



## Escape to the Caribbean Coast January 17 – 27, 2017

The mainland Maya always knew that they could escape a crumbling civilization to the paradise of the Yucatecan coast. From earlier times, Maya women made the devotional pilgrimage from as far away as Guatemala to

**Isla Mujeres** or to **Cozumel** where there were sacred temples to the **Moon Goddess Ixchel**, the Goddess of fertility. Ixchel was a complicated goddess with both a younger and an older personae, reminding one of Demeter and Persephone in many ways. She was connected with childbirth, agriculture, water, weaving and the Maya Cosmos. We will search for her on the islands. Besides Post Classic sites and museums we will have some free time for optional activities and evening archaeological discussions. Doreen Stelton will direct, count heads, lead Yoga and arrange optionals. Ricardo Vasquez will explain archaeological sites and Deb Stelton will lead discussions with videos. We will pursue the flora and fauna, the cenotes and the unique environment that affected the everyday life of the mysterious Maya.

**Day 1. Jan 17.** Depart U.S. arrive **Cancun**. Karina at EXITO Travel (303 835 0613) can help with your airline reservations. Ricardo will meet you at the airport. If everyone arrives in time we will have a first night dinner at a local restaurant. Otherwise, we will have our dinner the 2<sup>nd</sup> night. We will meet at the bar at nine to meet and greet old and new friends. **Holiday Inn** on the beach in Cancun. **(D)**



**Day 2. Jan 18. Cancun** After your buffet breakfast your morning is free to recuperate from traveling. The pool or beach is available. Lunch is on your own around noon and we will depart afterwards for **El Rey** (the King), a site in the city of Cancun. It is one of the hundreds of sites dotting the coast of the Caribbean and the Yucatan peninsula. Ricardo will explain the site and show us where there are remains of paint inside a structure. Afterwards we will visit the stunning **Museo de Maya Cancun** with its comprehensive collection from skeletal remains of extinct animals to the flora and fauna of today. The history of the ancient past will come alive in the exhibits of the dress and lives of the mysterious Maya. The facades of elaborate ancient temples and important huge stelae may take you to some of the most important sites that you probably will never see in the original because they are inaccessible. Right next door is a pleasant walk to the magical small site of **San Miguelito**. If time allows we will visit the site of **El Meco**, another Post classic site with a pyramid. Return to your hotel. **Holiday Inn. (B)**

**Day 3. Jan 19. Cancun –Isla Mujeres**



At 10 am we will depart for the ferry to tiny Isla Mujeres (1 mile wide and 5 miles long). Our hotel, the Na Balam on the beautiful North Beach. We will have lunch at the outdoor bar; ceviche is a favorite. Afterwards we will explore the island on our golf carts, visiting **Garrafon Park** and the temple originally thought to be the **Temple of Ixchel**. The setting would surely have

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made it an important place of worship. It has been called “a very Zen place.” Is it the real place where women came and left little clay figures of women that caused the Spanish to call Isla the “Isle of Women?” There are modern sculptures at the site. Nearby is the Tortuga Granja Turtle Farm, a government and privately owned sea life sanctuary and also a point where fishermen bring in their haul. It is possible to snorkel here but getting in and out of the water is a challenge due to the steep bank. Next we will visit **Hacienda Mundaca** that is now being claimed as the real **Temple of Ixchel**. There are other structures that might be in relation and provide Ricardo a clue. Tonight after dinner and a blazing sunset, we will see an animated video **The Popul Vuh**, the important story of the Maya Cosmos that Ixchel played a role. This myth explains the sacred aspects of the ballgame and ideas about the afterlife that have helped archaeologists. You might want to bring a copy with you. (Amazon: \$.01) **Na Balam Hotel (B)**

#### **Day 4. Jan 20. Isla Mujeres.**

Today is a free day with optionals. One option is the pristine **Isle of Contoy**, another tiny, unspoiled island. It does have a museum about the ecology. It is a place for naturalists and bird-watchers. You can find frigate and birds similar to birds found on the Galapagos. There are changing facilities for swimming or snorkeling off the white sand coast. You can swim with rays in shallow water and see other colorful fish. The cost of the trip has to be negotiated.

Another inexpensive choice (50 pesos) is the **Garrafon de Castille** where you can just learn about turtles and snorkel. It also has beach facilities and refreshments are available. Or you can rent a bike and/or visit **Tortu Granja** turtle conservancy and see all types of sea life for \$3! . Or you can return to Ixchel’s temple and have lunch while contemplating mysterious Ixchel.



An underwater art museum 25 feet in depth contains over 100 figures sculpted to aid in helping the reef. A circle of figures may illustrate “the hundredth monkey’ theory, also known as the Morphic Resonance Hypothesis, in which a female changes the behaviors of a culture by example, one by one. The theory is examined by Jean Bolen in her book about goddesses. Was the sculptor applying it to Ixchel?

In the evening we will find a cool place to have a drink and read a short article by

David Friedel about the Post Classic Maya on the coast. We can then discuss his ideas and methods. Copies will be provided.

