THE ULTIMATE GUIDE

TO THE MAYA TRAIN ROUTE



1,554 KILOMETERS
OF INTRIGUING LANDSCAPE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES | ECOTOURISM ACTIVITIES
SPECTACULAR NATURE | UNIQUE FLAVORS
HISTORICAL HERITAGE | LIVING CULTURE



The Maya Train is one of the most important infrastructure and mobility projects in contemporary Mexican history. Modern, comfortable, and aerodynamic, the Maya Train glides through 1,554 km (965 mi) of unmatched scenery in a land steeped in history, natural exuberance, ancestral traditions and living cultures that have stood the test of time, spreading across five states with extraordinary cultural wealth: Chiapas, Campeche, Tabasco, Yucatán and Quintana Roo.

Through its thirty-four stations, with the help of *The Ultimate Guide to the Maya Train Route*, you will be able to discover the treasures of this region, visiting a range of archaeological sites, historic cities, Magical Towns, nature reserves and eco-parks with the cenotes, (deep, natural wells), rivers and waterfalls, in addition to discovering the traditions that are the hallmark of a proudly multicultural nation.

This route will take you from world heritage sites to virtually unexplored areas. The Maya Train will also allow you find out more about the area through The Great Museum of Chichen Itzá, The Puuc Archaeological Museum, and The Western Coast Museum.

We are confident *The Ultimate Guide to the Maya Train Route* will be the perfect travel companion. Its descriptions, infographics, maps, routes, photographs and texts will unlock new experiences, enabling you to experience the Mexican southeast differently and witness one of the most extraordinary cultures that has ever existed.

Enjoy your trip!

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Andrés Manuel López Obrador

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BIENESTAR | COMUNICACIONES | CULTURA | DESARROLLO TERRITORIAL

GOBERNACIÓN | MARINA | MEDIO AMBIENTE | SEDENA | TURISMO | CJEF

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INAH | INDAABIN | PROCURADURÍA AGRARIA | PEMEX | RAN

CHIAPAS | TABASCO



COURTESY OF SEDENA

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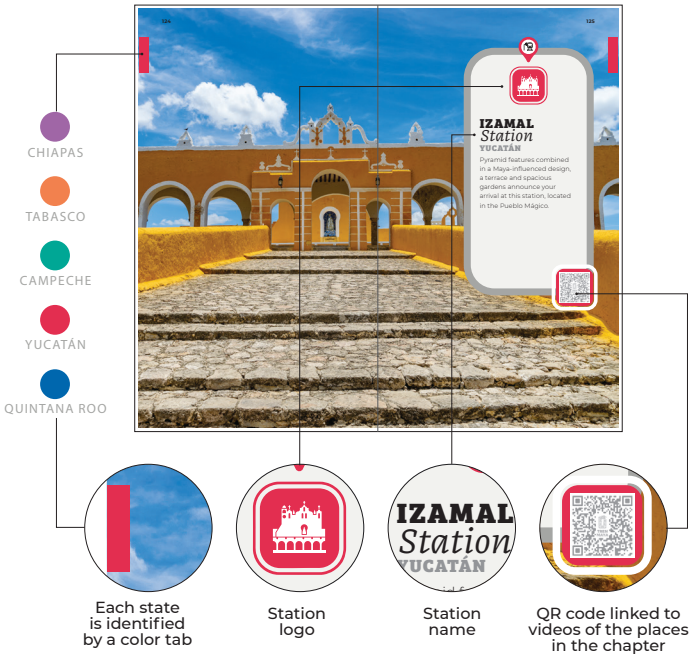
HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide provides detailed descriptions of the places the Maya Train traverses. It will help you build your itinerary so you can visit the cities, villages, archaeological zones and natural areas of the Mexican southeast. It contains practical information, as well as must-sees during your stay and is organized into chapters describing the stations on the Maya Train Route. It ends with a section on the gastronomy, handicrafts and festivals you will encounter on your journey.

HOW TO FIND YOUR WAY IN EACH CHAPTER

Each chapter describes one, two or three Maya Train stations, depending on their geographical location. To make them easier to find, a color has been assigned to each station, according to the state it belongs to.



DETAILED INFORMATION

The principal archaeological sites are described individually, together with a map showing the main buildings. The towns and cities in each chapter are accompanied by icons indicating the services and activities available, as well as information on the roads to get there.

There are also insets highlighting the main natural or cultural features.



Icons



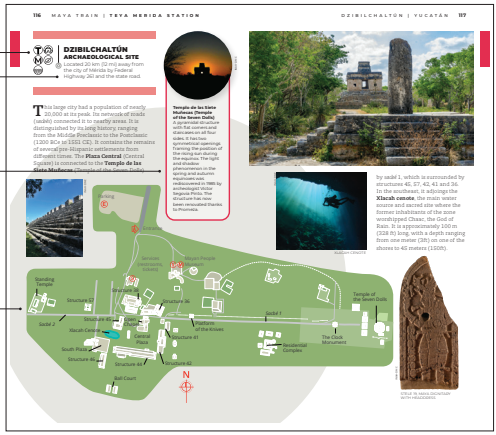
Location



Insets



Archaeological site map



MAIN ICONS

- Camping
- Water activities
- Ecotourism activities
- Natural area
- Archaeology
- Colonial architecture
- Handicrafts
- Cycling
- Diving
- Golf cart
- Visitors' Center
- Cenote
- Maya community
- Ecotourism
- Gastronomy
- Cave
- Turtle release
- Museum
- Swimming
- Nature
- Birdwatching
- Wildlife observation
- Park
- Boat ride
- Heritage
- Recreational fishing
- Beach
- Hiking
- Church
- Store
- Ziplining

LOCATION MAP

How to read it

The map shows the attractions near the stations and the roads leading to them.



Archaeological site



Maya Train Hotel



Airport



Natural area





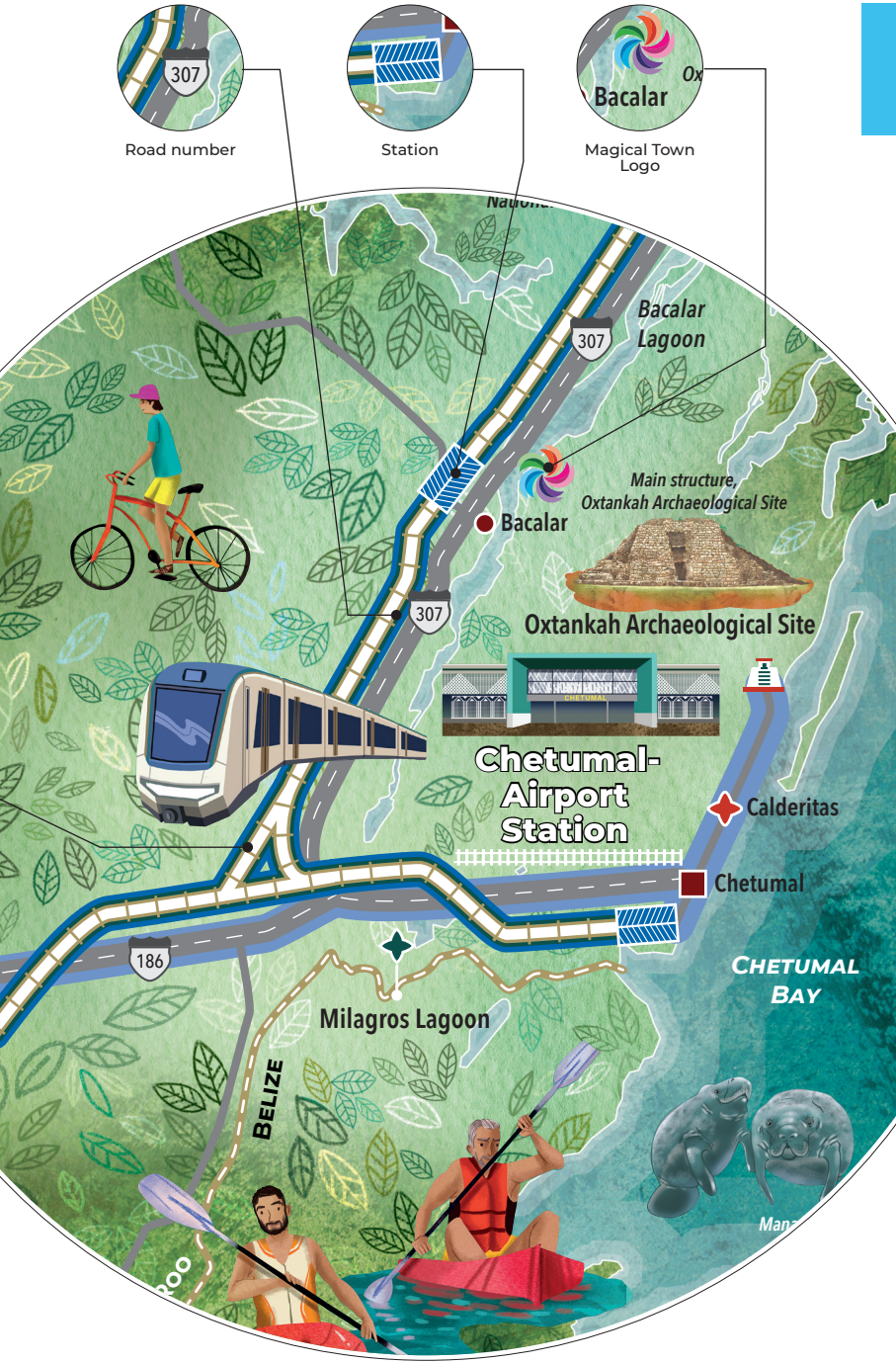
Roads, highlighted in the color used in each chapter



Railroad track

KEY

- Maya Train station
- Maya Train railroad track
- Capital city
- Population
- Cultural point of interest
- Natural point of interest
- Protected Natural Areas
- World Heritage site
- Magical Town
- Archaeological site
- Museum
- Maya train hotel
- Federal road
- State road
- Route to points of interest
- State road number
- Federal road number
- Highway number
- International airport


307
Road number
Station
Bacalar
Magical Town Logo
Bacalar Lagoon
307
Main structure, Oxtankah Archaeological Site
Bacalar
307
Oxtankah Archaeological Site
Chetumal-Airport Station
Calderitas
Chetumal
186
Milagros Lagoon
Chetumal Bay
Belize

ALL ABOARD THE MAYA TRAIN!

Throughout its 1,554 km (965 mi), the Maya Train will enable you to experience the Maya world in all its natural, cultural, and archaeological splendor. At every stop, it will help you understand the historical significance of its heritage.

Along the route with its thirty-four stations, you will be able to travel at your own pace from the northeast of Chiapas through Tabasco, Campeche, and Yucatán to the south of Quintana Roo, while enjoying the richness of southeast Mexico.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

During the tour, you will pass approximately fifty archaeological sites, many of which have new infrastructure and services as well as areas recently opened to the public. This is thanks to an ambitious refurbishment program linked to the Maya Train, promoting research and conservation programs. This has allowed the restoration and preservation of pre-Hispanic monuments, the discovery of pieces such as stelae, vessels, bones, and offerings and the renovation of signage and the interpretive trails.

In addition, eight museums have been built or refurbished, providing an overview of the Maya civilizations of the past and today. For example, you will be able to visit new museums such as The Great Museum of Chichen Itzá, The Puuc Archaeological Museum and The East Coast Museum. Other renovated spaces include the site museums in Calakmul, in Campeche, and Palenque's Alberto Ruz LHuillier Museum in Chiapas.



Along the way, you can stop off and visit places recently opened to the public such as Ichkabal and the Paamul II Eco Archaeological Circuit in Quintana Roo, where you can see caves such as Garra de Jaguar and Manitas. A beautiful East Coast Maya temple was found in Ocho Balas, whose wooden roof has been preserved intact. During construction of the



COURTESY OF FONATUR

Maya Train, archaeologists documented nearly sixty thousand buildings, approximately two thousand objects such as mortars, vessels, and tools, and recovered over 1,400,000 pottery shards and 660 bones, in addition to identifying and protecting more than 2,250 natural features associated with human activity such as caves, wells and cenotes.

Visitors to the archaeological sites of Palenque, Moral-Reforma, El Tigre, Edzná, Xcalumkin, Uxmal, Dzibilchaltún, Chichen Itza, Ek' Balam, and Calakmul will find Visitors' Centers (Catvi), designed to enhance the tourist experience and promote community development. Their architecture incorporates Maya features, respecting natural and historical areas. Above all, they are living spaces that protect national heritage, visibilize regional identity and guarantee cultural access and enjoyment. And as if that weren't enough, accommodation is available at the Maya Train Hotels in Palenque, Uxmal, Chichén Itzá, Tulum, Edzná and Calakmul.

CITIES AND VILLAGES

The Maya Train weaves its way through cities and towns inhabited by festive, creative and artistic people, and cooks faithful to their culinary roots, ensuring visitors will enjoy their stay. The diversity of southeast Mexico is reflected along the train route. In Chiapas, Palenque boasts scenery surrounded by rainforest and dotted with waterfalls, rivers and streams. It is an ideal eco-tourism destination and the perfect way to reach Bonampak and Yaxchilán.



In Tabasco, the towns of Boca del Cerro and El Triunfo, nestled between waterfalls and bird colonies, reflect the greatness of the Maya world in Moral-Reforma and Pomoná.

Campeche's stunning landscape includes springs, lagoons, large swathes of rainforest, and sea, as well as colonial cities with a diversity of gastronomy and traditions. Yucatán welcomes travelers to its capital city and Magical Towns, cenotes and archaeological remains, unique flavors and handicrafts. Finally, Quintana Roo will entrance you with its beaches, warm Caribbean waters, and Mesoamerican coral reef. Beaches, water parks, wetlands, lagoons and numerous archaeological zones mark the beginning or the end of this adventure on the Maya Train.



PROTECTED NATURAL AREAS

Nature will accompany you throughout your train journey. Large swathes of jungle and forests, wetlands, waterfalls, rivers and beaches hosting a diversity of wildlife can be seen up close when the train draws into the stations along the route. National Parks, Flora and Fauna Protection Areas, and Biosphere Reserves are home to endemic wildlife. In some of them, community members promote tourism activities and sell local food products. During your trip, you will be able to see wildlife crossings, flyovers protecting caves, cenotes, and underground rivers. Visiting them requires contacting a tour operator familiar with the regulations of each natural area, who will accompany you to the destination of your choice.

Along the Maya Train route, you will find new tourist development and environmental protection projects. Visitors to



COURTESY OF CONANP







Yucatán can stroll through New Uxmal Park, a project for ecological preservation and family recreation. Downtown Mérida is home to Parque La Plancha. This repurposed historical landmark is now a place where culture, sports, recreation, nature, gastronomy and modernity converge. In Parque del Jaguar, Tulum offers a recreational ecological space, designed to preserve natural heritage and sustainable tourism.

CONNECTIVITY

The Maya Train is part of a vast network connecting international airports with Mexico and the rest of the world. Palenque, Villahermosa, Ciudad del Carmen, Campeche, Mérida, Cancún, Tulum, and Chetumal airports are all located near the stations.

MAYA TRAIN HOTELS

Maya train passengers will be able to enjoy the unique experience of staying in places a stone's throw from archaeological sites in the southeast of Mexico. The Palenque, Edzná, Chichén Itzá, Nuevo Uxmal, Tulum, and Calakmul Maya Train Hotels offer a range of amenities, including 160 comfortable rooms, a swimming pool, spa, *temazcal* or sweat lodge, gym, bar, cafeteria, and restaurant where you can enjoy delicious regional dishes and other services.

THE MAYA TRAIN

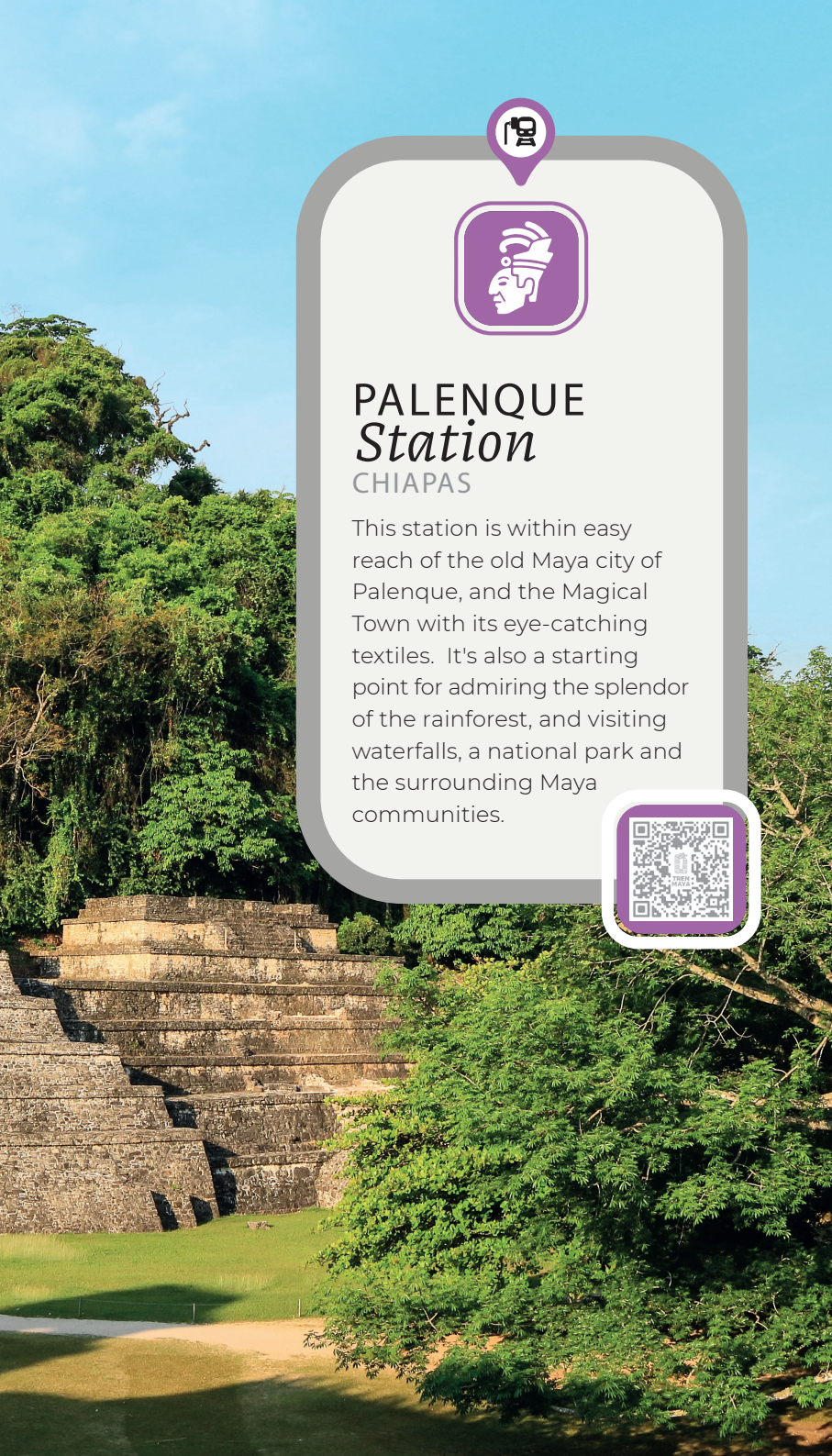
Manufactured in Mexico, the Maya Train has three types of trains available for travelers whose names correspond to three Mayan words: *Xinbal* (walk) is a standard model providing regular service, because it is the train with the greatest circulation. It has double seats with ample legroom, and space for luggage and bikes. *Janal* (eat) features a restaurant and cafeteria, with comfortable areas to enjoy the regional gastronomy. *P'atal* (stay), designed for long distances, offers comfortable cabins to enjoy the trip during the day and sleep at night.

