



LATIN AMERICA • RECOMMENDED 15 DAYS

✦ El Castillo, Chichén Itzá

Mexico – Yucatán

Flamingos, Maya pyramids, cenotes and a Caribbean-blue lagoon

RECOMMENDED LENGTH

15 days

DEPARTURE

Any day

you pick the dates

TRANSPORT

Self-drive

or private driver

 ESTIMATED FROM, EXCL.
FLIGHT

€1,570 p.p.

My recommended private route across the Yucatán Peninsula, away from the crowds. If your flight lands in time you go straight on to Río Lagartos (if you land late, you first spend a night close to Cancún airport). There you get unhurried days with thousands of flamingos and the pink waters of Las Coloradas, climb Maya temples at Ek Balam and Cobá, visit Chichén Itzá at opening time and stay in colonial Valladolid. Then the Caribbean coast with Playa del Carmen and Tulum, Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve and the 'lagoon of seven colours' at Bacalar. You travel with your own party on your own dates, by rental car or with a private driver; hotels and boat trips are arranged in advance.

✓ Put together personally

✓ No group travel

✓ At your own pace

✓ Leave out or add what you like

✓ Dates completely free

✓ Eat wherever you like

Highlights

- ★ Three nights in Río Lagartos (two if you land late): a sunrise boat ride among the flamingos and a slow afternoon in colourful San Felipe
- ★ The pink salt water of Las Coloradas
- ★ Climbing Ek Balam and swimming in X'Canché cenote
- ★ Chichén Itzá (World Heritage) at opening, before the crowds
- ★ Three nights in colonial Valladolid, with a cooking class at a Maya family's home
- ★ Tulum above the Caribbean Sea and floating through the canals of Sian Ka'an
- ★ Bacalar's 'lagoon of seven colours' by sailboat

Best time to travel

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

best time to travel: advice only, you travel when you like

TRAVELLERS

Private: only your own party, from 1 traveller. No group travel, no fellow travellers you don't know.

LENGTH

Recommended: 15 days · shorter or longer is always possible

DATES

Completely flexible: you leave on the day that suits you.

Your route on the map



Map: Natural Earth (public domain) · the arcs show the order of the route, not the exact road

- 1 Cancún (airport)**
1 night · day 1
- 2 Río Lagartos**
2 nights · day 2–3
- 3 Valladolid**
3 nights · day 4–6
- 4 Playa del Carmen**
2 nights · day 7–8
- 5 Tulum**
2 nights · day 9–10
- 6 Bacalar**
2 nights · day 11–12
- 7 Puerto Morelos**
1 night · day 13

overland, arrow = direction of travel day trip



DAY 3 Flamingos in the Río Lagartos Biosphere Reserve



DAY 9 Tulum: temple above the Caribbean Sea

My recommended route

This is the route as I put it together for you. It is a starting point, not a fixed programme: leave out what doesn't appeal to you, add what you would like to do and travel at your own pace. Everything below is arranged for you in advance. Prefer a guide? I can add a local guide to any activity.

DAY 1 **Arrival in Cancún** RÍO LAGARTOS (OR CANCÚN AIRPORT IF YOU LAND LATE)

Flight from Brussels with a connection to Cancún. If your flight lands early enough to drive in daylight (roughly by 14:00–15:00), you go straight on: your private driver meets you in the arrivals hall, or you collect your rental car at the airport (the rental office is only minutes away), with a briefing and our route notes. The drive to Río Lagartos takes approx. 3 hours, and in Yucatán it is best not to drive after dark. If you land later, a driver (or the hotel shuttle) takes you in approx. 15–25 minutes to a good hotel close to the airport, and you drive to Río Lagartos the next morning. Once your flight is known, I decide which of the two it will be.

DAY 2 **Río Lagartos and Las Coloradas** RÍO LAGARTOS ♦ BREAKFAST

A first day in the north of Yucatán. The pink salt ponds of Las Coloradas and the deserted beaches of the Gulf of Mexico, and sunset in the fishing village of Río Lagartos. If you landed late and slept at the airport, this is also your driving day: in the morning your rental car is delivered to your hotel (with a briefing and our route notes) or your private driver is ready, you drive approx. 3 hours to Río Lagartos and visit Las Coloradas in the afternoon.



