public holiday just about every month (see opposite), often the occasion for yet further merriment.

January

Día de los Reyes Magos (Three Kings' Day or Epiphany) On January 6, this is the day when Mexican children traditionally receive gifts, rather than at Christmas (but some get two loads of presents!). A good place to be at this time is Tizimin (p197).

February/March

Día de la Candelaria (Candlemas) Held on February 2, and commemorates the presentation of Jesus in the temple 40 days after his birth; celebrated with processions, bullfights and dancing in many towns.

Carnaval A big bash preceding the 40-day penance of Lent, Carnival takes place during the week or so before Ash Wednesday (which falls 46 days before Easter Sunday; late February or early March). It's festively celebrated in Mérida, Campeche, Ciudad del Carmen and Chetumal with parades, music, food, drink, dancing, fireworks and fun.

March/April

Semana Santa Held throughout Holy Week (starting on Palm Sunday – Domingo de Ramos), solemn processions move through the streets. On Good Friday (*Viernes Santo*) there are dramatic re-enactments of the Passion Play, with locals taking the role of penitents following their savior through the Stations of the Cross.

September

Día de la Independencia (Independence Day) On September 16, the anniversary of the start of Mexico's War of Independence in 1810 provokes an upsurge of patriotic feeling every year: on the evening of the 15th, the words of Padre Miguel Hidalgo's famous call to rebellion, the

Grito de Dolores, are repeated from the balcony of every town hall in the land, usually followed by fireworks.

November

Día de Todos los Santos (All Saints' Day) & **Día de los Muertos** (Day of the Dead) On November 1 and 2, in Mexico's most characteristic fiesta, the souls of the dead are believed to return to earth. Families build altars in their homes and visit graveyards to commune with their dead, taking garlands and gifts. A happy atmosphere prevails.

Festival Cervantino Barroco (Cultural fair) San Cristóbal de Las Casas (p235) puts on a great art and culture fair, with music, dance, theater and more. Held late October or early November.

December

Día de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe (Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe) A week or more of celebrations throughout Mexico leads up to the day in honor of the Virgin who appeared to an indigenous Mexican, Juan Diego, in 1531, and has since become Mexico's religious patron. Children are taken to church dressed as little Juan Diegos or indigenous girls. Held on December 12.

Posadas From December 16 to 24, nine nights of candlelit parades re-enact the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. More important in small towns than cities.

Día de Navidad Christmas is traditionally celebrated with a feast in the early hours of December 25, after midnight Mass.

FOOD

Some Eating sections of this book are divided into budget, midrange and top-end categories. We define a midrange restaurant as one where a main dish at lunch or dinner costs M\$60 to M\$120. Budget and top-end places are, respectively, less than M\$60 and over M\$120.

Typical restaurant hours are 7am to between 10pm and midnight. If a restaurant has a closing day, it's usually Sunday, Monday or Tuesday. Cafés typically open from 8am to 10pm daily. Bars, too, are normally open daily, but each seems to have its own hours. Travelers should be careful of unpeeled fruit and uncooked vegetables. While visitors with iron stomachs shouldn't have much trouble, those with a delicate constitution will only want to eat uncooked veggies in higher-end restaurants. For a full introduction to Yucatán's distinctive cuisine, see the Food & Drink chapter, p50.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELERS

Mexico is more broad-minded about sexuality than you might expect. Gays and lesbians rarely attract open discrimination or violence. Discrimination based on sexual orientation has been illegal since 1999 and can be punished with up to three years in prison. Gay men have a more public profile than lesbians. Cancún has a fairly active gay scene, and there are a number of gay-friendly hotels in Mérida.

The **International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association** (www.traveligta.com) provides information on the major travel providers in the gay sector. US-based **Arco Iris Tours** (☎ in the USA 800-765-4370; www.arcoiristours.com) specializes in gay travel to Mexico and organizes an annual International Gay Festival in Cancún.

A detailed Mexico gay travel guide and articles are available at **Out&About** (www.gay.com/travel/outandabout). Another good source of information is the **Gay Mexico Network** (www.gaymexico.net). It offers information on gay-friendly hotels and tours in Mexico, and publishes a newsletter offering discounted rooms in gay-friendly accommodations.

HOLIDAYS

The chief holiday periods are Christmas to New Year, *Semana Santa* (the week leading up to Easter and up to a week afterwards), and mid-July to mid-August. Transportation and tourist accommodations are heavily booked at these times.

Banks, post offices, government offices and many shops throughout Mexico are closed on the following national holidays:

Año Nuevo (New Year's Day) January 1

Día de la Constitución (Constitution Day) February 5

Día de la Bandera (Day of the National Flag) February 24

Día de Nacimiento de Benito Juárez (Anniversary of Benito Juárez' birth) March 21

Día del Trabajo (Labor Day) May 1

Cinco de Mayo (Anniversary of Mexico's victory over the French at Puebla) May 5

Día de la Independencia (Independence Day) September 16

Día de la Raza (Columbus' discovery of the New World) October 12

Día de la Revolución (Revolution Day) November 20

Día de Navidad (Christmas Day) December 25

At Easter businesses usually close from Good Friday (*Viernes Santo*) to Easter Sunday (*Domingo de Resurrección*). Many offices and businesses close during major national festivals (see p253).

INSURANCE

A travel insurance policy to cover theft, loss and medical problems is a good idea. Some policies specifically exclude dangerous activities, such as scuba diving, motorcycling and even trekking.

For further information on medical insurance, see p276. Worldwide cover to travelers from over 44 countries is available online at www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services.

For information on motor insurance, see p270.

INTERNET ACCESS

Cybercafés (which charge about M\$10 to M\$15 per hour) and web-based email are common in the Yucatán. A number of cybercafés are equipped with CD burners, webcams, headphones and so on. Few have card readers, so bring your own or the camera-to-USB cable if you plan on burning photos to CD along the way.

Quite a few accommodations provide internet access of some kind (shown as ☑ in this book). Facilities vary from a couple of computers in the lobby, for which you may or may not have to pay, to well-equipped business centers or wi-fi access (*internet inalámbrico*).

You may also be able to connect your own laptop or hand-held device to the internet through the telephone socket in your room. Be aware that your modem may not work once you leave your home country. The safest option is to buy a reputable 'global' modem before you leave home. For lots of useful stuff on connecting to the internet while traveling,

visit **Steve Kropla's Help for World Travellers** (www.kropla.com).

LEGAL MATTERS

Mexican Law

Mexican law presumes an accused person is guilty until proven innocent.

The minimum jail sentence for possession of more than a token amount of any narcotic, including marijuana and amphetamines, is 10 months – trafficking gets you a minimum of 10 years. As in most other countries, the purchase of controlled medication requires a doctor's prescription.

Road travelers should expect occasional police or military checkpoints. They are normally looking for drugs, weapons or illegal migrants.

See p270 for information on the legal aspects of road accidents.

Federal law establishes the minimum age of consent at 12 years, but state laws often override these laws, varying from 14 to 18 years old. For more information on the age of consent and sex tourism, see boxed text, p85.

Useful warnings on Mexican law are found on the website of **US Department of State** (www.travel.state.gov).

MAPS

Free city and regional maps of varying quality are given away by tourist offices around the peninsula.

Quality regional maps include the highly detailed **ITMB** (www.itmb.com) 1:500,000 *Yucatán Peninsula Travel Map* and the sketchier **Guía Roji** (www.guiaroji.com.mx) 1:1,000,000 scale *Maya*

World (M\$60) showing all of the peninsula and parts of Tabasco and Chiapas.

Guía Roji also publishes maps of each Mexican state (M\$50) and an annually updated national road atlas called *Mapa Turístico Carreteras de México* (M\$80). It's widely available throughout Mexico and can be bought from online booksellers. Also useful are Quimera publisher's regional road maps.

Riviera Maya, Cancún, Cozumel, Isla Mujeres, Chichén Itzá and Playa del Carmen foldout maps are published by the American couple behind **Can-Do Maps** (www.cancunmap.com). In addition to containing multiple insert maps, they also have a useful index for restaurants, hotels and attractions.

A good internet source is **Maps of Mexico** (www.maps-of-mexico.com), with detailed maps of all the states.

Inegi (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática; ☎ 800-490-4200; www.inegi.gob.mx) publishes a large-scale map series covering all of Mexico at 1:50,000 and 1:250,000, plus state maps at 1:700,000. Most of these maps have been updated within the past decade, and they are well worth having if you plan to do any hiking or back-country exploring. Inegi's Centros de Información in the peninsula's principal cities sell these maps for M\$40 to M\$60 each. Its addresses:

Campeche (☎ 981-127-3150; Calles 8 & 63, Planta Baja, Edificio Lavalle)

Cancún (Map p77; ☎ 998-884-4099, ext 7943; Av Tankah 70)

Chetumal (☎ 983-832-2733; cr Avs Carmen Ochoa de Merino & Independencia)

Mérida (☎ 999-942-1740; Calle 60 No 378 btwn Calles 39 & 41)

GETTING LEGAL HELP

If arrested, you have the right to notify your embassy or consulate. However, what consular staff can do for you is limited; see p253 for details. The longest a person can be detained by police without a specific accusation is 72 hours.

Tourist offices, especially state-run branches, can often help you with legal problems, such as complaints or reporting crimes, police seeking bribes (see p275) or lost articles. The national tourism ministry, **Sectur** (☎ 078, 800-987-8224), offers 24-hour phone advice.

If you are the victim of a crime, you may feel there is little to gain by going to the police, unless you need a statement to present to your insurance company. If you go to the police and your Spanish is poor, take a more fluent speaker. Also take your passport and tourist card, if you still have them. If you just want to report a theft for the purposes of an insurance claim, say you want to '*poner una acta de un robo*' (make a record of a robbery). This should make it clear that you merely want a piece of paper and you should get it without too much trouble.

MONEY

Mexico's currency is the peso, usually denoted by the 'M\$' sign. Prices are quoted in Mexican pesos in this book. The peso is divided into 100 centavos. Coins come in denominations of 20 and 50 centavos and one, two, five and 10 pesos; notes in 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500 (and occasionally 1000) pesos.

For exchange rates, see the Quick Reference inside this book's front cover. For information on costs, see p20.

The most convenient form of money is a major international credit or debit card – preferably two if you've got them. Visa, MasterCard and American Express cards can be used to obtain cash easily from ATMs in Mexico, and are accepted for payment by most airlines, car-rental companies, travel agents, many upmarket hotels, and some restaurants and shops. Occasionally there's a surcharge for paying by card. Making a purchase by credit card normally gives you a more favorable rate than exchanging money at a bank, but you'll normally have to pay your card issuer a 'foreign exchange' transaction fee of around 2.5%. (They always figure out a way to get you in the end!)

As a backup to credit or debit cards, it's a good idea to take some traveler's checks (*cheques de viajero*) and a little cash. US dollars are by far the most easily exchangeable foreign currency in Mexico (and indeed are common for payment in Cancún and other heavily touristed zones, though the exchange rate is rarely favorable). Euros, British pounds and Canadian dollars, in cash or traveler's checks, are accepted by most banks and some *casas de cambio* (money-exchange bureaus), but acceptance is less certain outside the main cities and tourist centers. American Express traveler's checks are recognized by banks, *casas de cambio* and top-end hotels, but are not accepted in most mom-and-pop establishments.

For tips on keeping your money safe, see p252.

ATMs

ATMs (*caja permanente* or *cajero automático* in Spanish) are plentiful in Yucatán, and are the easiest source of cash. You can use major credit cards and some bank cards, such as those on the Cirrus and Plus systems, to withdraw pesos (or dollars) from ATMs. The exchange rate that banks use for ATM

withdrawals is normally better than the 'tourist rate' – though that advantage may be negated by handling fees, interest charges and other methods that banks have of taking your money.

Banks & Casas de Cambio

You can exchange currency in banks or at *casas de cambio*, which are often single-window kiosks. Banks go through a more time-consuming procedure than *casas de cambio* and usually have shorter hours. *Casas de cambio* can easily be found in just about every large or medium-size town and in many smaller ones. They're quick and often open on evenings or weekends, but be aware that some don't accept traveler's checks.

Currency-exchange rates vary from one bank or *casa de cambio* to another; and there is often a better rate offered for *efectivo* (cash) than for traveler's checks. After hours or on weekends, hotels may exchange currency, though their rates tend to be unfavorable.

International Transfers

Should you need money wired to you in Mexico, an easy and quick method is the 'Dinero en Minutos' (Money in Minutes) service of **Western Union** (☎ in the USA 800-325-6000; www.westernunion.com). The service is offered by thousands of bank branches and other businesses around Mexico, identified by black-and-yellow signs proclaiming 'Western Union Dinero en Minutos.' Your sender pays the money online or at a Western Union branch, along with a fee, and gives the details on who is to receive it and where. When you pick it up, take along photo identification. Western Union has offices worldwide.

US post offices (☎ 888-368-4669; www.usps.com) offer reasonably cheap money transfers to branches of Bancomer bank in Mexico. The service is called Dinero Seguro.

Taxes

Mexico's value-added tax (IVA) is levied at 15%. By law the tax must be included in prices quoted to you and should not be added afterward. Signs in shops and notices on restaurant menus often state '*IVA incluido*.' Occasionally they state instead that IVA must be added to the quoted prices. In Quintana Roo, IVA is 10%.

Hotel rooms are also subject to the lodging tax (ISH). Each Mexican state sets its own rate, but in most it's 2%.

Tippling & Bargaining

In general, employees of small, cheap restaurants don't expect much in the way of tips – though they like to receive them – while those in resorts frequented by foreigners (such as in Cancún and Cozumel) expect you to be lavish in your largesse. At the latter, tipping is up to US levels of 15% or 20%; elsewhere 10% is usually plenty. If you stay a few days in one place, you should leave up to 10% of your room costs for the people who have kept your room clean (assuming they have). A porter in a midrange hotel would be happy with M\$10 per bag. Car-parking attendants expect a tip of M\$3 to M\$5, and the same is standard for gas station attendants. Baggers in supermarkets are usually tipped a peso or two.

Room rates are pretty inflexible, though it can be worth asking if any discounts are available, especially if it's low season or you are going to stay a few nights. In markets bargaining is the rule. You can also sometimes bargain with drivers of unmetered taxis.

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO Film & Equipment

Camera and film-processing shops, pharmacies and hotels sell film. Most types of film are available in larger cities and resorts, though slide film tends to be rarer outside Cancún (where several varieties of Fuji slide film are sold downtown at decent prices), and usually limited to Agfachrome and Kodak's Ektachrome.

Film on sale at low prices may be outdated. If the date on the box is obscured by a price sticker, look under the sticker. Avoid film from sun-exposed shop windows. Print processing (*revelando*) costs under M\$2 per photo; it's almost always done in one hour and quality is usually good.

Most cybercafés can burn your images onto a CD for M\$20 or so.

Video cameras and tapes are widely available at photo supply stores in the largest cities and in towns that receive many tourists. Prices are significantly higher than you may be used to in North America or Europe. Videotapes on sale in Mexico (like the rest of the Americas and Japan) nearly all use the NTSC image registration system. This is incompatible with

the PAL system common to most of Western Europe and Australia, and the Secam system used in France.

If your camera breaks down, you'll be able to find a repair shop in most sizable towns, and prices will be agreeably low.

For more information on taking travel photographs, check out Lonely Planet's *Travel Photography*.

Photographing People & Places

It is illegal to take pictures in Mexican airports and of police stations and penal institutions. Use of a tripod at most ruins sites requires a special (expensive) permit obtainable only in Mexico City.

Be forewarned that a fee for use of video cameras is charged at many ruins and other attractions. At most Maya sites charging an entry fee, you need to pay an extra M\$35 at the first site visited, which gives you a slip you can use all day, at any site you visit.

In general, Yucatecans enjoy having their pictures taken and will be happy to pose for your camera – if you ask. Increasingly, you may be asked to pay for the photo. This is especially true in areas that see heavy tourist traffic.

If local people make any sign of being offended by your desire to photograph them, you should put your camera away and apologize immediately, both out of decency and for your own safety. This is especially so in Chiapas state (see Dangers & Annoyances, p231). Also, many police officers and soldiers do not like having their photos taken.