The Maya Train has a total of forty-two comfortable, modern trains.


TREN MAYA
TSÍIMIN K'ÁAK
MAYA TRAIN
ALACRANES REEF
Puerto Progreso
Tixkokob
Sisal
LA PLANCHA PARK
Dzibilchaltún
Mérida
Umán
RÍA CELESTÚN
Maxcanú
LOS PETENES
Teya Mérida
Oxkintok
Calkiní
Uxmal
PUUC ROUTE
Loltún Caves
Kabah
Chacmultún
Labná
Hecelchakán
Xcalumkín
Xlapak
Tenabo
Chunhuhub
Sayil
Campeche
San Francisco de Campeche
Tohcok
Santa Rosa Xtampak
CHENES ROUTE
GULF OF MEXICO
Edzná
Tabasqueño
Dzibilnocac
Champotón
Hochob
Carrillo Puerto-Champotón
CAMPECHE
BALAM KIN
BALAM KÚ
Escárcega
Xpujil
Isla del Carmen
Balamkú
Xpuhil
Becán
TÉRMINOS LAGOON
Centenario
Chicanná
Hormiguero
RIO BEC ROUTE
Candelaria
Calakmul
Candelaria
El Tigre
CENTLA SWAMPS
TABASCO
El Triunfo
CALAKMUL
MÉXICO
Palenque
Moral-Reforma
GUATEMALA
WANHA'
Palenque
Pomoná
Tenosique
Boca del Cerro
USUMACINA CANYON
CHIAPAS
Toniná
MONTES AZULES
Yaxchilán


MEXICAN CARIBBEAN
RÍA LAGARTOS
YUM BALAM
Holbox
ISLA CONTOY
Cancún-Aeropuerto
Isla Mujeres
El Meco
Cancún
San Miguelito
El Rey
Leona Vicario
Nuevo Xcán
Izamal
Valladolid
Chichén Itzá
Izamal
Ek Balam
Puerto Morelos
Playa del Carmen
Xaman há
Chichén Itzá and Chichén Viejo
Valladolid
OTOCH MA'AX YETEL KOOH
Cobá
JAGUAR
Paamul II
Xcaret
Cozumel
San Gervasio
Xelhá
Tankah
Tulum
El Caracol
Tulum
Tulum Airport
PARQUE DEL JAGUAR
Tulum
Muyil
YUCATÁN
QUINTANA ROO
SIAN KA' AN REEFS
CARIBBEAN SEA
N
Felipe Carrillo Puerto
Ascención Bay
BALA'AN K'AAX
Espíritu Santo Bay
Limones-Chacchoben
Chacchoben
SIAN KA' AN
UAYMIL
BANCO CHINCHORRO
Bacalar
Bacalar
Ichkabal
Oxtankah
Dzibanché-Kinichná
Chetumal
Kohunlich
Chakanbakán
Chetumal-Airport
Nicolás Bravo-Kohunlich
XCALAK REEFS
BELIZE
Palenque
Maya Train station
Maya Train route
Capital city
Cultural point of interest
Protected Natural Area
World Heritage site
Magical Town
Archaeological site
Maya Train hotel
International airport
Railroad track


INAH-DMC



PALENQUE *Station*

CHIAPAS

This station is within easy reach of the old Maya city of Palenque, and the Magical Town with its eye-catching textiles. It's also a starting point for admiring the splendor of the rainforest, and visiting waterfalls, a national park and the surrounding Maya communities.


N
TABASCO
CHIAPAS
186
Villahermosa
Scarlet macaw
Vine snake
Ceramic censer holder
Colen Há
EcoTourism Center
Aluxes
Ecopark
Palenque
Maya Train Hotel
H
M
Alberto Ruz LHuillier
Site Museum
243
Palenque
Archaeological Site
Palenque
Emblem Glyph
Xanil River
Palenque
National
Park
199
Rafting
Agua Azul Waterfalls
Biosphere Reserve



PALENQUE STATION NEARBY ATTRACTIONS

PALENQUE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Located 11 km (6.8 mi) southeast of Palenque station, on Federal highway 199 and Palenque-Ruinas Road

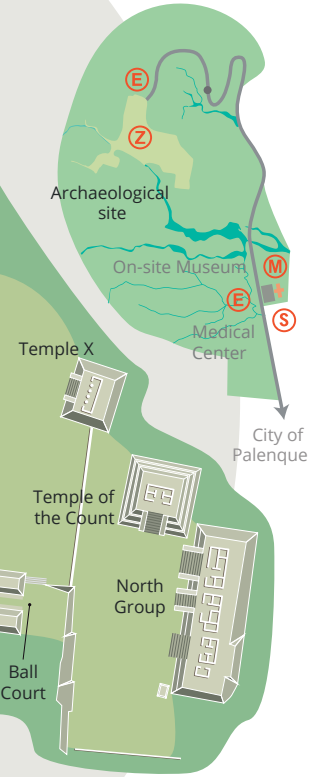

INAH-DMC

This is the first suggested stop at Palenque Station. Visiting this archaeological site introduces you to the Maya world and its rituals and beliefs. Palenque was inscribed in the World Heritage List because it was one of the main Maya sites whose influence spread to other settlements in the Usumacinta River basin. The seat of the powerful dynasty to which King Pakal belonged, Palenque reached its peak between 615 and 783 BCE during the Classic period. One of its many structures, the Temple of the Inscriptions, was discovered on June 13, 1952. The renowned Mexican



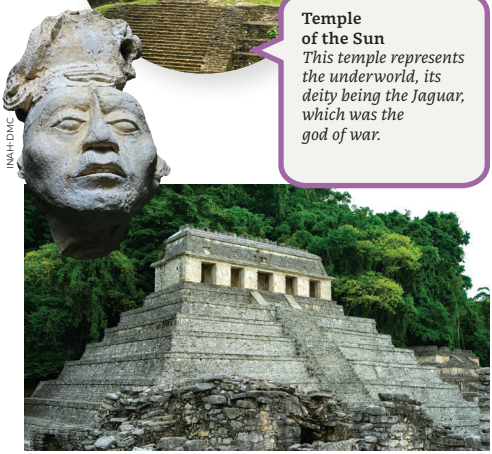


THE PALACE



Temple of the Sun
This temple represents the underworld, its deity being the Jaguar, which was the god of war.

INAH-DMC



TEMPLE OF THE INSCRIPTIONS

archeologist Alberto Ruz LHuillier discovered the famous K'inich Janaab'Pakal tomb, The Palace, Temple XI, the Temples of the Foliated Cross, the Sun, and the Count, as well as the Ball Court. Be sure not to miss the recently refurbished Northern Group, Temple XIII and Group IV.

INAH-DMC



REPLICA OF KING PAKAL'S TOMB

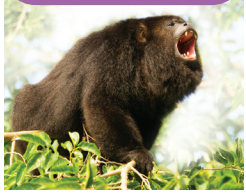
INAH-DMC



ALBERTO RUZ LHUILLIER
ON-SITE MUSEUM

Also worth a visit is the recently remodeled **Alberto Ruz LHuillier On-site Museum** with its brand-new museography. Additional features were incorporated into the permanent collection of over 260 pieces to expand and update the information on Palenque, and enhance the visitor experience.

Howler monkeys *are America's largest primates. Their howls can be heard over four km (2.5 mi) away. Keep an ear out for them! You will probably see and hear them on your visit to the archeological site or the rainforest.*



DEPOSITPHOTOS/SIEMPRE VERDE



FUNERARY OFFERINGS OF THE RED QUEEN

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TWIN WATERFALLS

PALENQUE NATIONAL PARK

Km 4.5 on the Palenque-Ruinas road

INAH-DMC



THE PALACE TOWER, PALENQUE

Take the opportunity to visit **Palenque National Park**, where the ancient Maya city flourished. The Conservation Center, located in the park, contains all the information you need to hike its trails, and observe the wildlife, such as toucans, jaguars, and howler monkeys. You can admire the thirty-one orchid species kept in the orchid garden and a range of butterflies in the butterfly garden. The Forestry Nursery showcases trees from the region such as mahogany and red cedar, and you can learn about the importance of environmental conservation at workshops organized by the Jaguar Area.



DEPOSITPHOTOS/ANANKKML



PALENQUE MAYA TRAIN HOTEL

Nestling in the rainforest, this resort lies just 3.5 km (2 mi) from the archaeological zone. A walking trail leads directly to the old city. Its proximity to Palenque Station (9 km or 5.5 mi), the Magical Town (5.4 Km or 3.3 mi) and Palenque International Airport (10 km or 6.2 mi) makes it easy to reach the heart of southeast Mexico.



PALENQUE, MAGICAL TOWN.



A BIRD PARADISE AWAITS



SOME OF THE DELICIOUS FOOD YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SAMPLE ON YOUR TRIP

PALENQUE, MAGICAL TOWN

Located 4.5 km (2.7 mi) southeast of Palenque station, along Federal Highway 199 and 8a Avenida Norte-Poniente

The Magical Town is probably the best starting point to explore the area's natural attractions. Before leaving this destination, make sure you take the time to find out what gives this place its charm.

We suggest beginning with the **Church of Santo Domingo de Guzmán**, located in the Main Square on one of the highest points in the area. When construction of this austere building was completed on August 4, 1573, the three bells brought over from Spain rang out to celebrate the event. They were inscribed 1573, with the Dominican coat of arms. Celebrations to honor the patron saint of Palenque are held from late July to early August, and the church provides a gorgeous view of the town.

If you'd like to learn techniques such as pyrography, stone cutting or Chol weaving, head for **Plaza del Artesano,** Artisans' square. In addition to workshops, there are a range of objects crafted by local artisans, such as baskets, amber jewelry, stone and wood

COURTESY OF FONATUR



DEPOSITPHOTOS/MARBOL



MAYA TEXTILES



ARTISANS

INAH-DMC



INTRIGUING WATERFALLS

carvings, ceramics, and scale models of archaeological sites. You will also find Maya textiles, one of the most important artisanal expressions in the region. In their designs, the artisans reflect their worldview with techniques dating from the pre-Hispanic era.

On the way to Palenque's archaeological site, you will come across Aluxes Ecopark, where rescuing wildlife is a priority. Visitors can feed manatees, get a close-up view of macaws and giant turtles, and admire the sunrise or sunset in the rainforest. It is a wonderful activity if you're traveling with children.

From here, you can hire a tour to the Bonampak and Yaxchilán archaeological sites. Bonampak is renowned for its murals in the chambers of Structure 1, while Yaxchilán is famous for its stelae, lintels and buildings surrounded by rainforest. Getting there requires taking a boat down the river Usumacinta.

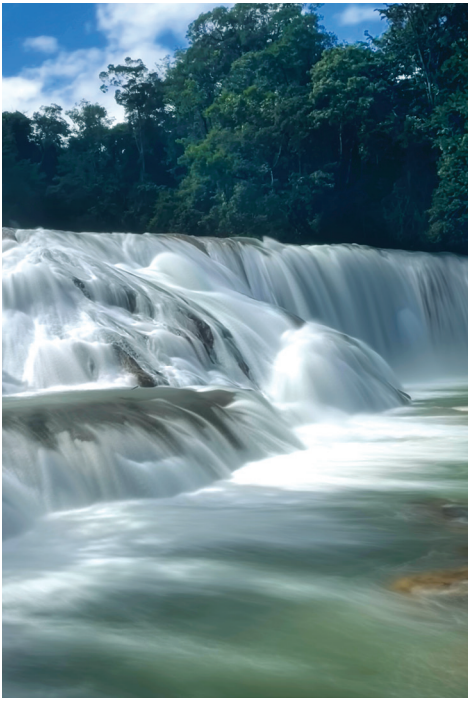


SANTO DOMINGO DE GUZMAN CHURCH

INAH-DMC



BONAMPAK MURALS



AGUA AZUL WATERFALLS





DEPOSITPHOTOS/PRIMUFILMS

CAMPING IN ECOTOURISM CENTERS



COURTESY OF FONATUR

ROBERTO BARRIOS WATERFALLS

LAGOONS AND WATERFALLS

The Catazajá Lagoons are 56 km (35 mi) north of Palenque's Magical Town

Palenque is a gateway to breathtaking natural attractions. To the north, Federal Highway 99 leads to the Catazajá Lagoons and to the south, it takes you to the Misol-Há and Agua Azul waterfalls.

The **Catazajá Lagoons** are a system of lagoons popular with recreational fishers. During the boat rides, you will be able to observe a range of birds and with any luck, a manatee. The area has been declared a Manatee Sanctuary and Natural Protected Area.

Located 24 km (15 mi) south of Palenque station, the **Misol-Há Waterfall Tourist**



MISOL-HÁ WATERFALL

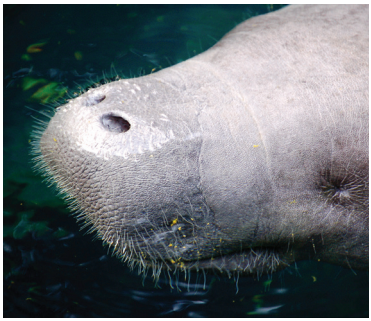
Center is run by the Chol community from Ejido San Miguel, who have preserved their traditions such as lighting candles inside caves to ensure rain and a good harvest. A walkway behind the water curtain leads to a grotto. Inside, a stream falls into a main well, in the midst of a high evergreen rainforest.



Forty kilometers (25 mi) south lie the **Agua Azul Waterfalls**: rapids, waterfalls, and deep turquoise blue pools created by tributaries of the Otulún, Shumuljá and Tulijá river, declared a Natural Biosphere Reserve. This is an ideal spot for camping, rafting, diving accompanied by a guide, swimming in the Tulijá river, taking long walks or hiking while you observe the local flora and fauna.

While you're in the area, in Francisco I. Madero, you can easily visit **the Colen Há Ecotourism Center**, where turquoise green water pools are linked to small waterfalls. You can swim in the pools or go rafting. The Center has cabins, trails, restaurants, palapas, and secure parking.

DEPOSITPHOTOS/PANTHERMEDIASELLER



AT THE CATAZAJÁ LAGOON, YOU MIGHT SPOT A MANATEE IF YOU'RE LUCKY

State Road 307 leads to the **Bascan or Roberto Barrios Waterfalls,** where the crystal clear waters and rainforest invite you to swim, admire the flora and fauna, hike or camp. Further along the road lies the **Welib Há Ecotourist Center** with its trails, camping site, and nature watching facilities, as well as a restaurant featuring traditional Chiapas dishes. The pools and cascades are a great place to swim.



COURTESY OF RENATUR/SONG AC



BOCA DEL CERRO AND

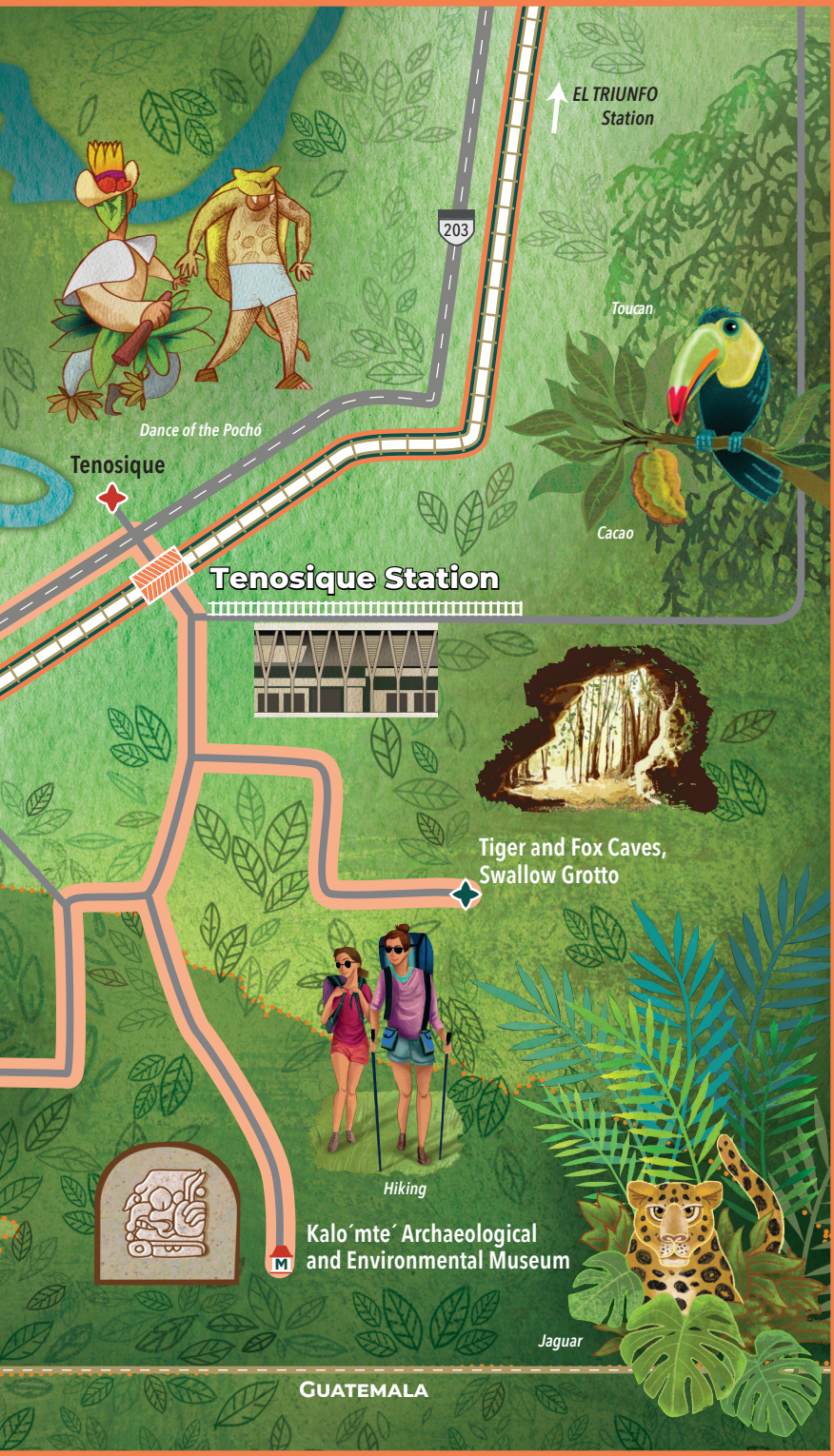
Stations

TABASCO

Get off at these stations for an unforgettable trip down the Usumacinta River, where you can visit lagoons and cenotes, explore caves and witness a centuries-old dance.



