

Costa Maya Explorer

A Lodge-to-Lodge Sea Kayak and Mayan Culture Adventure in the Undiscovered Yucatan, Mexico

Trip Details

7days / 7 nights

Price

\$1799

Trip Begins - Cancun

Trip End Options -
Cancun, Tulum, Playa del
Carmen, Belize City

2013 Departures

Please Call into our Office
for Dates

Activities

Sea Kayaking, Kayak Sail-
ing, Kayak Surfing,
Snorkeling, Fishing,
Mayan Ruins,
Cenotes, Lagoons,
Photography,
Natural History

Accommodations

1 night Cancun Hotel
4 nights seaside Eco-lodge
2 nights inland Lodge



The Setting...

The Mesoamerican Reef, which runs the full length of the Peninsula, through Belize and into Guatemala and Honduras is considered one of the richest marine ecosystems on earth. Its beginnings are at the northern extension of the Yucatan Peninsula (which separates the Gulf of Mexico from the Caribbean Sea) and as we head south towards Belizean waters the Barrier Reef becomes more formed with numerous cuts allowing water flow between the lagoons and open sea.

Rich with brilliantly coloured fish, sea grass beds, and patch reefs, the reef systems in our area of travel are far away from the areas near Cancun and Playa del Carmen and have not seen nearly the level of human impact as witnessed in the north. Our base of exploration is south of the town of Majahual extending almost to the Belizean border within the Yucatan, with numerous patch corals and wide expansive coral sand beach berms, often bordered by mangrove-lined lagoons that are ideal for protected water paddling.

Inland, the Yucatan is a large plate of karst/limestone with almost uniformly flat terrain. Because of the geology, surface waters are rare with most water resources in the form of underground aquifers. It is an area rich with Mayan and Spanish colonial culture.



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A Note About the Ecology...

The ecology of the Yucatan coast is a dynamic combination of coral reefs, sand flats with turtle grass, and expansive beaches. The Barrier Reef shelters the coastline from the rougher open waters of the Caribbean sea and acts as a huge break-water, holding in the sand, resulting in beautiful fringing beaches forested with coconut palms, sea grape, and chiki palm. There are also stretches where the reef is submerged and waves roll into the shallow beach zone which creates ideal conditions for kayak surfing.

We explore many different regions of the reef, including the inner and outer walls, the patch and fringing reefs, mangrove channels, and protected lagoons. Each habitat supports a different assortment of marine organisms.

In the Bacalar and Rio Bec inland regions we travel in tropical moist forest and dry forest habitat. The highlight of this area is Mexico's second largest freshwater lake, Laguna Bacalar, which is a pristine body of water that stretches for 60 kilometers and has a stunningly beautiful turquoise aquamarine water color. Laguna Bacalar has a number of underwater cenotes and numerous channels that connect with the Bay of Chetumal via the Rio Hondo. The region supports a rich diversity of life including two species of snail kites.

Recommended Tour books:

Hinsdale, Joshua Eden
[Playa del Carmen, Tulum & The Riviera Maya](#)
[Great Destinations Mexico](#)
Norton & Company, NY

O'Neill, Zora
[Rough Guide: Yucatan](#)
[Rough Guide Yucatan Map](#)

Recommended Reading:

Parkes Bamford, Henry
[A History of Mexico](#)
American Heritage Library

Typical Daily Itinerary:

Day 0: On Arrival day Island Expeditions will meet you upon arrival at the Cancun International Airport and transfer you to a local hotel in the Cancun Hotel Zone. After you pass through customs an Island Expeditions' representative will meet you as you step outside of the Terminal. Airport transfers and hotel is included on this night.

This day is your day to arrive before the trip starts, meet your fellow travelers, and acclimatize to your new tropical environment. Transfers from the airport and lodging are included.

Accommodation: Hotel **Meals:** Dinner is not included on this night

Day 1: After breakfast we travel south by van into the area of the Yucatan Peninsula. This takes us away from the mass tourism that characterizes the Cancun and Playa del Carmen region. We leave early from our hotel and on our way south we stop at a cenote cave system for a chance to snorkel in these unique underground waterways. After our cenote adventure we enjoy a delicious Mexican lunch and then continue on our way to the Caribbean coast. Here we settle into our accommodations on the beachfront at an exquisite small Eco-lodge.

Accommodation: Eco-Lodge **Meals:** B, L, D

Day 2: Wake to fresh coffee and the sunrise over the Caribbean Sea from our comfortable rooms. Our lodge at Balamku has achieved a reputation as one of the finest boutique lodges on the Costa Maya and operates completely off the grid - powered by solar, wind, and environmentally sensitive compost and waste management systems (we believe our trips must support eco-conscious businesses in order to protect the beauty and biological diversity of the areas we travel). This day we begin with an introduction to sea kayaking and snorkelling and then paddle directly to the main Reef just minutes from our beach front cabanas. Warm waters along with rich and diverse coral reefs are the focus of this day as we explore these waters by kayak and with snorkel and mask.

Accommodation: Eco-Lodge **Meals:** B, L



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Day 3: Today we paddle south along the reef system - snorkeling, kayaking, and if weather permits, we will hoist the sails on our kayaks (after an instructional session) to harness the power of the wind as we travel along the coast. Beautiful beaches, coral reefs, and the thrill of travelling by kayak are the memories of the day.