POST

An airmail letter or postcard weighing up to 20g costs M\$10.50 to send to the USA or Canada, M\$13 to Europe or South America, and M\$14.50 to the rest of the world. Items weighing between 20g and 50g cost M\$17.50 to M\$24.50 (depending on where you are sending them). *Registrado* (registered) service costs an extra M\$5. Mark airmail items 'Vía Aérea.'

Delivery times are elastic (inbound and outbound). An airmail letter from Mexico to the USA or Canada (or vice-versa) should take between four and 14 days. Mail to or from Europe may take between one and three weeks, to Australasia two to three weeks.

Post offices (*oficinas de correos*) are typically open from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday, and 9am to 1pm Saturday.

You can receive letters and packages care of a post office if they're addressed to the post office's *lista de correos* (mail list), as follows:

Kate REID (last name in capitals and underlined)

Lista de Correos

Cozumel

Quintana Roo 77609 (postcode)

MEXICO

When the letter reaches the post office, the name of the addressee is placed on an alphabetical list, which is updated daily and often pinned up on the wall. To claim your mail, present your passport or other identification. There's no charge, but many post offices only hold *lista* mail for 10 days before returning it to the sender. If you think you're going to pick mail up more than 10 days after it has arrived, have it sent to Poste Restante, instead of Lista de Correos. Poste restante may hold mail for up to a month, though no list of what has been received is posted up.

You can also have packages sent to most hotels (but you should ask beforehand).

If you're sending a package internationally from Mexico, be prepared to open it for customs inspection; take packing materials with you to the post office and don't seal it till you get there.

For assured and speedy delivery, you can use one of the more expensive international courier services, such as **UPS** (☎ 800-902-9200; www.ups.com), **FedEx** (☎ 800-900-1100; www.fedex.com) or Mexico's **Estafeta** (☎ 800-903-3500; www.estafeta.com). Packages up to 500g cost about M\$300 to the USA or Canada, and M\$400 to Europe.

SHOPPING

Yucatán travelers will find plenty of wonderful regional handicrafts made predominantly by indigenous people, including hats, hammocks, embroidered clothing and textiles, jewelry and ceramic items. You can buy these *artesanías* in the villages where they are produced, or in stores and markets in larger cities. *Artesanías* stores in cities will give you a good overview of what's available and a basis for price comparisons. Traveling out to craft-making villages gives you a chance to see artisans at work, and if you buy there, you'll know that more of

your money is likely to go to the artisans themselves and less to entrepreneurs.

Prices for handicrafts sold in shops are generally nonnegotiable, while in markets bargaining is the rule.

Refunds of the 10% to 15% IVA tax on some purchases are available for tourists who arrived in Mexico by plane or cruise ship. Under the scheme, goods worth at least M\$1200 (approximately US\$110) from any one store would qualify for the refund, on presentation of receipts with the shop's tax number (*Registro Federal de Causantes*) when the tourist leaves Mexico.

Guayaberas

Guayaberas – light, elegant shirts with four square pockets that are standard businesswear for men in southeast Mexico – originally hail from Yucatán. The best guayaberas can be purchased in Mérida; see p164 for details.

Hammocks

Yucatecan hammocks are renowned for their quality and durability. There are many hammock stores in Mérida, or bargain with sellers ready to do so in the plazas and along the beach, particularly along the Riviera Maya and Isla Holbox, where many residents weave and sell them. For more on hammocks, see boxed text, p163.

Hats

Attractive and comfortable panama hats, called *jipijapas*, are woven from locally grown palm fibers in Bécál (p214) in Campeche state. For more about the hats, see boxed text, p214.

Huipiles

Proudly sported by Yucatecan women across the social spectrum, the *huipil* is an instantly recognizable white tunic with brightly colored flower embroidery around the yoke and near the bottom of the dress. For more information about *huipiles*, see p46.

Pottery & Other Items

Earthenware pots of varying quality can be found across the peninsula. Among the most interesting are those crafted in Ticul (p176), in Yucatán state, where pottery-making predates the Spanish conquest by hundreds of years. Ticul is equally noted for its fine reproductions of archaeological pieces.

Also widely available in the region are handmade blankets, leather goods, decorative cloth, wicker baskets, brilliantly painted gourds and lots of amber jewelry. Filigreed silver baubles are often a good buy in the Yucatán as well.

Edible and drinkable products worth taking back with you include honey, a substance that has been produced by Maya beekeepers for centuries, and a special kind of tequila made from the henequen plant that is produced near Izamal.

SOLO TRAVELERS

A single room normally costs a little less than a double room, but budget travelers can cut accommodation costs by staying in Mexico's increasing number of hostels. Hostels have the additional advantage of providing ready-made company, and often a lot of fun and helpful travel tips. It's often easy to pair up with others at a hostel as there's a steady stream of people following much similar routes. In well-touristed places, notice boards advertise for traveling companions, flatmates, volunteer workers and so on.

Solo travelers should be especially watchful of their luggage when on the road and should stay in places with good security for their valuables. One big drag of traveling alone can be when you want to take a quick dip in the ocean – you're stuck with your possessions and there's no one to watch out for them.

Traveling alone, though, can be a very good way of getting into the local culture and it definitely improves your Spanish skills as Mexicans are very sociable. Single women can also check out the advice on p264.

TELEPHONE & FAX

Local calls are cheap; international calls can be expensive, but needn't be if you call from the right place at the right time. Mexico is well provided with fairly easy-to-use public card phones. *Locutorios* and *casetas de teléfono* (call offices where an on-the-spot operator connects the call for you) are quite widespread and can be cheaper than card phones. Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) calling is available from many internet cafés and is a great money-saver. A final option is to call from your hotel, but hotels charge what they like for this service. It's nearly always cheaper to go elsewhere.

Calling (Phone) Cards

Some phone (or calling) cards from other countries can be used for making phone calls from Mexico by dialing special access numbers:

AT&T (☎ 01-800-288-2872, 001-800-462-4240)

Bell Canada (☎ 01-800-123-0200, 01-800-021-1994)

BT Chargecard (☎ 01-800-123-02-44)

MCI (☎ 001-800-674-7000)

Sprint (☎ 001-800-877-8000)

Warning: if you get an operator who asks for your credit card instead of your calling-card number, or says the service is unavailable, hang up. There have been scams in which calls are rerouted to super-expensive credit-card phone services.

Cell Phones

Like other Mexican phone numbers, every cell (cellular, mobile) phone number has an area code (usually the code of the city where the phone was bought). When calling a cell phone from that same city, you usually need to dial ☎ 044, followed by the area code and number. When calling from other cities, dial ☎ 01 (the normal long-distance prefix), followed by the area code and number. The owner of the phone receiving the call has to pay a small amount as well as the caller.

If you want to use a cell phone in Mexico, one option for short visits is to get an international plan for your own phone, which will enable you to call home. You can also buy a Mexican cell phone for as little as M\$300 to M\$600, including some air time. The most widespread cellular phone system in Mexico is **Telcel** (www.telcel.com), with coverage almost everywhere that has a significant population. Amigo cards, for recharging Telcel phones, are widely available from newsstands and minimarts. Other companies are **Unefon** (www.unefon.com.mx), with coverage mainly in the major cities; **Iusacell** (www.iusacell.com.mx); and **Movistar** (www.telefoniamovistar.com.mx). If you already have a Movistar phone from another country, you can insert a Mexican Movistar SIM card into it.

For further information, contact your service provider or visit **Steve Kropla's Help for World Travellers** (www.kropla.com), or www.gsmcoverage.co.uk, which has coverage maps, lists of roaming partners and links to phone companies' websites.

Collect Calls

Una llamada por cobrar (collect call) can cost the receiving party much more than if they call you, so you may prefer to pay for a quick call to the other party to ask them to call you back. If you do need to make a collect call, you can do so from card phones without a card. Call an operator at ☎ 020 for domestic calls, or ☎ 090 for international calls, or use a 'home country direct' service through which you make an international collect call via an operator in the country you're calling. The Mexican term for 'home country direct' is *país directo*: but don't count on Mexican international operators knowing the access codes for all countries.

Some *casetas* and hotels will make collect calls for you, but they usually charge for the service.

Fax

Public fax service is offered in many Mexican towns by the public *telégrafos* (telegraph) office or the companies Telecom and Computel. Also look for 'Fax' or 'Fax Público' signs on shops, businesses and *casetas*, and in bus stations and airports. Typically you will pay around M\$10 per page to the USA or Canada.

Locutorios & Casetas de Teléfono

Costs in *casetas de teléfono* and *locutorios* are often lower than those for Telmex card phones, and their advantages are that they eliminate street noise and you don't need a phone card to use them. They often have a phone symbol outside, or signs saying '*teléfono*', '*Lada*' or '*Larga Distancia*'.

Prefixes & Codes

To call a town or city in Mexico other than the one you're in, you need to dial the long-distance prefix (☎ 01), followed by the area code (two digits for Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey; three digits for everywhere else) and then the local number. For example, to make a call from Cancún to Mérida, dial ☎ 01, then the Mérida area code ☎ 999, then the seven-digit local number. You'll find area codes listed under city and town headings throughout this book.

To make international calls, you need to dial the international prefix ☎ 00, followed by the country code, area code and local number. For example, to call New York City,

dial ☎ 00, then the US country code ☎ 1, the New York City area code ☎ 212, then the local number.

To call a number in Mexico from another country, dial your international access code, then the Mexico country code ☎ 52, then the area code and number.

Public Card Phones

These are common in towns and cities: you'll usually find some at airports, bus stations and around the main plazas. Easily the most common, and most reliable on costs, are those marked with the name of the country's biggest phone company, Telmex. To use a Telmex card phone you need a phone card known as a *tarjeta Ladatel*. These are sold at kiosks and shops everywhere – look for the blue-and-yellow signs that read '*De venta aquí Ladatel*.' The cards come in denominations of M\$30, M\$50 and M\$100.

Calls from Telmex card phones cost M\$1 per minute for local calls; M\$4 per minute long-distance within Mexico; M\$5 per minute to the USA or Canada; M\$10 per minute to Central America; M\$20 per minute to Europe, Alaska or South America; and M\$25 per minute to Hawaii, Australia, New Zealand or Asia.

In some parts of Mexico frequented by foreign tourists, you may notice a variety of phones that advertise that they accept credit cards or that you can make easy collect calls to the USA on them. While some of these phones may be a fair value, there are others on which very high rates are charged. Be 100% sure about what you'll pay before making a call on a non-Telmex phone.

Toll-Free & Operator Numbers

Mexican toll-free numbers (☎ 800 followed by seven digits) always require the ☎ 01 prefix. You can call most of these and the ☎ 060 and ☎ 080 emergency numbers from Telmex pay phones without inserting a phone card.

Most US and Canadian toll-free numbers are ☎ 800 or ☎ 888 followed by seven digits. These can be reached from Mexico, by dialing ☎ 001 then replacing the prefix with ☎ 880, but there is a charge for the call.

For a Mexican domestic operator, dial ☎ 020; for an international operator, dial ☎ 090. For Mexican directory information, dial ☎ 040.

To access the Mexican yellow pages online, go to www.seccionamarilla.com.mx.

VOIP

Many internet cafés offer Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) calling. Using services like **Skype** (www.skype.com), travelers can call internationally to and from Mexico at a fraction of the price.

TIME

The entire Yucatán Peninsula observes the Hora del Centro, which is the same as US Central Time – GMT minus six hours in winter, and GMT minus five hours during daylight saving time. Daylight saving time (*horario de verano*, summer time) runs from the first Sunday in April to the last Sunday in October. Clocks go forward one hour in April and back one hour in October.

The fabled relaxed Mexican attitude toward time and urgency – *mañana, mañana* – is still practiced, especially outside the big cities. Most Mexicans value *simpatía* (congeniality) over promptness. But if something is really worth doing, it gets done.

TOILETS

Public toilets are rare, so take advantage of facilities in places such as hotels, restaurants, bus terminals and museums; a fee of about M\$2 may be charged. It's fairly common for toilets in budget hotels and restaurants to lack seats. When out and about, carry some toilet paper with you because it often won't be provided. If there's a bin beside the toilet, put soiled paper in it because the drains can't cope otherwise.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Just about every town of interest to tourists in the Yucatán has a state or municipal tourist office. They are generally helpful with maps, brochures and questions, and often some staff members speak English.

You can call the Mexico City office of the national tourism ministry **Sectur** (☎ 55-5250-0123/51, 800-903-9200, in the USA & Canada 800-446-3942, 800-482-9832, in Europe 800-1111-2266; www.visitmexico.com) at any time – 24 hours a day, seven days a week – for information or help in English or Spanish.

Here are the contact details for the head tourism offices of each state covered in this book:

Campeche (☎ 981-811-9229, 800-900-2267; www.campechetravel.com)

Chiapas (☎ 961-617-0550, 800-280-3500; www.turismochiapas.gob.mx)

Quintana Roo (☎ 983-835-0860; sedetur.qroo.gob.mx, in Spanish)

Tabasco (☎ 993-316-3633, 800-216-0842; www.visitetabasco.com)

Yucatán (☎ 999-930-3760; www.mayayucatan.com)

TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

Lodgings on the Yucatán Peninsula are generally not disabled-friendly, though some hotels and restaurants (mostly towards the top end of the market) and some public buildings now provide wheelchair access. The absence of institutionalized facilities is largely compensated for, however, by Mexicans' accommodating attitudes toward others, and special arrangements are gladly improvised.

Mobility is easiest in the major tourist resorts and the more expensive hotels. Bus transportation can be difficult; flying or taking a taxi is easier.

Mobility International USA (☎ in the USA 541-343-1284; www.miusa.org) advises disabled travelers on mobility issues. Its website includes international databases of exchange programs and disability organizations with several Mexican organizations listed.

In the UK, **Radar** (☎ 020-7250-3222; www.radar.org.uk) is run by and for disabled people. Its excellent website has links to good travel-specific sites.

Two further sources for disabled travelers are **MossRehab ResourceNet** (www.mossresourcenet.org) and **Access-able Travel Source** (www.access-able.com).

VISAS

Every tourist must have an easily obtainable Mexican government tourist card (opposite). Some nationalities also need to obtain visas. Because the regulations sometimes change, it's wise to confirm them with a Mexican embassy or consulate before you go (see p253). **Lonely Planet** (www.lonelyplanet.com) has links to updated visa information.

Citizens of the USA, Canada, EU countries, Australia, New Zealand, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Norway and Switzerland are among those who do not require visas to enter Mexico as tourists. The list changes from time to time; check well ahead of travel. Visa procedures, for those who need them, can take several

weeks and you may be required to apply in your country of residence or citizenship.

For information on passport requirements, see p266. Non-US citizens passing (even in transit) through the USA on the way to or from Mexico, or visiting Mexico from the USA, should also check the passport and visa requirements for the USA.

Tourist Card & Tourist Fee

The Mexican tourist card – officially the *forma migratoria para turista* (FMT) – is a brief card document that you must fill out and get stamped by Mexican immigration when you enter Mexico and keep till you leave. It's available at official border crossings, international airports and ports, and often from airlines, travel agencies and Mexican consulates. At the US–Mexico border you won't usually be given one automatically – you have to ask for it.

At many US–Mexico border crossings you don't have to get the card stamped at the border itself, as Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Migración (INM; National Immigration Institute) has control points on the highways where it's also possible to do it. But it's preferable to get it done at the border itself, in case there are complications elsewhere.

A tourist card only permits you to engage in what are considered to be tourist activities (including sports, health, artistic and cultural activities). If the purpose of your visit is to work (even as a volunteer), to report or to study, or to participate in humanitarian aid or human-rights observation, you may well need a visa. Check with a Mexican embassy or consulate (p253).

The maximum possible stay is 180 days for most nationalities (90 days for Australians, Austrians, Israelis and Italians, among others), but immigration officers will often put a much lower number (as little as 15 or 30 days in some cases) unless you tell them specifically that you need, say, 90 or 180 days. It's advisable to ask for more days than you think you'll need.