The pink salt water of Las Coloradas

DAY 3 **Flamingos and San Felipe** RÍO LAGARTOS ♦ BREAKFAST

At sunrise, with a local fisherman in a private boat through the Río Lagartos Biosphere Reserve: flamingos (largest numbers November–June), herons, crocodiles and a natural clay mask. Then a slow afternoon: a fifteen-minute drive to San Felipe, a fishing village of wooden houses painted yellow, turquoise and fuchsia, with large murals. Fresh fish for lunch by the harbour, then a small boat across the ría to the white sand of Playa Bonita, or a short trip through the mangroves to the Ojo de Agua spring. Sunset with a drink on a jetty in Río Lagartos.

DAY 4 **Ek Balam and Valladolid** VALLADOLID ♦ BREAKFAST

Drive (approx. 1 hour) to Ek Balam, where the Acropolis can still be climbed, and a refreshing dip in X'Canché cenote. Arrival in Valladolid.

DAY 5 **Chichén Itzá at opening time** VALLADOLID ♦ BREAKFAST

Early departure (approx. 45 minutes) to visit Chichén Itzá, one of the New Seven Wonders, before the day-trippers from Cancún arrive. Then a swim in the community-run Yokdzonot cenote, managed by women from the village. Free afternoon in Valladolid, with the San Bernardino convent.



San Bernardino convent in Valladolid

DAY 6

Maya cuisine and cenotes VALLADOLID ♦ BREAKFAST • LUNCH

Cooking class with a Maya family in a nearby village: tortillas, cochinita pibil and stories about daily life. Afternoon swim in the cave cenotes of Dzitnup (X'kekén and Samulá) or free time in Valladolid.

DAY 7

Cobá and the Caribbean coast PLAYA DEL CARMEN ♦ BREAKFAST

Drive (approx. 1 hour), yourself or with your driver, to Cobá: cycle through the jungle between the ruins of this large Maya city. Continue to Playa del Carmen (approx. 1h15). Free evening on Quinta Avenida.

DAY 8

Snorkelling on the Riviera Maya PLAYA DEL CARMEN ♦ BREAKFAST

Swimming with sea turtles in Akumal bay (only allowed with a guide authorised by the nature authority CONANP; this guide is included) or, if you prefer, by ferry to the coral reefs of Cozumel. Rest of the day free.

DAY 9

Tulum: temples by the sea TULUM ♦ BREAKFAST

Drive (approx. 45 minutes) to Tulum. Visit the ruins on the cliffs above the Caribbean Sea at opening time, and then Gran Cenote. Free afternoon on the beach.

DAY 10

Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve TULUM ♦ BREAKFAST • LUNCH

With a local Maya cooperative to the Muyil site and by boat through the lagoons of Sian Ka'an (World Heritage). Wearing a life jacket, you float down an ancient Maya canal through the mangroves. Leave the car today: the cooperative collects you.

DAY 11

To Bacalar BACALAR ♦ BREAKFAST

Drive (approx. 2.5 hours), yourself or with your private driver, south to Bacalar lagoon and its seven shades of blue. Free afternoon to swim or kayak.

DAY 12

Sailing on the lagoon BACALAR ♦ BREAKFAST

Sailing trip with a skipper on the lagoon to the 'Pirates' Channel', the stromatolites and Cenote Negro. Afternoon free or a visit to San Felipe fort.

DAY 13

Back north PUERTO MORELOS ♦ BREAKFAST

Drive (approx. 4.5 hours) back up the coast to Puerto Morelos, stopping wherever you like. My tip for the last evening: fresh fish on the beach.

DAY 14

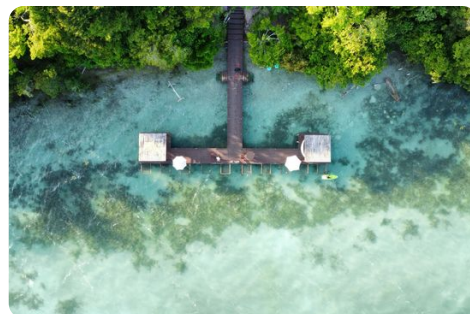
Return flight AAN BOORD ♦ BREAKFAST

Free morning by the sea. You return your rental car at Cancún airport (approx. 25 minutes), or your private driver drops you at departures, for your return flight.