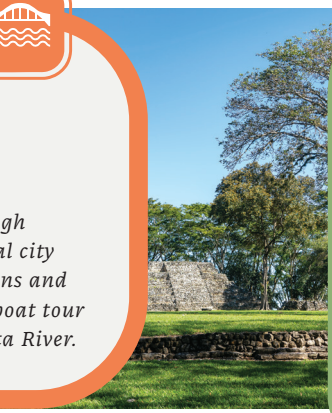
BOCA DEL CERRO AND TENOSIQUE STATIONS

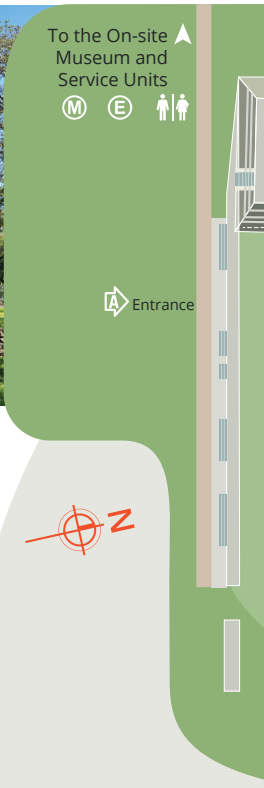

EL TRIUNFO
Station
203
Toucan
Dance of the Pochó
Tenosique
Cacao
Tenosique Station
Tiger and Fox Caves,
Swallow Grotto
Hiking
Kalo´mte´ Archaeological
and Environmental Museum
Jaguar
GUATEMALA

BOCA DEL CERRO *Station*

TABASCO

You can stroll through a former agricultural city here, enjoy the lagoons and cenotes, and take a boat tour down the Usumacinta River.





POMONÁ
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

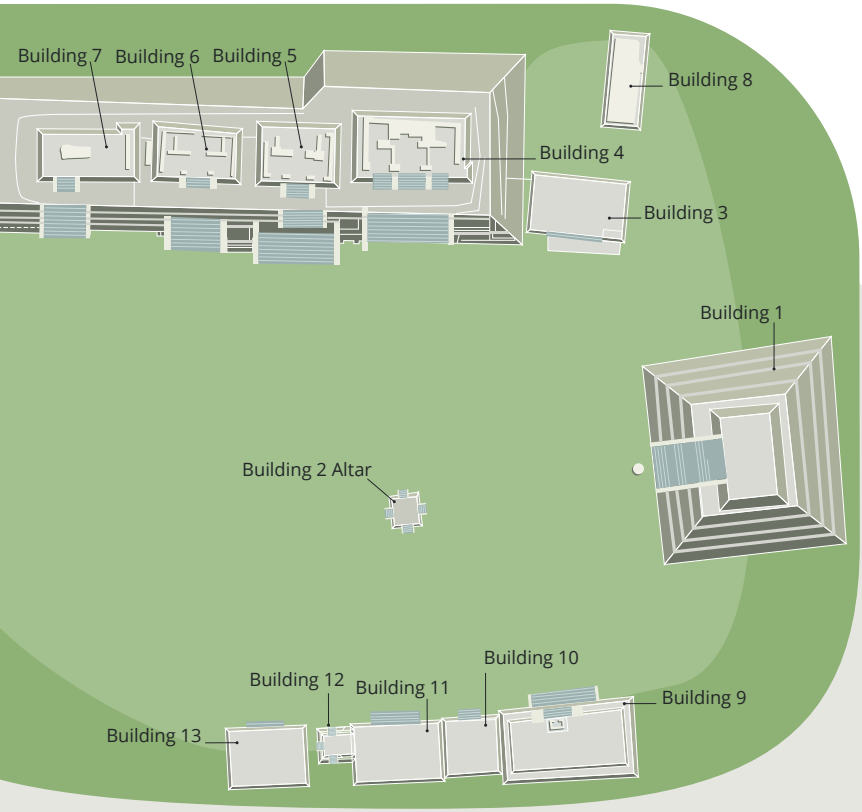
Located 15 km (9 mi) northeast of Boca del Cerro station, on Federal Highway 203

This city welcomes travelers arriving at Boca del Cerro Station. This former agricultural emporium played a major economic role in the region's past, reaching its peak in the Late Classic (600-900 CE). During this period, architectural activity flourished with influences from Comalcalco and Palenque and the creation of sculptural



INAH-DMC

COMPLEX 1



monuments such as stelae, panels and parallel beams. To visit Pomoná, take the road from Emiliano Zapata to Tenosique and then take the one leading to the archaeological site. The On-Site Museum contains pieces recovered during the excavations, with a section displaying artifacts from the surrounding area. Traces of their age-old culture are preserved in the panel inscriptions.



POMONÁ MUSEUM

Panel 1
A high relief of two seated male figures. The glyphs refer to the succession of rulers.



COURTESY OF EDITORIAL RAÍCES



COURTESY OF CONANP

USUMACINTA CANYON

USUMACINTA CANYON FLORA & FAUNA PROTECTION AREA

Located 15 km (9 mi) northeast of Boca del Cerro station on Federal Highway 203

The Breadnut Tree
This forest species was known as Óox by the ancient Maya. Growing abundantly in the tropical forests of southeast Mexico, it is renowned for its nutritional and medicinal properties.



Halfway between the Boca del Cerro and Tenosique stations, you can enjoy nature or do water sports on the Usumacinta river inside this natural area, which is part of the Mesoamerican biological corridor. Boat rides are an excellent way to see the high rainforest, reptiles, birds and mammals, including the jaguar, the largest endangered feline in America. Pathways and trails will lead you to the cenotes and other attractions. You can also rappel down the sides of the canyon or inside the caves in the area.

The **Boca del Cerro Tourist Center,** located in the southeast of the city, offers boat rides on the Usumacinta. Look out for the tropical flora covering the cliffs and banks. This area was once famous for its precious woods such as mahogany. Nowadays, the main tree species are terminalia amazonia, pukté, breadnut, mocayo, and chestnut, home to ocelots, tapirs, lizards, and bats. During the trip, you will see and hear the howler monkeys, who use their deep, guttural calls to mark their territory.

TENOSIQUE
Station
TABASCO

Crisscrossed by streams and lagoons, Tenosique offers caving enthusiasts grottos and caves with spectacular views, as well as a Maya treasure waiting to be discovered.



COURTESY OF FONATUR



KALO' MTE'

Tenosique's range of natural attractions make it ideal for adventure tourism. Twenty-three km (14 mi) south, inside the mountainous region, lies the ejido Santo Tomás, where the **Tiger and Fox Caves**, and **Swallows' Grotto** await cavers. Since Santo Tomás is part of the Usumacinta Reserve, it offers several eco-tourism activities, such as hiking through the lush vegetation. Be sure to visit cenotes such as **Aktun Há**, also called the Cave cenote and **Ya Ax Há** with its blue-green waters.

Thirty-nine km (24 mi) east stands the ejido Álvaro Obregón, the site of the **Kalo'mte' Archaeological and Environmental Museum.** The chief attraction of the museum is a Maya wooden box that protects and displays hieroglyphs describing the hierarchical relationships within the culture.





COURTESY OF FONATUR

DANCE **OF THE POCHÓ**
February 14

One of the most important dances in the pre-Hispanic world, the Dance of the Pochó symbolizes purification in the fight between good and evil. You can watch it during the Tenosique Carnival celebrations that culminate in the **danza de los blanquitos** (dance of the small white men).



INAH-DMC



EL TRIUNFO AND

Stations

TABASCO AND CAMPECHE

These stations bring travelers closer to archaeological sites and waterfalls. Nature lovers will find a range of wonderful places to explore here.

EL TRIUNFO AND CANDELARIA STATIONS




ESCÁRCEGA
Station
N
186
Salto Grande Waterfall
Candelaria
Candelaria River
Candelaria
Station
El Tigre
Archaeological Site
221
El Triunfo
El Triunfo
Station
Pedro Baranda
Springs
nha´ Biosphere
Reserve
Heron
Sanctuary
San Pedro
River
TENOSIQUE
Station
White heron
and chicks

EL TRIUNFO
Station
TABASCO

This is a great place to stop! You can explore ancient Maya buildings and cool waterfalls, ride a boat through the mangroves and explore caves and canyons.



MORAL-REFORMA
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Located 27 km (17 mi) southeast of El Triunfo station along the state road


INAH-DMC

At El Triunfo Station, we suggest making **Moral-Reforma Archaeological Site** your first stop. Because of its location, this city served as a port and center for bartering with other major Maya trading cities during the Classic period (200-900 CE). This area contains over seventy-six pre-Hispanic buildings


INAH-DMC

BUILDING 14



INAH-DMC

BUILDING 3 PLINTH
This is an elongated base with three sections, with a radial design with tucked-in corners. It is thought to have been used as a residence for the ruling class.

distributed around two open plazas. The most striking of these are the Western Plaza Complex, surrounded by nineteen buildings, and the Eastern Plaza Complex, comprising twenty-eight buildings. This ancient city was once even larger. The central area is surrounded by minor constructions distributed over approximately 3,000 hectares. It was built with El Petén style architecture, like Calakmul. Make sure you visit the On-Site Museum!



INAH-DMC

Two-Headed Altar
This two-headed representation of the Muwaan bird is related to the underworld and the night sky. It was found in the Ball Court, lending weight to archaeologists' hypothesis that ball games were symbolic elements forming part of the Maya worldview.

WANHA'
BIOSPHERE RESERVE

Located 48 km (30 mi) west of Moral-Reforma Archaeological Site, along the unnamed state road



REFORMA WATERFALLS RESERVE

This reserve on the banks of the San Pedro River serves as a gateway to the Aguada Fénix archaeological site, a monumental construction built over 3,000 years ago. In addition to archaeological sites such as San Claudio, Santa Elena and Moral Reforma, it is home to the **Reforma Waterfalls Ecological Reserve**. It is perfect for hiking, kayaking or riding a boat to the middle of the rainforest to enjoy a view of the waterfalls.

The **Heron Sanctuary**, a nature reserve for migrating birds, located sixty km (37 mi) east, is worth a visit. Several species come here to breed and nest in April and May. If you enjoy photography, this is an ideal spot for taking pictures.To get there, make your way to the village of San Pedro to rent a boat.

On your way there, you can stop off at the ejido Leona Vicario 13 km (8 mi) south of Balancán, where you'll find the **Señor**



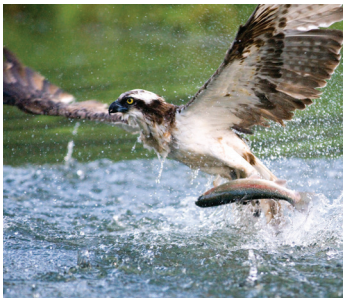
DEPOSITPHOTOS/STRANNIK_FOX



SEÑOR DE TILA CHURCH



CHASCHOC LAGOON



DEPOSITPHOTOS/MIKELANE45



de Tila Church, with its distinctive facade. Some people say that its colors are due to the miracles that this saint from Chiapas has performed for his worshippers. Opposite the church is a lagoon that warrants a quick detour.

In the same direction, heading towards the municipality of Emiliano Zapata, you will come to **Chaschoc Lagoon**, a wetland where you can also observe migrating and endemic birds, which is why it has been declared a bird sanctuary. On your way there, you can admire the local wildlife. Its size and the diversity of its flora and fauna make this a unique area that has managed to preserve its immense natural wealth.

What better way to round off your stay in Balancán than by trying the authentic "**queso de poro"** (porous cheese), an artisanal dish that is not only delicious, but also symbolizes the history and culture of the local people?

CANDELARIA *Station*

CAMPECHE

The Candelaria River will accompany you on your journey to El Tigre Archaeological Site. Along the way, you will come across springs and hiking trails surrounded by tropical rainforest.



EL TIGRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

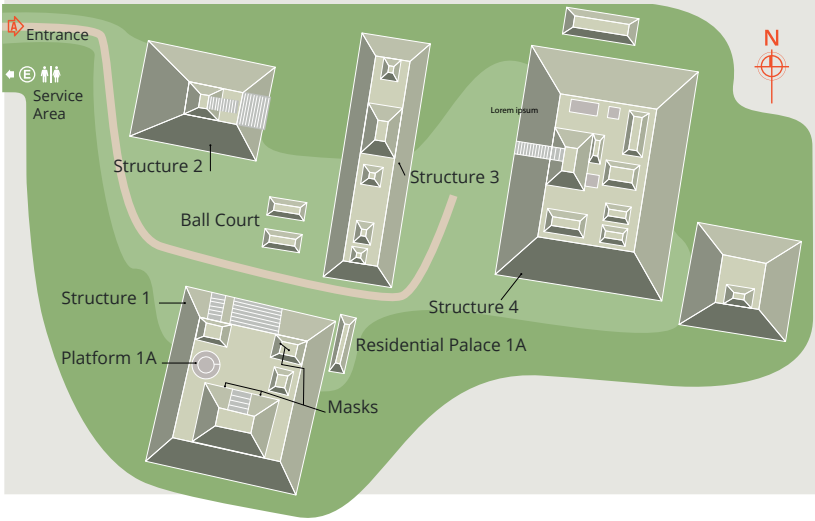
48 Km (30 mi) east of Candelaria Station, along Federal Highway 221 and the state road to El Tigre Archaeological Site



STUCCO MASKS

Candelaria Station takes travelers to within striking distance of **El Tigre Archaeological Site**, a once bustling river port, and the nature trail linking the coast of Campeche to El Petén, occupied from the Pre-Classic (600-300 BCE) to the Protohistoric (*ca.* 1557).

The ceremonial center, built on a natural slope on the left bank of the Candelaria River, consists of four main structures and several plazas. The beautifully





STRUCTURE 1

ornamented stucco masks, found in one of its substructures, are its main attraction, exemplifying the great pottery tradition and its importance as a feature of the Maya religious worldview.

WATER BODIES

Visitors can enjoy the beautiful natural landscapes surrounded by exuberant vegetation, and washed by the Candelaria River, a calm, bluish green tributary fed by springs and cenotes. Its navigable waters are essential to life in the region. Downriver stands Salto Grande, a gorgeous waterfall surrounded by open grasslands, mangroves, and tropical vegetation. This is the perfect spot for kayaking, bird watching, swimming, and trail walking.



COURTESY OF FONATUR

CANDELARIA RIVER

A must-see in the Magical Town of Candelaria is **Salto Grande Urban Park**, the most beautiful natural attraction in the area. The river opens onto 800-m (.5 mi) of flat land, creating waterfalls, streams and rapids. On your way, you will see a variety of orchids, exotic birds and archaeological remains hidden in the tropical rainforest.



Salto Grande Urban Park
This is considered a priority area for biodiversity conservation.

The community of **Pedro Baranda** lies thirty-nine km (24 mi) southeast, on State Road 221. Its springs are famous for their shallow waters which, due to an effect of the natural light, make it possible to see aquatic plants in different shades resembling a garden. Visitors can swim and kayak, as well as admiring birds such as the white heron, hummingbird and woodrail.

A few kilometers further south along the same road, you will come to **Miguel Hidalgo Spring**, its green waters reflecting the surrounding vegetation. Its shallow waters are ideal for swimming with children, kayaking, and snorkeling. If you want to get away from it all, this is the perfect place to commune with nature.



COURTESY OF FONATUR



ESCÁRCEGA AND CARRILLO PUERTO-

Stations

CAMPECHE

Escárcega is considered the heart of the Maya Train route, because it is the point where the routes to the north, south and west of the Yucatán Peninsula meet.


Playa Bonita
CAMPECHE Station
Mangrove Xpicob beach
Seybaplaya
Gulf of Mexico
Sihoplaya
180
Champotón
San Antonio Fort
Carrillo Puerto - Champotón Station
180
Sabancuy
Chuiná sanctuary
Chuiná Sanctuary
259
Ejido Aquiles Serdán
Cenote Miguel Colorado
El Tormento
Escárcega
Escárcega Station
CANDELARIA Station



ESCÁRCEGA AND CARRILLO PUERTO-CHAMPOTÓN STATIONS

ESCÁRCEGA *Station*

CAMPECHE

The moment you step off the train, you will find a destination offering a range of activities. This is an ideal place for birdwatching and learning about conservation.



CENOTE MIGUEL COLORADO

Escárcega offers Maya Train passengers a variety of ecotourism and adventure activities, while the rainforest provides striking landscapes.

One of these is the **Cenote Miguel Colorado**, located 33 km (20 mi) north along the road to Champotón. You can admire the spectacular scenery, explore the walking trail, swim, kayak, or ride the zipline.

Close to Escárcega Station, 8 km (5 mi) west along Road 186, stands the **El Tormento Forest Technology Transfer and Research Center**. This tropical forest, which has been kept intact, helps preserve 200 species, 140 forest flora and sixty animals such as howler monkeys,

Bird counting
Escárcega is ideal for birdwatching. The best place to do this is the Hotel Real Primavera Campestre *in early November, when birdwatchers meet to count birds. These include the long-tailed turtledove, the sungrebe and the ruddy crake.*



DEPOSITPHOTOS/SOFT_LIGHT69

BIRDERS WILL BE ABLE TO SPOT A RANGE OF BIRD SPECIES

COURTESY OF FONATUR



EL TORMENTO CENTER, RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND ECOTOURISM ACTIVITIES



DEPOSITPHOTOS/WEBITECT



squirrels, spotted pacas, porcupines, and a diversity of birds. There is also an **orchidarium,** where approximately fifty species of the *Orquidaceae* botanical family are grown and kept. Some are epiphytic, meaning that they grow on another plant or tree, while others grow on the ground. The 50 m tall (160 ft) observation tower is ideal for birdwatching. Another attraction is the **arboretum**, a reservoir of useful forest and threatened species. The genetic diversity of timber species is preserved here for research, education, and ecotourism.