Though the tourist card itself is issued free of charge, a tourist fee of about M\$200, called the *derecho para no inmigrante* (DNI; nonimmigrant fee), will need to be paid before you leave the country. If you enter Mexico by air, however, the fee is included in your airfare. If you enter by land, you must pay the fee at a bank in Mexico at any time before you re-enter the frontier zone

on your way out of Mexico (or before you check in at an airport to fly out of Mexico). Most Mexican border posts have on-the-spot bank offices where you can pay the DNI fee. When you pay at a bank, your tourist card will be stamped to prove that you have paid.

Look after your tourist card because it may be checked when you leave the country. You can be fined M\$420 for not having it.

EXTENSIONS & LOST CARDS

If the number of days given on your tourist card is less than the maximum for your nationality (90 or 180 days in most cases), its validity may be extended one or more times, up to the maximum. To get a card extended you have to apply to the INM, which has offices in many towns and cities (see www.inm.gob.mx for a list, under Servicios Migratorios/Oficinas y horarios de atención). The procedure costs around M\$200 and takes up to three hours. You'll need your passport, tourist card, photocopies of the important pages of these documents and, at some offices, evidence of 'sufficient funds.' A major credit card is usually OK for the latter, or an amount in traveler's checks anywhere from M\$1000 to M\$10,000 depending on the office.

Most INM offices will not extend a card until a few days before it is due to expire; don't bother trying earlier.

If you lose your card or need further information, contact your nearest tourist office, or the **Sectur tourist office** (☎ 55-5250-0123, 800-903-9200) in Mexico City, or your embassy or consulate. Any of these should be able to give you an official note to take to your local INM office, which will issue a duplicate for M\$420.

Under-18 Travelers

To conform with regulations aimed at preventing international child abduction, minors (people aged under 18) traveling to Mexico without one or both of their parents may need to carry a notarized consent form signed by the absent parent or parents, giving permission for the young traveler to make the international journey. Though Mexico does not specifically require this documentation, airlines flying to Mexico may refuse to board passengers without it. In the case of divorced parents, a custody document may be required. If one or both parents are dead, or the traveler

has only one legal parent, a death certificate or notarized statement of the situation may be required.

These rules are aimed primarily at visitors from the USA and Canada but may also apply to people from elsewhere. Procedures vary from country to country; contact your country's foreign affairs department and/or a Mexican consulate to find out exactly what you need to do. Forms for the purposes required are usually available from these authorities.

WOMEN TRAVELERS

Women can have a great time in Mexico, traveling with companions or traveling solo, but in this land that invented machismo, some concessions have to be made to local custom. Gender equalization has come a long way in a few decades, and Mexicans are generally a very polite people, but they remain, by and large, great believers in the difference (rather than the equality) between the sexes.

Women traveling alone can expect a few catcalls and attempts to chat them up. Often you can discourage unwanted attention by

avoiding eye contact (wear sunglasses), dressing modestly, moving confidently and speaking coolly but politely if you feel that you must respond. Wearing a wedding ring can prove helpful, too. Don't put yourself in peril by doing things that Mexican women would not do, such as challenging a man's masculinity, drinking alone in a cantina, hitchhiking or going alone to isolated places. Keep a clear head. Lone women, and even pairs of women, should be cautious about going to remote beach spots.

In beach resorts many Mexican women dress in shorts, skimpy tops or dresses, and swimsuits of all sizes, though others bow to modesty and swim in shorts and a T-shirt. On the streets of cities and towns you'll notice that women cover up and don't display too much leg or even their shoulders.

On local transportation, especially long journeys, it's best to don long or mid-calf-length trousers and a top that meets the top of your pants, with sleeves of some sort. That way you'll feel most comfortable, and you also have the benefit of keeping your valuables out of sight with ease.

Most of all, appear self-assured.

WORK

Mexicans themselves need jobs, and people who enter Mexico as tourists are not legally allowed to take employment. The many expats working in Mexico have usually been posted there by their companies or organizations with all the necessary papers.

English speakers (and a few German or French speakers) may find teaching jobs in language schools, *preparatorias* (high schools) or universities, or can offer personal tutoring. The pay is low, but you can live on it.

A foreigner working in Mexico normally needs a permit or government license, but a school will often pay a foreign teacher in the form of a *beca* (scholarship), and thus circumvent the law, or the school's administration will procure the appropriate papers.

Apart from teaching, you might find a little bar or restaurant work in tourist areas. It's likely to be part-time and short-term.

Jobs Abroad (www.jobsabroad.com) posts paid and unpaid job openings in Mexico. **Lonely Planet** (www.lonelyplanet.com) has several useful links.

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

Many opportunities exist for short- or longer-term unpaid work (or work that you pay to do) in Mexico. Projects range from sea-turtle conservation to human-rights observation to work with abused children.

- **Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations** (www.alliance-network.org) A good service for Europeans.
- **AmeriSpan** (www.amerispan.com) Offers volunteer opportunities in environmental education and other areas.
- **Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service** (www.unesco.org/ccivs) UNESCO's volunteer service wing.
- **Council on International Educational Exchange** (www.ciee.org) Arranges volunteer trips.
- **Global Exchange** (www.globalexchange.org) Needs Spanish-speaking volunteer human-rights observers to live for six to eight weeks in peace camps in Chiapas villages threatened by violence.
- **Pronatura** (<http://english.pronatura-ppy.org.mx>) An environmental NGO that seeks volunteers to work with sea-turtle nesting areas in the Yucatán and in other projects.
- **Sipaz** (www.sipaz.org) An international peace group, Sipaz needs Spanish-speaking volunteers to work for a year or more in Chiapas.
- **Vive Mexico** (www.vivemexico.org) NGO that coordinates international social, ecological and cultural work camps in Mexico.
- **Volunteer Abroad** (www.volunteerabroad.com) Has a very wide range of volunteer openings in Mexico.

Transportation

CONTENTS

Getting There & Away	266
Entering the Country	266
Air	266
Land	269
River	270
Sea	270
Getting Around	270
Air	270
Bicycle	270
Boat	271
Bus & Colectivo	271
Car & Motorcycle	272
Hitchhiking	275
Tours	275
Trains	275

GETTING THERE & AWAY

ENTERING THE COUNTRY

Mexican immigration officers usually won't keep you waiting any longer than it takes to flick through your passport and enter your length of stay on your tourist card. Stay patient and polite, even if the procedure takes some time to complete. Anyone traveling to Mexico via the USA should be sure to check US visa and passport requirements.

Flights, tours and train tickets can all be booked online at www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services.

Passport

All international travelers – including Canadian and US nationals – will need a valid passport to enter the country, whether they enter by land, air or sea. These passport requirements were recently implemented. For full details, visit the **US State Department website** (www.travel.state.gov).

In Mexico you will often need your passport if you change money or you may be asked to show it when you check into a hotel. Make sure it is valid for at least six months after arriving in Mexico. Before you leave, get photocopies of the main page of your passport as well as your visa and airline tickets in the event the originals are lost or stolen.

For information on Mexican visa requirements and the tourist card, see p262. Travelers under 18 who are not accompanied by both their parents may need special documentation (see p263).

AIR

Most visitors to the Yucatán arrive by air. Air routes are structured so that virtually all international flights into the region pass through a handful of 'hub' cities: Dallas/Fort Worth, Houston, Los Angeles, Mexico City, Miami or New York.

Airports & Airlines

The majority of flights into the peninsula arrive at busy **Aeropuerto Internacional de Cancún** (CUN; ☎ 998-886-0047; www.cancun-airport.com). The region's other gateways are **Cozumel airport** (CZM; ☎ 987-872-2081; www.asur.com.mx); **Chetumal** (CTM; ☎ 983-832-0898), **Mérida** (MID; ☎ 999-946-1530; www.asur.com.mx) and Campeche (CPE).

Mexico's two flag airlines are Mexicanair and Aeroméxico. Formerly state-controlled, Mexicanair was bought by Grupo Posadas, Mexico's biggest hotel company, in 2005, and Aeroméxico was sold to Banamex in 2007. Their safety records are comparable to major US and European airlines.

AIRLINES FLYING TO/FROM THE YUCATÁN

Aeroméxico (code AM; ☎ 800-021-4010; www.aero.mexico.com; hub Mexico City); Campeche (☎ 981-823-4044); Cancún (☎ 998-287-1868); Mérida (☎ 999-920-1293)

THINGS CHANGE...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works, and be aware of the security requirements for international travel, especially if traveling via the USA. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

Alaska Airlines (code AS; ☎ 800-252-7522; www.alaskaair.com; hub Seattle)

America West (code HP; ☎ 800-428-4322; www.americawest.com; hub Phoenix)

American Airlines (code AA; ☎ 800-904-6000; www.aa.com; hub Dallas)

ATA (code ATA; ☎ 800-435-9282; www.ata.com; hub Chicago)

Aviaca (code 6A; ☎ 800-284-2272; www.aviaca.com; hub Mexico City)

Click Mexicana (code QA; ☎ 800-122-5425; www.clickmx.com; hubs Cancún & Mexico City)

Continental Airlines (code CO; ☎ 800-900-5000; www.continental.com; hub Houston)

Cubana (code CU; ☎ 52-5250-6355; www.cubana.co.cu; hub Havana)

Delta Airlines (code DL; ☎ 800-123-4710; www.delta.com; hub Atlanta)

Frontier Airlines (code F9; ☎ in the USA 800-432-1359; www.frontierairlines.com; hub Denver)

LTU (code LT; ☎ in Germany 211-9418-333; www.ltu.de; hub Düsseldorf)

Mexicana de Aviación (code MX; ☎ 800-801-2010; www.mexicana.com; hub Mexico City)

TACA Airlines (code TA; ☎ 800-400-8222; www.taca.com; hub San Salvador)

US Airways (code US; ☎ 800-428-4322; www.usairways.com; hub Philadelphia)

Tickets

The cost of flying to the Yucatán is usually higher around Christmas and New Year, and during July and August. Also, weekends can be more costly than weekdays. During US spring break (roughly mid-March to mid-April) Cancún attracts swarms of college students and inexpensive fares vanish months in advance. In addition to websites and ticket agents such as those recommended following, it's often worth checking the airlines' own websites for special deals. Newspapers, magazines and websites serving Mexican communities in other countries are also good sources. **Lonely Planet** (www.lonelyplanet.com) has good links, too.

On flights to and within Mexico, children under two generally travel for 10% of the adult fare, as long as they do not occupy a seat, and those aged two to 11 normally pay 67%.

If the Yucatán is part of a trip encompassing other countries, the best ticket for you may be an open jaw (where you fly into one place and out of another, covering the intervening distance by land), or a

round-the-world ticket (these can cost as little as UK£900, A\$2100 or US\$1700), or a Circle Pacific ticket, which uses a combination of airlines to circle the Pacific. **Airtreks** (www.airtreks.com) is one good source for multistop tickets.

International online booking agencies worth a look include **CheapTickets** (www.cheaptickets.com) and, for students and travelers under the age of 26, **STA Travel** (www.statravel.com).

Asia

From Asia you normally have to make a connection in the USA or Canada (often Los Angeles, San Francisco or Vancouver), and maybe one in Asia as well. From more westerly Asian points such as Bangkok, routes via Europe are also an option.

No 1 Travel (☎ 03-3205-6073; www.no1-travel.com) Good Japanese option.

STA Travel Bangkok (☎ 2236-0262; www.statravel.co.th); Hong Kong (☎ 2736-1618; www.statravel.com.hk); Singapore (☎ 6737-7188; www.statravel.com.sg); Tokyo (☎ 03-5391-2922; www.statravel.co.jp) STA proliferates in Asia.

Australia & New Zealand

The cheapest routes are usually via the USA (normally Los Angeles). You're normally looking at A\$2300 or NZ\$2300 or more, round-trip (plus several hundred dollars extra at high season).

The following are well-known agents for cheap fares, with branches throughout both countries:

Flight Centre Australia (☎ 133-133; www.flightcentre.com.au); New Zealand (☎ 0800-243-544; www.flightcentre.co.nz)

STA Travel Australia (☎ 134-782; www.statravel.com.au); New Zealand (☎ 0800-474-400; www.statravel.co.nz)

For online fares try www.travel.com.au or www.zuji.com from Australia, and www.travel.co.nz or www.zuji.co.nz from New Zealand.

Canada

Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver all have direct flights to Mexico, though better deals are often available with a change of flight in the US. Round-trip fares from Toronto start around C\$900 to Cancún. **Travel Cuts** (☎ 866-246-9762; www.travelcuts.com) is Canada's national student-travel agency. For online bookings try www.kayak.com, www.expedia.ca and www.travelocity.ca.

Central & South America and Cuba

There are direct flights to Cancún from Guatemala City and Flores (Guatemala), Havana, Panama City and São Paulo. The Havana–Cancún flights continue to Mérida. Round-trip fares start around M\$5000 from Guatemala City and M\$8000 to M\$10,000 from South America.

It is illegal for US nationals to visit Cuba, in most circumstances. However, many US visitors visit Cuba through Cancún. If you choose to do this, ensure you get an entry stamp on a piece of paper (and not in your passport); otherwise the US authorities will not be impressed.

Recommended ticket agencies include the following:

Asatej (☎ 011-4114-7595; www.asatej.com) In Argentina.

IVI Tours (☎ 0212-993-6082; www.ividivenezuela.com) In Venezuela.

Student Travel Bureau (☎ 11-3038-1555; www.stb.com.br) In Brazil.

Viajo.com (www.viajo.com) Online and phone bookings from several countries.

Europe

There are few direct flights to Cancún; airlines that do so include Aeroméxico and LTU. One

alternative is to fly to Mexico City; another is to change planes in the USA or Canada.

Round-trip fares to Cancún start around €600 to €700. The two budget airlines (LTU from Düsseldorf and Jetair from Brussels) can save you a couple of hundred euros if you choose your dates carefully.

For online bookings throughout Europe, try www.opodo.com or www.ebookers.com.

CONTINENTAL EUROPE

France

Nouvelles Frontières (☎ 08-25-00-07-47; www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr)

OTU Voyages (☎ 01-55-82-32-33; www.otu.fr) A student and youth travel specialist.

Voyageurs du Monde (☎ 08-92-234-834; www.vdm.com)

Germany

Expedia (www.expedia.de)

Just Travel (☎ 089-747-3330; www.justtravel.de)

STA Travel (☎ 069-743-032-92; www.statravel.de) For travelers aged under 26.

Other Countries

Airfair (☎ 0900-771-7717; www.airfair.nl) Dutch.

CTS Viaggi (☎ 199-501-150; www.cts.it) Italian specialist in student and youth travel.

eDreams (☎ 902-422-433; www.edreams.es) Spanish.

CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

Flying & Climate Change

Pretty much every form of motorized travel generates CO₂ (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

Carbon Offset Schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow travelers to offset the level of greenhouse gases they are responsible for with financial contributions to sustainable travel schemes that reduce global warming – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, supports the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: www.lonelyplanet.com.

DEPARTURE TAX

A departure tax equivalent to about M\$250 is levied on international flights from Mexico. It's usually included in the price of your ticket, but if it isn't, you must pay in cash during airport check-in. Ask your travel agent in advance.

Kilroy Travels (www.kilroytravels.com) Covers Scandinavia.
Rumbo (☎ 902-123-999; www.rumbo.es) Spanish.

UK

Flight advertisements appear in the travel pages of the weekend broadsheet newspapers, in *Time Out*, the *Evening Standard* and free online magazine *TNT* (www.tntmagazine.com).

An excellent place to start your inquiries is **Journey Latin America** (☎ 020-8747-3108; www.journeylatinamerica.co.uk), which offers a variety of tours as well as flights. Other recommended agencies include the following:

Flight Centre (☎ 0870-499-0040; www.flightcentre.co.uk)

Flightbookers (☎ 0871-223-5000; www.ebookers.com)

STA Travel (☎ 0871-230-0040; www.statravel.co.uk)

For travelers under the age of 26.

Travelbag (☎ 0800-804-8911; www.travelbag.co.uk)

USA

From the USA you can fly to airports on the Yucatán Peninsula nonstop or with just one stop from several US cities. If you're lucky you can get round-trip fares to Cancún for as low as US\$250. If you're not so lucky, 'budget' operators can cost as much as other airlines. For current bargain offers, check **Airfare Watchdog** (www.airfarewatchdog.com). Some typical discounted low-season fares to Cancún include: Chicago (US\$350), Los Angeles (US\$400), Miami (US\$350) and New York (US\$450). In high season you may have to pay an additional US\$100 to US\$200.

