



# YUCATÁN

# CULTURE & ARCHEOLOGY



**SEFOTUR**  
SECRETARÍA DE FOMENTO  
TURÍSTICO



#TheColorsOfYucatan

# THE MAYAN CULTURE

It was one of the most prominent Mesoamerican civilizations developed in the course of more than two millennia. Mayan people inhabited the southeast of Mexico at the Yucatan Peninsula, Guatemala, Belize, the western part of Honduras, and at El Salvador.

Here we let you know a little bit of the Mayan culture.

- They invented the unique complete hieroglyphic writing system in the pre-Columbian Americas.
- They developed their own knowledge regarding art, architecture, and astronomy.
- They were great mathematicians who invented the zero and used a vigesimal numbering, something far ahead for their times.
- Mayan cosmovision considered 13 levels in heaven and 9 in the underworld, and in between of them there was the world of living people.
- Skull deformation and visual strabismus were signs of beauty, both generated in childhood.
- They created the most exact calendar, and it is considered one of their greatest contributions to humanity.

An important part of their behavior was based in religion and in the different rituals they performed, some of them are still performed in current days, as they have and important meaning:



## Xukulem Ritual

It is a ceremony to get close to and communicate with *Ajau*, creator and God of the universe.



## Sac Ha Ritual

Farmers continue celebrating this ritual every year with the objective of cultivating corn.



## Pa Puul Ritual

It is a traditional festival that takes place every June 24th with the objective of requesting rains.



## Hanal Pixán

It is the celebration in which food and drinks are offered to the souls of the dead in Yucatán. It is the ceremony of rituals performed to honor our ancestors, to establish and keep the bond between living people and the deceased.

The festivity begins on October 31st remembering children, on November 1st adults are honored, and on November 2nd all saints are commemorated.



## Pok ta Pok

It is the ball game ancient Mayan people played to thank Gods for the good harvest and to ask for their protection.

You can enjoy this show for free every Saturday at 8 pm on the San Ildefonso Cathedral Esplanade in the city of Mérida.



# INTERESTING FACTS



- Currently, **Chichén Itzá** is the most famous Mayan city in the world,

Cultural Human Heritage and one of the New 7 Wonders of the Modern World.



- Izamal has the second **largest atrium** in the world, only after the one at the Vatican.



*\*It is recommended to wear a hat or cap, comfortable clothes, swimming suit, photo camera with protection against water, insect repellent, and biodegradable sunscreen.*



YUCATÁN  
REGIONS

Yucatán Riviera

Mérida, Southern Cultural  
and Culinary Capital City

Yucatán Cenotes  
and Haciendas

Puuc Route and  
Mayan Villages

Mayan World Capital

Mayan Port

ICONOGRAPHY



Mérida



Valladolid



Izamal



Sisal



Maní



Chichén Itzá



Uxmal



Archeological sites



Haciendas



Cenotes



Cave



Biosphere Reserve



Bird Sanctuary



Beach



Airport



Cruise Port



There are  
**18 archeological sites**  
open to the public



The Castle of Kukulcán has  
**4 staircases**  
of 91 steps each one,  
364 in total, and with the  
top platform there are 4 staircases  
**365 steps**

HIGHWAYS AND URBAN AREAS



Urban Areas



Federal Highway (Toll)



Federal Freeway



State Freeway



Unpaved road



The Mayan  
**language**  
is still spoken.



**4 Magic Towns**  
Izamal, Maní, Sisal & Valladolid

# YUCATECAN CULTURE

Among dances, traditional dishes, Mayan rituals, music, and traditional clothing, Yucatán is one of the tourist destinations with a great cultural richness in Mexico. On each village and community of the State there is a multicolor range of Mayan historic heritage in the daily life of the Yucatecan people.

Some expressions of the Yucatecan culture that you must not miss are:



## La Jarana

It is the traditional dance of the State, a combination of pre-Hispanic ethnic elements and the popularization of dances brought by Spaniards. They dance accompanied by an orchestra interpreting music of *Jaranero* rhythm.

In between the pauses from the orchestra, the *jaraneros* say verses called “*bombas*” to add playfulness to the celebration:

*¡¡¡BOMBA!!!*

Del cielo cayó un pañuelo  
bordado con mil colores  
y en la puntita decía:  
mestiza de mis amores.

*¡¡¡BOMBA!!!*

*From the heaven a handkerchief fell  
Embroidered in many colors  
And in the tip it said  
Mestiza of my love affairs.*





Izamal, Magic Town  
Cenotes & Haciendas Region



## La Vaquería

It is the traditional Yucatecan festivity; it has its origins in the colonial times and the reason of celebration was to mark the cattle of the haciendas; they prepared a feast, and the owner invited all his friends to demonstrate his wealth.