DAY 15

Arrival in Brussels

Arrival in Brussels. A few days later I call you to hear how it went.



The clear waters of Bacalar lagoon

What I arrange for you

1 Airport pickup

With a private driver (or if you land late), your driver waits at Cancún airport outside the arrivals hall with a name sign; simply walk past the taxi and timeshare sellers inside. He tracks your flight and also waits if it is delayed. If you self-drive, you collect your rental car at the airport (the rental office is only minutes away). If your flight lands in time, you drive straight to Río Lagartos (approx. 3 hours, in daylight). If you land late, you spend the first night at a hotel close to the airport (approx. 15–25 minutes; some hotels also have a free shuttle). Once your flight is known, I decide this for you. Your last night is in Puerto Morelos (approx. 25 minutes from the airport). On the last day you return your rental car at the airport, or your private driver drops you at departures.

2 Hotels

Every night is booked and confirmed in advance, at the level you choose: Budget, Comfort or Premium. Prefer another hotel? I change it.

3 Transport

You choose: self-drive with a rental car waiting for you, or a private driver and private transfers. Domestic flights, trains and boats where they make sense, all booked in advance.

4 Activities, at your pace

The activities and entrance tickets on the route. No guide or group travels with you: you set the pace, and anything you would rather skip, you simply leave out.

5 Eat wherever you like

Breakfast is included, as are the meals at remote camps and lodges where there is no alternative. For the rest I give you my restaurant tips, but you are completely free to choose where you eat. I never send you somewhere because it earns me something.

Estimated prices per person

PER PERSON, BASED ON 2 TRAVELLERS, EXCL. INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT

ACCOMMODATION LEVEL	Self-drive	Private driver
	rental car, everything pre-booked	private transfers and driver
Budget simple, clean and well located	€1,570 p.p.	€2,260 p.p.
Comfort characterful mid-range	€2,000 p.p.	€2,690 p.p.
Premium the best addresses on the ground	€2,920 p.p.	€3,610 p.p.

WITH 4 TRAVELLERS	approx. 11% off per person: you share the car and driver. E.g. Comfort, private driver: approx. €2,395 p.p.
TRAVELLING SOLO	supplement of approx. 58%: you carry the room and transport alone. E.g. Comfort, private driver: approx. €4,250 p.p.
INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT	I book your flight as part of your trip; the flight price for your dates is in your personal quote. Return flight Brussels–Cancún not included: allow about € 570–850 p.p. depending on the month (most expensive in summer and around the holidays). I find you the best flight with your quote.

SELF-DRIVE

Yucatán is very well suited to self-drive: roads are flat, straight and good, and distances are short. If your flight lands in time, you collect your rental car at Cancún airport on day 1 and drive to Río Lagartos in daylight. If you land late, a driver takes you to a hotel close to the airport and your rental car is delivered there the next morning (day 2). You return it at Cancún airport on day 14, so there is no one-way fee. Your Belgian licence is sufficient and you drive on the right. Watch out for speed bumps (topes), do not drive after dark and never leave anything visible in the car: the Belgian FPS Foreign Affairs reports thefts from rental cars in Quintana Roo and police officers asking for money. Full insurance is included in the price; fuel, tolls (approx. €20 per trip on the Cancún–Valladolid motorway) and parking are paid by you.

WITH A PRIVATE DRIVER

With a private driver you do not have to worry about anything. A licensed driver with an air-conditioned vehicle takes you from hotel to hotel and, on excursion days, to the sites and cenotes; he waits while you visit. Usually it is the same driver for the Yucatán part and a second one for the coast. He speaks Spanish and often some English; at the sites you explore at your own pace, or with a guide if you like. In Playa del Carmen, Tulum and Bacalar you do a lot on foot, by bike or by taxi.

ESTIMATED PRICES

Estimated prices: per person, based on 2 travellers sharing a room, excl. international flight, estimated from desk research (2027 price level). The binding price is the one in your personal proposal and booking confirmation.

Estimated price. In high season the price can be higher, in low season lower; your exact price is in your personal quote.

Three accommodation levels

Budget

Simple, well-reviewed small hotels, guesthouses and B&Bs, always with a private bathroom and breakfast (where a hotel has no breakfast, I add it). Indicative price approx. €40–90 per room per night.