San Francisco is the ticket consolidator (discounter) capital of the USA, but good deals can also be found in other big cities. The following agencies are recommended for online bookings. They offer competitive fares year-round, if you book ahead.

- www.cheaptickets.com
- www.expedia.com
- www.kayak.com

- www.lowestfare.com
- www.orbitz.com
- www.sta.com (for students and travelers under 26)
- www.travelocity.com

LAND Border Crossings

Mexico can be entered from the USA at around 40 official road-crossing points.

Crossing the Mexico–Belize border at the southern tip of Quintana Roo is easy for most tourists. Although there have been isolated reports of authorities requiring a minimum 72-hour stay in Belize, official word is that day visitors are welcome, and there are no special fees for such a visit; see boxed text, p146.

An old bridge on the Río Hondo at the town of Subteniente López, 8km southwest of Chetumal, marks the official crossing point.

At the time of writing, each person leaving Belize for Mexico needed to pay a departure tax of M\$100 and an 'environment tax' of M\$37.50 at the border. An additional M\$42.50 is charged for fumigation of private vehicles. All fees must be paid in cash (in Belizean or US currency), and officials usually won't have change for US currency. For Mexican entry requirements, see p262.

Bus

Buses run between Chetumal (Quintana Roo) and Belize City (M\$100, four hours). **Novelo's Bus Line** (☎ in Belize City 227-2025) runs around 20 buses a day on this route passing through the Belizean towns of Corozal and Orange Walk.

There are a few daily buses between Flores, Guatemala, and Chetumal (M\$290, seven to eight hours), via Belize City, run by **Línea Dorada** (☎ in Flores 7926-0070) and **San Juan Travel** (☎ in Flores 7926-0041).

Car & Motorcycle

Driving a car into Mexico is most useful for travelers who:

- like to get off the beaten track;
- have surfboards, kayaks, diving equipment or other cumbersome luggage;
- will be traveling with other companions.

You can check the full requirements for bringing a vehicle into Mexico with the **American Automobile Association** (AAA; www.aaa.com),

Sanborn's (☎ 800-222-0158; www.sanbornsinsurance.com), a Mexican consulate or Mexican tourist information (in the USA and Canada ☎ 800-446-3942, ☎ 800-482-9832).

For information on driving and motorcycling around the Yucatán, see p272.

INSURANCE

It is very foolish to drive in Mexico without Mexican liability insurance. If you are involved in an accident, you can be jailed and have your vehicle impounded while responsibility and restitution is assessed.

RIVER

From Flores, Guatemala you can take the Río Usumacinta route to Palenque or Yaxchilán, in Chiapas, Mexico. Several daily 2nd-class buses run from Flores to Bethel (M\$40, four hours), on the Guatemalan bank of the Usumacinta. The 40-minute boat trip from Bethel to Frontera Corozal, Mexico, costs M\$75 to M\$133 per person; an alternative is to take a bus from Flores that continues through Bethel to La Técnica (M\$50, five to six hours), from where it's only a M\$15, five-minute river crossing to Frontera Corozal. Vans run from Frontera Corozal to Palenque (M\$60, three hours, 10 daily). From Frontera Corozal, it's well worth first detouring to the outstanding Maya ruins at Yaxchilán. Travel agencies in Palenque and Flores offer bus-boat-bus packages between the two places from around M\$300.

SEA

The cruise ship-vehicle ferry between Tampa (Florida) and Progreso, in Yucatán state, is no longer operating.

There are several ports-of-call in the region, including Puerto Morelos, Calica (south of Playa del Carmen) and Progreso. The Costa Maya port in Mahahual was destroyed by Hurricane Dean, but there are plans to rebuild it.

Following are some of the cruise lines visiting Mexico, with US phone numbers:

Carnival Cruise Lines (☎ 888-227-6482; www.carnival.com)

Crystal Cruises (☎ 800-804-1500; www.crystalcruises.com)

Holland America Line (☎ 877-724-5425; www.hollandamerica.com)

Norwegian Cruise Lines (☎ 800-327-7030; www.nd.com)

P&O Cruises (☎ 415-382-8900; www.pocruises.com)

Princess Cruises (☎ 800-774-6237; www.princess.com)

Royal Caribbean International (☎ 800-398-9813; www.royalcaribbean.com)

GETTING AROUND

AIR

Airlines in the Yucatán

Flights from other parts of Mexico arrive at the airports of Campeche, Mérida, Cancún, Cozumel, Playa del Carmen, Ciudad del Carmen and Chetumal. Another useful gateway for the region is Tuxtla Gutiérrez, which services San Cristóbal de Las Casas in Chiapas. For details, see the Getting There & Away sections of those cities.

Aeroméxico and Mexicana are the country's two major airlines. There are also numerous smaller ones, often cheaper and providing service between provincial cities. The US Federal Aviation Administration considers Mexico to be in compliance with international aviation safety standards.

Each of the following has domestic flights within the Yucatán.

Aeromar (code BQ; ☎ 800-237-6627; www.aeromar.com.mx) Also services central Mexico, west, northeast and the Gulf Coast.

Aeroméxico (code AM; ☎ 800-021-4010; www.aeromexico.com) More than 50 cities nationwide.

Aviaca (code 6A; ☎ 800-284-2272; www.aviaca.com) Services 20 cities around the country.

Click Mexicana (code QA; ☎ 800-122-5425; www.clickmx.com) Connections to Veracruz, Guadalajara, Toluca and other cities around the country.

Interjet (☎ 800-011-2345; www.interjet.com.mx) Services to Toluca, Guadalajara and Monterrey.

Magnicharters (☎ in Cancún 800-201-1404; www.magnicharters.com.mx) Mexico City, Guadalajara, Monterrey, León and San Luis Potosí.

Mexicana de Aviación (code MX; ☎ 800-400-8222; www.mexicana.com) More than 50 cities nationwide.

Volaris (☎ 800-786-5274; www.volaris.com.mx) Toluca, Guadalajara, León and Monterrey.

BICYCLE

Cycling on the peninsula's highways can be hair-raising because of the narrow shoulders and speeding traffic. Many routes see a lot of local bicycle traffic, but on some of them you'll often see cyclists, pedestrians and even dogs step off the pavement and wait by the side of the road until traffic passes.

The tropical sun can be brutal, but at least the roads are mostly flat. If you're bringing your own bike to tour, be prepared to handle your own repairs.

For details on bike rental, see p68.

Purchase

Of course it's possible to purchase a bicycle in the Yucatán. Indeed, if you plan on staying on the peninsula for months and want to get around by bike or at least exercise on one, purchasing isn't a bad option, as there are many inexpensive models available in the big cities. A good place to pick up a cheap bike is the duty-free Zona Libre between Belize and Mexico; see p147.

BOAT

Ferries run from the mainland to Isla Mujeres (p95), Isla Cozumel (p117) and Isla Holbox (p98).

BUS & COLECTIVO

The Yucatán Peninsula has a good road and bus network, and comfortable, frequent, reasonably priced bus services connect all cities. Most cities and towns have one main bus terminal where all long-distance buses arrive and depart. It may be called the Terminal de Autobuses, Central de Autobuses, Central Camionera or simply La Central (not to be confused with *el centro*, the city center!). If there is no single main terminal, different bus companies will have separate terminals scattered around town.

Baggage is safe if stowed in the bus's baggage hold, but get a receipt for it when you hand it over. Keep your valuables (passport, money etc) on you, and keep them closely protected.

Highway robbery happens very occasionally, usually at night, on isolated stretches of highway. See p252 for details.

Classes

DELUXE

De lujo (deluxe) services, sometimes termed *ejecutivo* (executive), run mainly on the busy routes. They are swift, modern and comfortable, with reclining seats, adequate legroom, air-con, few or no stops, toilets on board (but not necessarily toilet paper), and sometimes drinks or snacks. Deluxe buses usually show movies on video screens, and may offer headphones.

DOMESTIC DEPARTURE TAX

There are two taxes on domestic flights: IVA, the value-added tax (15%), and TUA, an airport tax of about M\$85. In Mexico, the taxes are normally included in quoted fares and paid when you buy the ticket. If you bought the ticket outside of Mexico, though, you will have to pay the TUA when you check-in in Mexico.

1ST CLASS

On *primera* (1a) *clase* (1st-class) buses, standards of comfort are adequate at the very least. The buses usually have air-con and a toilet and they stop infrequently. They always show movies (often bad ones, unless Jean Claude Van Damme is your idea of cinematic glory) for most of the trip.

Bring a sweater or jacket to combat overzealous air-conditioning. As with deluxe buses, you buy your ticket in the bus station before boarding.

2ND CLASS

Segunda (2a) *clase* (2nd-class) buses serve small towns and villages, and provide cheaper, slower travel on some intercity routes. A few are almost as quick, comfortable and direct as 1st-class buses. Others are old, slow and shabby.

Many 2nd-class services have no ticket office; you just pay your fare to the conductor. These buses tend to take slow, nontoll roads in and out of big cities and will stop anywhere to pick up passengers: if you board midroute you might make some of the trip standing. The small amount of money you save by traveling 2nd class is not usually worth the discomfort or extra journey time entailed, though traveling on these buses is a great way to meet locals and see less-traveled parts of the countryside.

Second-class buses can also be less safe than 1st-class or deluxe buses, for reasons of maintenance, driver standards, or because they are more vulnerable to being boarded by bandits on quiet roads. Out in the remoter areas, however, you'll often find that 2nd-class buses are the only buses available.

Microbuses or '*micros*' are small, usually fairly new, 2nd-class buses with around 25 seats, often running short routes between nearby towns.

Costs

First-class buses typically cost around M\$40 per hour of travel (70km to 80km). Deluxe buses may cost just 10% or 20% more than 1st class, or about 60% more for superdeluxe services such as UNO. Second-class buses cost 10% or 20% less than 1st class. Children under 13 pay half-price on many Mexican long-distance buses, and, if they're small enough to sit on your lap, they will usually go for free.

Reservations

For trips of up to four or five hours on busy routes, you can usually just go to the bus terminal, buy a ticket and head out without much delay. For longer trips, or routes with infrequent service, buy a ticket a day or more in advance. Deluxe and 1st-class bus companies have computerized ticket systems that allow you to select your seat when you buy your ticket.

Seats on deluxe and 1st-class lines such as UNO, ADO and OCC can be booked through **Ticket Bus** (☎ 800-702-8000; www.ticketbus.com.mx), a reservations service with offices in Mérida, Cancún, Cozumel, Campeche and Ciudad del Carmen.

If you pay for a bus ticket in cash, cash refunds of 80% to 100% are available from many bus companies if you return your ticket more than an hour or two before the departure time.

Combi, Colectivo & Truck

On much of the peninsula, a variety of other vehicles, often Volkswagen, Ford or Chevrolet vans, operates shuttle services between some towns, especially on short-haul routes and those linking rural settlements. These vehicles usually leave whenever they are full. Fares are typically a little less than 1st-class buses. *Combi* is often used as a catch-all term for these services regardless of van type, as is *taxi colectivo* (shared taxi) or simply *colectivo*.

More basic than the *combis* are passenger-carrying *camiones* (trucks) and *camionetas* (pickups), usually with benches lining the sides. Standing in the back of a lurching truck with a couple of *campesinos* (farm workers) and their machetes and animals is at least an experience to remember. Fares are similar to 2nd-class bus fares.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Driving in Mexico is not as easy as it is north of the border, and rentals are more expensive, but having your own vehicle gives you extra flexibility and freedom.

Drivers should know some Spanish and have basic mechanical knowledge, reserves of patience and access to extra cash for emergencies. Good makes of car to drive in Mexico are Volkswagen, Nissan, General Motors, Chrysler and Ford, which have plants in Mexico and dealers in most big towns. Very big cars are unwieldy on narrow roads. A sedan with a trunk (boot) provides safer storage than a station wagon or hatchback. Mexican mechanics are resourceful, and most repairs can be done quickly and inexpensively, but it still pays to take some spare parts (spare fuel filters are very useful). Tires (including a spare), shock absorbers and suspension should be in good condition. For security, have something to immobilize the steering wheel.

Motorcycling in Mexico is not for the faint-hearted. Roads and traffic can be rough, and parts and mechanics hard to come by. The parts you'll most easily find will be for Kawasaki, Honda and Suzuki bikes. Helmets are required by Mexican law.

Fuel

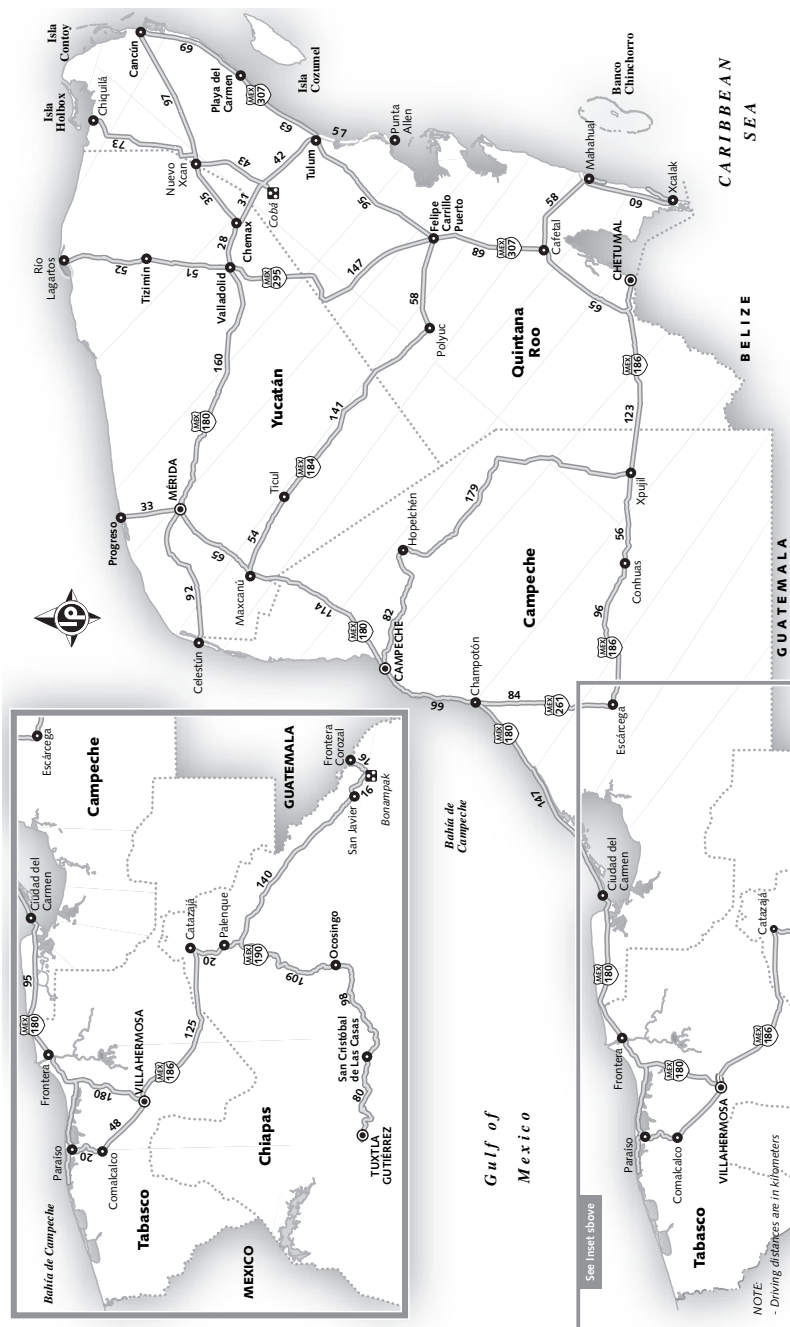
All *gasolina* (gasoline) and diesel fuel in Mexico is sold by the government-owned Pemex (Petróleos Mexicanos). Most towns, even small ones, have a Pemex gas station, and the stations are pretty common on most major roads. In remote areas you should fill up whenever you can.