Nowadays, it is a music and dance festivity celebrated in the patronal feasts of all villages in the State, and in special dates.

You can enjoy of this show all year long every Monday at 9 pm, on the ground floor of Mérida's Palacio Municipal (City Hall).



## Yucatecan Trova

Result of a literary and musical culture that flourished in Mérida between 1900 and 1940, times in which serenades and artistic soirées were essential part of social life. Yucatecan songs use Cuban rhythms combined with love poems. Every Thursday at 9 pm you can enjoy the Yucatecan trova music at Santa Lucía Park.



## Traditional Clothing

The gala dress for women is called Terno and it has 3 components: the *jubón*, the *hipil*, and the *fustán*, which are embroidered with cross stitch, very characteristic of the region. It is complemented with a shawl and filigree jewelry which harmonizes with the terno.





Handcrafts / Pisté  
Mayan World Capital Region

The suit for men is composed of straight white trousers and a long-sleeve shirt (similar to the guayabera) with high round collar, without flaps; they wear white espadrilles made out of leather, with thick heels. Their garment is complemented by a big red handkerchief hanging from the trousers' pocket, and a white hat.



## Handcrafts

Items of diverse materials, designs, and colors are made in Yucatán, which apart of being useful, they are beautiful and elegant: artifacts made of tortoiseshell, shell, conch, wood, and carved stone, clay pots, the sisal and cotton fiber knitwear; embroidery, lace applications, and cross stitch, ternos, guayaberas, and hammocks, straw and *jipi palm hats*, reed and liana sleeping mats, leather bags and shoes.

- **Chemax** is dedicated to carving figures in wood, which are basically ornaments.
- **Dzityá** manufactures numerous items with trumpet tree wood and diverse carved stone works.
- **En Ebtún y Kinchil** people make objects knitted with liana or other fibers.
- **En Halachó**, people make the traditional "*jipi*" or "*Panama*" hat.
- **Hunucmá** produces one of the best leather footwear in the peninsula.
- **Kimbilá** is a population devoted to work in embroidered clothing, though their most important product are guayaberas.
- **Muna** produces beautiful bowls and rattles decorated with pre-Hispanic patterns, machetes with original designs, and carved stone works.
- **Pisté** is a village that is devoted to basketry works.
- **En Tixkokob**, Chumayel, and Teabo, people produce some of the best hammocks in the region.
- **Ticul** outstands for its production of pottery and footwear.
- **Uayma** makes diverse pottery works like pitchers, jars, pots, bowls, and ornamental vessels.



Handcrafts / Izamal  
Cenotes & Haciendas Region



# YUCATÁN RIVIERA

This region includes most of the State's coast, with places like *Celestún*, *Sisal*, *Chicxulub*, *Progreso*, *Telchac*, *Dzilam de Bravo*, among others. Here you will find different accommodation options for all tastes, as well as restaurants, guides, boats, rental of equipment for diverse water activities. Each one of this villages has their own patronal festivities and small museums to learn a little bit of the history of each place.

## What can you do in this region?

- ① **X'cambó Archeological Site.** Located in the north coast of the State of Yucatán, it has big buildings settled in a swamp area just 1.24 miles from the coast. Appreciate the *Templo de la Cruz*, a large staired base with a cross on top, and the *Templo de los Sacrificios*, as well as the Virgin's Chapel
- ② **Walk around the International Boardwalk in Progreso** there are around 1.24 miles with artistic places, restaurants, and areas for exercising and enjoying the sea breeze. There, you will find the impressive Official Pier and the Deep-Sea Port, which is currently the place where numerous tourist cruises arrive from all over the world.

Xcambó Archeological Site  
Yucatán Riviera Region



### Traveling times:

- From Mérida to Progreso: 20 minutes
  - From Cancún to Dzilam de Bravo: 3 hours and 40 minutes (nearest place).
- \*Estimated times.

International Boardwalk in Progreso  
Yucatán Riviera Region



- 3 Visit the **Progreso Lighthouse** and look at its light from the Boardwalk at night. It is a beautiful symbol of the port that used to guide sailors in past times.

## MAYAN PORT

The **Mayan Port Region** is located northeast of the State, where you can find destinations such as *Río Lagartos*, *San Felipe*, *El Cuyo*, and *Tizimín*. The coast of this region delivers a natural unique sight, and a cuisine based mainly in sea food. It has different accommodation options, from simple houses for rental up to ecotourist hotels.

