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PORT EXPLORER & SHOPPING GUIDE

Puerto Costa Maya
MEXICO

GENERAL INFORMATION Puerto Costa Maya is an exclusive facility specifically built to accommodate cruise ship passengers. It is located on the Caribbean coast of the Mexican state of Quintana Roo. The state of Yucatán is to the north, Campeche is to the west and the country of Belize is to the south.

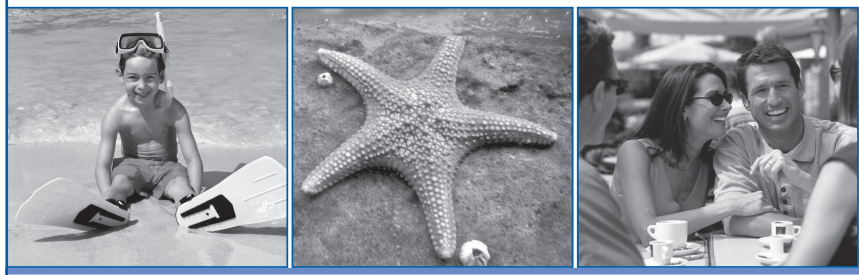
Not far from the little fishing village of Majahual, the cruise complex offers passengers the opportunity to relax with a cool drink under a seaside cabana, swim in the refreshing waters of the saltwater pool, try the food at any of the different cafes or browse the numerous stores and shops.

The cruise facility of Puerto Costa Maya, while facing the blue waters of the Caribbean, is surrounded by miles of flat, low lying forests. It is not the forest itself which is so interesting or attractive; rather what can be found in the forest which visitors who venture out will remember for a lifetime.

HISTORY To date, that which has been discovered or uncovered, the partial unraveling of the mysterious Mayan civilization is one of the most dramatically interesting stories of world history. If ever truth be stranger than fiction this is a narrative few can equal. This is the account of ancient Mayan kings, priests and astronomers whom, using only two wooden sticks and extended time, produced celestial observations and mathematical calculations. Their accuracy staggers the imagination of modern astronomers with their massive telescopes and banks of computers. This is the account of a truly amazing people who built remarkable cities using little more than stone tools and bare hands. This is the account of an extraordinary civilization whose incredibly precise calendrical system continues to confound experts and inspire the fatalistic fantasies of “end times” prognosticators.

But tragically, this is also the story of ritual sacrifice and zealous bishops, priests and monks who were charged with the earthly task of converting the Mayans. This is the story of the subjugation and attempted elimination of an entire people; together with every written trace of their heritage and history.