The gasoline on sale is all *sin plomo* (unleaded). There are two varieties: *magna sin*, roughly equivalent to US regular unleaded, and premium, roughly equivalent to US super unleaded. At the time of research, *magna sin* cost about M\$6.70 per liter, and premium about M\$7.50. Diesel fuel is widely available at around M\$5 per liter. Regular Mexican diesel has a higher sulfur content than US diesel, but there is a '*diesel sin*' with less sulfur.

Pump attendants at gas stations appreciate a tip of M\$2 to M\$5.

Maps

Mexican signposting can be poor and decent road maps are essential. See p256 for more information on maps.



Rental

Auto rental in the Yucatán is expensive by US or European standards, but is not hard to organize. You can book by internet, phone or in person and pick up cars at city offices, airports and many of the big hotels. You'll save money by booking ahead of time over the internet.

Renters must provide a valid driver's license (your home license is OK), passport and major credit card, and are usually required to be at least 21 (sometimes 25, or if you're aged 21 to 24 you may have to pay a surcharge). Read the small print of the rental agreement. In addition to the basic rental rate, you pay tax and insurance to the rental company, and the full insurance that rental companies encourage can almost double the basic cost. You'll usually have the option of taking liability-only insurance at a lower rate, about M\$100 per day. Ask exactly what the insurance options cover: theft and damage insurance may only cover a percentage of costs. It's best to have plenty of liability coverage: Mexican law permits the jailing of drivers after an accident until they have met their obligations to third parties. The complimentary car-rental insurance offered with some US credit cards does not always cover Mexico. Call your card company ahead of time.

Most rental agencies offer a choice between a per-kilometer deal or unlimited kilometers. Local firms may or may not be cheaper than the big international ones. In most places the cheapest car available (often a Volkswagen Beetle) costs M\$250 to M\$500 a day including unlimited kilometers, insurance and tax. If you rent by the week or month, the per-day cost can come down by 20% to 40%. You can also cut costs by avoiding airport pickups and drop-offs, for which 10% can be added to your total check. The extra charge for drop-off in another city, when available, is usually about M\$4 per kilometer.

Some major firms in Mexico:

Alamo (☎ 800-849-8001; www.alamo.com)
Avis (☎ 800-288-8888; www.avis.com.mx)
Budget (☎ 800-700-1700; www.budget.com.mx)
Dollar (☎ 998-886-0222; www.dollar.com)
Europcar (☎ 800-201-2084; www.europcar.com.mx)
Hertz (☎ 800-709-5000; www.hertz.com)
National (☎ 800-716-6625; www.nationalcar.com.mx)
Thrifty (☎ 55-5786-8268; www.thrifty.com.mx)

Motorcycles or scooters are available for rent in a few tourist centers. You're usually required to have a driver's license and credit card. It's

advisable to look particularly carefully into insurance arrangements here: some renters do not offer any insurance at all. Note that a locally acquired motorcycle license is not valid under some travel insurance policies.

Road Conditions

Many Mexican highways, even some toll highways, are not up to the standards of US, Canadian or European ones. Still, the main roads are serviceable and fairly fast when traffic is not heavy. Mexicans are not such reckless drivers as they are often supposed to be, and are certainly no worse than their counterparts in southern Europe. Traffic density, poor surfaces and frequent hazards (potholes, speed bumps, animals, bicycles and children) all help to keep speeds down.

Driving on a dark night is best avoided since unlit vehicles, rocks, pedestrians and animals on the roads are common. Also, hijacks and robberies do occur.

In towns and cities and on rural roads, be especially wary of *Alto* (Stop) signs, *topes* (speed bumps) and holes in the road. They are often not where you'd expect, and missing one can cost you a traffic fine or car damage. Speed bumps are also used to slow traffic on highways that pass through built-up areas: they are not always signed, and some of them are severe!

BREAKDOWN ASSISTANCE

The Mexican tourism ministry, Sectur, maintains a network of *Ángeles Verdes* (Green Angels) – bilingual mechanics in green uniforms and green trucks, who patrol 60,000km of major highways throughout the country daily during daylight hours looking for tourists in trouble. They make minor repairs, change tires, provide fuel and oil, and arrange towing and other assistance if necessary. Service is free; parts, gasoline and oil are provided at cost. If you are near a telephone when your car has problems, you can call its **24-hour hotline** (☎ 078) or contact the network through the national **24-hour tourist-assistance service** (☎ 800-903-9200) in Mexico City. There's a map of the roads it patrols at www.sectur.gob.mx/wb2/sectur/sect_9454_rutas_carreteras (in Spanish).

CITY PARKING

It's not usually a good idea to park on the street overnight. If your hotel doesn't have

parking, it's best to find a commercial *estacionamiento* (parking lot). These usually cost around M\$50 overnight and M\$10 per hour during the day.

TOLL ROADS

There are three major toll roads, mostly four-lane, in the Yucatán that connect the major cities. They are generally in much better condition and a lot quicker than the alternative free roads. *Cuotas* (tolls) average about M\$10 per 10km.

Road Rules

Drive on the right-hand side of the road.

One-way streets are the rule in cities. Priority at street intersections is indicated by thin black and red rectangles containing white arrows. A black rectangle facing you means you have priority; a red one means you don't. The white arrows indicate the direction of traffic on the cross street; if the arrow points both ways, it's a two-way street.

Speed limits range between 80km/h and 120km/h on open highways (less when highways pass through built-up areas), and between 30km/h and 50km/h in towns and cities. Seat belts are obligatory for all occupants of a car, and children under five must be strapped into safety seats in the rear. Traffic laws and speed limits rarely seem to be enforced on the highways. Obey the rules in the cities so you don't give the police an excuse to demand a 'fine' payable on the spot.

Although less frequent in the Yucatán, there is always the chance that you will be pulled over by traffic police for an imaginary infraction. If this happens, stay calm and polite and don't be in a hurry. You don't have to pay a bribe, and corrupt cops would rather not work too hard to obtain one. You can also ask to see documentation about the law you have supposedly broken, ask for the officer's identification, ask to speak to a superior, and/or note the officer's name, badge number, vehicle number and department (federal, state or municipal). Pay any traffic fines at a police station

and get a receipt, then if you wish to make a complaint head for a state tourist office.

HITCHHIKING

Hitchhiking is never entirely safe in any country in the world, and is not recommended. Travelers who decide to hitch should understand that they are taking a small but potentially serious risk. People who do choose to hitch will be safer if they travel in pairs and let someone know where they are planning to go. A woman traveling alone certainly should not hitchhike in Mexico, and even two women together is not advisable.

However, some people do choose to hitchhike, and it's not an uncommon way of getting to some of the off-the-beaten-track archaeological sites and other places that tend to be poorly served by bus. Keep your wits about you and don't accept a lift if you have any misgivings.

In Mexico it's customary for the hitchhiker to offer to pay for the ride, especially if the ride is in a work or commercial vehicle. As a general rule, offer about M\$10 per person for every 30 minutes of the ride but not less than M\$20 total and never more than M\$100.

TOURS

For details on tours offered by locally based operators, check the destination chapters. Big international operations also offer trips in the region.

Gap Adventures (☎ in the US & Canada 800-708-7761; www.gapadventures.com)

Intrepid Travel (☎ in the US 800-970-7299; www.intrepidtravel.com)

Journey Latin America (☎ in the UK 020-8747-8315; www.journeylatinamerica.co.uk)

TRAINS

Espresso Maya (☎ 999-944-9393; www.expresomaya.com) was the last train service operating in the region, but it is not currently offering service as the rails are being repaired. The high-end trips ran from Palenque to Dzitás (near Chichén Itzá) and to various stops in Yucatán state.

Health

Dr David Goldberg

CONTENTS

Before You Go	276
Insurance	276
Vaccinations	276
Medical Checklist	277
Internet Resources	277
Further Reading	277
In Transit	277
Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)	277
Jet Lag & Motion Sickness	277
In Mexico	277
Availability & Cost of Health Care	277
Infectious Diseases	278
Travelers' Diarrhea	280
Environmental Hazards & Treatment	280

Travelers to the Yucatán need to be careful chiefly about food- and water-borne diseases, though mosquito-borne infections can also be a problem. Most of these illnesses are not life threatening, but they can certainly impact on your trip. Besides getting the proper vaccinations, it's important that you bring a good insect repellent.

BEFORE YOU GO

Since most vaccines don't produce immunity until at least two weeks after they're given, visit a physician four to eight weeks before departure. Ask your doctor for an International Certificate of Vaccination, which will list vaccinations you've received.

Bring medications in their original containers, clearly labeled. A signed, dated letter from your physician describing all medical conditions and medications, including generic names, is also a good idea. If carrying syringes or needles, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their necessity.

INSURANCE

Mexican medical treatment is generally inexpensive for common diseases and minor treatment, but if you suffer some serious medical problem, you may want to find a private hospital or fly out for treatment. Travel insurance typically covers the costs

but make sure the policy includes such things as ambulances and emergency flights home. Some US health insurance policies stay in effect (at least for a limited time) if you travel abroad, but it's worth checking exactly what you'll be covered for in Mexico. For people whose medical insurance or national health systems don't extend to Mexico (which includes most non-Americans) a travel policy is advisable. Check the website of **Lonely Planet** (www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services) for more information.

You may prefer a policy that pays medical costs directly rather than requiring you to pay on the spot and claim later. If you have to claim later, keep all documentation. Some policies ask you to call collect to a center in your home country, where an immediate assessment of your problem is made. Some policies offer lower and higher medical-expense options; the higher ones are chiefly for countries such as the USA, which have extremely high medical costs. There is a wide variety of policies; check the small print.

VACCINATIONS

The only required vaccination for Mexico is yellow fever, and that's only if you're arriving from a yellow fever-infected country in Africa or South America (including Guatemala). However, a number of vaccines are recommended: see table below. Rabies injections are only recommended for those who may have contact with animals and won't have access to immediate health care.

Vaccine	Dosage
hepatitis A	1 dose before trip; booster 6-12 months later
typhoid	4 capsules by mouth, 1 taken every other day
hepatitis B	long-term travelers in close contact with the local population; 3 doses over 6-month period
rabies	3 doses over 3-4 week period
tetanus-diphtheria	1 dose lasts 10 years
measles	1 dose

MEDICAL CHECKLIST

- Antibiotics
- Antidiarrheal drugs (eg loperamide)
- Acetaminophen/paracetamol (Tylenol) or aspirin
- Anti-inflammatory drugs (eg ibuprofen)
- Antihistamines (for hay fever and allergic reactions)
- Antibacterial ointment (eg Bactroban) for cuts and abrasions
- Adhesive or paper tape
- Bandages, gauze, gauze rolls
- DEET-containing insect repellent for the skin
- Iodine tablets (for water purification)
- Oral rehydration salts
- Permethrin-containing insect spray for clothing, tents and bed nets
- Pocket knife
- Scissors, safety pins, tweezers
- Steroid cream or cortisone (for poison ivy and other allergic rashes)
- Sunscreen
- Syringes and sterile needles (with doctor's letter)
- Thermometer

INTERNET RESOURCES

There is a wealth of travel health advice on the internet. For further information, the website of **Lonely Planet** (www.lonelyplanet.com) is a good place to start. The World Health Organization publishes a superb book called *International Travel and Health*, which is revised annually and is available online at no cost at www.who.int/ith. Another website of general interest is **MD Travel Health** (www.mdtravelhealth.com), which provides complete travel health recommendations for every country, updated daily, also at no cost.

FURTHER READING

For further information, see *Healthy Travel Central & South America*, also from Lonely Planet. If you're traveling with children, Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* may be useful. The *ABC of Healthy Travel*, by E Walker et al, and *Medicine for the Outdoors*, by Paul S Auerbach, are other valuable resources.

IN TRANSIT

DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

Blood clots may form in the legs (deep vein thrombosis) during plane flights, chiefly

because of prolonged immobility. The longer the flight, the greater the risk. Though most blood clots are reabsorbed uneventfully, some may break off and travel through the blood vessels to the lungs, where they could cause complications that are life-threatening.

The chief symptom of DVT is swelling or pain of the foot, ankle or calf, usually but not always on just one side. When a blood clot travels to the lungs, it may cause chest pain and difficulty breathing. Travelers with any of these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention.

To prevent the development of DVT on long flights you should walk about the cabin, perform isometric compressions of the leg muscles (ie contract the leg muscles while sitting), drink plenty of fluids, and avoid alcohol and tobacco.

JET LAG & MOTION SICKNESS

Jet lag is common when crossing more than five time zones, resulting in insomnia, fatigue, malaise or nausea. To avoid jet lag try drinking plenty of nonalcoholic fluids and eating light meals. Upon arrival, get exposure to natural sunlight and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep etc) as soon as possible.

Antihistamines such as dimenhydrinate (Dramamine) and meclizine (Antivert, Bonine) are usually the first choice for treating motion sickness. Their main side effect is drowsiness. A herbal alternative is ginger, which works like a charm for some people.

IN MEXICO

AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

There are a number of first-rate clinics in Cancún (p74). In general, private facilities offer better health care, though at greater cost, than public hospitals. Adequate medical care is available in other major cities of the region, but facilities in rural areas may be limited.

Many doctors and hospitals expect payment in cash, regardless of whether you have travel health insurance. If you develop a life-threatening medical problem, you'll probably want to be evacuated to a country with state-of-the-art medical care. Be sure you have insurance to cover this (see opposite).

CHILDREN & PREGNANT WOMEN

In general, it's safe for children and pregnant women to go to Mexico. However, because some of the vaccines listed earlier are not approved for children and pregnant women, these travelers should be particularly careful not to drink tap water or consume any questionable food or beverage. Also, when traveling with children, make sure they're up to date on all routine immunizations. It's sometimes appropriate to give children some of their vaccines a little early before visiting a developing nation. You should discuss this with your pediatrician. If pregnant, bear in mind that should a complication such as premature labor develop while abroad, the quality of medical care may not be comparable to that in your home country.

Since yellow-fever vaccine is not recommended for pregnant women or children less than nine months old, if you are arriving from a country with yellow fever, obtain a waiver letter, preferably written on letterhead stationery and bearing the stamp used by official immunization centers to validate the International Certificate of Vaccination.

Mexican pharmacies are identified by a green cross and a 'Farmacia' sign. Most are well stocked and the pharmacists well trained. Reliable pharmacy chains include Sanborns, Farmacia Guadalajara, Benavides and Farmacia Fenix. To find an after-hours pharmacy, look in the local newspaper, ask your hotel concierge, or check the front door of a local pharmacy, which will often post the name of a nearby pharmacy that is open after hours.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Malaria

Malaria occurs in every country in Central America, including parts of Mexico. It's transmitted by mosquito bites, usually between dusk and dawn. The main symptom is high spiking fevers, which may be accompanied by chills, sweats, headache, body aches, general weakness, vomiting or diarrhea. Severe cases may involve the central nervous system and lead to seizures, confusion, coma and death.

Taking malaria pills is strongly recommended when visiting rural areas. For Mexico, the first-choice malaria pill is chloroquine, taken once weekly in a dosage of 500mg, starting one to two weeks before arrival and continuing through the trip and for four weeks after departure. Chloroquine is safe, inexpensive and highly effective. Side effects are typically mild. Severe reactions are uncommon.

Protecting yourself against mosquito bites is just as important as taking malaria pills (see p280), as no pills are 100% effective.

If you develop a fever after returning home, see a physician, as malaria symptoms may not occur for months. It can be diagnosed by a simple blood test.

Dengue Fever

Dengue fever is a viral infection found throughout Central America. In Mexico, the risk is greatest along the Gulf Coast, especially from July to September. Dengue is transmitted by *Aedes* mosquitoes, which bite preferentially during the day and are usually found close to human habitations, often indoors. They breed primarily in artificial water containers, such as barrels, cans, cisterns, metal drums, plastic containers and discarded tires. As a result, dengue is especially common in urban environments.

Dengue usually causes flu-like symptoms, including fever, muscle aches, joint pains, headaches, nausea and vomiting, often followed by a rash. The body aches may be quite uncomfortable, but most cases resolve uneventfully in a few days. Severe cases usually occur in children under 15 years who are experiencing their second dengue infection.

There is no specific treatment for dengue fever, except to take analgesics such as acetaminophen/paracetamol (Tylenol) and drink plenty of fluids. Severe cases may require hospitalization. There is no vaccine. The cornerstone of prevention is insect protection measures (see p280).