### What to do?

- 1 Find out **Tizimín**, known for its colonial buildings, beautiful cattle ranches and also its temples. We suggest visiting the Temple dedicated to the Three Wise Men, as well as the Franciscan former Convent.

#### Tip

For visiting this region, we recommend the town of Valladolid as starting point, in order to optimize traveling times and distances.



Río Lagartos  
Mayan Port Region



Las Coloradas  
Mayan Port Región



#### Traveling times:

- From Mérida to Tizimín: 2 hours.  
\*Estimated times.





San Felipe  
Puerto Maya Region

- ② **Visit Kulubá archeological site**, a Mayan city located 23 miles southeast of Tizimin.
- ③ **Celebrate the Fair of the Three Wise Men in Tizimin**, a great festival which includes cattle exhibit, handcrafts' exhibition, and the patronal festivity. The fair starts on December 28th and finishes on January 22nd of the next year. It is the second largest fair in the State!
- ④ **4 Visit Río Lagartos**, an experience full of colors, scents, and tastes of this particular town. A jewel in this region because there you can find the *Ría Lagartos* Biosphere Reserve.



San Bernardino de Siena Convent  
Mayan World Capital Region

## MAYAN WORLD CAPITAL

It is located at the east of the State, it is known because it is there where the *Chichén Itzá* archeological site is settled, as well as the magic town of Valladolid. It is also the Yucatecan region closest to *Riviera Maya and Cancún*.

Most of the accommodation and restaurant options you can find them in Valladolid, this region has tour operators and activities to learn about the secrets of the Mayan culture.



### Traveling times:

- From Mérida to Valladolid: 1.5 hours
  - From Cancún to Valladolid: 1 hour and 40 minutes.
- \*Estimated times.

Chichén Itzá Archeological Site  
Mayan World Capital Region



## What to do?

- ① **Find out the Mayan city of Chichén Itzá**, from Mérida the distance is 74.5 miles and from Cancún de distance is 116.8 miles. *Chichén Itzá* is considered World Human Heritage by UNESCO since 1988 and one of the New 7 Wonders of the Modern World since 2007. You will find the largest *Juego de Pelota* in Mesoamerica and you will be astonished by the *Kukulcán Pyramid*. Visit *Chichén Itzá* during spring and autumn equinoxes, on March 21st and between September 21st and 23rd to appreciate incredible phenomena of light and shadow.
- ② **Kukulcán Nights in Chichén Itzá** at sunset with a special illumination and a 45-minute tour. The night tour ends with a light and sound show projected on the Kukulcán Pyramid, in which you will learn more about the history of the Mayan people. During summer it starts at 8 pm, during winter it starts at 7 pm.
- ③ **Walk around Ek Balam or “Dark Jaguar” in Mayan language**; it is located to the east of the State, very close to Valladolid. This archeological site has a great artistic and cultural richness because of the preservation of its murals and altars.
- ④ In the grottoes of **Aktún Taman in Santa Rita and in Balankanché** you will learn, accompanied by experienced guides, about the daily life of the ancient Mayan people when descending to the earth's depths.

Ek Balam Archeological Site  
Mayan World Capital Region



⑤ **Experiencing Mayan culture firsthand** is an adventure, get close to rural communities offering accommodation services the Mayan style; In Xocén and Santa Rita you can camp, and in Yaxunah and Ek Balam there are Mayan huts for lodging.

⑥ **Take advantage of your visit to Valladolid;** this beautiful Magic Town located to the east of the Yucatán State has an extensive historic and cultural heritage which can be observed in its colonial buildings and houses. Some activities you must not miss are:

- *San Bernardino de Siena Convent*, it is located at the Sisal neighborhood, and it has a church, a chapel, and several buildings with a museum about the Caste War. At night enjoy the video mapping projected on the façade, it describes the history of the place at 9 pm, and at 9:20 pm in English (everyday).
- If you like art, at *Casa de los Venados* you will find an interesting collection of folk-art, which includes approximately 3,000 objects made in Mexico.
- The *Calzada de los Frailes* is a picturesque street of colonial houses, ideal for the souvenir picture!
- *The San Roque Museum* is a place to learn more about the history of the city.



- The San Servacio Church, located around the Plaza Central, was built in 1543 and it is one of the most emblematic places in Valladolid.

- Enjoy the Zací Cenote, this spectacular place is located in the center of the city and it offers all services.