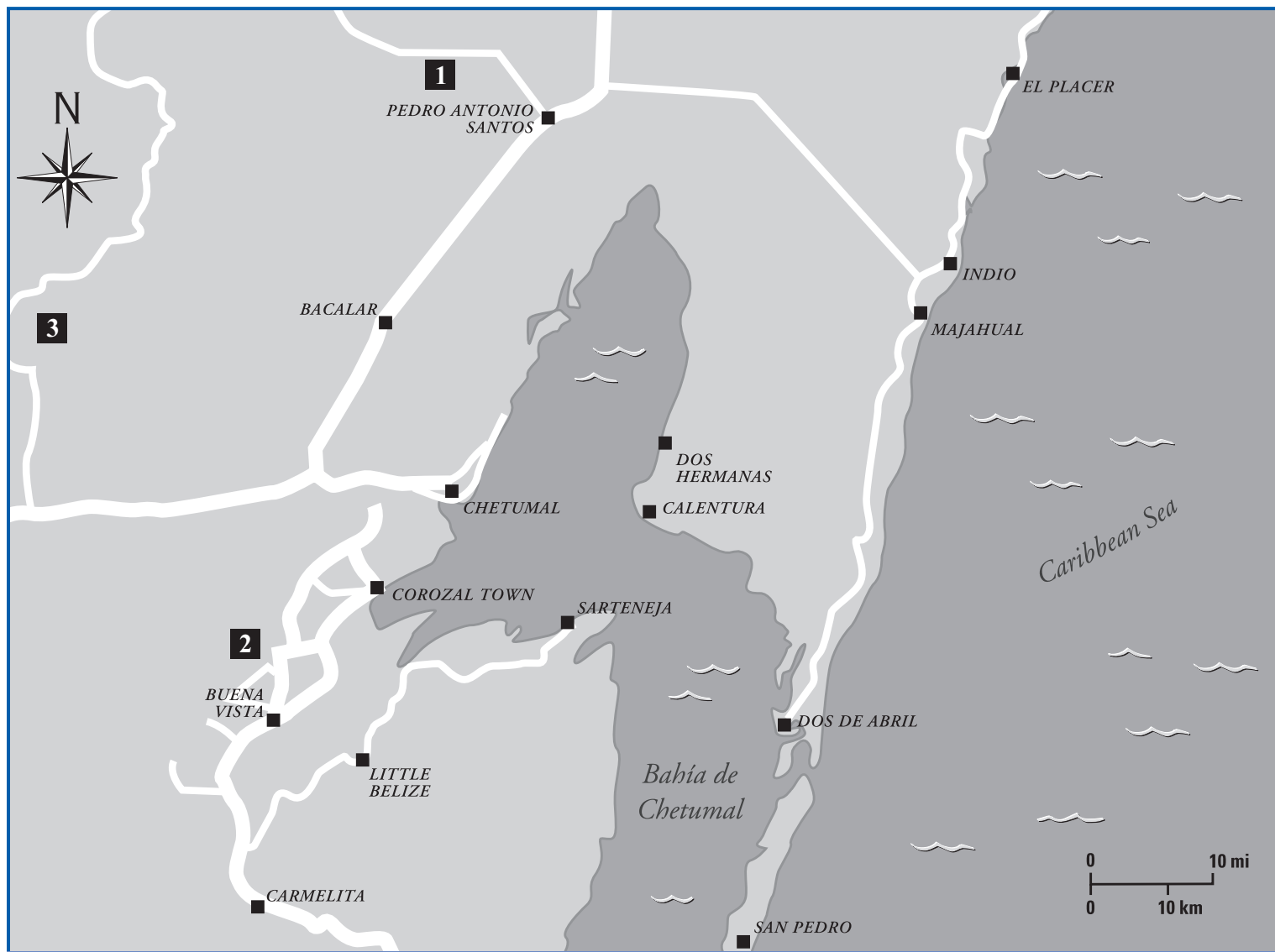
Father Diego de Landa Calderón was a Catholic priest who seemingly befriended the Mayans in the 1500s. He was welcomed and respected as he traveled widely among them, studied and chronicled their religion, hieroglyphs, language and way of life. It was too late when the Mayans realized the terrible consequences of their misplaced trust. In 1562, Franciscan Father Diego de Landa Calderón turned on the Mayans. The entire written record of this ancient tribe (save three small books) was put to the flames of the Inquisition. All Mayans who opposed the priest and the message he brought from his Pope were consigned to the fires as well. Calderón attacked the Mayan empire with such religious fervor, ferocity and efficiency he was ordered to return to Spain



and stand trial for his crimes. In preparation for his defense the priest, the very man who burned the records of their existence, wrote down all he knew of the Mayan people; their mathematics and calendars, their pagan cults, idolatry, human sacrifice and worship of the powers of the underworld. Calderón was not only acquitted, he was promoted to Bishop and sent back to the Yucatán to continue his “good work”. His writing about the Mayans and the attempted translation of their mysterious hieroglyphs was all that remained as testament to who

they were as a people. His manuscript was eventually misplaced and slowly hidden by the dust of history.

The story is as complicated as it is interesting. After being lost for centuries three small Mayan books were re-discovered. Scholars were finally able to unravel the Mayan hieroglyphic code. The door to the mysteries of this amazing people has finally been opened, if only a crack.



PLACES OF INTEREST

PUERTO COSTA MAYA PLACES OF INTEREST

1 The **Mayan Ruins of Chacchoben** date back close to 1500 years. Archeologists believe the settlement itself may have been inhabited as far back as 200 BC. In an isolated jungle setting an hour or so west of the port of Costa Maya, the ruins are named after a small town located near by. The name itself roughly translates as “place of red corn”. Some of the lands surrounding the ruins were cleared in the 1940s by a young Mayan farmer named of Serviliano Cohuo. The wildly overgrown site became a virtual playground for children of the family. It was not until 1972 when Dr. Peter Harrison, an archaeologist from Tulane University, over flew the area in his helicopter. Dr. Harrison spotted mysterious mounds rising out of the relatively flat jungle.

He explored the site and reported his findings to the Government of Mexico. Two decades later the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (Mexican National Institute of Anthropology and History) secured and excavated the ruins. Today the protected pyramid temples together with other buildings and gardens are open to the public.