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A occurs throughout Central America. It's a viral infection of the liver usually acquired by ingestion of contaminated water, food or ice, though it may also be acquired by direct contact with infected persons. The illness occurs worldwide, but the incidence is higher in developing nations. Symptoms may include fever, malaise, jaundice, nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain.

Most cases resolve uneventfully, though hepatitis A occasionally causes severe liver damage. There is no treatment.

The vaccine for hepatitis A is extremely safe and highly effective. If you get a booster six to 12 months later, it lasts for at least 10 years. You should get it before you go to Mexico. Because the safety of hepatitis A vaccine has not been established for pregnant women or children aged under two, they should instead be given a gammaglobulin injection.

Hepatitis B

Like hepatitis A, hepatitis B is a liver infection that occurs worldwide but is more common in developing nations. Unlike hepatitis A, the disease is usually acquired by sexual contact or by exposure to infected blood, generally through blood transfusions or contaminated needles. The vaccine is recommended only for long-term travelers (on the road more than six months) who expect to live in rural areas or have close physical contact with the local population. Additionally, the vaccine is recommended for anyone who anticipates sexual contact with locals or a possible need for medical, dental or other treatments while abroad, especially if a need for transfusions or injections is expected.

Hepatitis B vaccine is safe and highly effective. However, a total of three injections is necessary to establish full immunity. Several countries added hepatitis B vaccine to the list of routine childhood immunizations in the 1980s, so many young adults are already protected.

Typhoid Fever

Typhoid fever is caused by ingestion of food or water contaminated by *Salmonella typhi*. Fever occurs in virtually all cases. Other symptoms may include headache, malaise, muscle aches, dizziness, loss of appetite, nausea and abdominal pain. Either diarrhea or constipation may occur. Possible complications include intestinal perforation, intestinal bleeding, confusion, delirium or (rarely) coma.

Unless you expect to take all your meals in major hotels and restaurants, the typhoid vaccine is a good idea. It's usually given orally, but is also available as an injection. Neither vaccine is approved for use for children aged under two.

The drug of choice for typhoid fever is usually a quinolone antibiotic, such as

ciprofloxacin (Cipro) or levofloxacin (Levaquin), which many travelers carry for treatment of travelers' diarrhea.

Rabies

Rabies is a viral infection of the brain and spinal cord that is almost always fatal without treatment. The rabies virus is carried in the saliva of infected animals and is typically transmitted through an animal bite, though contamination of any break in the skin with infected saliva may result in rabies. Rabies occurs in all Central American countries. Most cases in Mexico are related to dog bites, but bats and other wild species remain sources of infection.

The rabies vaccine is safe, but a full series requires three injections and is quite expensive. Those at high risk of rabies, such as animal handlers and spelunkers (cave explorers), should certainly get the vaccine, as well as people traveling to remote areas away from appropriate medical care. The treatment for a possibly rabid bite consists of rabies vaccine with rabies immune globulin. It's effective, but must be given promptly.

See p281 for what to do if bitten or scratched by an animal.

Cholera

Cholera is an intestinal infection acquired through ingestion of contaminated food or water. The main symptom is profuse, watery diarrhea, which may be so severe that it causes life-threatening dehydration. The key treatment is drinking oral rehydration solution. Antibiotics are also given, usually tetracycline or doxycycline, though quinolone antibiotics, such as ciprofloxacin and levofloxacin are also effective.

Only a handful of cases have been reported in Mexico over the last few years. The cholera vaccine is no longer recommended.

Other Infections

Gnathostomiasis is a parasite acquired by eating raw or undercooked freshwater fish, including ceviche, a popular lime-marinated fish salad. The chief symptom is intermittent, migratory swellings under the skin, sometimes associated with joint pains, muscle pains or gastrointestinal problems. The symptoms may not begin until many months after exposure.

Leishmaniasis occurs in the mountains and jungles of all Central American countries.

The infection is transmitted by sand flies. Leishmaniasis may be limited to the skin, causing slowly growing ulcers over exposed parts of the body. The disease may be particularly severe in those with HIV. There is no vaccine for leishmaniasis. To protect yourself from sand flies, follow the same precautions as for mosquitoes (below), except that netting must be finer mesh (at least 18 holes to the linear inch).

Brucellosis is an infection occurring in domestic and wild animals that may be transmitted to humans through direct animal contact or by consumption of unpasteurized dairy products from infected animals. Symptoms may include fever, malaise, depression, loss of appetite, headache, muscle aches and back pain. Complications can include arthritis, hepatitis, meningitis and endocarditis (heart valve infection).

Typhus may be transmitted by lice in scattered pockets of the country.

HIV/AIDS has been reported in all Central American countries. Be sure to use condoms for all sexual encounters.

TRAVELERS' DIARRHEA

To prevent diarrhea, avoid tap water unless it has been boiled, filtered or chemically disinfected (eg by iodine tablets); only eat fresh fruits or vegetables if cooked or peeled; be wary of dairy products that might contain unpasteurized milk; and be very selective when eating food from street vendors.

If you develop diarrhea, be sure to drink plenty of fluids, preferably an oral rehydration solution containing lots of salt and sugar. A few loose stools don't require treatment, but if you start having more than four or five stools a day, you should start taking an antibiotic (usually a quinolone drug) and an anti-diarrheal agent (eg loperamide). If diarrhea is bloody or persists for more than 72 hours or is accompanied by fever, shaking chills or severe abdominal pain, you should seek medical attention.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS & TREATMENT

Mosquito Bites

To prevent mosquito bites, wear long sleeves, long pants, hats and shoes (rather than sandals). Bring along a good insect repellent, preferably one containing DEET, which should be applied to exposed skin and clothing, but not to the eyes, mouth, cuts, wounds or irritated

skin. Products containing lower concentrations of DEET are as effective, but for shorter periods of time. In general, adults and children over 12 years should use preparations containing 25% to 35% DEET, which usually last about six hours. Children between two and 12 years should use preparations containing no more than 10% DEET, applied sparingly, which will usually last about three hours. Neurological toxicity has been reported from DEET, especially in children, but appears to be extremely uncommon and generally related to overuse. Don't use DEET-containing compounds on children under two years.

Insect repellents containing certain botanical products, including eucalyptus oil and soybean oil, are effective but last only 1½ to two hours. Where there is a high risk of malaria, use DEET-containing repellents. Products based on citronella are not effective.

For additional protection, apply permethrin to clothing, shoes, tents and bed nets. Permethrin treatments are safe and remain effective for at least two weeks, even when items are laundered. Permethrin should not be applied directly to the skin.

Don't sleep with the window open unless there is a screen. If sleeping outdoors or in accommodations that allows entry of mosquitoes, use a bed net treated with permethrin, with edges tucked in under the mattress. The mesh size should be less than 1.5mm. Alternatively, use a mosquito coil, which will fill the room with insecticide through the night. Repellent-impregnated wristbands are not effective.

Tick Bites

To protect yourself from tick bites, follow the same precautions as for mosquitoes, except that boots are preferable to shoes, with pants tucked in. Be sure to perform a thorough tick check at the end of each day. You'll generally need the assistance of a friend or mirror for a full examination. Remove ticks with tweezers, grasping them firmly by the head. Insect repellents based on botanical products (see left) have not been adequately studied for insects other than mosquitoes and cannot be recommended to prevent tick bites.

Water

Tap water is generally not safe to drink. Vigorous boiling for one minute is the most effective means of water purification.

Another option is to disinfect water with iodine pills. Instructions are usually provided and should be carefully followed. Or you can add 2% tincture of iodine to one quart or liter of water (five drops to clear water, 10 drops to cloudy water) and let stand for 30 minutes. If the water is cold, a longer time may be required. The taste of iodinated water can be improved by adding vitamin C (ascorbic acid). Don't drink iodinated water for more than a few weeks. Pregnant women, those with a history of thyroid disease and those allergic to iodine should not drink iodinated water.

Numerous water filters are on the market. Those with smaller pores (reverse osmosis filters) provide the best protection, but they are relatively large and are readily plugged by debris. Those with somewhat larger pores (microstrainer filters) are ineffective against viruses, although they do remove other organisms. Manufacturers' instructions must be carefully followed.

Sun & Heat

To protect yourself from excessive sun exposure, you should stay out of the midday sun, wear sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat, and apply sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher, providing both UVA and UVB protection. Sunscreen should be applied to all exposed parts of the body approximately 30 minutes before sun exposure and be reapplied after swimming or vigorous activity.

Drink plenty of fluids and avoid strenuous exercise when the temperature is high. Heat exhaustion is characterized by dizziness, weakness, headache, nausea or profuse sweating. Salt tablets or rehydration salts may help, but fluids, rest and shade are essential.

Animal Bites

Do not attempt to pet, handle or feed any animal, with the exception of domestic animals known to be free of any infectious disease. Most animal injuries are directly related to a person's attempt to touch or feed the animal.

Any bite or scratch by a mammal, including bats, should be promptly and thoroughly cleansed with large amounts of soap and water, followed by application of an antiseptic, such as iodine or alcohol. Contact the local health authorities immediately for possible postexposure treatment, whether or not you've been immunized against rabies. It may also be advisable to start an antibiotic, since wounds caused by animal bites and scratches frequently become infected. One of the newer quinolones, such as levofloxacin (Levaquin), which many travelers carry in case of diarrhea, would be an appropriate choice.

SNAKE & SCORPION BITES

Venomous snakes in the Yucatán generally do not attack without provocation, but may bite humans who accidentally come too close. Coral snakes are somewhat retreating and tend not to bite humans unless considerably provoked.

In the event of a venomous snake bite, place the victim at rest, keep the bitten area immobilized and move them immediately to the nearest medical facility. Avoid using tourniquets, which are no longer recommended.

Scorpions are a problem in many states. If stung, you should immediately apply ice or cold packs, immobilize the affected body part and go to the nearest emergency room. To prevent stings, be sure to inspect and shake out clothing, shoes and sleeping bags before use, and wear gloves and protective clothing when working around piles of wood or leaves.

Language

CONTENTS

Spanish	282
Pronunciation	282
Gender & Plurals	283
Accommodations	283
Conversation & Essentials	284
Directions	284
Emergencies	285
Health	285
Language Difficulties	285
Numbers	285
Shopping & Services	286
Time & Dates	286
Transportation	287
Yucatec Maya	288
Pronunciation	288
Useful Words & Phrases	288

The predominant language of Mexico is Spanish. Mexican Spanish is unlike Castilian Spanish (the language of much of Spain) in a few respects: in Mexico the Castilian lisp has more or less disappeared, the *vosotros* form (informal plural 'you') isn't used and numerous indigenous words have been adopted.

There are more than 30 Maya dialects still spoken today. Chiapas has eight dialects, with Tzeltal, Tzotzil and Chol being the most widely spoken. Yucatec Maya is the predominant indigenous language of the Yucatán. For some background information and a few handy words and phrases in the language, see p288.

Travelers in cities, towns and larger villages can almost always find someone who speaks at least some English. All the same, it is advantageous and courteous to know at least a few words and phrases in Spanish. Mexicans will generally respond much more positively if you attempt to speak to them in their own language.

It's easy enough to pick up some basic Spanish, and for those who want to learn the language in greater depth, courses are available in the Yucatán itself (p251). You can also study using books, records and tapes

before you leave home. These resources are often available for loan from public libraries. Evening or college courses are also an excellent way to get things started.

For a more comprehensive guide to the Spanish of Mexico, get a copy of Lonely Planet's *Mexican Spanish Phrasebook*. For words and phrases that will come in handy when dining, see p55.

SPANISH

PRONUNCIATION

Vowels

a	as in 'father'
e	as in 'met'
i	as in 'marine'
o	as in 'or' (without the 'r' sound)
u	as in 'rule'; the 'u' is not pronounced after q and in the letter combinations gue and gui , unless it's marked with a diaeresis (eg <i>argüir</i>), in which case it's pronounced as English 'w'
y	at the end of a word or when it stands alone, it's pronounced as the Spanish i (eg <i>ley</i>); between vowels within a word it's as the 'y' in 'yonder'

Consonants

As a rule, Spanish consonants resemble their English counterparts. The exceptions are listed below.

While the consonants **ch**, **ll** and **ñ** are generally considered distinct letters, **ch** and **ll** are now often listed alphabetically under **c** and **l** respectively. The letter **ñ** is still treated as a separate letter and comes after **n** in dictionaries.

b	similar to English 'b,' but softer; referred to as 'b larga'
c	as in 'celery' before e and i ; otherwise as English 'k'
ch	as in 'church'
d	as in 'dog,' but between vowels and after l or n , the sound is closer to the 'th' in 'this'
g	as the 'ch' in the Scottish <i>loch</i> before e and i ('kh' in our guides to pronunciation); elsewhere, as in 'go'

h	invariably silent. If your name begins with this letter, listen carefully if you're waiting for public officials to call you.
j	harsh and breathy, as the 'ch' in 'loch' (written as 'kh' in our guides to pronunciation)
ll	varies between the 'y' in 'yes' and the 'lli' in 'million'
ñ	as the 'ni' in 'onion'
r	a short r except at the beginning of a word, and after l , n or s , when it's often rolled
rr	very strongly rolled (not reflected in the pronunciation guides)
v	similar to English 'b,' but softer; referred to as 'b corta'
x	as in 'taxi,' and sometimes as 'sh,' especially by indigenous people
z	as the 's' in 'sun'

Word Stress

In general, words ending in vowels or the letters **n** or **s** have stress on the next-to-last syllable, while those with other endings have stress on the last syllable. Thus *vaca* (cow) and *caballos* (horses) both carry stress on the next-to-last syllable, while *ciudad* (city) and *infeliz* (unhappy) are both stressed on the last syllable.

Written accents will almost always appear in words that don't follow the rules above, eg *sótano* (basement), *porción* (portion).

GENDER & PLURALS

In Spanish, nouns are either masculine or feminine, and there are a few rules to help determine gender (with the mandatory exceptions, of course). Feminine nouns generally end with **-a** or with the groups **-ción**, **-sión** or **-dad**. Other endings typically signify a masculine noun. Endings for adjectives also change to agree with the gender of the noun they modify (masculine/feminine **-o/-a**). Where both masculine and feminine forms are included in this language guide, they are separated by a slash, with the masculine form first, eg *perdido/a*.

If a noun or adjective ends in a vowel, the plural is formed by adding **s** to the end. If it ends in a consonant, the plural is formed by adding **es** to the end.

ACCOMMODATIONS

I'm looking for ...

<i>Estoy buscando ...</i>	<i>e-stoy boos-kan-do ...</i>
---------------------------	-------------------------------

Where is ...?

<i>¿Dónde hay ...?</i>	<i>don-de ai ...</i>
a cabin/cabana	
<i>una cabaña</i>	<i>oo-na ca-ba-nyá</i>
a camping ground	
<i>un área para acampar</i>	<i>oon a-re-a pa-ra a-kam-par</i>
a guesthouse	
<i>una pensión</i>	<i>oo-na pen-syon</i>
a hotel	
<i>un hotel</i>	<i>oon o-tel</i>
a lodging house	
<i>una casa de huéspedes</i>	<i>oo-na ka-sa de wes-pe-des</i>
a posada	
<i>una posada</i>	<i>oo-na po-sa-da</i>
a youth hostel	
<i>un albergue juvenil</i>	<i>oon al-ber-ge khoov-ve-neel</i>

MAKING A RESERVATION

To ...	<i>A ...</i>
From ...	<i>De ...</i>
Date	<i>Fecha</i>
I'd like to book ...	<i>Quisiera reservar ... (see under 'Accommodations' for bed and room options)</i>
	<i>en nombre de ...</i>
in the name of ...	<i>para las noches del ...</i>
for the nights of ...	<i>tarjeta de crédito ...</i>
credit card ...	<i>número</i>
number	<i>fecha de vencimiento</i>
expiry date	
Please confirm ...	<i>Puede confirmar ...</i>
availability	<i>la disponibilidad</i>
price	<i>el precio</i>

Are there any rooms available?