⑦ **Discover the gorgeous cenotes** located in this region, *Dzitnup Cenote, Samula, X'Canché, Sac Aua, Xcanahaltun, Zazil Tunich, Ik-kil, Xkekén, Suytún, Tsukan*, among many others

⑧ **Discover Xocen**, known as the center of the Mayan World in Yucatán, it is a community near Valladolid. The Peasant and Indigenous Theatre Lab is a treasure worth experiencing.

⑨ **Uayma**, It is a small village located only 20 min away from Valladolid, and it is where a hidden majestic temple dazzles everyone who visits it. One of a kind, the Santo Domingo Temple and former Convent was built around 1646. This place is a treasure to be admired and a perfect background for your pictures.





# PUUC ROUTE & MAYAN VILLAGE

An archeological expedition is waiting for you in the south of Yucatán, to discover Mayan treasures in the Puuc Route & Mayan Village region. It is ideal to tour around by car and stop on every village to interact with the population and discover secrets from the ancient Mayan culture, which is currently a living culture.

We suggest lodging in a hacienda in the area or in a hotel in the Uxmal region, to enjoy the serenity and harmony provided by this region.

## What to do?

Admire the Puuc Route, here you can see the most beautiful architecture of the Mayan culture. This tour includes the following archeological sites: *Uxmal, Kabah, Sayil, Xlapak, Labná, Oxkintok, Calcehtok grotto and Loltún grotto.*

- ① Uxmal was appointed Human Heritage by UNESCO in 1996. It is one of the most important archeological ruins of the Mayan




## Traveling times:

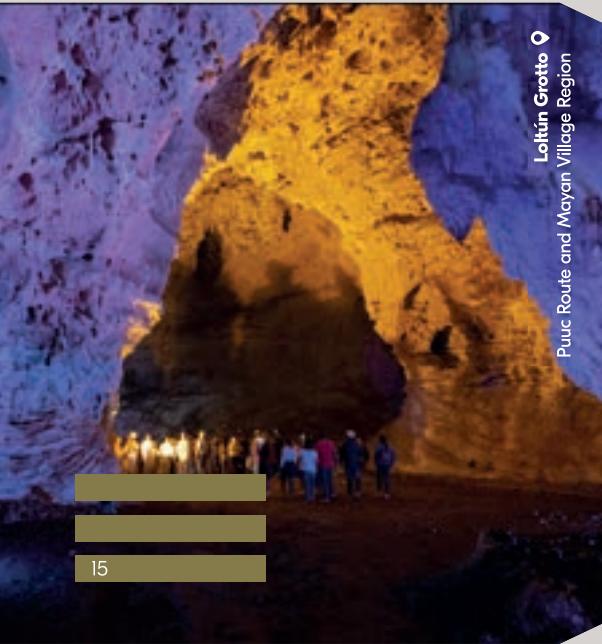
- From Mérida to Uxmal: 1 hour
- From Cancún to Uxmal: 4 hours

\*Estimated times.





**Kabah Archeological Site**   
Puuc Route and Mayan Village Region



**Loltún Grotto**   
Puuc Route and Mayan Village Region

culture. It has 15 groups of buildings distributed from north to south.

- ② Kabah is located south to Uxmal. It is the largest place in the Puuc Route. The Palacio de los Mascarones stands out, it is a structure with a façade ornamented with hundreds of stone masks of Chaac, God of the Rain
- ③ Sayil is a Mayan city of large extension, it was appointed Human Heritage by UNESCO in 1996, together with Uxmal.
- ④ Xlapak is an archeological site where you can see chambers and a magnificent façade where you can see a stone tiled board with Greek key and other geometric elements.
- ⑤ Labná, here you can see the famous Arch at Labná, which is one of the most representative architectural works of the Mayan culture.
- ⑥ Oxkintok, here you will find calendars in registers that date from 475 and 487 a. C
- ⑦ Calcehtok, this thrilling grotto has a wide extension and there are different kinds of tours, for beginners and experts.
- ⑧ Loltún, it has the largest and most famous caves in the south of Yucatán.



- ⑨ Visit the *Kaxil Kiuic* Biocultural Reserve located near Yaxhachén community, it is a place that looks to preserve and explore the richness of the cultural and historical identity of Mayan communities in the region.
- ⑩ Fall in love with Mayan Villages, in Yaxunah you will be able to integrate to the community and perform diverse activities altogether.