Comfort

Characterful boutique hotels: a room with a balcony or terrace, often a pool or roof garden, and in Playa del Carmen deliberately a little outside the busy centre. Indicative price approx. €70–165 per room per night.

Premium

The finest addresses: a suite in a restored colonial house in Valladolid, beach hotels in Playa del Carmen, Tulum and Puerto Morelos and a lagoon-front hotel with its own jetty in Bacalar. Río Lagartos has no luxury hotel: there I take the best available. Indicative price approx. €220–470 per room per night.

Possible guided moments

Prefer a guide? I can add a local guide to any activity.

- ✦ Akumal: snorkelling among the sea turtles is only allowed with a guide authorised by the nature authority (CONANP); this guide is included
- ✦ Cobá and Tulum: a local guide for the ruins
- ✦ Valladolid: a city walk with a local guide
- ✦ Chichén Itzá and Ek Balam: a licensed guide who meets you at the entrance
- ✦ Prefer a guide? I can add a local guide to any activity.

Ideas to adapt the route

- Shorter (10–11 days): drop Bacalar and finish in Tulum
- A night near Chichén Itzá to be the very first inside
- One night less in Río Lagartos: flamingo boat and straight on to Ek Balam and Valladolid
- A few beach days in Puerto Morelos or Akumal to finish
- A long beach day in remote El Cuyo (approx. 1h15 drive) instead of San Felipe
- Fly home from Tulum (TQO) or Chetumal to avoid the long drive back from Bacalar, if a good connection exists
- Longer: two nights on car-free Isla Holbox after Río Lagartos, or add Mérida and the Puuc route (Uxmal)
- With children: more cenotes and fewer ruins

Included

- ✓ 13 nights at the comfort level of your choice (Budget, Comfort or Premium), double room with breakfast
- ✓ Airport welcome in Cancún; if you land late, also the transfer to a hotel close to the airport
- ✓ Your choice: rental car from day 1 to day 14 with full insurance, pickup and return at Cancún airport (if you land late, from day 2, delivered to your airport hotel) and our route notes, or a private driver for all journeys and airport drop-off
- ✓ All listed entrance fees (Maya sites, cenotes, Sian Ka'an) and activities: Río Lagartos flamingo boat and the boat across to Playa Bonita in San Felipe, cooking class with a Maya family, snorkelling in Akumal with the compulsory licensed guide, the Maya cooperative trip in Sian Ka'an and the Bacalar sailing trip
- ✓ Lunch at the cooking class (you eat what you cook) and during the Sian Ka'an trip (no alternative)
- ✓ Quintana Roo VISITAX tourist tax

Not included

- International flight (optional add-on; allow approx. €570–850 pp, depending on the month)
- Other meals and drinks (you get my restaurant recommendations)
- When self-driving: fuel, tolls and parking (indicative ± €125 fuel per car for the whole route, plus approx. €20 toll per trip on the Cancún–Valladolid motorway; paid locally) and the deposit on your credit card
- Tips for driver, skippers and guides
- Travel and cancellation insurance
- Optional activities and personal expenses
- Local lodging tax charged by some hotels on site

Practical information

VISA (BELGIAN CITIZENS)

No visa required for tourist stays up to 180 days (immigration decides the exact number of days). Passport valid for the length of stay (6 months recommended). On arrival by air the digital migration form (FMMd) is issued automatically; keep it safe. Keep your return ticket and hotel addresses at hand. VISITAX (Quintana Roo tourist tax, approx. MXN 283) must be paid before departing Cancún. We arrange this.

HEALTH

No mandatory vaccinations. Dengue occurs, especially in the rainy season: mosquito protection. Use biodegradable sunscreen (mandatory in many cenotes and reserves). Consult a travel clinic (ITG/Wanda).

CURRENCY & PAYMENT

Mexican peso (MXN). Cards common in towns; cash needed for cenotes, markets and small restaurants. Don't exchange money at the airport.

FLIGHT TIME FROM BRUSSELS

Approx. 13–15 hours with one connection (Amsterdam, Paris, Frankfurt or Madrid); nonstop sector from Europe approx. 11 hours. No direct Brussels–Cancún flight was operating in 2026 (check per season).

TIME DIFFERENCE

Quintana Roo UTC-5 all year (no daylight saving): 6 hours behind Belgium in winter, 7 in summer. Note: Yucatán state (Valladolid, Chichén Itzá) is UTC-6, one hour behind Quintana Roo.