*¿Hay habitaciones libres?
ay a-bee-ta-syon-es lee-bres*

I'd like a ...	<i>Quisiera una habitación ...</i>	<i>kee-sye-ra oo-na a-bee-ta-syon ...</i>
room.	<i>doble</i>	<i>do-ble</i>
double	<i>individual</i>	<i>een-dee-vee-dwal</i>
single	<i>con dos camas</i>	<i>kon dos ka-mas</i>
twin		

How much is it per ...?	<i>¿Cuánto cuesta por ...?</i>	<i>kwan-to kwes-ta por ...</i>
night	<i>noche</i>	<i>no-che</i>
person	<i>persona</i>	<i>per-so-na</i>
week	<i>semana</i>	<i>se-ma-na</i>

full board	<i>pensión completa</i>	<i>pen-syon kom-ple-ta</i>
private/shared bathroom	<i>baño privado/compartido</i>	<i>ba-nyo pree-va-do/kom-par-tee-do</i>

too expensive	<i>demasiado caro</i>	de-ma-sya-do ka-ro
cheaper	<i>más económico</i>	mas e-ko-no-mee-ko
discount	<i>descuento</i>	des-kwen-to

Does it include breakfast?

¿Incluye el desayuno? een-kloo-ye el de-sa-yoo-no

May I see the room?

¿Puedo ver la habitación? pwe-do ver la a-bee-ta-syon

I don't like it.

No me gusta. no me goos-ta

It's fine. I'll take it.

Está bien. La tomo. es-ta byen la to-mo

I'm leaving now.

Me voy ahora. me voy a-o-ra

CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS

When approaching a stranger for information you should always extend a greeting, and use only the polite form of address, especially with the police and public officials. Young people may be less likely to expect this, but it's best to stick to the polite form unless you're quite sure you won't offend by using the informal mode. The polite form is used in all cases in this guide; where options are given, the form is indicated by the abbreviations 'pol' and 'inf.'

The use of *por favor* (please) and *gracias* (thank you) are second nature to most Mexicans and a recommended tool in your travel kit.

Hi.	<i>Hola.</i>	o-la (inf)
Hello.	<i>Buen día.</i>	bwe-n dee-a
Good morning.	<i>Buenos días.</i>	bwe-nos dee-as
Good afternoon.	<i>Buenas tardes.</i>	bwe-nas tar-des
Good evening/night.	<i>Buenas noches.</i>	bwe-nas no-ches
Goodbye.	<i>Adiós.</i>	a-dyos
See you soon.	<i>Hasta luego.</i>	as-ta lwe-go
Yes.	<i>Sí.</i>	see
No.	<i>No.</i>	no
Please.	<i>Por favor.</i>	por fa-vor
Thank you.	<i>Gracias.</i>	gra-syas
Many thanks.	<i>Muchas gracias.</i>	moo-chas gra-syas
You're welcome.	<i>De nada.</i>	de na-da
Apologies.	<i>Perdón.</i>	per-don
May I?	<i>Permiso.</i>	per-mee-so
Excuse me.	<i>Disculpe.</i>	dees-kool-pe

(used before a request or when apologizing)

What's your name?

¿Cómo se llama usted? ko-mo se ya-ma oo-sted (pol)

¿Cómo te llamas? ko-mo te ya-mas (inf)

How are things?

¿Qué tal? ke tal

My name is ...

Me llamo ... me ya-mo ...

It's a pleasure to meet you.

Mucho gusto. moo-cho goos-to

The pleasure is mine.

El gusto es mío. el goos-to es mee-o

Where are you from?

¿De dónde es/eres? de don-de es/er-es (pol/inf)

I'm from ...

Soy de ... soy de ...

Where are you staying?

¿Dónde está alojado? don-de es-ta a-lo-kha-do (pol)

¿Dónde estás alojado? don-de es-tas a-lo-kha-do (inf)

May I take a photo?

¿Puedo sacar una foto? pwe-do sa-kar oo-na fo-to

SIGNS

Entrada	Entrance
Salida	Exit
Información	Information
Abierto	Open
Cerrado	Closed
Prohibido	Prohibited
Comisaría	Police Station
Servicios/Baños	Toilets
Hombres/Varones	Men
Mujeres/Damas	Women

DIRECTIONS**How do I get to ...?**

¿Cómo llego a ...? ko-mo ye-go a ...

Is it far?

¿Está lejos? es-ta le-khos

Go straight ahead.

¡Siga/Vaya derecha. see-ga/va-ya de-re-cho

Turn left.

De vuelta a la izquierda. de vvel-ta a la ees-kyer-da

Turn right.

De vuelta a la derecha. de vvel-ta a la de-re-cha

Can you show me (on the map)?

¿Me lo podría señalar (en el mapa)? me lo po-dree-a se-nya-lar (en el ma-pa)

north	<i>norte</i>	nor-te
south	<i>sur</i>	soor
east	<i>este</i>	es-te
west	<i>oeste</i>	o-es-te
here	<i>aquí</i>	a-kee
there	<i>ahí</i>	a-ee
avenue	<i>avenida</i>	a-ve-nee-da
block	<i>cuadra</i>	kwa-dra
street	<i>calle/paseo</i>	ka-lye/pa-se-o

EMERGENCIAS

Help!	<i>¡Socorro!</i>	so-ko-ro
Fire!	<i>¡Fuego!</i>	fw-e-go
I've been robbed.	<i>Me han robado.</i>	me an ro-ba-do
Go away!	<i>¡Déjeme!</i>	de-khe-me
Get lost!	<i>¡Váyase!</i>	va-ya-se
Call ...!	<i>¡Llame a ...!</i>	ya-me a
the police	<i>la policía</i>	la po-lee-see-a
a doctor	<i>un médico</i>	oon me-dee-ko
an ambulance	<i>una ambulancia</i>	oo-na am-boo-lan-sya

It's an emergency.

Es una emergencia. es oo-na e-mer-khen-sya

Could you help me, please?

¿Me puede ayudar, por favor? me pwe-de a-yoo-dar por fa-vor

I'm lost.

Estoy perdido/a. es-toy per-dee-do/a

Where are the toilets?

¿Dónde están los baños? don-de stan los ba-nyos

HEALTH**I'm sick.**

Estoy enfermo/a. es-toy en-fer-mo/a

I need a doctor.

Necesito un doctor. ne-se-see-to oon dok-tor

Where's the hospital?

¿Dónde está el hospital? don-de es-ta el os-pee-tal

I'm pregnant.

Estoy embarazada. es-toy em-ba-ra-sa-da

I've been vaccinated.

Estoy vacunado/a. es-toy va-koo-na-do/a

I have ...

diarrhea	<i>Tengo ... diarrea</i>	ten-go ... dya-re-a
nausea	<i>náusea</i>	now-se-a
a headache	<i>un dolor de cabeza</i>	oon do-lor de ka-be-sa
a cough	<i>tos</i>	tos

I'm allergic to ...

Soy alérgico/a a ... soy a-ler-khee-ko/a a ...

antibiotics

los antibióticos los an-tee-byo-tee-kos

nuts

las nueces las nwe-ses

peanuts

los cacahuates los ka-ka-khwa-tes

I'm ...

Soy ... asmático/a soy ... as-ma-tee-ko/a

diabético/a dya-be-tee-ko/a

epiléptico e-pé-lep-tee-ko/a

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES**Do you speak (English)?**

¿Habla/Hablas (inglés)? a-bla/a-blas (een-gles) (pol/inf)

Does anyone here speak English?

¿Hay alguien que hable inglés? ai al-gyen ke a-ble een-gles

I (don't) understand.

(No) Entiendo. (no) en-tyen-do

How do you say ...?

¿Cómo se dice ...? ko-mo se dee-se ...

What does ...mean?

¿Qué significa ...? ke seeg-nee-fee-ka ...

Could you please ...?

¿Puede ..., por favor? pwe-de ... por fa-vor

repeat that

repetirlo re-pe-teer-lo

speak more slowly

hablar más despacio a-blar mas des-pa-syo

write it down

escribirlo es-kree-beer-lo

NUMBERS

1	<i>uno</i>	oo-no
2	<i>dos</i>	dos
3	<i>tres</i>	tres
4	<i>cuatro</i>	kwa-tro
5	<i>cinco</i>	seen-ko
6	<i>seis</i>	says
7	<i>siete</i>	sy-te
8	<i>ocho</i>	o-cho
9	<i>nueve</i>	nwe-ve
10	<i>diez</i>	dyes
11	<i>once</i>	on-se
12	<i>doce</i>	do-se
13	<i>trece</i>	tre-se
14	<i>catorce</i>	ka-tor-se
15	<i>quince</i>	keen-se
16	<i>dieciséis</i>	dye-see-says
17	<i>diecisiete</i>	dye-see-sye-te
18	<i>dieciocho</i>	dye-see-o-cho
19	<i>diecinueve</i>	dye-see-nwe-ve
20	<i>veinte</i>	vayn-te
21	<i>veintiuno</i>	vayn-tee-oo-no
30	<i>treinta</i>	trayn-ta
31	<i>treinta y uno</i>	trayn-ta ee oo-no
40	<i>cuarenta</i>	kwa-ren-ta
50	<i>cincuenta</i>	seen-kwen-ta
60	<i>sesenta</i>	se-sen-ta
70	<i>setenta</i>	se-ten-ta
80	<i>ochenta</i>	o-chen-ta
90	<i>noventa</i>	no-ven-ta
100	<i>cient</i>	syen
101	<i>ciento uno</i>	syen-to oo-no
200	<i>doscientos</i>	do-syen-tos

1000	mil	meel
5000	cinco mil	seen-ko meel

SHOPPING & SERVICES

I'd like to buy ...

Quisiera comprar ...	kee-sye-ra kom-prar ...
----------------------	-------------------------

I'm just looking.

Sólo estoy mirando.	so-lo es-toy mee-ran-do
---------------------	-------------------------

May I look at it?

¿Puedo verlo/la?	pwe-do ver-lo/la
------------------	------------------

How much is it?

¿Cuánto cuesta?	kwan-to kwes-ta
-----------------	-----------------

That's too expensive for me.

Es demasiado caro para mí.	es de-ma-sya-do ka-ro pa-ra mee
----------------------------	---------------------------------

Could you lower the price?

¿Podría bajar un poco el precio?	po-dree-a ba-khar oon po-ko el pre-syo
----------------------------------	--

I don't like it.

No me gusta.	no me goos-ta
--------------	---------------

I'll take it.

Lo llevo.	lo ye-vo
-----------	----------

Do you accept ...?

¿Aceptan ...?	a-sep-tan ...
---------------	---------------

American dollars credit cards

dólares americanos	do-la-res a-me-ree-ka-nos
tarjetas de crédito	tar-khe-tas de kre-dee-to
traveler's checks	
cheques de viajero	che-kes de vya-khe-ro

less	menos	me-nos
more	más	mas
large	grande	gran-de
small	pequeño/a	pe-ke-nyo/a

I'm looking for (the) ...

ATM	el cajero automático	el ka-khe-ro ow-to-ma-tee-ko
bank	el banco	el ban-ko
bookstore	la librería	la lee-bre-ree-a
exchange office	la casa de cambio	la ka-sa de kam-byo
general store	la tienda	la tyen-da
laundry	la lavandería	la la-van-de-ree-a
market	el mercado	el mer-ka-do
pharmacy/chemist	la farmacia	la far-ma-sya
post office	la oficina de correos	la o-fee-see-na de ko-re-os
supermarket	el supermercado	el soo-per-mer-ka-do
tourist office	la oficina de turismo	la o-fee-see-na de too-rees-mo

What time does it open/close?

¿A qué hora abre/cierra?	a ke o-ra a-bre/sye-ra
--------------------------	------------------------

I want to change some money/traveler's checks.

Quisiera cambiar dinero/cheques de viajero.	kee-sye-ra kam-byar dee-ne-ro/che-kes de vya-khe-ro
---	---

What is the exchange rate?

¿Cuál es el tipo de cambio?	kwal es el tee-po de kam-byo
-----------------------------	------------------------------

I want to call ...

Quisiera llamar a ...	kee-sye-ra lya-mar a ...
-----------------------	--------------------------

airmail letter registered (mail) stamps	correo aéreo carta certificado timbres	ko-re-o a-e-re-o ka-r-ta ser-tee-fee-ka-do teem-bres
---	--	--

TIME & DATES

What time is it?

¿Qué hora es?	ke o-ra es
---------------	------------

It's one o'clock.

Es la una.	es la oo-na
------------	-------------

It's seven o'clock.

Son las siete.	son las sye-te
----------------	----------------

Half past two.

Dos y media.	dos ee me-dya
--------------	---------------

midnight	medianoche	me-dya-no-che
noon	mediodia	me-dyo-dee-a
today	ahora	a-o-ra
today	hoy	oy
tonight	esta noche	es-ta no-che
tomorrow	mañana	ma-ny-a-na
yesterday	ayer	a-yer

Monday	lunes	loo-nes
Tuesday	martes	mar-tes
Wednesday	miércoles	myer-ko-les
Thursday	jueves	khwe-ves
Friday	viernes	vyer-nes
Saturday	sábado	sa-ba-do
Sunday	domingo	do-meen-go

January	enero	e-ne-ro
February	febrero	fe-bre-ro
March	marzo	mar-so
April	abril	a-bree-l
May	mayo	ma-yo
June	junio	khoo-nyo
July	julio	khoo-lyo
August	agosto	a-gos-to
September	septiembre	sep-tyem-bre
October	octubre	ok-too-bre
November	noviembre	no-vyem-bre
December	diciembre	dee-syem-bre

TRANSPORTATION Public Transportation

What time does ... leave/arrive?	¿A qué hora ... sale/llega?	a ke o-ra ... sa-le/ye-ga
the boat	el barco	el bar-ko
the bus (city)	el camión	el ka-myon
the bus (intercity)	el autobús	el ow-to-boos
the minibus	el combi/minibús	el kom-bee/mee-nee-boos
the plane	el avión	el a-vyon

the airport	el aeropuerto	el a-e-ro-pwer-to
the bus station	la estación de autobuses	la es-ta-syon de ow-to-boos-es
the bus stop	la parada de autobuses	la pa-ra-da de ow-to-boos-es
a luggage locker	un casillero	oon ka-see-ye-ro
the ticket office	la taquilla	la ta-kee-ya

A ticket to ..., please.	Un boleto a ..., por favor.	oon bo-le-to a ... por fa-vor
What's the fare to ...?	¿Cuánto cuesta hasta ...?	kwan-to kwes-ta a-sta ...

student's 1st class	de estudiante primera clase	de es-too-dyan-te pree-me-ra kla-se
2nd class	segunda clase	se-goon-da kla-se
single/one way	viaje sencillo	vee-a-khe-sen-see-yo
round-trip	redondo	re-don-do
taxi	taxi	tak-see

Private Transportation

I'd like to hire a/an ...	Quisiera rentar ...	kee-sye-ra ren-tar ...
4WD	un cuatro por cuatro	oon kwa-tro por kwa-tro
car	un coche	oon ko-che
motorbike	una moto	oo-na mo-to

bicycle	bicicleta	bee-see-kle-ta
hitchhike	pedir aventón	pe-deer a-ven-ton
pickup (ute) truck	pickup camión	pee-kop ka-myon

Where's a gas/petrol station?

¿Dónde hay una gasolinera?	don-de ai oo-na ga-so-lee-ne-ra
----------------------------	---------------------------------

How much is a liter of gasoline/petrol?

¿Cuánto cuesta el litro de gasolina?	kwan-to kwes-ta el lee-tro de ga-so-lee-na
--------------------------------------	--

Please fill it up.

Lleno, por favor.	ye-no por fa-vor
-------------------	------------------

I'd like (100) pesos worth.

Quiero (cien) pesos.	kye-ro (syen) pe-sos
----------------------	----------------------

diesel gas/petrol unleaded	diesel gasolina gasolina sin plomo	dee-sel ga-so-lee-na ga-so-lee-na seen plo-mo a-say-te
oil	aceite	a-say-te

ROAD SIGNS

Though Mexico mostly uses the familiar international road signs, you should be prepared to encounter these others as well:

Acceso	Entrance
Estacionamiento	Parking
Ceda el Paso	Give Way
Curva Peligrosa	Dangerous Curve
Despacio	Slow
Desviación	Detour
Dirección Única	One-Way
No Adelantar	No Overtaking
No Hay Paso	Road Closed
Peligro	Danger
Prepare Su Cuota	Have Toll Ready
Prohibido Aparcar/No Estacionar	No Parking
Prohibido el Paso	No Entry
Topes	Speed Bumps

Is this the road to (...)?