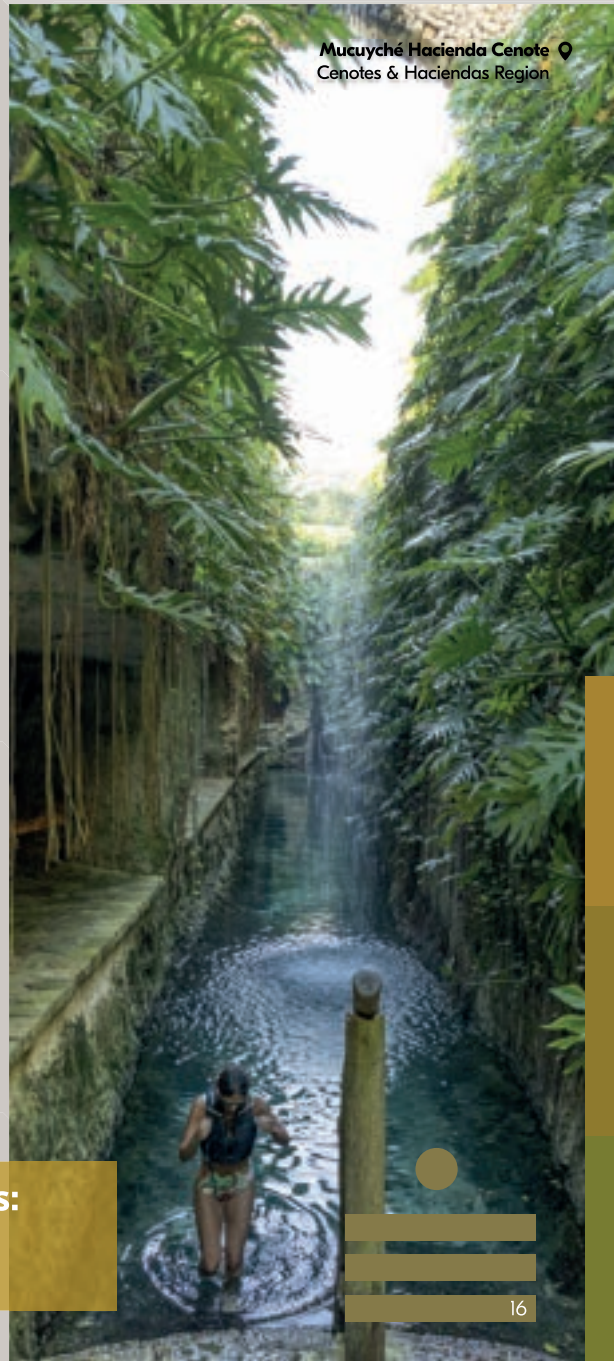
## CENOTES & HACIENDAS

Expeditions do not come to a halt here, there are many archeological sites and historic haciendas in this region to enjoy and understand part of the history of Yucatán. You could visit around 300 haciendas, different kinds of cenotes, and ruins of Mayan cities, distributed in the municipalities of *Cuzamá, Chocholá, Hocabá, Homún, Izamal, Motul, Sotuta, Tecoh, Tixkokob, Umán*, among others.



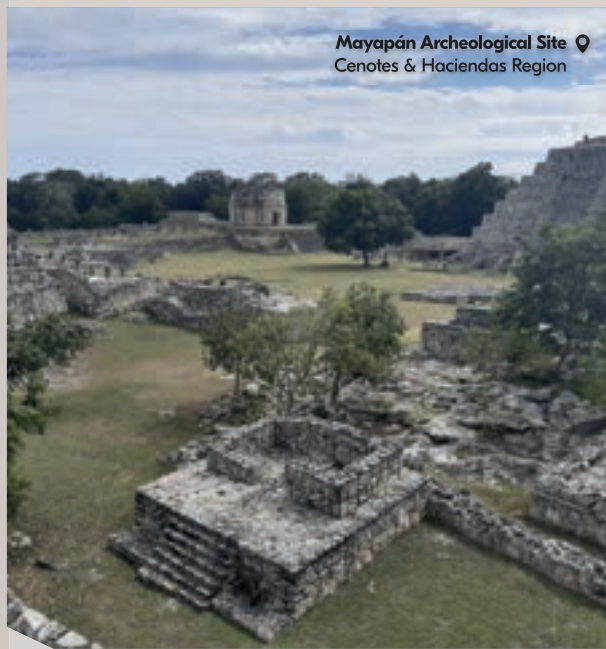
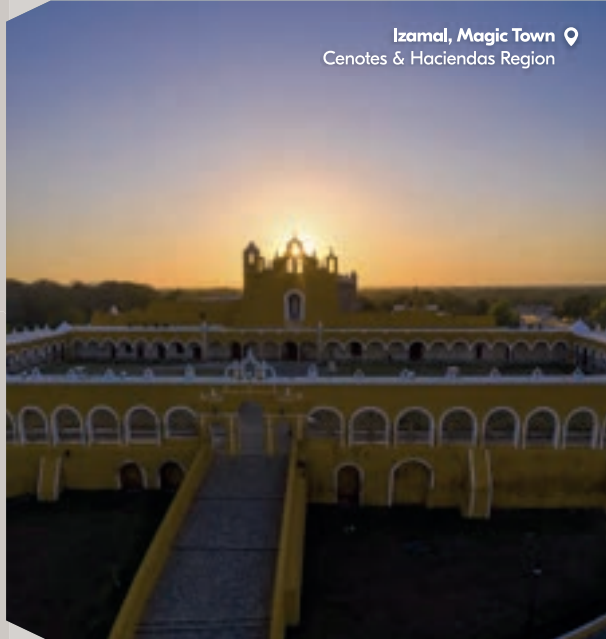
### Traveling times:

- From Mérida to Izamal: 1 hour
  - From Cancún to Izamal: 3 hours
- \*Estimated times..



## What to do?

- ① **Bring back to life the history of the sisal and the “Green Gold”** era in the Yucatecan haciendas. In modern times some of them have been recovered and restored to turn them into elegant boutique hotels, spas, restaurants, and museums. Many haciendas have cenotes within their lands and provide unique experiences.
- ② **Aké archeological site is a Mayan city** with a *sacbé* (pre-Hispanic white road) 19.8 miles long, through which it was connected to Izamal. Around the site there is a sisal hacienda, which has continued its agribusiness operation and received the name of San Lorenzo de Ake, there you can refresh and walk around to learn about its history.
- ③ **Izamal is known as “The City of the Three Cultures”** because there you can find pre-Hispanic traces, colonial features, and current aspects. It is famous for having all façades painted in yellow, and for being an important religious center, considered the most ancient from the Mayan world.
- ④ **Visit Mayapán**, which is considered the last great Mayan capital, the city of *Mayapán* was one of the most important walled cities of the Mayan civilization, and it was built with a very close resemblance to *Chichén Itzá*.



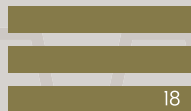


Cuzamá Cenote  
Cenotes & Haciendas Region



Huevos Motuleños  
Cenotes & Haciendas Region

- 5 In this region you can pinpoint a great number of cenotes around *Cuzamá, Homún, and Mucuyché*.
- 6 **Meet Yaax Tekit Cooperative**, which offers a diverse variety of activities in the community such as tours in the surrounding areas, accommodation in houses of the community, and a local unparalleled cuisine.
- 7 **Bee-related tourism at Sinanché** is an activity that involves the visitor in the whole process of honey production.
- 8 **You cannot miss visiting Motul**, the special recommendation is to try the famous **Huevos Motuleños** for breakfast at the municipal market, and visit the Felipe Carrillo Puerto Museum, he was an important historic character who fought for the rights of the Mayan people.
- 9 If you get as far as **Temax**, we suggest that you visit Chenché de las Torres hacienda, walk around its gardens and enjoy the landscape.



# MÉRIDA, SOUTHERN CULTURAL AND CULINARY CAPITAL CITY

Mérida is the capital city of the State, it offers a wide variety of leisure and cultural options, what have made it be awarded twice the title of Culture Capital of the Americas, and it is the best starting point to tour thrilling roads all over Yucatán.

## What to do?

- ① **Montejo 495 Casa Museo** is a building from the 16th Century and the only example of a particular house of renaissance style in Mexico. The owner was Don Francisco de Montejo, who was Yucatán's conqueror.
- ② **Fernando García Ponce Museum – MACAY:** It is the only museum devoted to the promotion and dissemination of modern and contemporary art in all the Yucatán Peninsula
- ③ **Palacio Cantón Yucatán Anthropology Regional Museum:** Nowadays, the museum has a program of continuous temporary exhibits that look to disseminate cultural heritage from the pre-Hispanic past up to our days.

④ **Palacio de la Música Interactive Museum:** it is a great showcase to let people know about the musical heritage richness of Mexico, mainly from indigenous cultures.

⑤ **Museo de Arte Popular (Folk Art Museum) in Yucatán:** In this museum you can find different handicrafts and artworks from important Mexican characters and Yucatecan folk artists.