LANGUAGE

Spanish; Yucatec Maya in the villages; English common on the Caribbean coast.

MEALS

Breakfast is included every day, as are the lunch you cook yourself at the cooking class and lunch during the Sian Ka'an trip, where there is no alternative. For the other meals you get my restaurant recommendations, but you are completely free to choose where and when you eat: I never steer you to expensive restaurants in return for a commission.

GUIDES

By default you travel without a guide. Prefer a guide? I can add a local guide to any activity.

As of September 2026 — check diplomatie.belgium.be (travel advice) and wanda.be (health) before you travel.

Travelling responsibly

We skip the big all-inclusive resorts and choose small hotels in Valladolid, Río Lagartos and Bacalar. Cenotes and excursions in Sian Ka'an and Río Lagartos are run with community cooperatives so income stays in the villages. We ask for biodegradable sunscreen and distance from flamingos and turtles, and we advise travelling outside hurricane and sargassum season. We do not build the new Tren Maya into the route where it runs through fragile jungle and cave areas, and we inform travellers honestly about the debate around it.



Steennot Travels

Contact & booking

Steennot Travels · Yari Steennot

Ghent, Belgium

Phone and WhatsApp +32 475 23 18 45 · info@steennot-travels.be

steennottravels.be · personal 24/7 number while travelling:
+32 475 23 18 45

Put together personally by Yari, down to the last detail. — Yari Steennot

No group travel and no fixed dates: you travel privately, at your own pace. Leave out what doesn't appeal to you, add what you like. I give you my restaurant tips, but you choose freely where you eat: nobody sends you to expensive restaurants for a commission.

MY CONTACT ON THE GROUND: [\[contact name\]](#)

ESTIMATED PRICES

Estimated prices: per person, based on 2 travellers sharing a room, excl. international flight, estimated from desk research (2027 price level). The binding price is the one in your personal proposal and booking confirmation. Ask for a no-obligation personal intake call or a proposal. Other dates, more or fewer days, something left out or added? Everything can be adapted.

This trip is a package under the Belgian Act of 21 November 2017 on the sale of package travel, linked travel arrangements and travel services. Before you sign, you receive the standard information form and our travel conditions. Steennot Travels is insured against insolvency with [insurer, address, policy number — to be completed]: in case of insolvency, payments are refunded and, where transport is included, repatriation is guaranteed. All prices are indicative estimates; the binding price is the one in your booking confirmation.

Photo credits

Photos via Wikimedia Commons, used under the licence stated (CC BY / CC BY-SA: attribution required; CC BY-SA: adaptations are shared under the same licence). Cropped and/or resized for print as indicated; otherwise unaltered.

COVER El Castillo, Chichén Itzá — Photo: Daniel Schwen · CC BY-SA 4.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) · commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chichen_Itza_3.jpg · *cropped, resized*

DAY 2 The pink salt water of Las Coloradas — Photo: Walter Rodriguez from Helsinki, Finland · CC BY 2.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/) · commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Las_Coloradas_435436.jpg · *resized*

DAY 3 Flamingos in the Río Lagartos Biosphere Reserve — Photo: Adam Baker from Houston / Moscow / Toulouse (travel a lot) · CC BY 2.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/) · commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flamingoes_at_Ria_Lagartos.jpg · *cropped, resized*

DAY 4 San Bernardino convent in Valladolid — Photo: Adam Jones · CC BY-SA 2.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/) · [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Iglesia_y_Ex-Convento_San_Bernardino_de_Siena_\(Widescreen\)_-_Valladolid_-_Yucatan_-_Mexico.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Iglesia_y_Ex-Convento_San_Bernardino_de_Siena_(Widescreen)_-_Valladolid_-_Yucatan_-_Mexico.jpg) · *cropped, resized*

DAY 9 Tulum: temple above the Caribbean Sea — Photo: Martin Falbisoner · CC BY-SA 4.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) · commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tulum_-_God_of_the_Winds_Temple_03.JPG · *cropped, resized*

DAY 11 The clear waters of Bacalar lagoon — Photo: Yosef Ben Melamed · CC BY-SA 4.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) · commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bacalar_lagoon1.jpg · *cropped, resized*