DEPOSITPHOTOS/FOTOPARATI



CARRILLO PUERTO-CHAMPOTÓN *Station*

CAMPECHE

Surrounded by mangroves and the Champotón river, this destination boasts beaches, haciendas and buildings steeped in pirate lore.



CHAMPOTÓN

A few miles west of Carrillo Puerto Station lies the town of Champotón, one of the first Maya communities explored by Spaniards. As you stroll through it, you will come across buildings reflecting its past, such as the **Church of Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes,** founded by Franciscans in the 17th century**.** Another famous landmark is the **Fort of San Antonio,** known as Moch Cohuo Castle, built to



CHURCH OF NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LAS MERCEDES



COURTESY OF FONATUR

SEYBAPLAYA AERIAL VIEW

prevent pirate raids in the 17th century.

North of Champotón, continuing up the coast, you will reach **Sihoplaya, Playa Bonita** and **Seybaplaya,** beaches with gentle waves, white sands, and



CHAMPOTÓN



CALM WATERS OF SEYBAPLAYA





SAN ANTONIO FORT

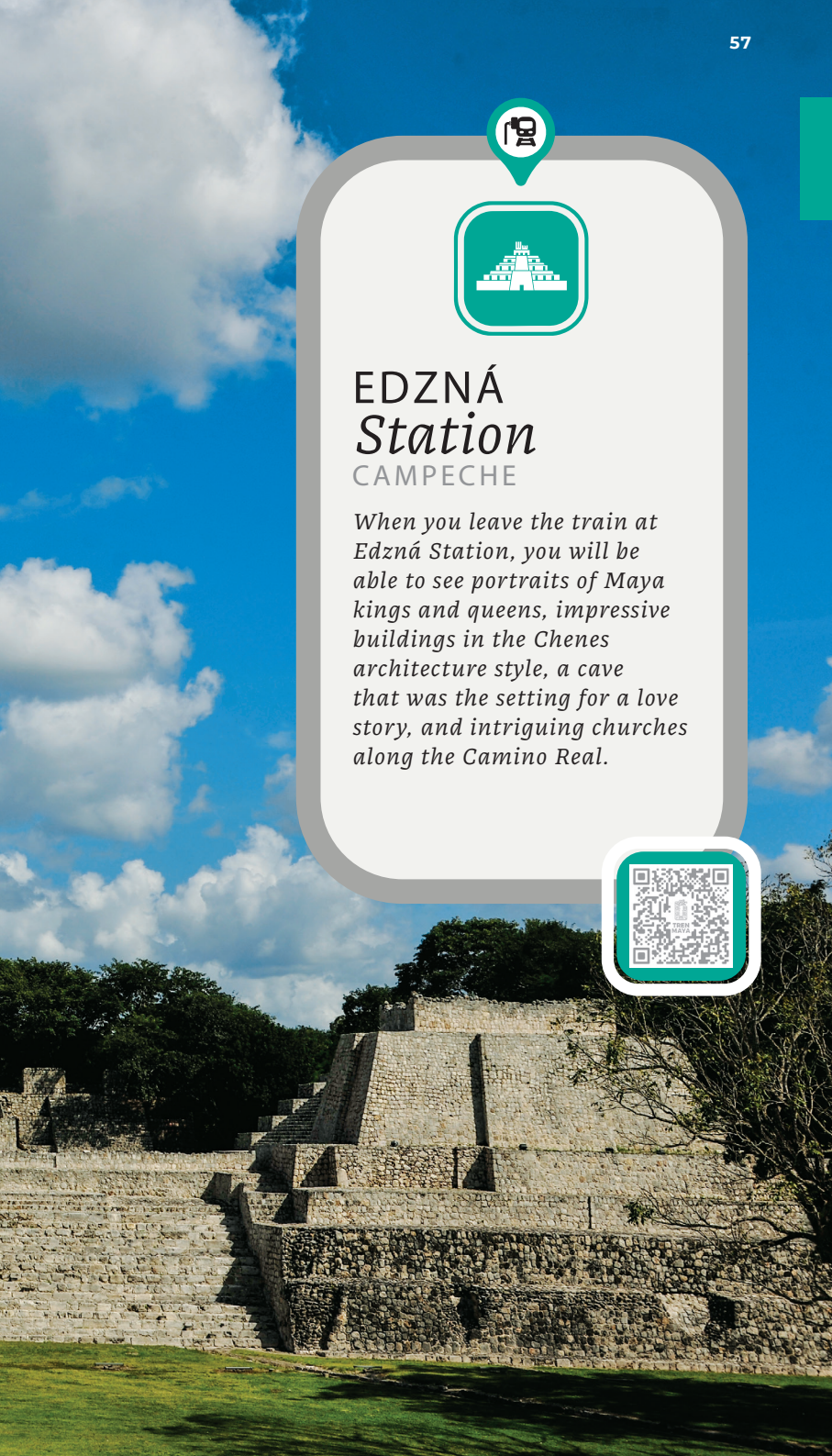
spectacular sunsets. A few miles further on, you will come to **Playa Xpicob Mangrove**. Between October and December, you can enjoy the nightly spectacle of bioluminescence lighting up the waves and beach. This is nature's way of protecting the beach and mangrove biodiversity from predators, taking care of the birds and preserving the turtle camp. This natural phenomenon can be enjoyed by the whole family.

If you head south, 45 km (28 mi) along the Escárcega-Champotón road, you will come to the **Chuiná Sanctuary** in the town of Aquiles Serdán. This indigenous place of worship is one of the most important religious sanctuaries on the Yucatán Peninsula, receiving numerous pilgrimages from local Maya communities.



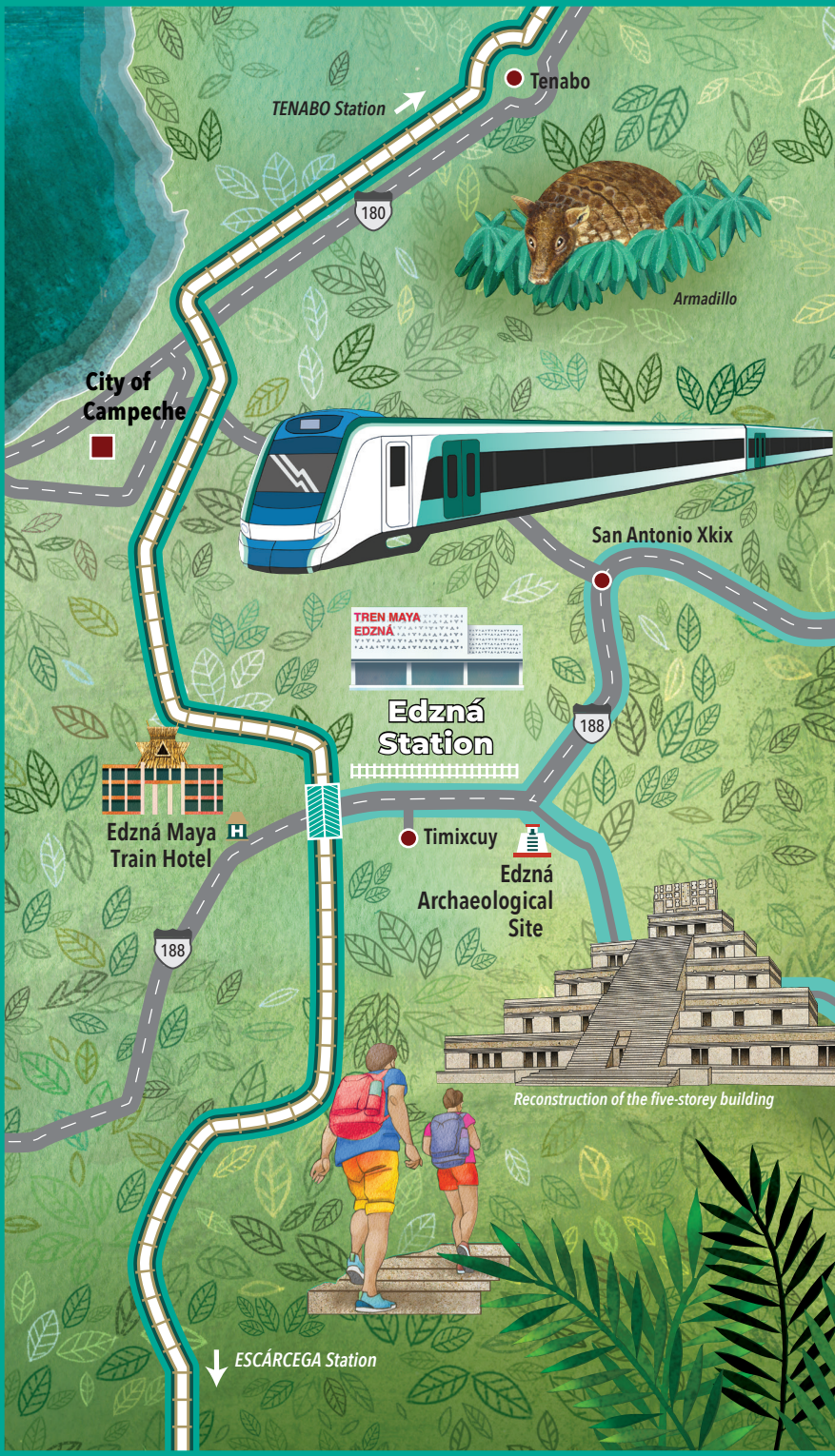


INAH-DMC



EDZNÁ
Station
CAMPECHE

When you leave the train at Edzná Station, you will be able to see portraits of Maya kings and queens, impressive buildings in the Chenes architecture style, a cave that was the setting for a love story, and intriguing churches along the Camino Real.

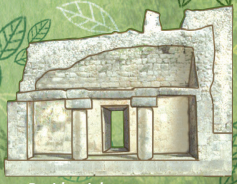

Tenabo
TENABO Station
180
Armadillo
City of Campeche
San Antonio Xkix
TREN MAYA
EDZNÁ
Edzná Station
188
Edzná Maya Train Hotel
H
Timixcuy
Edzná Archaeological Site
188
Reconstruction of the five-storey building
ESCÁRCEGA Station

EDZNÁ STATION
NEARBY ATTRACTIONS

N

Xtacumbilxuna'an Caves





Residential structure

Tohcok
Archaeological Site

261

YUCATÁN
CAMPECHE

Hopelchén

261

Santa Rosa Xtampak Archaeological Site



Reconstruction of the Palace of the Three Legends

261

CHENES ROUTE



North Facade of the Palace-Temple

Dzibilnocac
Archaeological Site



Structure A-1

Tabasqueño
Archaeological Site

Dzibalchén

Hochob Archaeological Site



Facade of the Principal Palace or Structure II

269





EDZNÁ
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Located 55 km (34 mi) southeast of Campeche City, along Federal Highways 180 and 261



INAH-DMC

When you arrive at Edzná Station, we suggest visiting the archaeological zone, one of the most important sites in Maya Culture from the Late Classic Period (700-900 BCE). Its name, House of the Itza, is a reference to the Chontal origins of the Itza,



INAH-DMC

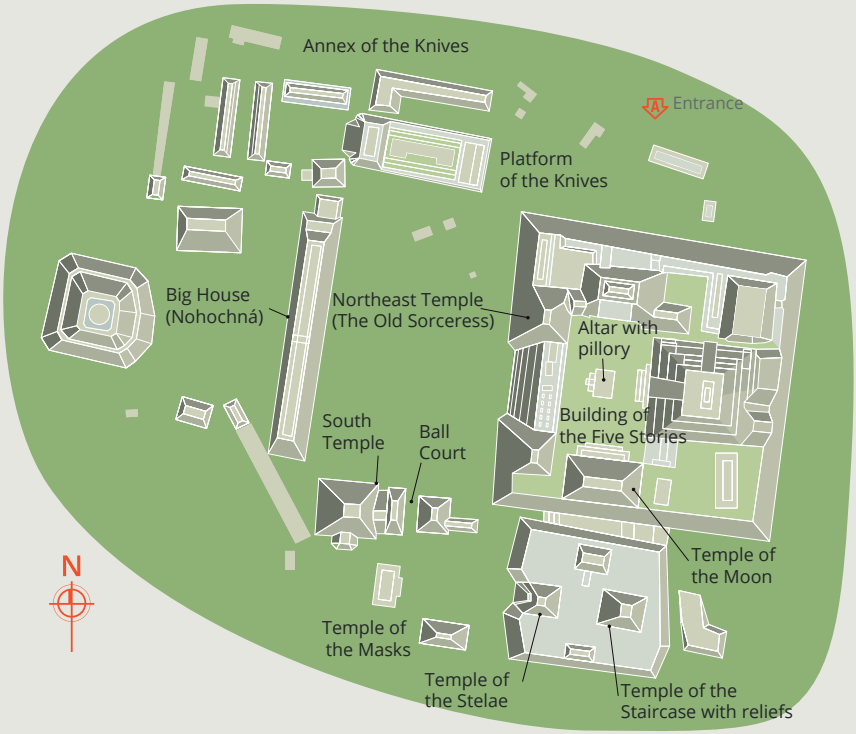
INAH-DMC

BUILDING OF THE FIVE STORIES



BUILDING OF THE FIVE STORIES

who settled in a fertile valley where they developed a complex system of canals and drinking and irrigation water deposits. They concentrated production and the labor force, subjugating the surrounding villages. Between 400 and 1000 CE, Edzná became a powerful regional capital of the western peninsula. The city covers 17 km² (10.5 mi²) and contains several monumental buildings, proof of the concentrated political, economic, and religious power achieved by the ruling class. It is possible to identify various architectural styles such as Petén, Chenes and Puuc in this extraordinary site abandoned *ca.* 1450 CE.



INAH-DMC



Temple of the Masks
Built in the Petén architecture style, this is the finest example of modeled stucco. These masks represent the sun god in its daily journey across the sky. The east side shows the worship of the sunrise and the west side the worship of the sunset. In both cases, the sun has been anthropomorphized with ornaments indicating a high social position.

A few yards away stands the **Edzná On-Site Museum,** where you can learn about the history and myths of this Maya city. Its collection comprises pieces discovered during the recent archaeological excavations. Be sure to visit the Catvi with its interpretation room on the Maya.

INAH-DMC



RECENT EXCAVATIONS



EDZNÁ MAYA TRAIN HOTEL
This resort in Edzná valley is conveniently located just one km (6 mi) from the Edzná archaeological site, 16.3 km (10 mi) from the Edzná Maya Train station and 45.5 km (28 mi) from the International Airport.



INAH-DMC

Chenes Route
Hopelchén is the starting point for visiting the archaeological sites on this route, the Santa Rosa Xtampak, Tabasco, Hochob, and Dzibilnocac sites. Built in the Maya architectural style, they are characterized by their facades with zoomorphic masks and lower palace-temples than in other parts of the Maya World.

HOPELCHÉN AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Located 60 km (37 mi) northeast of Edzná, along Federal Highway 188 and State Road 261

This city was founded in the 8th century as part of the Camino Real or Royal Road linking settlements on the peninsula to the center of New Spain. We suggest visiting the **Church of San Antonio de Padua** and its impressive baroque altar. Ten km (6 mi) north stands the **Tohcok Archaeological Site**, a small site from the Classic period (600 to 1000 BCE) managed by the local population. From the road you can see a housing structure influenced by Puuc-style architecture.

On State Road 261, heading towards Uxmal, lie the **Xtacumbilxuna'an** or **"Mujer Escondida" (Hidden Woman) Caves,** in the town of Bolonchén. They conceal one of the main cave systems in the peninsula. During your visit, you will hear about the love story between the beautiful Lol-Be and Dzulin, and see stalactite and stalagmite formations, ceremonial objects and ponds used for rituals by the Maya. These caves are also famous for appearing in the drawings of Frederick Catherwood, the 19th century explorer.



INAH-DMC

TOHCOK



DEPOSITPHOTOS/AI804.



SAN FRANCISCO DE CAMPECHE

Stations

CAMPECHE

A World Heritage City washed by the waters of the Gulf and ancient Maya cities sharing traditions with villages serving time-honored dishes seasoned with history are just some of the reasons to step off the train and explore this area.


N
Gulf of Mexico
Flamingos
Crocodile
Map of the City of Campeche
Costera del Golfo
16 de Septiembre
Calle 8
Calle 49
Calle 10
Calle 12
Calle 53
Calle 57
Calle 55
Calle 16
Calle 63
Calle 61
Calle 59
Calle 65
Calle 14
La Muralla
Circuito Baluartes
República
Talamantes
Description of historic points of interest marked on the map pp. 68-73
Balantanche Estuary
El Cuyo
San Francisco de Campeche Station
Ich Ha Loł Xaan Waterhole
Hampolol
Sea Gate
City of Campeche
International Airport
EDZNÁ Station

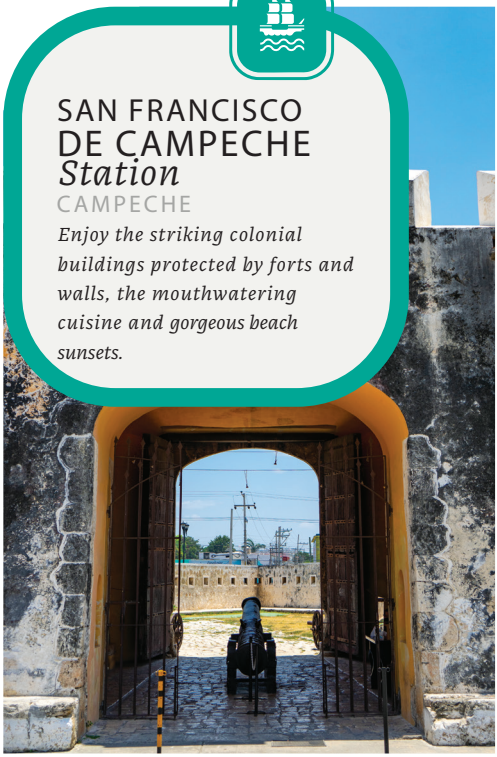


SAN FRANCISCO DE CAMPECHE AND TENABO STATIONS NEARBY ATTRACTIONS

SAN FRANCISCO DE CAMPECHE *Station*

CAMPECHE

Enjoy the striking colonial buildings protected by forts and walls, the mouthwatering cuisine and gorgeous beach sunsets.