¿Por aquí se va a (...)?	por a-kee se va a (...)
--------------------------	-------------------------

Where do I pay?

¿Dónde se paga?	don-de se pa-ga
-----------------	-----------------

I need a mechanic/tow truck.

Necesito un mecánico/remolque.	ne-se-see-to oon me-ka-nee-ko/re-mol-ke
--------------------------------	---

Is there a garage near here?

¿Hay un garaje cerca de aquí?	ai oon ga-ra-khe ser-ka de a-kee
-------------------------------	----------------------------------

The car has broken down (in ...).

El coche se se descompuso (en ...).	el ko-che se des-kom-poo-so (en ...)
-------------------------------------	--------------------------------------

I have a flat tire.

Tengo una llanta pinchada.	ten-go oo-na yan-ta pon-cha-da
----------------------------	--------------------------------

I've run out of gas/petrol.

Me quedé sin gasolina.	me ke-de seen ga-so-lee-na
------------------------	----------------------------

I've had an accident.

Tuve un accidente.	too-ve oon ak-see-den-te
--------------------	--------------------------

YUCATEC MAYA

Yucatec Maya, spoken primarily in Yucatán, Campeche and Quintana Roo, and in the northern and western parts of Belize, is part of the Amerind family of Native American languages. This means that Yucatec Maya (commonly called ‘Yucatec’ by scholars and ‘Maya’ by local speakers) is related to many languages spoken in the southeastern United States, as well as many of the indigenous languages of far-off California and Oregon (eg Costanoan, Klamath and Tsimshian). Yucatec is just one of 28 modern Mayan languages but it probably has the largest number of speakers, estimated at 900,000 people.

You can hear Yucatec spoken in the markets and occasionally by hotel staff in cities throughout the peninsula. If you really want to hear Yucatec spoken by monolingual Maya (and learn a lot about Maya culture besides!), you must travel to some of the peninsula’s more remote villages. Maya speakers will not assume that you know any of their language. If you attempt to say something in Maya, people will usually respond quite favorably. A useful learning resource is the online Maya dictionary (www.famsi.org/mayawriting/dictionary.htm). So give it a try!

PRONUNCIATION

Mayan vowels are similar to English vowels but the consonants can be a bit tricky.

c	always hard, as the ‘k’ in ‘kick’
j	always an aspirated ‘h’ sound. So <i>abaj</i> is pronounced ah- <i>bahh</i> ; to get the ‘ <i>h</i> ’ sound, take the ‘h’ sound from ‘half’ and put it at the end of ah- <i>bahh</i> .
u	as ‘oo’ except at the start or end of a word, in which case it’s like English ‘w.’ Thus <i>baktun</i> is ‘bak-toon,’ but <i>Uaxactún</i> is ‘wa-shak-toon’ and <i>ahau</i> is ‘a-haw’.
x	as the ‘sh’ in ‘she’; a shushing sound

Mayan glottalized consonants (ie those followed by an apostrophe: **b’**, **ch’**, **k’**, **p’**, **t’**) are similar to normal consonants, but are pronounced more forcefully and ‘explosively.’ However, an apostrophe following a vowel

VILLAGE GREETINGS

The most polite thing to do in a village setting is to greet the male head of the household first. If you have trouble figuring out who this is, simply try to greet the oldest man present. Men should try to speak to other men or possibly older women. Approaching young women might give people a mistaken idea of your intentions. Women should try to greet the eldest man (as above), and any of the women you think are your age or older.

signifies a glottal stop (the sound between the two syllables in ‘uh-oh’) – it doesn’t signify a more forceful vowel. See ‘Tongue Twisters – A Difficult Decision’ (p41) for more information on the glottal stop.

Maya is a tone language, which means that some words take on different meanings when pronounced with a high tone or a low tone. For example, *aak* said with a high tone means ‘turtle,’ but ‘grass’ or ‘vine’ when said with a low tone.

In many Mayan place names the stress falls on the last syllable. When these names are written out, Spanish rules for indicating stress are often followed (see p283). This practice varies; in this book we have tried to include accents as much as possible. Here are some pronunciation examples:

<i>Abaj Takalik</i>	a-bah ta-ka-leek
<i>Acance</i>	a-kan-ke
<i>Dzibilchaltún</i>	dzee-beel-chal-toon
<i>Hopelchén</i>	ho-pel-chen
<i>Oxcutz’kab</i>	osh-kootz-kab
<i>Pacal</i>	pa-kal
<i>Pop</i>	pope
<i>Tikal</i>	tee-kal
<i>Uaxactún</i>	wa-shak-toon
<i>Xcaret</i>	shka-ret
<i>Yaxchilán</i>	yash-chee-lan

USEFUL WORDS & PHRASES

Spanish borrowings tend to be stressed differently in Yucatec Maya, eg *amigo* (Spanish for ‘friend’) is pronounced ‘a-mee-go’ in Spanish and ‘aa-mee-go’ in Yucatec.

Hello.

Hola. o-la

Good day.

Buenos días. bwe-nos dee-as

Good afternoon.

Buenas tardes. bwe-nos tar-des

Good evening.

Buenas noches. bwe-nos no-ches

You might also hear someone saying simply *buenos* to stand in for the full greeting; this isn’t considered as improper to Maya speakers as it is for many Spanish speakers.

How are you?

Bix a beel? beesh a bail?
Bix yanikech? beesh yaw-nee-kech? (less formal)

OK/Well.

Maalob. ma-lobe

Bye/See you tomorrow.

Hasta saamal. as-ta sa-mal

Goodbye.

Pa’atik kin bin. pa’a-teek keen been

Thank you.

Gracias/Dios Bo’otik. gra-see-as/dyose boe’o-teek

Yes.

Haa/He’ele. haa/he’e-le
 (Maya speakers often reiterate what is said to them, instead of saying ‘yes’; eg ‘Are you going to the store?’ ‘I’m going.’)

No.

Ma’. ma’

What’s your name?

Bix a k’aaba? beesh a k’aa-ba?

My name is ...

In kaabae’ ... een ka-ba-e’

I understand English.

Kin na’atik ingles. keen na’-a-teek een-gles

I don’t speak Maya.

Ma tin na’atik mayat’aani.
 ma’ teen na’-a-teek ma-ya-taa-nee



Also available from Lonely Planet: *Mexican Spanish Phrasebook*

Do you speak Spanish?

Teche’, ka t’aanik wa castellano t’aan?
 te-che’ ka t’a-neek wa ca-stay-ya-no t’an?

Who is the head of the house?

Maax u pool u nail?
 mash oo pole oo na-heel?

Where is the ...?

<i>Tu’ux yaan le ...</i>	too’oosh yan le ...
bathroom	
<i>baño</i>	ba’-nyo
road to ...	
<i>u be ti’ ...</i>	u be tee ...
hotel	
<i>hotel</i>	o-tel
doctor	
<i>médico</i>	me-dee-ko
Comisario	
<i>Comis</i>	ko-meets

How much is ...?

<i>Baux ...?</i>	ba-hoosh ...?
this one	
<i>lela’</i>	le-la’
that one	
<i>lelo’</i>	le-lo’

expensive

ko’o ko-o

not expensive

mix ko’oi meesh ko’o-hi

pretty

ki’ichpam kee’eech-pam

I’m hungry.

Wiihen. wee-hen

It’s (very) tasty.

(Hach) Ki’. (hach) kee’

I want to drink water.

Tak in wukik ha’. tak een woo-keek ha’

1	<i>un peel</i>	oom pail
2	<i>ka peel</i>	ka pail
3	<i>ox peel</i>	osh pail

When counting animate objects, like people, replace *peel* with *tuul* (pronounced ‘tool’). Beyond three, use Spanish numbers.

Glossary

Words specific to food, restaurants and eating are listed on p55. See also the Language chapter, p288.

Ah Tz'ib – Maya scribes. They penned the Chilam Balam and still practice their craft today.

alux (s), **aluxes** (pl) – Maya 'leprechauns,' benevolent 'little people'

Ángeles Verdes – 'Green Angels'; bilingual mechanics in green trucks who patrol major highways, offering breakdown assistance

ayuntamiento – municipal government; commonly seen as H Ayuntamiento (Honorable Ayuntamiento)

baluartes – bastions or bulwarks

barrio – district, neighborhood

billete – bank note (unlike in Spain, where it's a ticket)

boleto – ticket (bus, train, museum etc)

cacique – indigenous chief; also used to describe a provincial warlord or strongman

cafetería – literally 'coffee-shop,' it refers to any informal restaurant with waiter service; it is not usually a self-service restaurant

cajero automático – Automated Teller Machine (ATM)

camión (s), **camiones** (pl) – truck; bus

camioneta – pickup

campechanos – citizens of Campeche

campesinos – countryfolk, farm workers

casa de cambio – currency-exchange office

casetas de teléfono – call offices where an on-the-spot operator connects the call for you; often shortened to *casetas*

cenote – a deep limestone sinkhole containing water

cerveza – beer

Chac – Maya god of rain

chac-mool – Maya sacrificial stone sculpture

chenes – name for cenotes (limestone sinkholes) in the Chenes region

chilangos – natives of Mexico City

chultún (s), **chultunes** (pl) – Maya cistern found at

Puuc archaeological sites south of Mérida

cocina – cookshop (literally 'kitchen'), a small, basic restaurant usually run by one woman, often located in or near a municipal market; also seen as *cocina económica* (economical kitchen) or *cocina familiar* (family kitchen); see also *lonchería*

colectivo – literally, 'shared,' a car, van (VW combi, Ford or Chevrolet) or minibus that picks up and drops off passengers along its set route; also known as *taxi colectivo*

combi – a catch-all term used for taxi, van and minibus services regardless of vehicle type

comida corrida – set meal, meal of the day

conquistador – explorer-conqueror of Latin America from Spain

correo, correos – post office

costera – waterfront avenue

criollo – a person of pure Spanish descent born in Spanish America

cuota – toll road

daños a terceros – third-party car insurance

de lujo – deluxe class of bus service

DNI – Derecho para No Inmigrante; nonimmigrant fee charged to all foreign tourists and business travelers visiting Mexico

ejido – communal landholding, though laws now allow sale of *ejido* land to outside individuals

encomenderos – owners of Maya lands divided into large estates

encomienda – a grant made to a conquistador, consisting of labor or tribute from a group of indigenous people; the conquistador was supposed to protect and convert them, but usually treated them as little more than slaves

feria – fair or carnival, typically occurring during a religious holiday

gala terno – women's straight, white, square-necked dress with an embroidered overyoke and hem, worn over an underskirt, which sports an embroidered strip near the bottom; fancier than a *huipil* and often accompanied by a hand-knitted shawl

gringo/a – male/female US or Canadian visitor to Latin America (sometimes applied to any visitor of European heritage); can be used derogatorily but more often is a mere statement of fact

gruta – cave, grotto

guardaequipaje – room for storing luggage (eg in a bus terminal)

guayabera – man's thin fabric shirt with pockets and appliquéd designs on the front, over the shoulders and down the back; often worn in place of a jacket and tie

hacendado – landowner

hacienda – estate; Hacienda (capitalized) is the Treasury Department

henequen – agave fiber used to make rope, grown particularly around Mérida

h-menob – Maya shaman still practicing their trade in the Yucatán today.

huipil (s), **huipiles** (pl) – indigenous women's sleeveless white tunic, usually intricately and colorfully embroidered

iglesia – church

INAH – Instituto Nacional de Arqueología e Historia; the body in charge of most ancient sites and some museums

INM – Instituto Nacional de Migración (National Immigration Institute)

Itzamná – lord of the heavens; a popular figure on the wooden panels of contemporary architecture

IVA – *impuesto al valor agregado* or 'ee-bah,' a 15% value-added tax added to many items in Mexico

Ixchel – Maya goddess of the moon and fertility

jarana – a folkloric dance that has been performed by Yucatecans for centuries

jipijapa – an alternative name for panama hats (which are made from *jipijapa* palm fronds)

Kukulcán – Maya name for the Aztec-Toltec plumed serpent Quetzalcóatl

ladino – also known as *mestizo*, a person of mixed indigenous and European blood'

lagunas – small lakes, lagoons

larga distancia – long-distance; usually refers to

telephones, often seen on signs outside *casetas* as 'Lada'

lavandería – laundry; a *lavandería automática* is a coin-operated laundry

lista de correos – general delivery in Mexico; literally 'mail list,' the list of addressees for whom mail is being held, displayed in the post office

lonchería – from English 'lunch'; a simple restaurant that may in fact serve meals all day (not just lunch), often seen near municipal markets. See also *cocina*.

lotería – Mexico's version of bingo

machismo – maleness, masculine virility or bravura

malecón – waterfront boulevard

manzana – apple; also a city block. A *supermanzana* is a large group of city blocks bounded by major avenues. Cancún uses *manzana* and *supermanzana* numbers as addresses.

maquiladora – export-only factory paying workers around M\$40 per day

mariachi – small ensemble of Mexican street musicians; strolling mariachi bands often perform in restaurants

más o menos – more or less, somewhat

méridanos – citizens of Mérida

mestizo – also known as *ladino*, a person of mixed indigenous and European blood; the word now more commonly means 'Mexican'

metate – flattish stone on which corn is ground with a cylindrical stone roller

Montezuma's revenge – Mexican version of 'Delhi-belly' or travelers' diarrhea

mudéjar – Moorish architectural style

mul – mound in Maya. Often used to describe pyramid sites.

mulatto – a person of mixed white and black ancestry

municipios – townships

na – thatched Maya hut

nohoh – 'big' in Maya. The word is used by everybody around the peninsula to describe large men.

nortes – relatively cold storms bringing wind and rain from the north

Nte – abbreviation for *norte* (north), used in street names

oficina de correos – post office; also called *correo* or *correos*

Ote – abbreviation for *oriente* (east), used in street names

palacio de gobierno – building housing the executive offices of a state or regional government

palacio municipal – town or city hall; municipal government

palapa – thatched, palm-leaf-roofed shelter usually with open sides

Pemex – government-owned petroleum extraction, refining and retailing monopoly

pisto – colloquial Maya term for money

plateresque – 'silversmith-like'; the architectural style of the Spanish renaissance (16th century), rich in decoration

Popol Vuh – painted Maya book containing sacred legends and stories; equivalent to the Bible

porfiriato – the name given to the era of Porfirio Díaz's 35-year rule as president-dictator (1876–1911), preceding the Mexican Revolution

PRI – Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party); the controlling force in Mexican politics for much of the 20th century

primera (1a) clase – 1st class of bus service

Quetzalcóatl – plumed serpent god of the Aztecs and Toltecs

retablo – altarpiece (usually an ornate gilded, carved wooden decoration in a church)

ría – estuary

río – river

roofcomb – a decorative stonework lattice atop a Maya pyramid or temple

sacbé (s), **sacbeob** (pl) – ceremonial limestone avenue or path between great Maya cities

segunda (2a) clase – 2nd class of bus service

Semana Santa – Holy Week, the week from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday; Mexico's major holiday period

stela (s), **stelae** (pl) – standing stone monument, usually carved

supermercado – supermarket, ranging from a corner store to a large, US-style supermarket

sur – south; often seen in street names

temescal – bathhouse, sweat lodge

templo – in Mexico, a church; anything from a wayside chapel to a cathedral

tequila – clear, distilled liquor produced, like pulque and mezcal, from the maguey cactus

Tex-Mex – Americanized version of Mexican food

típico – typical or characteristic of a region; particularly used to describe food

topes – speed bumps, sometimes indicated by a highway sign depicting a row of little bumps

torito – a vivacious song that evokes the fervor of a bullfight

tranvía – tram or motorized trolley

vaquería – a traditional Yucatecan party where couples dance in unison to a series of songs; the parties are often held in town halls or on haciendas

viajero/a – male/female traveler

vulcanizadora – automobile tire repair shop

War of the Castes – bloody 19th-century Maya uprising in the Yucatán

Xibalbá – in Maya religious belief, the secret world or underworld

xtabentún – a traditional Maya spirit in the Yucatán; an anise-flavored liqueur made by fermenting honey