2 The **Mayan Ruins of Kohunlich** are located a couple of hours south of Puerto Costa Maya, not far from the border of Belize. The site was discovered in 1912 by American archaeologist Raymond Merwin. They remained relatively untouched until the Mexican authorities began excavation and restoration in the 1960s. The site includes temples, public plazas, ball courts, private homes and gardens. Especially interesting are the large intricately carved masks represent-

ing various Mayan deities.

3 The **Mayan Ruins of Dzibanche** are not far from Kohunlich. At one time this city was a regional power. The beautiful site includes public plazas, the Temple of the Captives and the Temple of the Owls.

SHORE EXCURSIONS To make the most of your visit to the historic sites and local beaches surrounding Costa Maya we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing, consult your Shore Excursion Brochure or contact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, be advised to take with you only necessary items and secure any valuables on-board.

LOCAL CUSTOMS Bargaining: Prices in restaurants and stores are fixed. Bargaining is often practiced in some of the stores and shops.

Tipping: A tip of 15% or more is appropriate in restaurants.

LOCAL CUISINE AND DRINK SPECIALTIES Most of us don’t go to the supermarket or sit down to a nice dinner and consciously give thanks to the ancient Mayans, Christopher Columbus or the Spanish conquistadors for that matter. But in a very real way they are responsible for a number of the basic foods we now enjoy and even take for granted. Most of us remember back to grade school and learning about how the Mayans were the first to domesticate and cultivate the wild grass, maize, that we now call corn.

What about the tomato; talk about changing the world. The Spanish were introduced to the tomato in the 1500s by the Mayans whereupon conquistadors took it across to Asia and back to Spain. The love of the fruit spread quickly and by the 1600s tomato based recipes were already being published in Italy. We say “spread quickly”; that is until the tomato reached the shores of England whereupon English chefs pronounced the fruit “poisonous” and unfit for consumption. It took England and her American colonies a century-and-a-half to catch up with the tastes of the rest of Europe.

We could mention the Mayan chilies and pumpkins, sweet potatoes and squash, black beans and avocados and the list goes on. But the most important food to reach the Western world which was introduced by the Mayans was chocolate. The Aztecs gave chocolate to the Spanish, but it was the Mayans who introduced chocolate to the Aztecs.

So, can you imagine how very different the world would be without the culinary contribution of the ancient Mayans? There would be no Thanksgiving Day in the U.S. because you can’t celebrate Thanksgiving without pumpkin pie. And the thought is beyond comprehension that without the Mayan’s tomatoes there would be no such thing as New York thin or Chicago deep-dish pizzas. But the most dramatic transformation of Western culture would be realized if there had never been the introduction of Mayan chocolate. In no small part, much of civilization as we now know it stands upon the culinary contributions of the ancient Mayans.

What do you get when you combine pepper seasoning, sea salt and lime juice with Worcestershire, Tabasco and soy sauces all mixed in a cold beer? The drink is popular and known as Michelada. If you decide to pass on all the hot spice and sauces and just go with the lime and beer it is known as Chelada. The prickly skins of fermented pineapples are used to produce a regional drink known as Balché. For

countless centuries honey has been an important part of the local diet. A sweet liqueur made from the golden nectar is called Xtabentun.

SHOPPING FACILITIES Located at the end of the pier, the Mayan Pavilion Park contains numerous stores and shops. Together with souvenirs, leather goods, locally made crafts and jewelry are available. Many of the shops will bargain.

LOCAL CURRENCY The peso (MXN) is Mexico’s official currency. U.S. dollars are accepted in the port complex. The symbol (\$) refers to pesos, not U.S. dollars, unless specifically noted. There is an ATM machine at the port complex and a few in Mahahual town.

POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE There is no local Post Office nearby. You can buy postage stamps and mail items at the photograph store located at the port entrance.

Place a call with your personal calling card using the following access numbers:

AT&T: 01.800.288.2872 or 001.800.462.4240

MCI: 001.800.674.7000

TOURIST INFORMATION There is a Visitor’s Information Center within the cruise complex.

TRANSPORTATION Taxis are not available at the cruise complex though transportation arrangements can be made. Taxis can drop off returning guests.

USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

Yes - Si

No - No

Hello - ¡Hola!

Good Bye - Adiós

Please - Por favor

Thank-you - Gracias

You’re welcome - De nada.