LAND GATE



DEPOSITPHOTOS/JKRAFTS

SAN FRANCISCO DE CAMPECHE

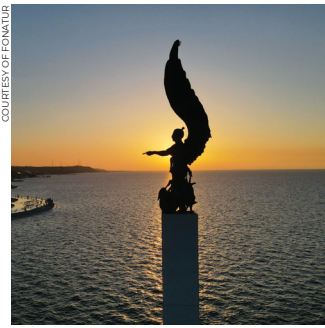
14 km (8.7 miles) north of San Francisco de Campeche Station along Periférico Pablo García y Montilla



DEPOSITPHOTOS/JKRAFTS

LA CIUDAD AMURALLADA (THE WALLED CITY)

As soon you get off the train, you feel you are in a seaport once besieged by pirates, protected by a wall with eight bulwarks and the forts of **San Miguel and San José El Alto**. You can stroll between **the Puerta de Tierra** 1 (Land Gate) and the **Puerta de Mar** 2 (Sea Gate). On the way, you can admire buildings with military architecture, the main square and perfectly preserved ancient mansions,



COURTESY OF FONATUR



as a result of which the city of San Francisco de Campeche was added to the World Cultural Heritage Sites list.

Downtown, make sure you visit the **Cathedral of Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción** 3. Its baroque facade sports two towers topped with small domes. The two sections are decorated with images of saints carved in stone.

The Cathedral rises over the place where the first chapel devoted to Nuestra Señora de la Inmaculada Concepción (Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception), was built after the city was founded in 1540. The current building dates back to the early 17th century when construction began on the new church, completed in 1705.





COURTESY OF FONATUR

A few steps away, on Calle 8 (8th Street), stands the **Baluarte San Carlos** 4 or San Carlos Bulwark, now the City Museum, displaying pieces from the colonial era, such as cannons and armor. Don't miss El Pulguero, a vault used as a prison. Further along this same street is the **Palacio Centro Cultural** 5, a dynamic space providing a glimpse of the past and present of this city. It shows the streets comprising the Villa de San Francisco de Campeche between the 16th and 19th centuries, as well as interactive images of how trade was conducted between this port and those on the other side of the Atlantic. Pirate raids on the city are realistically represented, and a mechanical simulator recreates a ship's deck. This is an excellent place to take the whole family.

Calle 10, number 333 houses the **Tienda de Artesanías Tukulná** 6 (Tukulná Handicrafts Store). Tukulná, meaning "the house of thought," brings together









CENTRO CULTURAL CASA 6

the most representative craft work in the state. Stocking hammocks, *huipiles* (traditional embroidered dresses), Jipijapa hats, jewelry carved from bone and bulls' horns, and traditional candy and preserves, it is housed in a building dating from the turn of the 20th century.





On Calle 55, between 8 and 10, stands the **Museo de Arte Sacro (Capilla de Jesús de Nazareno)** 7 (Sacred Art Museum, Chapel of Jesus of Nazareth), home to a collection of 17th and 18th century sacred art. Look out for the sculptured complex of the Holy Sepulcher of Christ in Campeche Cathedral.

Across the street is the **Centro Cultural Casa 6** 8 (House 6 Cultural Center), set in an 18th century mansion. The great room is elegantly appointed with period furniture and decorations.



SAN JOSE FORT



SAN JOSE F



As you arrive at Puerta de Tierra (Land Gate) on Circuito Baluartes (Bastion Circuit), you will find the **Baluarte de San Francisco** 9 (San Francisco Bastion). For a while, it housed the Gustavo Martinez Alomia Library. It subsequently contained an exhibition room on the city's defense against piracy, which reopened in 2023. It currently has an auditorium where cultural activities are held. It is part of the light and sound show on Fridays and Saturdays. A few steps ahead, you come to **Baluarte de San Pedro** 10 (San Pedro Bastion), one of the defense points of the city of Campeche, completed in the 18th century. It was dedicated to the first pope and was the site of the Court of the Inquisition.



CALAKMUL MASK, BULWARK OF SOLITUDE
MUSEUM OF MAYA ARCHITECTURE

On the other side of the city lies the Sea Gate and the **Malecón de Campeche** 11, (Campeche Boardwalk), a must-see where you can enjoy the open scenery and sea breeze.

Its 6.5 km (4 mi) with three running tracks are suitable for cycling, skating, jogging, and walking. You will also find



FORT

museums telling the history of this Heritage City. One of them is the **Museo de Arquitectura Maya Baluarte de la Soledad** 12 (Bulwark of Solitude, Museum of May Architecture) built in 1692, displaying objects in the Petén, Rio Bec, Chenes and Puuc styles. In one of the rooms, you can see the funerary offerings from Structure VII in Calakmul, among other intriguing items.

Make sure you visit the Santiago 13, Santa Rosa Bulwark 14 and San Juan Bulwarks 15.

While you are in the area, you can visit the **Museo de Arqueología Maya Fuerte de San Miguel** 16 (San Miguel Fort Maya Archeology Museum) and the **Museo de Arqueología Subacuática Fuerte de San José el Alto** 17, (The Fort of San José el Alto Underwater Archaeology Museum). At the former, you can admire a collection of the most important archeological and historic objects from the State of Campeche, such as the figurines of Jaina and funerary masks from Calakmul. In the latter, you will be pleasantly surprised by the collection of archaeological objects found submerged beneath the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean. Visit the Immersion Room where a presentation shows how what is now Mexico was formed over 165 million years ago.

Don't leave the city without enjoying its traditional neighborhoods, listed as World Heritage Sites: San Román, Santa Ana, Santa Lucía, San Francisco and Guadalupe, characterized by their civil, religious, and military architecture, with their many attractions and historical references.



SAN MIGUEL FORT

AMIDST RAINFORESTS AND MANGROVES

Ojo de Agua de Ich Ha Lol Xaan (Ich Ha Lol Xaan Waterhole) is on the road from Campeche to Mérida, at Km 21, in the locality of Hampolol. This reserve in Los Petenes offers a range of activities, such as hiking, ziplining, rappelling, kayaking, and diving. It also features palapas, cabins, and camping grounds.



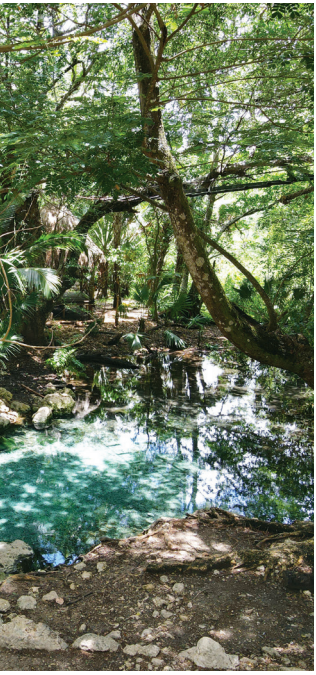
COURTESY OF FONATUR



ICH HA LOL XAAN

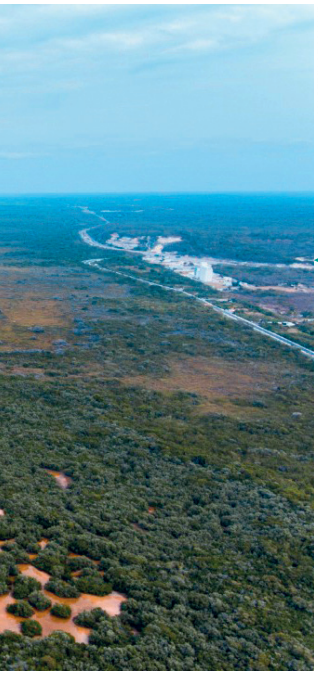


LOS PETENES.



COURTESY OF FONATUR

Further along is **Los Petenes Biosphere Reserve,** a vast conservation area comprising over 382, 000 hectares. It contains a variety of islets with medium rainforest vegetation and red, black and white mangroves, home to over 473 species of flora such as poison ivy, Campeche logwood, sapodilla plum, copperwood, sweetsop, and sabal trees. The diversity of environments and their relative inaccessibility mean that the region is essential to the conservation of animal species such as the wood stork, the great curassow, the blue winged teal, and other species native to the southeast. It extends to the coastal zones of the municipalities of Campeche, Tenabo, Hecelchakán and Calkini. Recreational fishing is available within the marine zone while the port zone of Campeche is ideal for kayaking. Be sure to contact a CONANP-authorized tour operator if you wish to visit the reserve.



COURTESY OF CONANP



COURTESY OF FONATUR

Los Petenes Biosphere Reserve

Make the most of your time here and discover the products made by the Maya community, who have organized as cooperatives to offer their products: henequen hammocks, curtains, rugs, hats, fans, jewelry boxes, accessories, and honey.

Enjoy a unique experience in a labyrinth of mangroves, visit El Cuyo where reptiles nest, go snorkeling and wander around the reserve to observe the wildlife.



COURTESY OF CONANP

DEPOSITPHOTOSSNEHITDESIGN

TENABO *Station*

CAMPECHE

The remains of ancient Maya cities are never far from sight in this town, where the rhythm of the jarana leads you to traditional dances, festivals known as *vaquerías* and mouthwatering dishes.



CHURCH OF THE ASSUMPTION

Tenabo is a peaceful town. When you wander through its streets, you will come to the **Church of the Assumption**, which still retains the mixtilinear belfry of the original facade, built in the 17th century. Inside, it features an image of the Recumbent Christ.

Your stroll will take you to artisans' workshops where hammocks, *huipiles*, shirts, and embroidered blouses and skirts are meticulously crafted (the last three are the traditional garments of the peninsula). In the evenings,



KANKÍ ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE



INAH-DMC

BUILDING I OR CREST BUILDING

COURTESY OF FONATUR



BAKERY IN POMUCH



DAY OF THE DEAD IN POMUCH

Day of the Dead in Pomuch
If you arrive on November 1 or 2, you will be able to see a unique celebration based on Maya cosmology. It is a ritual known as Choo Ba'ak, in which families carefully clean the bones of their deceased, then place them in an urn wrapped in a freshly embroidered cloth.
During this celebration, it is customary to eat the tasty, colorful Day of the Dead baked goods from Pomuch.



POMUCH BAKED GOODS

INAH-DMC



Dance of the Pig's Head
This dance was performed by the Maya during ceremonies of gratitude to nature. Nowadays it is a religious dance framed as a promise. Participants dance with colored ribbons, making figures around a table bearing a cooked pig's head with a piece of bread in its mouth while a small boy makes an offering of maize. This dance is still performed in many municipalities around Campeche and the state of Yucatán.

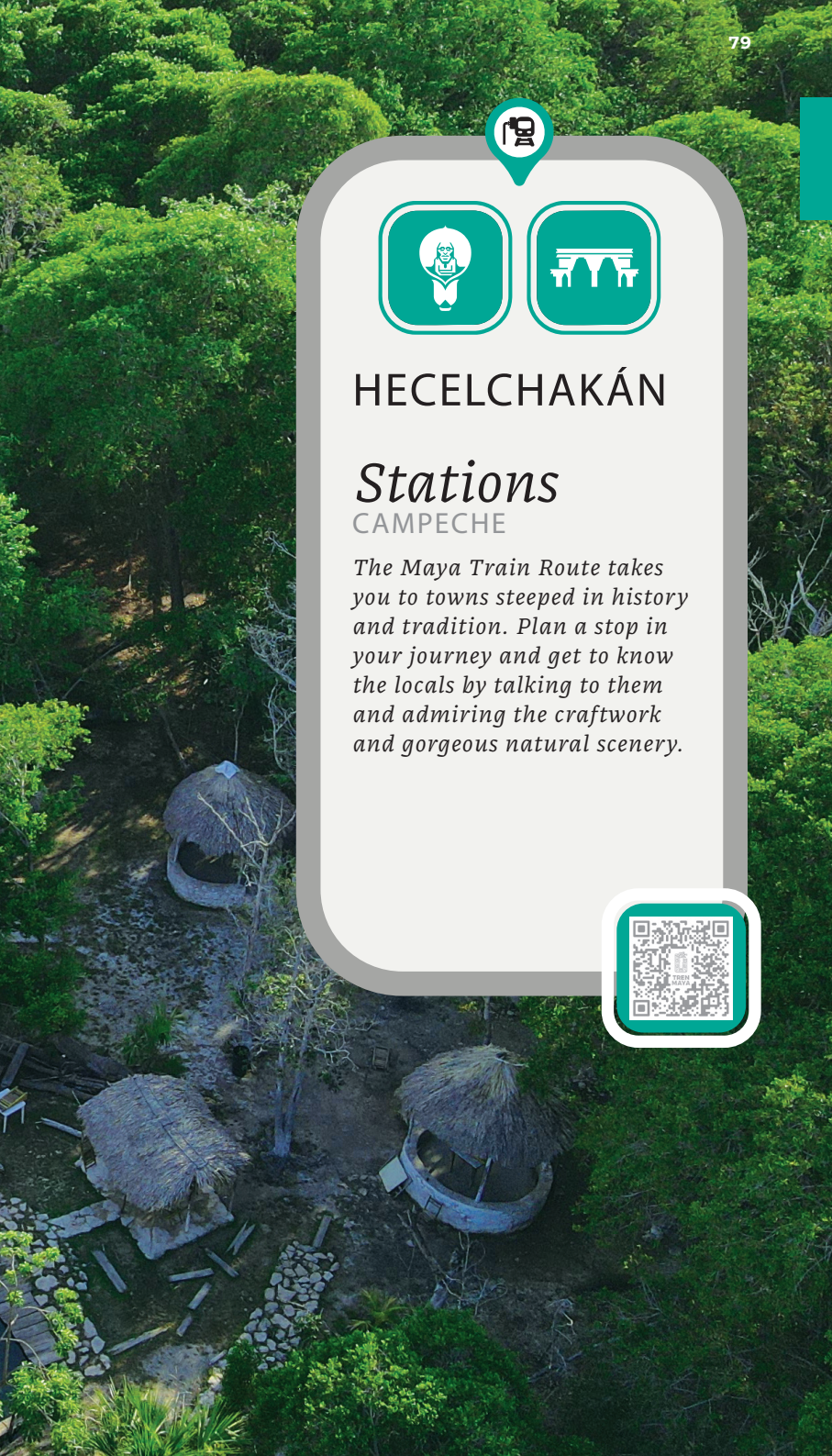
you can mingle with the locals in the park while enjoying a meringue and cup of pozol (a corn and cacao beverage).

If you visit the town in early May, you will be able to see craft exhibitions, *vaquerías* and bullfights. In August, you can watch the traditional Dance of the Pig's Head during the celebration of the Virgin of the Assumption.

Sixteen km (10 mi) southeast of Tenabo stands the **Kankí Archaeological Site**. This site has structures forming interconnected courtyards arranged on several levels. At the center is a two-storey palace with columns with capitals. It contains the remains of fretwork, Chaac God masks, and friezes decorated with rectangular Puuc-style reliefs.

Two *sacbés* (raised paved roads) have been found on the nearby flatlands. The first evidence of occupation dates from the end of the Early Classic, between 500 and 600 CE. It reached its peak between 600 and 650 CE, and the last records of occupation are between the years 800 and 1000 CE, in the Late Classic period.





HECELCHAKÁN

Stations

CAMPECHE

The Maya Train Route takes you to towns steeped in history and tradition. Plan a stop in your journey and get to know the locals by talking to them and admiring the craftwork and gorgeous natural scenery.


Kayak
El Remate
Tankuché
Los Petenes
Biosphere Reserve
Huaymil
Santa
Cruz
Flamboyance of flamingos
Gulf of
Mexico
Clay figurine
Jaina Island
Jaina
Balantanché
Estuary

HECELCHAKÁN AND CALKINÍ STATIONS NEARBY ATTRACTIONS



Palm Weaver

MAXCANÚ Station

Halachó

Becal

YUCATÁN

CAMPECHE

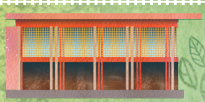
N

180

Nunkiní

To the PUUC Route

Calkiní Station



Calkiní

Dzitbalché

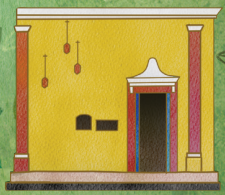


Bacabchén

Hecelchakán Station



180



Maya Archaeological Museum of the Camino Real, Hecelchakán

Hecelchakán

Cumpich

Xcalumkin Archaeological Site



Palace of the Cylinders

Pomuch

TENABO Station

HECELCHAKÁN *Station*

CAMPECHE

Let yourself be carried away by the flavors and colors of the Maya cities lining the Camino Real or Royal Road.



COURTESY OF FONATUR





SAN FRANCISCO DE ASÍS MONASTERY AND TEMPLE

At this train stop, you will be greeted by the friendly inhabitants of **Hecelchakán**, a town founded in the 16th century. The Franciscan legacy is reflected in the **San Francisco de Asís Monastery and Temple,** built with stones taken from pre-Hispanic structures, and exemplifying the colonial architecture of Campeche churches. Another attraction is the **Museo de Arqueología Maya del Camino Real, Hecelchakán** (Hecelchakán Royal Road Museum of Maya Archaeology). Visiting this place is like stepping into a Maya house, with its characteristic lighting, where you can find everyday objects, as well as key pieces from the Island of Jaina.

Do not leave without visiting the **José del Carmen Obregón market**, with its colorful tropical fruit, seeds and textiles.