### Day 5. Jan 21. Isla Mujeres - Akumal

Breakfast. Today we will ferry back to the coast and start down the highway that leads eventually to Belize. We'll stop at **Xel-ha**, a site that is part of the **Xel-ha – Tancah** complex. It was a stopping point on the pilgrimage route to the Temple of Ixchel on Cozumel. Marriages frequently took place here. A pilgrimage might follow to assure that many children will follow. A structure at the side of the highway has interesting paintings that you can still make out. Further back are buildings near a cenote. It is said to be a lovely place with structures with more paintings. The site is related to a site named **Tancah** that we will try to find. The post classic art at Tancah is said to be the style of the art of the **Madrid Codex**. To see Chaac and Ixchel exchanging cacao, above, you have to go to Madrid. Eventually we will arrive to Akumal, a favorite haunt for many years. This must have been a bay for Maya fishermen for many centuries. Would a sacbe, (Maya road) have been nearby to send fresh fish to the nobles at Coba? In the 1960's a road from the highway led to large gate attached to a reception room on one side and a nautical museum on the other. This kept the public from using the beach. But groups are now coming to use the beach and swim, snorkel or scuba dive with the turtles. Regardless, it is still a beautiful beach. The comfortable bungalows are quiet. **Club Akumal Caribe (B)**



*Chaac and Ixchel exchange cacao*

### Day 6. Jan 22 Akumal

Breakfast at nearby restaurant. Today you have options. You can walk out into the water at the designated place and swim or snorkel with the turtles. If you have your own snorkel mask and flippers there is no charge. But if you need one of these items, there is a dive shop with scuba and snorkel gear. Swim, snorkel or scuba. There are more options – biking, bird watching at **Sian Ka'an** or the shallow cenote/lagoon, **Yal ku**, nearby (\$10). If you have not been to the important sprawling site of **Coba**, with **Nohoch Mul**, the highest pyramid in the Yucatan, you will want to go via taxi and driver with Ricardo. We need two or three persons to do this. The group will decide where to meet for dinner, with a choice from 2 restaurants and a pizza place on the beach. **Club Akumal Caribe (B)**

### Day 7. Jan 23. Akumal.

Today we will visit the site of **Muyil** with a pyramid not far from to the water. Along the roadside to the site there are some carved slabs with designs for us to decipher. The Castillo at Muyil is said to be similar to Structure 12 at Tancah. In the afternoon we can tour the small quirky arts and crafts shops, the Eco-Center and the little restaurants that have sprung up. It is more interesting and more fun than the expensive designer shops in Cancun. We will meet the innovative Mexican entrepreneur- survivors,

perhaps descendants of the ancient Maya who escaped the mainland draught and came here to find a living. **Club Akumal Caribe. (B)**

### **Day 8. Jan 24 Akumal Cozumel**

The ferry will deliver us to Cozumel and vans will meet us. Two Spanish conquistadors were somehow left on the island according to contradicting stories. Later Hernan Cortez returned to collect them. One had become a Maya and chose to remain with his Maya wife. Later this



same man led warriors against the Spanish. The other was picked up by Hernan Cortez and became the Maya interpreter to a woman who assisted Cortez in his conquest of the Aztecs. The stories about these two men and about all the Spanish explorers who came here in the 16<sup>th</sup> century is fascinating. There are 24 ruins on Cozumel. We will seek the **Temple of Ixchel** and visit a couple of museums. One museum deals with natural history where we will learn about the dwarfing of animals due to their environment. It is possible to see dwarf raccoons on a south section. This could remind you of the “new race” of small people found on an Indonesian island –actually an example of the same phenomenon. The **Maya Museum** will show us how the Maya lived on the island and how and why it is different from houses around Chichen Itza. Our hotel has an extraordinary garden with a variety of tropical plants, a pool and a bridge to a pier to the ocean with tropical fish, rays, sea cucumbers and starfish. **Casa Del Mar (B)**

### **Day 9 Jan 25. Cozumel**

Today we will look for other ruins mentioned by David Freidel and search for traces of the other explorers Francisco Montejo, Juan de Grijalon, Pedro de Alvarado and Francisco Cordoba, who came here. The **Museo de la Isla de Cozumel** will help us. After lunch we will visit the **Cha-an Ka’an Planetarium and Observatory** and learn about what the Mayans knew about the universe and their place in the cosmos. It covers the history of the island from prehistoric times. Optional exotic bird watching (with a guide, see fifty birds in a short time), cycle the island, or look for crocodiles, kinkajous, pizoks or coatimundis in mangrove forests, lagoons, cenotes or sea life amongst the reefs. There is also swimming with, or seeing Manatees and seals at the **Archaeological Park**. Another optional activity is a **flight and tour to Chichen Itza in a 12 passenger plane. (\$152)** You might want to meditate upon the turquoise and cobalt blue water from the hotel pier while waiting for sunset. **Casa Del Mar (B)**