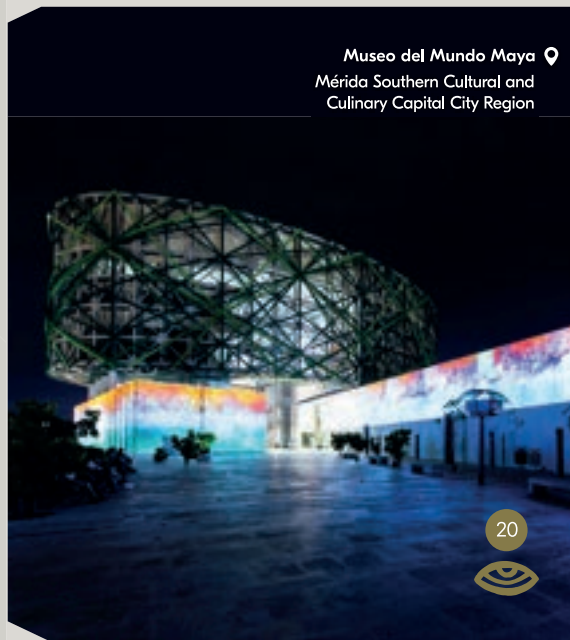
⑥ **Museo de la Ciudad de Mérida (Mérida's City Museum):** located in the former Central Post Office, this museum has a cultural repertory that illustrates the historic development of the city of Mérida.

⑦ **Gran Museo del Mundo Maya (Great Mayan World Museum):** The museum exhibits a magnificent collection of more than 1,160 items, among them you can see textiles, religious objects, and diverse household goods that portray current daily life of Mayan people; engravings, books, and historic documents, art and religious works from the Vice-Royal times; heritage from the pre-Hispanic period which includes stelae, bas-relief and stone sculptures; vessels, trousseaus, and ceramic offerings, besides ornaments and luxury objects made of gold, jade, and shell.

Palacio de la Música  
Mérida Southern Cultural and  
Culinary Capital City Region

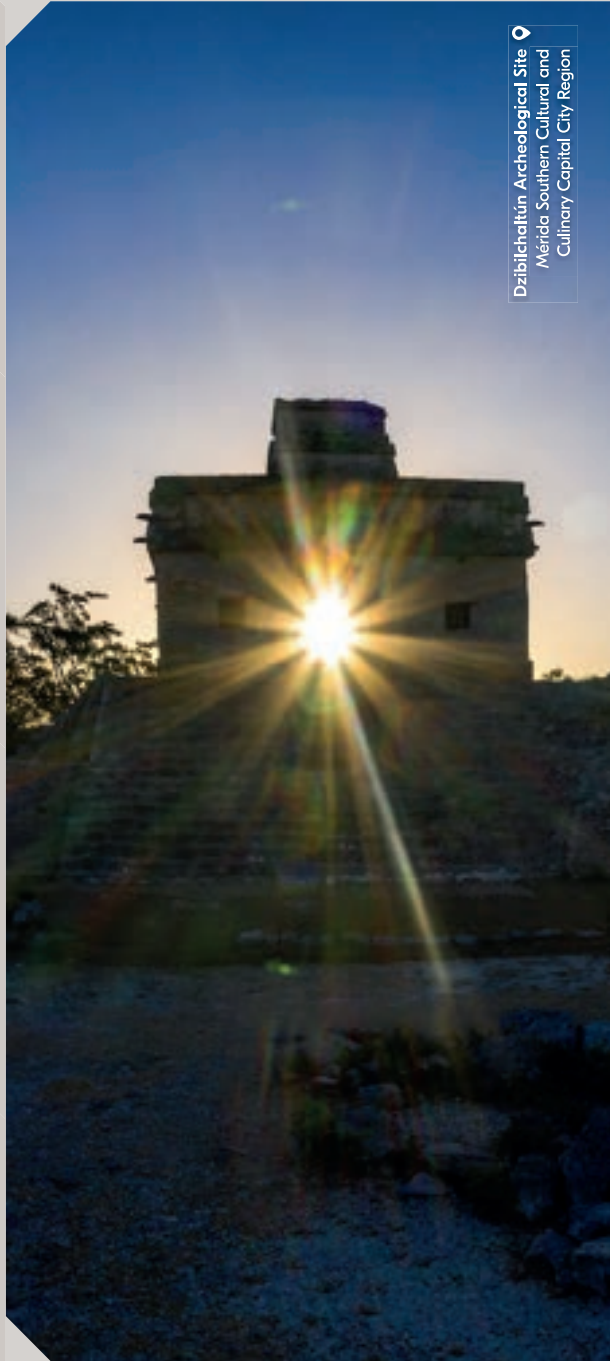


Museo del Mundo Maya  
Mérida Southern Cultural and  
Culinary Capital City Region