COURTESY OF FONATUR

AERIAL VIEW OF HECELCHAKÁN

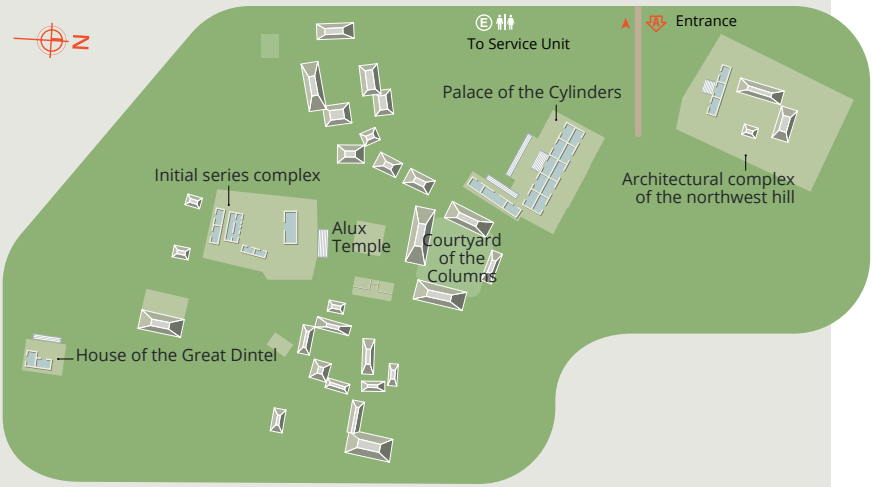
XCALUMKÍN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

85 km (53 mi) northeast of Campeche city, east of Hecelchakán municipality



Hecelchakán is located on fertile flat land in Campeche within the Puuc region. Its name can be translated as "Place of good, sunny land" or "Window through which the sun streams in." Over 1,500 years old, this Maya city functioned as an agricultural center for several nearby settlements. It also served as a link to the Campeche coast on the Gulf of Mexico. It was inhabited between the 5th and 10th centuries, reaching its peak during the 8th century, which saw the construction of much of its monumental, palatial, and residential architecture. Most of the buildings are in the Puuc style. They were made by carving and assembling limestone blocks, some decorated with smooth cylinders, fretwork, casings and panels. Their hieroglyphic inscriptions tell the story of its rulers, and lesser dignitaries, who nonetheless wielded considerable intellectual influence.

Sixty-three km (40 mi) west of the village lies the **Island of Jaina** "the House in the Water," an artificial island built by the Maya in the Classic period to create a center for political links and worship. Many small, realistic anthropomorphic clay figurines were produced on this island. Designed to accompany the deceased on their journey to the next world, they faithfully depict the garments, physical features and symbols of the complex cosmovision of the Maya world.



CALKINÍ
Station
CAMPECHE

This traditional village in Campeche, famous for its woven palm leaf mats and crystalline water spring, stands poised to welcome Maya Train passengers.



SAN LUIS OBISPO DE TOL

The train drops you off near Calkiní, a peaceful village brimming with culture. As you stroll through its streets, you will come across the **Church and Monastery of San Luis Obispo de Tolosa**. This church, built in two sections, in the plain baroque architecture of the 17th century, houses a magnificent 18th century altarpiece dedicated to San Luis Obispo. The largest, most beautiful baroque altarpiece in the Yucatán Peninsula, it is over 15m (50ft) tall and over 10m (30ft) wide. Made from cedar wood, it was apparently locally carved.

While you're here, why not visit **Nunkini,** 11 km (7 mi) west, to admire the craftsmen's eye-catching mats with geometrical patterns,



HENEQUEN ARTI



ALTARPIECE OF SAN LUIS OBISPO



EL REMATE



EL REMATE

OSA



COURTESY OF FONATUR

made from henequen fiber? These are called *kich kelenpop,* meaning pretty palm leaf mat in Mayan.

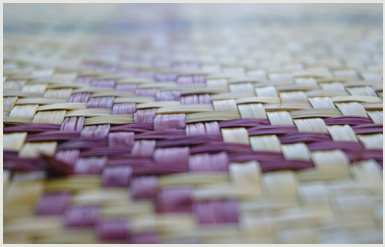
El Remate, located 47 km (30 mi) from Calkini, is a natural area with a clear water spring linked to the sea by a large natural channel and surrounded by lush vegetation. It is ideal for swimming, diving, ziplining, bouldering and hiking among mangroves and spider monkeys. Palapas, tables and benches are also available. This is a wonderful place to visit if you are traveling with small children.

Calkiní Station brings you close to **Nuevo Uxmal Park**, with its more than 2,000 hectares, declared a Protected Natural Area. It is the gateway to the **Puuc Route.**

SAN



COURTESY OF FONATUR



WOVEN NUNKINÍ MATS



The **Uxmal Maya Train Hotel** is quite near the **Uxmal Archaeological Site**. A walking trail and cycle path are available to walk or cycle the 7.5 km (4.5 mi) there. We recommend continuing to travel south to reach the archaeological sites of **Sayil, Xlapac, Labná**, **Chacmutún** and **Kabah** where the Puuc-Oxlintok Archaeological Museum is located. On your journey, look out for the Loltún Caves.

For more information on the Puuc Route, see pages 91 and 97.





MAXCANÚ

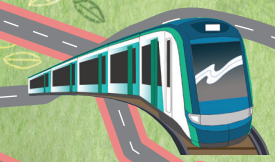
Stations

YUCATÁN

The first station brings you close to the impressive Puuc Route, a thematic park and an enigmatic cave. The second takes you to the Magical Town, natural areas, and the gorgeous scenery of the Gulf.


N
Gulf of Mexico
El Palmar State Reserve
Sisal
281
Santiago Fort
Mangrove
281
Umán Convent
Ria Celestun
Biosphere
Reserve
Maxcanú
Station
180
CAMPECHE
YUCATÁN
Maxcanú
Calcehtok
Caves
Oxkintok
Archaeological Site
Oxkintok Arch
Calkiní
Mask, Nunnery, Uxmal
Los Petenes
Biosphere
Reserve
180
Balantanche
Estuary
Hecelchakán
Pomuch
Chac mask, The Palace, Kabah
CAMPECHE Station
Tenabo

MAXCANÚ AND UMÁN STATIONS
NEARBY ATTRACTIONS



Umán Station

City of Mérida

Tixkokob

Teya

IZAMAL Station

180

Umán

M

Yaxcopoil Hacienda Museum

Cenote X Batún



Facade of Yaxcopoil H.M.

261

184



Uxmal Archaeological Site (A.S.)

Ticul

Santa Elena

Uxmal Site Museum

M



Puuc Route

Oxkutzcab

Kabah A.S.

Hotel T. M. Uxmal

H

New Uxmal Park

Loltún Caverns

M

Puuc Archaeological Museum

Chacmultún A.S.

184

Sayil A.S.

Xlapak A.S.

Labná A.S.



The Palace of Sayil, detail of the south facade

261

Cabalpak of Chacmultún



MAXCANÚ *Station*

YUCATÁN

This town boasts corn and habanero chili fields as well as religious, archaeological, and natural art.



CHURCH OF SAN MIGUEL ARCÁNGEL

When you arrive in Maxcanu, a sense of calm fills the air. This is the site of the **Church of San Miguel Arcángel**, with its 18th-century, burnt ocher facade and broken curved pediment, a primitive adobe version of a Roman baroque church. The facade and nave are adjacent to the visiting chapel and 16th century bell gable. Inside is a Churrigueresque altarpiece with gold leaves, considered a jewel of the region, and classical paintings. Don't miss the only sundial in the state of Yucatán, located next to the church.

Fifteen km (9 mi) southeast is a treat for explorers, the **Calcehtok Caves, with their** 30-meter (100ft) high ceilings. Visitors can walk through passageways and tunnels, while admiring stalactites and stalagmites. The tour is suitable for those traveling with family and friends. For the more adventurous and experts, there is an extreme tour that includes climbing with ropes and crawling on the ground. In the evenings, a bat colony swarms out of the cave. In addition to this natural phenomenon, you can also see pre-Hispanic items discovered there.



CALCEHTOK CAVES

PUUC ROUTE

The south of Yucatán is one of the most attractive regions in the Maya world because of its Puuc style buildings. This architectural style is characterized by false arches, crests and round columns with square capitals attached to the facades. Other distinctive features include decorative motifs such as the large-nosed masks over the doors and the masks of Chaac, the God of Rain.

We suggest you begin your tour in Uxmal and follow the route to the south, ending up in Chacmultún. Maxcanú Station leaves you within striking distance of all these pre-Hispanic cities.



AH MAY GROUP

OXKINTOK
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Located 7 km (4 mi) away from Maxcanú, along the state road to Maxcanú



This city from the Maya Classic period (400 to 900 CE), also known as Maxacan or Tzat Tun Tzat, boasts one of the largest concentrations of monumental architecture in the north of the Yucatán peninsula. In the Early Classic (300-500 CE), it was an important city on the trade routes with other cities in the Gulf of Mexico and the Central Tableland. This period saw the construction of most of the early Oxkintok style pyramids and palaces, showing the Maya's mastery of building methods. This was one of the main Puuc cities, as borne out by its size and the discovery of several monuments with hieroglyphic inscriptions, anthropomorphous stone columns and stelae.



Kinich Ahau
The name of the Maya Sun god. This heavenly body is worshipped because in the Maya religion, the sun is a cosmological force, and its path defines the shape and dimensions of the universe. The sun is also the sustenance of life on earth. The journey of the sun was a model for the path and circumstances surrounding the last rite of passage of the life cycle.

PUUC ROUTE

NEW UXMAL PARK

Approximately 40 km (25 mi) from Maxcanú Station

This ecological conservation, family and cultural recreation program offers visitors a long cycle lane, camping grounds and a range of ecotourism activities. Located in the town of Santa Elena, Uxmal Park is the gateway to the Puuc Route, with a pathway leading to the Uxmal archaeological site.



UXMAL
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

83 km (51 mi) south of Mérida, along Federal Highway 180 and State Road 261

Being here makes it impossible to ignore the quality of the architecture and the harmony of its layout, all of which make it an astonishing city. During the Late Classic (600-800 CE), Uxmal was home to a population of nearly 20,000 inhabitants. It was the seat of the economic and political power of a large region, and probably the place where the Puuc architecture style originated and spread.

Its fertile soil was ideal for agricultural activity, which perhaps explains why its name means "Place of abundant crops" in Mayan. It consists of compounds with low, horizontal





PYRAMID OF THE MAGICIAN





NEW UXMAL
MAYA TRAIN HOTEL

Why not stay at this resort located in the heart of the Puuc Route, surrounded by hiking trails and wildlife crossings? It is strategically located a short distance from the archaeological site of Uxmal, just 8.8 km (5.5 mi) away, 51.4 km (32 mi) from Maxcanú Station and 75 km (47 mi) from Merida's International Airport.

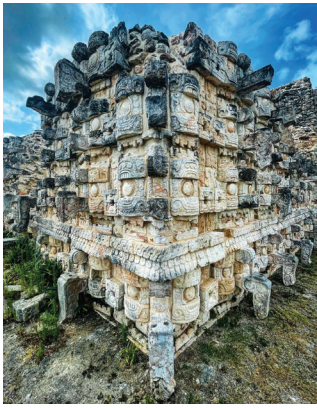
buildings, arranged around courtyards. The orientation and decoration of its structures show that the Maya worshipped water, the earth, the sun, and Venus. The most emblematic building is the **Pirámide del Adivino** (Pyramid of the Magician), sitting on a low-rise plinth. It comprises two stepped sections, and above the truncated cusp stands a temple with stairways facing east and west.

The **Cuadrángulo de las Monjas** (Nunnery Quadrangle) boasts a central courtyard surrounded by four buildings. It is exquisitely decorated with fretwork, lattices, human figures, snakes, turtle heads, owls and masks of the god Chaac.The **Palacio del Gobernador** (Governor's Palace), consisting of twenty rooms, contains detailed sculptures of snakes, astrological symbols, and the rain god.

PUUC ROUTE



THE PALACE



CODZ POP

KABAH
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

23 km (about 14 mi) southeast of Uxmal, along State Road 261

This is one of the most important settlements in the region. It reached its peak in the Terminal Classic, between 750 and 900 CE, when the east and northeast groups were built. These display the design patterns and spatial organization characteristic of the Puuc region, such as the construction of multiple rooms organized around courtyards or plazas, a technique enabling them to build larger, taller buildings. Constructions from this period boast elaborate facades decorated with stone mosaics, such as **Codz Pop**, ornamented with cascades of masks from floor to ceiling.

A few steps away is the **Museo Arqueológico del Puuc** (Puuc Archaeological Museum), a space with unique items discovered in the archaeological excavations. It also showcases the results of over twenty years of research in the region and recent studies of hieroglyphic writing, which have allowed an updated interpretation of peninsular Maya history. The collection includes over 360 pieces. Highlights of the exhibit include stelae 14 and 18 from Uxmal, the outfit of an Itzá warrior, the masks of Chaac, the Maya god of rain, and a profusion of jade offerings.







GREAT PALACE



THE LOOKOUT TOWER

SAYIL
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

9 km (5.5 mi) south of Kabah, along state road 261

It is generally agreed that this is one of the Puuc's great cities. Sayil, meaning "The place of the leafcutter ants" in Mayan, was once home to 17,000 inhabitants. It was arranged around a large *sacbé* (raised paved road), running north to south from the Palace to another complex located one km (.6 mi) away. The limits of the settlement were marked by small pyramidal structures placed in the direction of the cardinal points. **The Great Palace** is striking because of its distinct levels. The first is built in an early Puuc style, the second has a frieze with masks of Chaac, while a third has a plain, undecorated frieze.

XLAPAK
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

6 km (4 mi) east of Sayil, along the unnamed state road





PUUC STYLE DETAIL

The city of Xlapak, meaning Old Stone, flourished between 750 and 950 CE, with its community supplying the region with agricultural products. **The Palace** is one of its best preserved structures. The decorative elements are primarily friezes and columns, and rows of overlapping Chaac masks. The site was inhabited in the Late Classic period (800 to 1,000 CE).

PUUC ROUTE

LABNÁ
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Three km (2 mi) east of Xlapak, along the unnamed state road



LABNÁ ARCH

You will immediately be struck by its magnificent architecture, regarded as one of the finest examples of the Puuc style. The settlement achieved its greatest florescence during the Late Classic (800 to 1000 CE). It is known for having an emblematic building in the characteristic style of the region: the **Labná Arch**. This vaulted passage leads into to a small quadrangle situated west of **El Mirador** (The Lookout Tower). Don't miss **The Palace** with its zoomorphic mask with a human head emerging from its jaws, located on the front section of the first level.



LOLTÚN
CAVES

20 km (12 mi) northeast of the Labná archaeological site



A nearly two-hour journey will take you to the intriguing underground cathedrals and allow you to come face to face with the famous Loltún Warrior, believed to be the god of the underworld. Ceramic pieces, seashells, stone artifacts and petroglyphs have been found in its rooms, galleries, and chambers. Studies have revealed human presence 7,000 years ago. The restoration and preservation of the rock carvings have enabled them to be appreciated once again.



SECOND LEVEL PALACE

Pre-Columbian Town of Uxmal
This is the name given to the pre-Hispanic cities of Uxmal, Sayil, Xlapak, and Labná inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The criteria considered for this honor include its universal heritage, the richness of the iconography on its buildings, and the architectural landscape. In addition, its ceremonial sites reflect the florescence of the art and culture of the ancient Maya civilization.

CHACMULTÚN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

42 km (26 mi) east of Labná, along the unnamed state road

This settlement reached its peak at the same time as the rest of the Puuc cities, in the Late Classic period (800 to 1,000 CE). The most noticeable trait of this important city is the way its inhabitants used the hills (*huitz* in Mayan) to build their principal architectural complexes. These *huitz* were arranged in such a way that each group was surrounded by artificial terraces. The highlight is the **North Group** or **Chacmultún** where **The Palace** is located.



DISTANT VIEW OF THE CHACMULTÚN GROUP

UMÁN
Station
YUCATÁN

Stepping off the train at this station will allow you to admire the wonders of nature. It is the perfect starting point for visiting mangroves, natural canals, and an enormous variety of birds.



SANTIAGO FORT, SISAL

Umán was a prominent city from the 16th century onwards as the gateway to Mérida. During the Viceregal period, livestock and agricultural products were abundant, with memories of that splendor still lingering today. If you walk through the center of the town, you will come to the magnificent **ex Monastery and Parish Church of San Francisco de Asis** and its unfinished facade with three ogival arches, with no belfries or towers, a dome and ribbed vault. The church was completed in the 17th century.

This destination is a starting point for enjoying the natural wonders protected in the North, such as the Magical Town of Sisal, the El Palmar State Reserve and the Ria Celestún Biosphere Reserve.

COURTESY OF FONATUR



EX CONVENT AND PARISH OF SAN FRANCISCO DE ASIS



SISAL
MAGICAL TOWN

Forty-six km (28 mi) north of Umán Station, along State Road 281





This Magical Town, bounded to the north by the waters of the Gulf of Mexico, is remembered as the legendary port where Empress Carlota arrived in 1865. It's possible to camp on the beach here and enjoy the soft sand and gentle waves.

In the center, you will see the **Fort of Santiago,** built in the 18th century to defend the port from pirate raids. You can also visit the **Former Maritime Customs building**, repurposed as a cultural center, where you can see how henequen fiber was processed. Do not leave without sampling the sumptious seafood dishes.

Heading west, you will find the **El Palmar State Reserve**. This place is ideal for nature lovers, and a paradise for bird watchers. You can either walk or kayak through it. On your way, you will see mangroves, marine systems and low deciduous rainforest inhabited by marine species and migratory land and water birds.



FLAMINGOS IN RÍA CELESTUN



COURTESY OF CONANP

Ria Celestún Biosphere Reserve
Part of the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves. Local wildlife includes the Yucatán wren and the Sheartail hummingbird, while the local flora consists mainly of chi'iit palms, starbells and mangroves. People from nearby communities sell arts and crafts and honey-based products. They are also the main service providers for you to enjoy the zone, offering bike tours and accommodation in eco-cabins.

A few miles away, on the coast road, a paradise full of birds, especially pink flamingos, awaits. The **Ría Celestún Biosphere Reserve** is a great choice if you are traveling with the family. You can ride a canoe down natural channels leading to cenotes, water springs and mangroves while admiring all kinds of birds and pink flamingos. If you take a night tour, you will have an unforgettable experience and be able to see fish, owls, fireflies and Morelet's crocodiles. Other activities available during your visit including camping, trekking, sport fishing and boat rides to the **Isla de los Pajaros** (Birds' Island).





YAXCOPOIL HACIENDA MUSEUM

THE SOUTH ROADS BETWEEN CENOTES AND HACIENDAS

Thirty-one km (9 mi) south of Umán, along State Road 261, you will find **Cenote X Batún**, where tree roots dangle above the rock formations at the cave entrance. Bird watchers will have the opportunity to see a variety of species encircling the vegetation, such as the thó bird, yuya and xtacay and turtle doves. Another attraction is the underwater cavern, perfect for cave diving. Camping grounds, palapas and a car park are available for visitors.

Further along this same road you will come to the **Yaxcopoil Hacienda Museum, showing** aspects of pre-Hispanic and colonial life and the henequen boom in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It still preserves the original European furniture, which enhances the historically accurate ambiance. An oil painting from colonial times hangs in the chapel. During the tour, you will be able to see several pyramidal structures, archaeological relics, and a henequen fiber shredder together with other intriguing items from the past.