### **Jan 26 Cozumel – Cancun**

Today will take you on your last ferry ride and the drive back to Cancun. Per your requests, your last night dinner will be at the gorgeous **La Habichuela**. Your hotel is the **Holiday Inn (B)**

### **Jan 27 Depart Cancun – U.S.A.**

**\$2,215 pp in a double. Single supplement \$855.00. A check for \$400 will hold your space.**

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## Escape to the Caribbean Coast January 17 – 27 2017

### **TOUR CONDITIONS AND GENERAL INFORMATION**

**TOUR FEATURES:** The group tour, Escape to the Caribbean Coast January 17 - 27 includes all land transportation, hotels, and breakfasts each day, per final itinerary, transfers, and tips for hotel maids, bell boys and waiters and handling for one bag. Purified water will be provided on vehicles and at most hotels. The trip originates and terminates in Cancun, Mexico.

**TOUR COST:** The tour cost, **\$2,215.00 per person, double occupancy, and single supplement is \$855.00** based on rates at time of publication, and on minimum group size of 12. All rates are per person and based on double occupancy, a single supplement will be charged when requested and where single rooms are available.

**PAYMENT SCHEDULE:** Secure your reservation with a \$400 deposit per person. Final payment will be due December 5, 2016.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** \$200 of your deposit is non-refundable. After Oct 1, your penalty will depend upon the number of persons enrolled and our suppliers. After January 1, there is no refund. All cancellations must be received in writing. We recommend travel insurance.

**INSURANCE:** International health and trip cancellation insurance is strongly recommended. We recommend that you call Travel Guard at 800 826-4919 within 15 days of your reservation in order that preexisting conditions are covered. They have a one year policy for \$238.00 that pays up to \$1500 of medical or trip interruption, etc.

**PREREQUISITES:** A passport for U. S. citizens, Openness to experience a rich and varied culture with an active friendly group of experienced travelers. The trip has archaeological sites scheduled, with two optional sites, Coba and Chichén Itza. For clients interested in other activities such as bird watching, natural history, cycling, or scuba diving, we will help you arrange it. Suggestions are on the itinerary. One may opt out of an activity, but will not receive any reimbursement.

**NOT INCLUDED IN THE COST OF THIS TOUR:** International travel, lunches and dinners Telephone calls and items not specifically described in the final itinerary, and tips for tour director, guide and for drivers, excess baggage charges and items of a personal nature.

**SCHEDULE OF MAILINGS:** Upon request of the reservation and deposit, you will receive more information, hotel phone numbers, as well as suggested readings for evening discussions

**THE TOUR OPERATOR AND THE ESCORTS:** MexiMayan Academic Travel, Inc., 12S675 Knoebel Drive, Lemont, Illinois 60439, phone (630) 972-9090, is a non-profit educational travel provider. Doreen K. Stelton, M.A. will escort the group and fulfill role of principal investigator. *Explora Mexico*, Merida, is our Mexico operator.

**RESPONSIBILITIES:** MexiMayan Academic Travel, Inc., its officers and corporate agents, and its appointed escort for this tour, act only as agents for the passenger with respect to transportation, hotels, and automobile and bus contractors. They will not be held responsible for accident, delay, sickness, personal injury or death, loss of personal property, additional expenses due to weather or other causes beyond their control. MexiMayan Academic Travel, Inc. reserves the right to amend the itinerary if weather or other factors make it necessary or advisable.

**QUESTIONS:** For more information about the tour, please call MexiMayan at (630) 972-9090 or email [meximayan@meximayan.com](mailto:meximayan@meximayan.com).

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## **Enrollment: Escape to the Caribbean Coast, January 17 – 27, 2017**

Please mail the completed form with check payable for \$400 deposit to **MexiMayan Academic Travel, Inc., 12S675 Knoebel Dr., Lemont IL 60439**. Balance of land payment is due December 5, 2016. For airline reservations we recommend EXITO TRAVEL, Karina Alonso 800 655-4053 X 8312. For travel insurance we recommend TRAVEL GUARD 800 826-4919.

Name as on passport \_\_\_\_\_

Passenger #2 \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Passport Expires: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency contact & relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Accommodations (please indicate your Preference(s):

Please note: Your preference will be requested, but may not be available at all hotels.

- I wish to share a room with: \_\_\_\_\_
- Please recommend a non-smoking roommate.
- I would prefer single accommodations where available.
- We prefer a double bed.
- We prefer two beds.
- Personal dietary requirements \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Each applicant must read and sign the following Responsibility Statement***

#### **Responsibility Statement MexiMayan Academic Travel, Inc.**

The undersigned has read the schedule of activities for this tour and recognizes and accepts any risk thereof. The undersigned also understands and hereby agrees for and on behalf of himself, his dependents, heir, executors, administrators and assigns to abide by the conditions set forth under Responsibility in the Tour Conditions and General Information, and to release and harmless MexiMayan Academic Travel, Inc. and any of its officers, agents, licensees or representatives from any and all liability for delays, injuries or death, or for the loss or damage to his property however occurring during any portion of, or in relation to this tour and the extension.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_