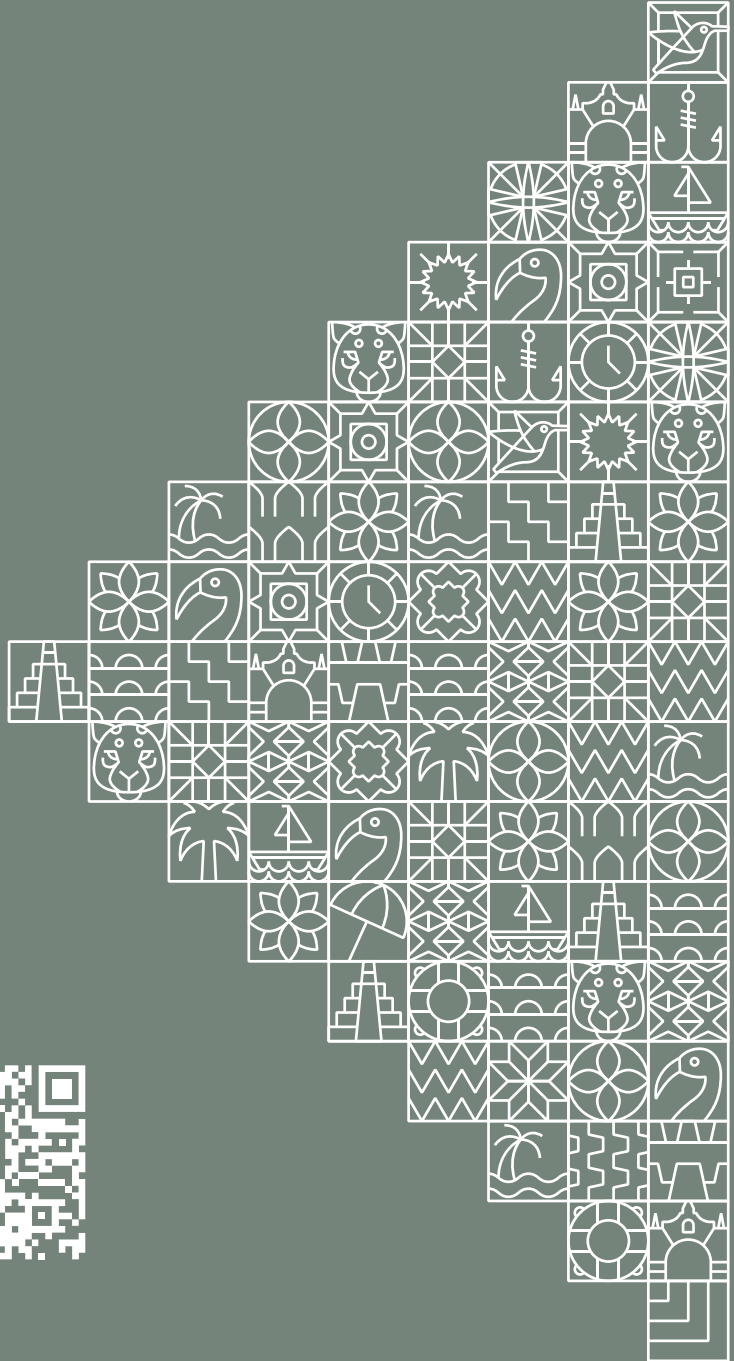
- ⑧ **Dzibilchaltún Archeological Site:** this area has in one place a pre-Hispanic city, an eco-archeological park, and the *Museo del Pueblo Maya (Mayan People Museum)*, which houses Mayan and Spanish remains.
- ⑨ **Walk along Paseo Montejo Avenue,** it is a must in the city as you will be able to see colonial buildings with French style design. We suggest taking the city tour where you can hear about the history and interesting facts of the city. Another option is to take a ride along the avenue in a Calesa (carriage).
- ⑩ **Historic downtown and the Plaza Grande** is an area of historic monuments where there are many places to visit and see like the Cathedral, the Palacio de Gobierno (Town Hall), museums, cultural centers and many more.
- ⑪ **Casa Manzanero Museum** It is a cultural place dedicated to an important Yucatecan singer-songwriter: Armando Manzanero. Here you can learn about his artistic career and at the terrace you can try delicious traditional dishes.

*Check the billboard of cultural events, there are interesting activities to learn about this beautiful land every day.*





# YUCATAN



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