

FREE TRAVEL GUIDE · 2026

The Riviera Maya Arrival Guide

Everything we tell our own guests before they land in Cancun: the airport, travel times, where to stay, money, safety and the best tours.

Before you fly | Cancun Airport step by step | Travel times | Where to stay | Money & safety | Tours | Packing list

1 Before you fly

Ten minutes of prep now saves you an hour of stress at the airport.



- **Passport valid for your whole stay.** Many airlines recommend at least 6 months of validity, so check yours before you book.
- **Entry is digital.** Most travelers use the e-gates or see an officer and get a ticket with a QR code (your digital tourist card). Keep it until you fly home.
- **Visitax (Quintana Roo tourist fee).** Foreign visitors pay it once per trip. The official 2026 fee is about 285 MXN per person. Pay it only on the official state website, visitax.gob.mx, and ignore anyone asking for more.
- **Leave vapes at home.** E-cigarettes and vapes are banned in Mexico.
- **Book your airport transfer before you land** and share your flight number, so your driver can follow your flight if it changes.
- **Phone and data:** buy an eSIM or turn on an international plan before you fly. Airport Wi-Fi is not always reliable.
- **Tell your bank** you are traveling to Mexico so your cards are not blocked.
- **Download offline maps** of Cancun and the Riviera Maya, and save your hotel address in your phone.

Pro tip

Screenshot your hotel confirmation, transfer confirmation and Visitax receipt. You may need them with no signal.

2 Landing at Cancun Airport, step by step



1. **Immigration.** Use the e-gates or see an officer. Keep the QR ticket you receive.
2. **Baggage claim.** Grab your bags and head to customs.
3. **Customs.** Put your bags through the scanner when asked.
4. **Keep walking.** Right after customs is a hall full of people offering taxis, tours and "free" gifts (see below). You do not need anything there.
5. **Go outside to your meeting point.** Your driver will be holding a sign with your name. We send exact meeting instructions before you fly.
6. **Running late or your flight changed?** Message us on WhatsApp. We follow your flight.

The "Shark Tank": what nobody tells you

The hall after customs is famous for sales staff who look official. Many are selling timeshares or rides. Smile, say "No, gracias", and walk straight outside. If someone says your driver "is waiting over here", only trust the person holding the sign with your name at the meeting point.

3 How long to your hotel?

Approximate private-transfer times from Cancun Airport (CUN) in normal traffic.

Destination	From CUN
Cancun Hotel Zone	**20–35 min**
Downtown Cancun	**20–30 min**
Costa Mujeres / Playa Mujeres	**30–40 min**
Puerto Morelos	**25–35 min**
Playa del Carmen / Playacar	**45–60 min**
Mayakoba	**40–50 min**
Puerto Aventuras	**70–80 min**
Akumal	**80–95 min**
Tulum	**1 h 45 – 2 h**
Tulum Airport (TQO) → Tulum	**30–45 min**

Times vary with traffic, weather and hotel location. Flying into Tulum? Ask us about pickups from Tulum Airport (TQO).

Flying home: when to leave your hotel

If you are staying in…	Leave your hotel
Cancun Hotel Zone	**3.5 h before your flight**
Playa del Carmen / Mayakoba	**4 h before your flight**
Tulum (to CUN)	**5 h before your flight**

Departure day

Check your terminal (CUN has Terminals 2, 3 and 4) and keep your passport, QR entry ticket and Visitax receipt handy.

4 Where to stay: find your zone

Each area has a different vibe. Choose the one that fits your trip.



Cancun Hotel Zone

Turquoise beaches, big resorts, restaurants and nightlife. The closest area to the airport.

Best for: first-timers, short trips, nightlife

Costa Mujeres

Newer all-inclusive resorts and quieter beaches north of Cancun.

Best for: couples, calm family time

Puerto Morelos

Small fishing town with a protected reef and a laid-back feel, halfway to Playa.

Best for: snorkel lovers, slow travel

Playa del Carmen

Walkable 5th Avenue, beach clubs and the ferry to Cozumel. Luxury resorts in Playacar and Mayakoba.

Best for: families, groups, beach + town

Puerto Aventuras & Akumal

Marina, calm bays and sea turtles, between Playa and Tulum.

Best for: families, snorkeling

Tulum

Boho beach clubs, Mayan ruins on the sea and cenotes all around. About 2 hours from CUN.

Best for: couples, wellness, nature

5 Money, tips & staying safe

The practical stuff our drivers get asked about every day.

💵 Money

- Pesos usually get you a better price than dollars.
- Use ATMs inside banks or malls. If the ATM offers to "convert" your charge, choose to be charged in pesos.
- Cards are widely accepted. Carry small bills for tips, markets and lockers.

🤝 Tipping

- Restaurants: 10–15%. Check the bill first, because some already include "servicio".
- Tipping tour guides and drivers is customary when you are happy with the service.
- Hotel staff: small tips go a long way.

🛡️ Safety

- Use pre-booked, registered transportation only.
- Do not accept rides from people who approach you inside the terminal.
- Keep passports and valuables in the hotel safe.
- Hurricane season runs June 1 to November 30. Travel insurance is a smart idea.

🌞 Health & sea

- Do not drink tap water. Drink bottled or filtered water.
- The sun is strong: reapply sunscreen and drink plenty of water.
- Seaweed (sargassum) varies by season and beach, so check local beach reports.
- Many parks and cenotes require biodegradable sunscreen, or none at all.

6 Tours & experiences

We organize tours across the Riviera Maya and can add a private transfer from your hotel.



Cozumel by sea

Sailing and beach-club days or a snorkel boat tour. Round-trip ferry from Playa del Carmen included.

Isla Mujeres

A private yacht for your group, or a shared catamaran with snorkel and beach time.

Cenotes in Tulum

Swim in crystal-clear underground rivers in the jungle. No ferry needed.

Kantun-Chi Ecopark

Cenotes and jungle trails near Puerto Aventuras. Admission tickets available.

Xcaret parks

Xcaret, Xel-Há, Xplor and more. Packages marked "TOUR" include transportation to the park.

Private driver by the hour

Your own day: Tulum ruins, cenotes and beach clubs on your schedule (3-hour minimum).

Tour tips from our team

- Cenotes: shower before you swim, skip lotions, and bring water shoes and a towel.
- Cozumel ferry: the crossing can be choppy. Take motion-sickness medicine 30 minutes before boarding.
- Tulum ruins: go early, before the heat and the crowds. Bring a hat and water.
- Parks: bring cash for lockers and photos, and only biodegradable sunscreen.

Some park and tour packages use the provider's shared transportation. We always tell you before you book, and you can add a private transfer.



Packing checklist

- ☐ Passport + copies on your phone
- ☐ Biodegradable sunscreen
- ☐ Hat & sunglasses
- ☐ Water shoes
- ☐ Swimsuits (2)
- ☐ Light rain jacket
- ☐ Insect repellent
- ☐ Power bank
- ☐ Small bills (pesos)
- ☐ Motion-sickness pills
- ☐ Reusable water bottle
- ☐ Dry bag for boat days

Your vacation starts the moment you land.

100% private **Never shared** **Flight monitoring** **Driver waiting with your name** **Bilingual service**

Build your trip

app.surfingontheroad.com/arma-tu-viaje

Chat on WhatsApp

+52 984 138 8860

Airport transfers to Cancun and the whole Riviera Maya, plus tours and private drivers, all in one place.

Scan, pick your services and send it to us. We confirm in minutes.

Info current as of November 2026. Fees and rules can change.