Accommodation: Eco-Lodge **Meals:** B, L

Day 4: Our day's activities include a paddle in protected lagoons where we are able to see rich bird life and have a chance to view the wildlife residing in these waters characterized by labyrinth like mangrove passages and clear water. Your guides will organize which activities on this day are best suited to the wind and weather conditions we encounter. On our last night on the coast we venture to a small restaurant in the village of Majahual for an excellent dinner. Tonight we will guide you on an exploration of the tastes and flavours that reflect the cuisine of Mexico.

Accommodation: Eco-Lodge **Meals:** B, L

Day 5: After breakfast we have a chance for a sunrise paddle or a relaxing morning at the lodge before leaving the coast for a hidden gem in the southern Yucatan near the border of Belize. Today we venture to little known Laguna Bacalar. Our hotel is located on the shoreline of a remarkable freshwater lagoon known for its shades of turquoise blues - Bacalar is known as the "Lagoon of Seven Colors". Each room has a balcony with stunning views overlooking the water. Relax, enjoy a refreshing swim, and explore this unique hotel before heading out to dinner in the town of Bacalar.

Accommodation: Hotel **Meals:** B, L

Day 6: We have an early morning breakfast so we can arrive early for the Mayan ruin sites of Kohunlich and Dzibanche. These extensive ruins are in a natural setting surrounded by tropical forest that supports a rich diversity of wildlife. Because of the more remote setting it is not uncommon for us to be the only ones at the ruins. One of the more impressive Mayan ruins in the southern Quintana Roo, Kohunlich is best known for its Pyramid of the Masks, with six large masks each standing over eight feet tall. We return back to our lake-side hotel in the afternoon in time for a swim. In the evening we tour a 17th century Spanish fort in town with its unique museum that profiles the history of piracy and colonial occupation of the area.

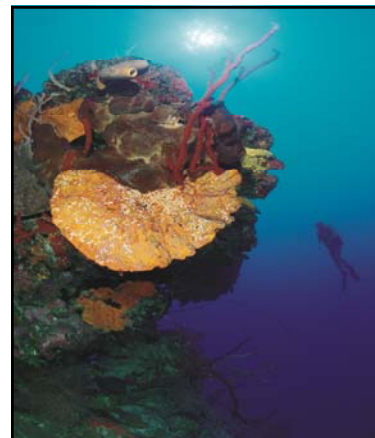
Accommodation: Hotel **Meals:** B, L

Day 7: Enjoy the morning at the hotel and a cool swim before traveling north to Cancun with optional drop-offs along the way at Tulum or Playa Del Carmen. We do not arrive back into Cancun until early evening on this day. For those continuing south into Belize it is a short drive to Chetumal where we connect with a water taxi into Belize.

Accommodation: Not Included **Meals:** B

Important Travel Notes: On Day 7 of the trip we have left options available on how and where you would like to travel after the trip. For those who are continuing to Belize for another Island Expeditions' trip we will take care of the transfer details.

More details can be seen at www.costamayaexplorer.travel



What's Included...

- Pre-Trip Information Package
- All transfers and accommodations as described in the Itinerary
- Meals as per itinerary (dinners except for Day 1 are not included)
- Unlimited use of our equipment - including activities and instruction
- Accommodation the day before the trip (Day 0)
- Professional guiding services

What's Not Included...

- Gratuities
- International flights
- Airport Departure Tax
- Dinners
- Extra costs due to late arrivals, lost baggage, and circumstances beyond our control

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Accommodation...

On 'Day 0' we will be spending the night at a hotel in the Cancun area. On Day 1 we travel 280 km south to reach our area of exploration where we will be staying at the seaside lodge called Balamku, located just south of Majahual. Our lodge is well situated right on the water and is a model of ecological building, using solar power, a modern compost toilet system, and capturing and storing rainwater for showers. Each room has an ocean view and is tastefully decorated with local crafts and furnishings.

While exploring the Bacalar and Rio Bec area we will be staying at Hotel Laguna Bacalar on the water's edge. This hotel is comfortable with wonderful service and, of course, colonial-styled architecture, and has all the amenities of a modern hotel plus the interesting and quirky features that are often part of staying in rural Yucatan.

NOTE: Lodging and hotels may vary slightly on some departures. We will endeavour to inform you prior to trip departure if there will be any changes to our lodging.



Thinking about travelling to Belize with Island Expeditions?

The Costa Maya Explorer combines well with one of our adventures in Belize. Visit Belize's coral reefs, cayes, and offshore atolls. Explore the caves and ancient Mayan cities such as Lamanai and Altun Ha and the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary. Belize is only 1 hour away and it's like walking into an entirely different world. For those joining an IEC trip we will take care of your transfers from Mexico to Belize.

Getting back to Cancun or continuing to Belize...

On Day 7 we will provide transportation back to Cancun with options to be dropped off along the way at Tulum or Playa Del Carmen. You will require an extra night hotel in Cancun depending on what time your return flight departs. For those continuing on with us to Belize we will provide transport from Bacalar to Belize City to meet up with your trip for \$60US. We suggest you arrange your return flight home from Belize.

Thinking about traveling independently in Belize, before or after your trip?

With over 25 years of exploration in Belize, our very knowledgeable and experienced office staff can offer you a wealth of travel information to help you plan the best vacation possible! However, we do recommend you read up on the country and find what interests you. Once you find an area of interest, give our office a phone call.



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Phone: 604.452.3212
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Email: info@islandexpeditions.com
Website: www.islandexpeditions.com
School Trips: www.educationaltrips.org

Hey Teachers & Parents! Did you know Island Expeditions Co. has been operating custom educational trips for high schools and colleges for over a decade! For more information, please visit: www.educationaltrips.org



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