CENOTE X BATÚN



DEPOSITPHOTOS/JDROSS75



TEYA MÉRIDA

Stations

YUCATÁN

This is an ideal place to make a stop on your journey. You can stroll through Mérida and the Gran Ateneo Peninsular, walk around La Plancha Park and explore its natural areas.


To the Alacranes Reef National Marine Park
Ría Progreso
Puerto Progreso
261
Temple of the Seven Dolls, Archaeological Site of Dzibilchaltún
Morpho Blue Butterfly
Archaeological Site and Museum of Dzibilchaltún
M
Dzibilchaltún National Park
Xlacah Cenote
281
LA PLANCHA PARK
Center
Mérida
Entrance to San Lorenzo Aké Hacienda
Teya
International Airport
Teya Mérida Station
Cuxtal Ecological Reserve
261
MAXCANÚ Station
Relief in the Stucco Palace, Aké Archaeological Site

TEYA MÉRIDA AND TIXKOKOB STATIONS



Thó Bird,
Cuxtal Ecological Reserve



Motul

Cenote Sambulá

180

Tixkokob

Tixkokob Station

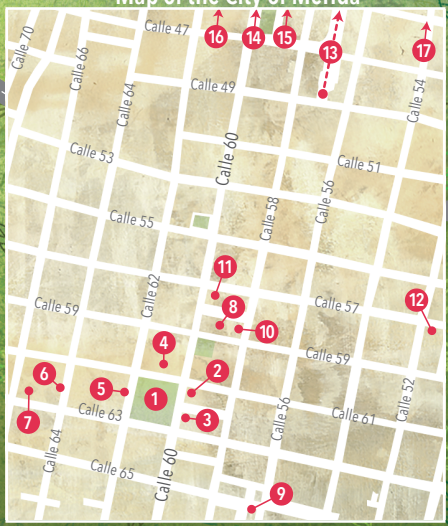


IZAMAL Station

Hacienda Aké

Aké Archaeological Site

Map of the City of Merida



180

Acanceh Archaeological Site

184



Tzabnáh Grottoes

Description of historic sites of interest marked on the map pp. 108-114

TEYA MÉRIDA *Station*

YUCATÁN

When you alight at this station, you will find that Mérida's streets are full of secrets. Open-air spaces, fiestas, handicrafts and regional fare will enhance your stay.



COURTESY OF FONATUR

MÉRIDA, THE WHITE CITY

Located 12 km (7.5 mi) northeast of the Teya Mérida Station

The capital city of the State of Yucatán blends modernity with its rich historical past; it is also the economic and cultural center of southeast Mexico. For a long time, it was known as The White City, either because of the typical dress of its inhabitants or the lime coating on the early constructions. Other versions suggest that the city was for many years reserved for the families of peninsular Spaniards.

HISTORIC CENTER

This city, with its distinctly European feel,was founded by Francisco de Montejo in 1542. It is laid out on a grid running from north to south, and east to west. The downtown area boasts several buildings from the colonial period and others with a more French style. A good place to start is **La Plaza Grande,** 1 where you can take a leisurely walk through the surrounding streets.

Cultural and Gastronomic Capital of the Southeast

Mérida's delicious cuisine has something for every palate. It offers an astonishing variety of new Yucatán cuisine at Néctar, Arcano, Rosas y Xocolate, Micaela and La Picheta; traditional fare at Catrín, La Pigüa, Pancho Maíz and Manjar Blanco; and international cooking at Olivia Enoteca and Roberta's (both Italian), Cervo (Mediterranean) and Habibi (Arab). Maya de Asia and Salón Gallos specialize in fusion cuisine. Don't leave without trying the signature tacos de cochinita pibil *from the Santiago and Santa Ana Markets.*



COURTESY OF PRUN SANTOS



MÉRIDA CATHEDRAL

The first place to visit is the **Cathedral of Mérida** 2, on Calle 60, between 61 and Pasaje de la Revolución. It is the oldest cathedral in Mexico and continental America, built between 1561 and 1598. Its facade comprises five sections, the side ones topped by two towers and the central ones by three doors with semi-circular arches in a plain Renaissance style. The main entrance is flanked by sculptures of St. Peter and St. Paul, topped by a choir window. In the center is a large coat of arms crowned by the national eagle made of quarry stone.

To one side stands the **Gran Ateneo Peninsular** 3 (Great Peninsular Athenaeum), originally built as the Palacio Arzobispal (Archbishop's Palace). It is the largest cultural space in the state of Yucatán, used for the promotion and dissemination of artistic, scientific and academic activities, as well as the research and conservation of the state's cultural heritage. It houses the Museum of Yucatán History and a room displaying pre-Hispanic pieces recovered during construction of the Maya Train. Be sure to visit the bookstore, with its attractive selection of handicrafts.



INAH-DMC



GREAT PENINSULAR ATHENAEUM



MUNICIPAL PALACE

Located on the corner of 60th and 61st Street is the "**Palacio de Gobierno" 4 (Government Palace)**, built on the site of the Royal Houses, the seat of government during the Viceroyalty. The current building was inaugurated in the late 19th century. This is a great place to learn about the Yucatán history- just walk in and look at the wall murals by Yucatecan artist Fernando Castro Pacheco.

On another side of the square, stands the **Palacio Municipal 5** (Municipal Palace), a 17th century building that was formerly the Casa del Cabildo (Chapter House). Be sure to look out for the oil paintings and murals by artists Fernando Castro Pacheco, Sergio Cuevas and Manuel Lizama Salazar. The Palace was erected on one of the five hills of the old Maya city, from which stones were taken to build it.

A short walk will take you to the **Templo Expiatorio Las Monjas 6** (Nuns' Expiatory Church), between 63rd and 64th Streets. It was inaugurated on June 9, 1633, as part of the Conceptionist Nuns' Convent, under the title of Our Lady of Consolation. It is currently a parish and expiatory church under the care of the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit. The convent now houses the **Casa de la Cultura del Mayab** and **Casa de las Artesanías 7** (Mayab Cultural Center and Handicraft Center).



NUNS' EXPIATORY CHURCH

On 57-A Street you will come to the **Templo de la Tercera Orden 8** (Church of the Third Order),



TEMPLE OF THE THIRD ORDER



COURTESY OF FONATUR



COURTESY OF PRUN SANTOS

the first Jesuit school in Yucatán. Both the school and the church were opened in 1618. The building has a semicircular arch entrance with Corinthian capital columns and towers with three sections. When the Jesuits were expelled from New Spain in the 17th century, the Franciscans moved in, calling themselves The Third Order. The interior is decorated with 19th-century mural paintings.

South of the Plaza Mayor, on 56th Street, is the **Museo de la Ciudad** 9 (City Museum). Designed by the architect Salvador Echegaray, it was opened in 1908 to house Mérida's Mail and Telegraph Offices, during Porfirio Diaz's regime. The museum collection specializes in the history of the capital of Yucatán, displaying pre-Hispanic, colonial and contemporary items.



GOVERNMENT PALACE



JUAN GAMBOA GUZMÁN PAINTING GALLERY





COURTESY OF PRUN SANTOS

THE CREATOR OF WAYAN'E TORTAS



A CORNUCOPIA OF ART COLLECTIONS

If you come in from the Plaza Mayor, you will encounter intriguing buildings such as the **Pinacoteca Juan Gamboa Guzmán** 10 (Juan Gamboa Guzmán Painting Gallery), on 59th Street, housed in the former Jesuit School of San Francisco Javier. Since 1981, it has displayed viceregal and nineteenth century paintings, sculpture and caricatures. It also contains the works of the leading 19th century Yucatecan painter, Juan Gamboa Guzmán, after whom it is named. A few yards further on, on the corner of 60th and 57th street, the **Teatro Peón Contreras** 11 (Peón Contreras Theater) will surprise you not only because it is the oldest one in Mérida but because of its French Neoclassical style. As you enter, you will be greeted by a marble staircase, vaults, and columns. This building is home to the Yucatán Symphony Orchestra. Look out for the chandelier at the center of the dome.

On 57th Street, on the way towards Parque de la Mejorada, stands the **Museo de Arte Popular de Yucatan** 12 (Museum of Popular Art of Yucatan), located in Casa Molina, built



PÉON CONTRERAS THEATER

in the early 20th century, with a collection of over 600 handicrafts from the state including items made from clay, stone, wood, and glass, and other materials such as textiles. Temporary exhibits showcase the most representative pieces of Mexican folk art.

49th Street marks the start of the emblematic **Paseo Montejo** 13 , a 4 km- (2.5 mi) boulevard originally lined with neoclassical mansions, owned by Mérida's wealthiest families. Its roundabouts are decorated with monuments from south to north. Parades, festivities and cultural activities are organized along this broad avenue. On Sunday mornings, you can ride a horse-drawn carriage or cycle along it.

COURTESY OF FONATUR



CARRIAGE RIDE

Monumento a la Patria (Monument to the Motherland) 14

This monolith, designed by Colombian sculptor Rómulo Pozo, recounts the history of Mexico from pre-Hispanic to modern times. Construction took eleven years to complete. It is 14 m (45 ft) high, with a 40-m (130 ft) diameter, and a surface of 2,500 square meters (8,200 ft²). Its walls are engraved with Aztec and Maya gods, state shields and the Independence heroes.



FRENCH-STYLE BUILDING ON PASEO MONTEJO



The **Museo Regional de Antropología Palacio Cantón** 15 (Canton Palace Regional Museum of Anthropology) is set in the heart of Paseo Montejo. The exterior and interior details of this French-style building were carved by the artist Michel Guacomino. In addition to the attraction of its elegant construction, the museum also stages temporary exhibits on regional and national issues, as well as signature items from Maya culture. Erected between 1908 and 1911, it is an architectural jewel. It was built at the end of the Porfiriato (Porfirio Diaz's presidency) by General Francisco Cantón, governor of Yucatán, who lived there until his death. Construction was overseen by the Yucatán architect and engineer Manuel G. Cantón Ramos, while Italian architect Enrico Deserti was responsible for the design.



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EXHIBITION ROOM, CANTON PALACE MUSEUM



INTERIOR CANTON PALACE

Further north, to one side of the 21st Century Convention Center, stands the **Gran Museo del Mundo Maya** 16 (Great Museum of the Maya World), displaying religious objects, furnishings, engravings, books, and documents providing a glimpse of the life of the Maya from pre-Hispanic times until the present. It is worth taking



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DEPOSITPHOTOS/LUNAMARINA

CANTON PALACE REGIONAL MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY

your time to visit the museum and enjoy the museography, with its digital and interactive systems and immersion and audiovisual rooms. The museum received the **2012 Partnerships Awards** for Innovative Projects for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage and its Dissemination. Its design is based on Maya cosmogony, structured around the sky, the earth and the underworld. Its most outstanding pieces include the Jaina figurines and a censer or effigy of the god of corn from the Late Postclassic.



TRADICIONAL **MÉRIDA** DISTRICTS



COURTESY OF FONATUR



When you arrive in Mérida you will hear people talking about its *barrios* or districts and, if you spend a couple of nights there, you might like to explore them. You will find that there are nine of them, each with an intriguing backstory. **San Sebastián** is one of the oldest and most traditional. **Ermita** has gorgeous buildings and you can walk along the Camino Real de Campeche (Royal Road of Campeche). The famous district of **Santa Lucía** boasts the oldest churches and mansions, some repurposed as restaurants. **Mejorada** is one of the largest and home to the Popular Art and Yucatecan Song Museums. **Santa Ana** offers a range of cultural activities and is a wonderful place to take pictures. **Santiago** was the first Maya city to be occupied by the Spaniards, and if you are feeling hungry, its market serves traditional local dishes. **San Juan** is renowned for its iconic arch, the tallest of all, possibly used for fortification. **Itzimná** is thought to be a former Maya place of worship, which was then replaced by a church, which has retained its original baptismal font. Finally, **San Cristóbal** is the site of the cathedral, and government buildings located near the main market.



COURTESY OF GAFSACOMM/MAURICIO VILLAGÓMEZ

LA PLANCHA PARK

OUTDOORS

We suggest beginning your tour in the recently opened **Parque La Plancha** 17 (La Plancha Park), a few blocks away from Parque de la Mejorada. As soon as you arrive, you will be met by spacious green areas, which is why it is regarded as the new lung of the city. It is an ideal place to take the family and stroll along its walkways, and enjoy the artificial lake and promenade. It is equipped with an amphitheater, sports field, pet park, outdoor gym, circular track, and gastronomic area. It also contains the **Museo de los Ferrocarriles** (Railroad Museum) and other services. Make sure to try some of the delicious local food prepared in the gastronomic market or food trucks.



Puerto Progreso is 43 km (26 mi) north of Mérida. Since the mid-19th century, it has been Yucatan's link to the rest of the world.



COURTESY OF FONATUR

YUCATECAN GASTRONOMY



COURTESY OF FONATUR

PUERTO PROGRESO

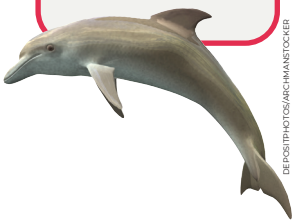


COURTESY OF FONATUR

Its promenade offers a spectacular view of the beach. You will also find shops selling handicrafts and restaurants featuring Yucatecan specialties. This destination is renowned for its white sand beaches and gentle waves, ideal for windsurfing, paddleboarding, swimming and sailing. We suggest taking a kayak excursion through the mangroves along the Progreso estuary.

If you want to get away from it all, we suggest a trip to the **Parque Marino Nacional Arrecife Alacranes** (Scorpions Reef Marine National Park). Take time to visit this set of islands with the only bank reef in Yucatán. It is the natural habitat of dozens of fish and mollusks, as well as sharks, pilot whales, dolphins and turtles, and seabirds. You can dive or take a boat ride to watch the wildlife. Visting this paradise requires contacting a tour operator.

Cuxtal Ecological Reserve
This Natural Protected Area is located south of the city of Mérida. With an area of 11,000 hectares, it protects the low deciduous rainforest, cenotes, caves and secondary vegetation, and is home to over a thousand wildlife species. It is considered the water reservoir of the city of Mérida. In addition to its natural beauty, it is socially and culturally important because of its Mayan-speaking communities engaged in the production of handicrafts, agriculture and livestock. It also boasts a priceless archaeological heritage.



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DIVING IN ALACRANES REEF

DZIBILCHALTÚN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Located 20 km (12 mi) away from the city of Mérida by Federal Highway 261 and the state road

This large city had a population of nearly 20,000 at its peak. Its network of roads (*sacbés*) connected it to nearby areas. It is distinguished by its long history, ranging from the Middle Preclassic to the Postclassic (1200 BCE to 1551 CE). It contains the remains of several pre-Hispanic settlements from different times. The **Plaza Central** (Central Square) is connected to the **Templo de las Siete Muñecas** (Temple of the Seven Dolls)



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Templo de las Siete Muñecas (Temple of the Seven Dolls)
A pyramidal structure with flat corners and staircases on all four sides. It has two symmetrical openings framing the position of the rising sun during the equinox. The light and shadow phenomenon in the spring and autumn equinoxes was rediscovered in 1985 by archeologist Víctor Segovia Pinto. The structure has now been renovated thanks to Promeza.



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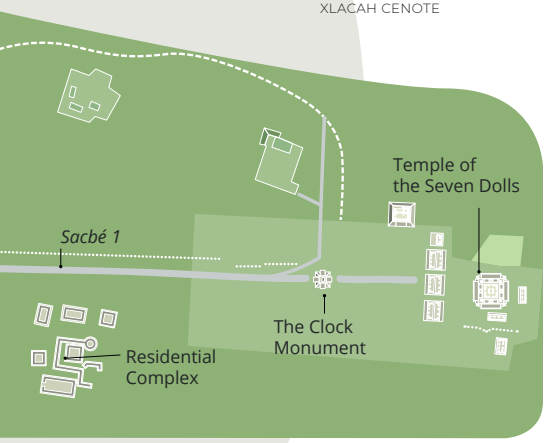
XLACAH CENOTE

by *sacbé* 1, which is surrounded by structures 45, 57, 42, 41 and 36. In the southeast, it adjoins the **Xlacah cenote**, the main water source and sacred site where the former inhabitants of the zone worshipped Chaac, the God of Rain. It is approximately 100 m (328 ft) long, with a depth ranging from one meter (3ft) on one of the banks to 45 meters (150ft).





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STELE 19, MAYA DIGNITARY WITH HEADDRESS

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GENERAL VIEW OF THE CENTRAL PLAZA

Human remains and ceramic, wood, bone, and stone objects were discovered on its floor.

Do not miss the **Museo del Pueblo Maya de Dzibilchaltún** (Dzibilchaltún Museum of the Maya People), designed by architect Fernando González Gortázar, which blends into the archaeological and ecological context. It was built using a combination of traditional and modern materials. Its new museography incorporates recent findings from the area. The exhibit includes the funerary offerings of Kalo'mte', King of Kings, the first governor of this Maya settlement.



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DZIBILCHALTÚN MUSEUM OF THE MAYA PEOPLE

COURTESY OF CONANP



VIEW FROM THE CENOTE XLACAH

DZIBILCHALTÚN NATIONAL PARK

20 km (12 mi) from the city of Mérida along Federal highway 261 and the state road

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The low deciduous rainforest vegetation is home to over 300 animal species, including amphibians, mammals, birds, and butterflies. The park has 539 hectares of cenotes and wells, its only source of water. Take a while to enjoy the park, and visit the archaeological zone, on-site museum and interpretative trails.



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Ts'iits'ilche'
The scientific name of this honey plant is Gymnopodium floribundum. *It is important in Yucatán because it produces honey from the nectar of its flowers. It is used as firewood and charcoal because it is a long-burning wood with low smoke. It is also used to build houses.*

TIXKOKOB *Station*

YUCATÁN

Make another stop in the heart of Yucatán's henequen zone to explore the churches, cenotes and pre-Hispanic cities.



The town of Tixkokob was founded in the 16th century, when an *encomienda* of over 500 indigenous people was granted to the Montejo family. In the center stands the **former Monastery and Church of San Bernardino** built by the Franciscan order. This church has two towers, a simple facade and a stained glass window depicting the Virgin of Guadalupe.

During the tour, you will likely spot several artisans weaving and selling **hammocks** or **chairs** with cotton thread.

Northeast is Conkal with the **former Monstery and Church of San Francisco de Asís**, built in the mid-16th century. The church facade is noted for its curved pediment with three openings for its bells and two



Motul eggs

This signature dish is said to have been created in Motul at the request of Felipe Carrillo Puerto, the then governor, who wished to honor his guests, including Carlos Pellicer, Jaime Torres Bodet, José Vasconcelos and Diego Rivera, with a special breakfast.
Try them with habanero salsa, fried plantain and cheese!



MUSEUM OF SACRED ART

lateral belfries. Nowadays, the convent houses the **Sacred Art Museum**, displaying documents, photographs, sculptures, archives, and altarpieces from several churches in Yucatán. Another religious site worth visiting is the **Church of the Virgin of the Assumption**, built in the 16th century and rebuilt in 1898.





MUSEUM OF SACRED ART





FELIPE CARRILLO PUERTO MUSEUM



SAN JUAN BAUTISTA CHURCH



CENOTE SAMBULÁ

This building has a sober portico with two towers preserved in their original condition. It is definitely worth trying the traditional local food and drinking in the peaceful atmosphere.

Northeast of Tixkokob Station, stands **Motul**, the capital of a large Maya dominion during the era of the Conquest. Here you will see the **Former Monastery and Church of St. John the Baptist**, one of the first thirteen monasteries founded by the Franciscans in the peninsula. The **Felipe Carrillo Puerto Museum** recounts the life of this state governor from 1922 to 1924. Look out for the sculpture shaped like an open book engraved with his first speech in Mayan. Head south of the town and dive in the crystalline waters of **the Sambulá cenote** or swim or snorkel.

THE SOUTHERN ROADS

Being in Tixkokob provides the perfect opportunity to visit the **Aké and Acanceh archaeological sites.**

Eleven km (7 mi) south lies the town of Aké. When you reach the archaeological zone, you will have the feeling of being in a monumental city.



CHURCH OF THE VIRGEN DE LA ASUNCION, EKMUL





PILASTER BUILDING

It soon achieved a high level of urban development, establishing links with places such as Izamal. You can also visit the **Hacienda San Lorenzo Aké** and its fully operational henequén fiber extracting facility.

Twenty-eight km (17 mi) southeast, you will come to the **Acanceh archeological site**. Although most of the site has been covered by the current town and many of its buildings destroyed, it retains traces of its former splendor.



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ACANCEH

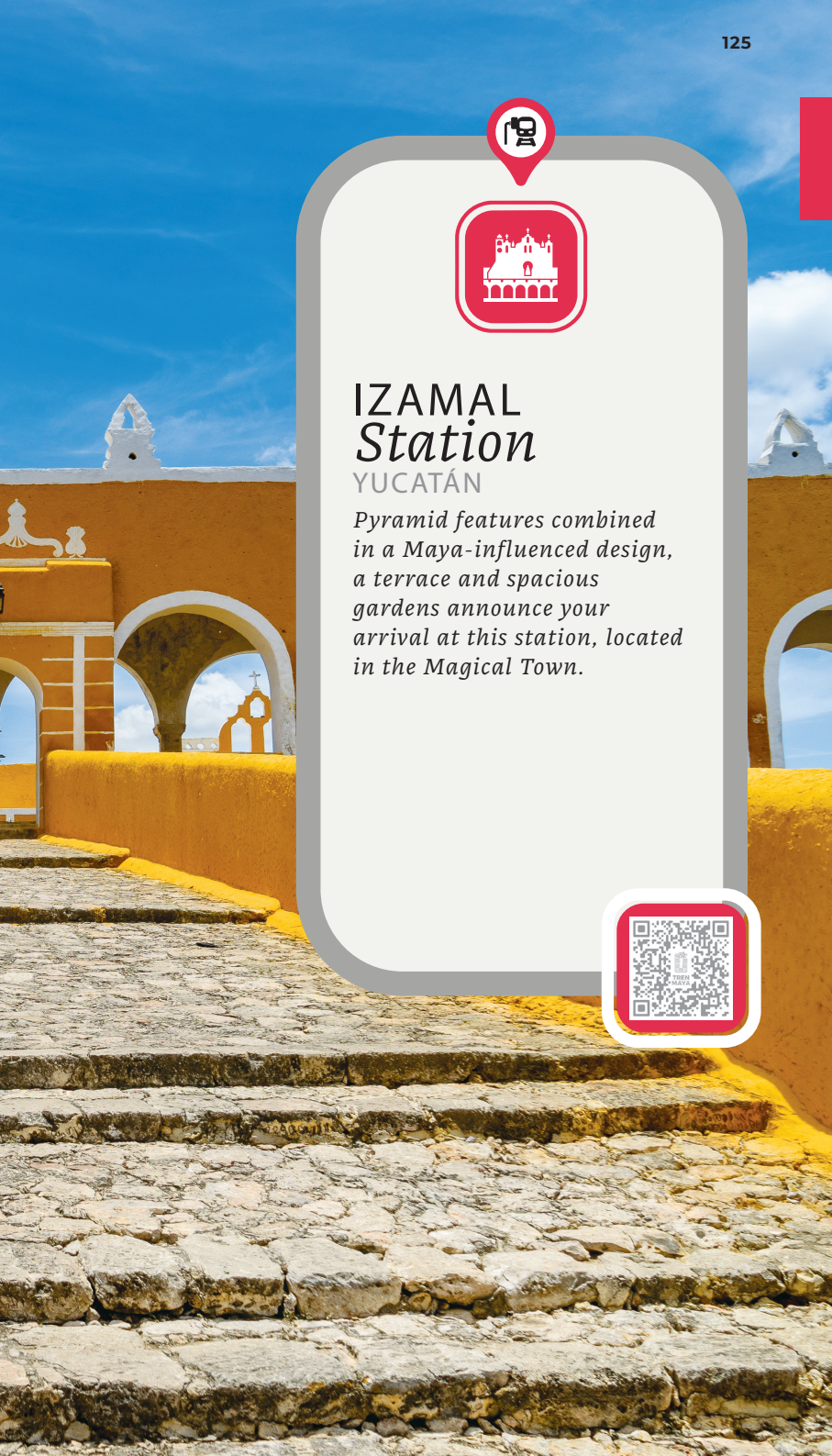
It must have achieved florescence during the Classic period, when it had 300 structures in various styles. Buildings open to the public include the **Palacio de los Estucos** (Stucco Palace) and the **Pirámide** (Pyramid). In the town, it's worth visiting the 16th-century **Templo de Nuestra Señora de la Natividad** (Church of Our Lady of the Nativity), with its baroque chapel.

Adventure lovers, particularly cavers, can explore the **Tzabnáh Grottoes**. During your tour you will see over ten cenotes. According to the records, the Maya found shelter here when they were persecuted during the Caste War.



AKÉ ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE, PILASTER BUILDING

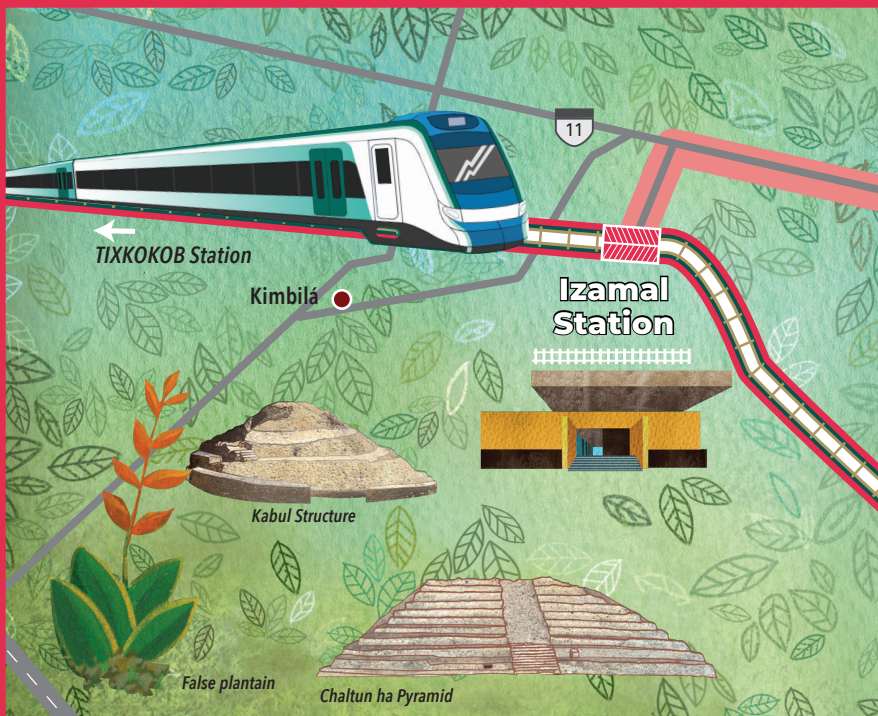




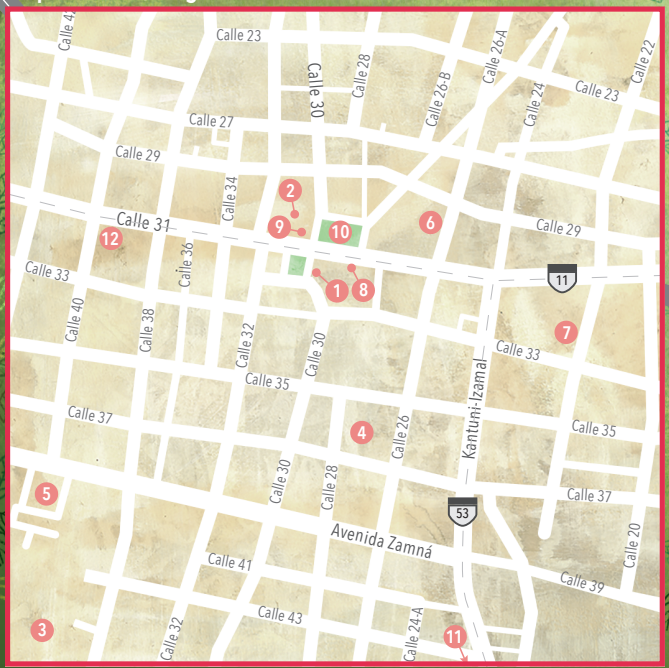
IZAMAL *Station*

YUCATÁN

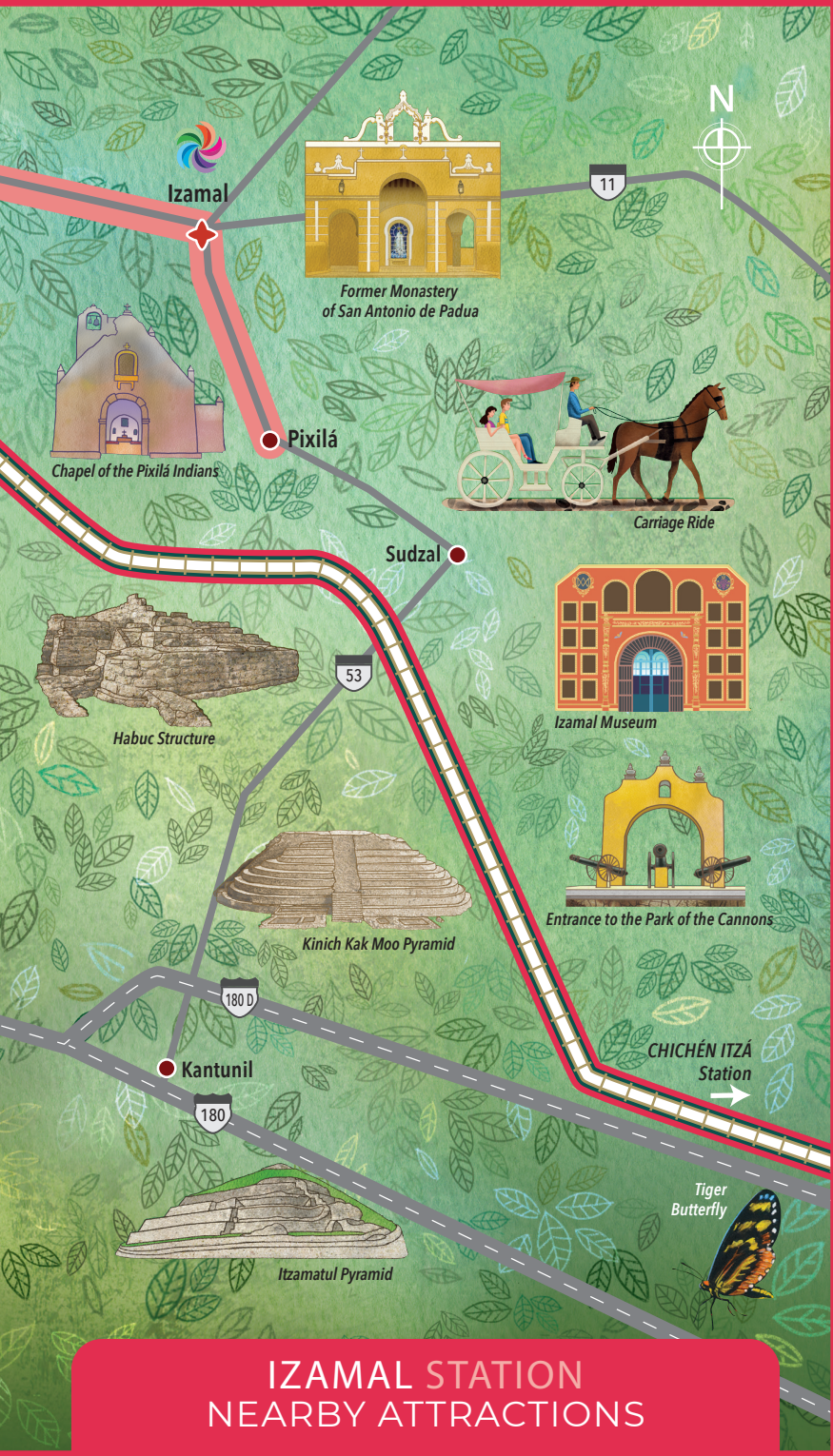
Pyramid features combined in a Maya-influenced design, a terrace and spacious gardens announce your arrival at this station, located in the Magical Town.



Map of Izamal, Magical Town



Description of the historic points of interest marked on the map pp. 128-130

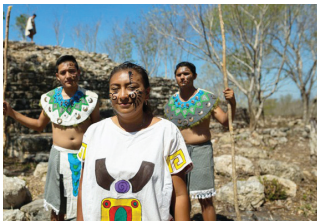


IZAMAL STATION
NEARBY ATTRACTIONS



IZAMAL, MAGICAL TOWN

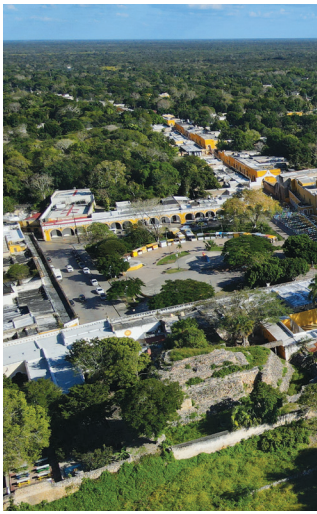
7 km (about 4 mi) east of Izamal Station, following state road 11



INAH-DMC

Known as the City of Three Cultures because of the syncretism between the Maya, the Spanish and the contemporary. Izamal's charm is expressed in its yellow and white facades, colonial architecture, ceremonial centers, and people.

Your first port of call should be the **Former Monastery of San Antonio de Padua** 1, founded by the Franciscans in the 16th century. Built on top of a pre-Hispanic pilgrimage





COURTESY OF FONATUR

THE CHARACTERISTIC YELLOW OF THE FORMER MONASTERY OF SAN ANTONIO DE PADUA



CHALTUN HA

center where Itzamná was worshipped, it is one of the most striking monasteries in Yucatán. The monastery church, dedicated to the **Immaculate Conception**, has a Renaissance style portico, although the rest of the facade was modified at the end of the colonial era. Friar Diego de Landa, bishop of Yucatán, brought the image of the Virgin from Guatemala. Over the years, it has become the most venerated image in Yucatán. This image is also known as Our Lady of Izamal or Mamá Linda. It is worth taking the time to visit the Virgin's dressing room where her wardrobe is kept, accessed through one of the two convent cloisters. And don't miss the gilded baroque altarpiece inside the church.



KINICH KAK MOO



COURTESY OF FONATUR

FORMER MONASTERY OF SAN ANTONIO DE PADUA, AERIAL VIEW

To visit the ancient Izamal of the Maya era, we suggest you head to where the pre-Hispanic sites are concentrated. Although the colonial settlement destroyed most of them, some of the large buildings have been preserved in the center and its surroundings, such as **Kabul** 2, devoted to Itzamná, the god of the sky; **Chaltun ha** 3 with its stepped temple and **Habuc** 4, one of the oldest constructions in the city. **Kinich Kak Moo,** 5 devoted to the Sun, was one of the largest and most important pyramids in Mesoamerica.



ARTISANAL CULTURAL CENTER

Itzamatul 6, on which the monastery was built, is still in good condition while **Conejo** 7, referring to the era of the rabbit, was the site most heavily plundered for the construction of newer buildings.

Why not take a horse-drawn carriage to enjoy the warmth of the town, its plazas and parks? In the heart of Izamal, you can visit the **Museo Comunitario Izamal Kauil** 8 (Izamal Kauil Community Museum), where you will see archaeological findings, old photographs of the Magical Town, paintings, biographies of illustrious figures, historical documents and items from the colonial era. Also worth a visit is the **Centro Cultural**





INAH-DMC



Senderos de Luz (Paths of Light)
You can enjoy this video mapping performance from Parque de los Cañones *(Canyon Park)* 12 *the atrium of the Former Monastery of San Antonio de Padua on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 8 pm. During the ninety-minute walk, you will learn about the history of Izamal, its historic figures and the period of Green Gold, during the height of the henequen boom.*



EL CONEJO



ARTISINAL CULTURAL CENTER

Artesanal 9 **(The Artisinal Cultural Center)**, set in a 16th century mansion, just across the main plaza 10.

You will find a wide range of handicrafts here, made by local artisans from plant fibers, wood, textiles, clay and metal. In addition to its architectural beauty, the building boasts a restaurant, spa and small café. Bikes are available for cycling around the streets of Izamal. Ask about the guided tours of the Bird Route and the Artisans' Route.

Heading south, in the district of Cuauhtémoc commissary, you will find the **Capilla de Indios Pixilá** 11 (Pixilá Indian Chapel). As in other parts of Yucatán, it was established during the Viceregal era so priests could visit it when they could not stay permanently. It is striking because of its collapsed roof and unusual facade. Definitely worth a visit!



PIXILÁ INDIAN CHAPEL