





It is Mexico's paradise, where there is always something new for you to discover

he Mexican Caribbean is like no other place in the world due to its destinations and attractions: turquoise sea, white sandy beaches, tropical jungle, archeological sites, cenotes, underwater rivers, islands, lagoons, Mayan culture and history. Featuring a world-class tourist infrastructure, a variety of lodging options, culinary delights and great air connectivity.





rand Costa Maya is a region located in the south of Quintana Roo that straddles Chetumal, Bacalar and Mahahual, destinations that are part of the Mexican Caribbean. Its exuberant nature, lagoon systems, calm-water beaches, history, culture, archeological sites and attractions make this area a true paradise of relaxation, fun and adventure.

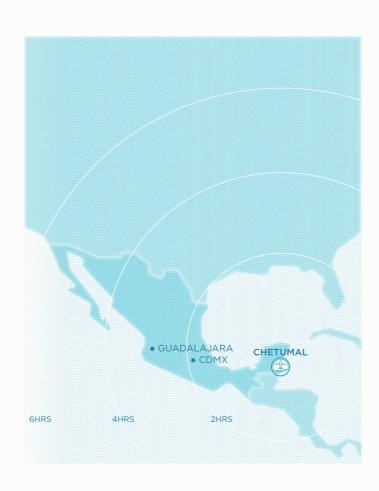
#### HOW TO GET THERE?

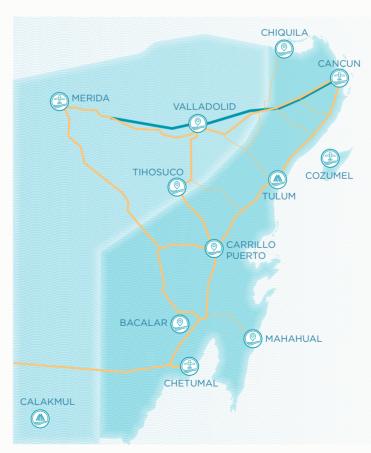
BY PLANE
The Chetumal International Airport is located 4 kilometers (2.4 miles) away from downtown Chetumal. It handles daily air traffic to and from Mexico City, Guadalajara, Cancun, and Miami in the United States.



#### DISTANCE

9.3 km (24.4 miles) away from Bacalar 142 km (88.5 miles) away from Mahahual





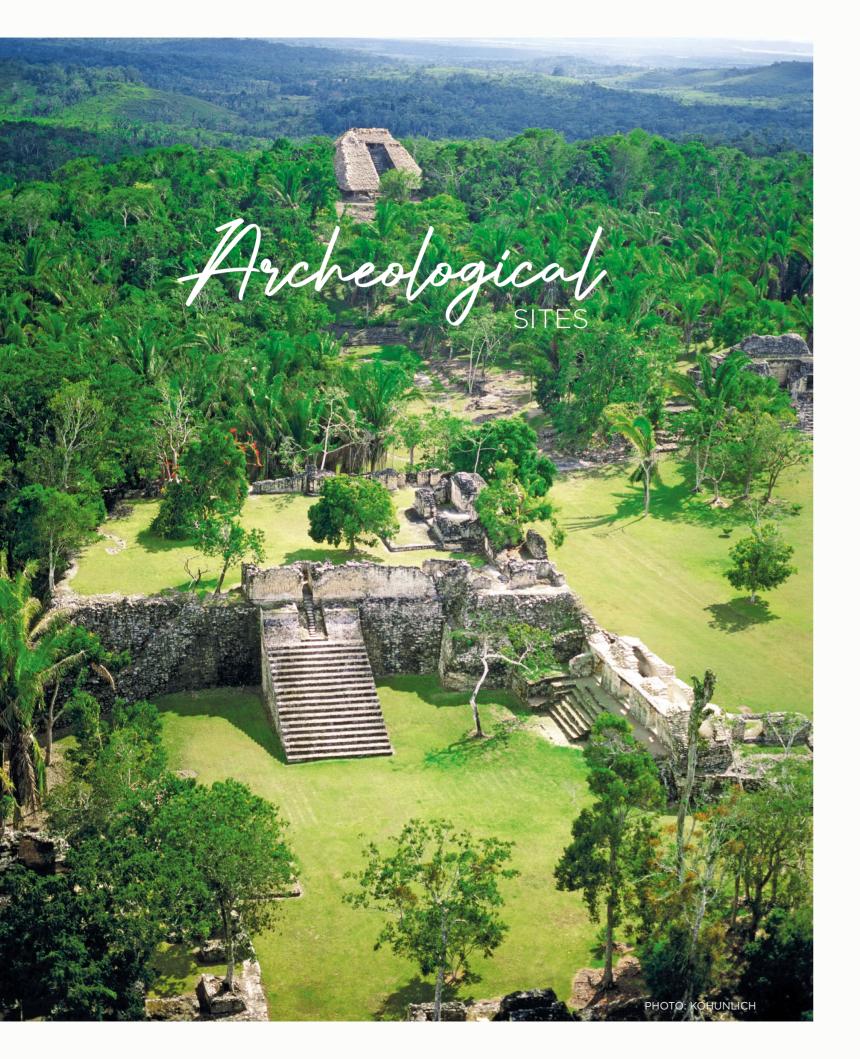
#### **GETTING AROUND**

Buses, vans, and taxis are the most common ways to get around Grand Costa Maya. Mahahual, Bacalar, and Chetumal each have a bus station.

From Cancun: Taking Highway 307 (Carretera Cancún-Chetumal) all the way south to Mahahual, which is the first destination of the Grand Costa Maya you will come across with. On your way to Mahahual, you will pass other destinations of the Mexican Caribbean, such as Puerto Morelos, Playa del Carmen, Tulum and Felipe Carrillo Puerto.

From Merida in the Yucatan state: Taking Highway 293 until it connects with Highway 307 Cancun-Chetumal; you must take the route to the south (75 km) until you see a sign that says "Bacalar".

From Belize or Central America: Taking the highway that leads to the Santa Elena border bridge. From Belize, it will take about 2:15 hours and you will have to go through the towns of Orange Walk and Corozal until you reach the Belize-Mexico border and then take the route to the south until you get to Chetumal.





#### CHACCHOBEN

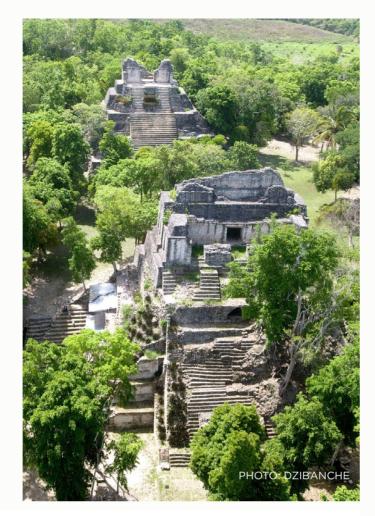
43 miles away from Chetumal. Chacchobén emerged as a small village around 200 B.C., however, it is now considered one of the biggest settlements in the area known as "Región de los Lagos" (The Lakes Region). Its name translates as "red corn" in Mayan. The remains of this Mayan city cover approximately 6 km². Some of the structures that stand out the most are the building complexes of "Gran Basamento", "Las Vías" and "Grupo II", which has the highest building in the area. The buildings and the landscape will take your breath away, as you will be able to observe different birds such as toucans and oscines.

# **KOHUNLICH**

Its original name is unknown. The word "Kohunlich" is the result of a phonetic transcription of the English word "Cohoon Ridge", which is a type of palm tree. Located 43 miles away from Chetumal, Kohunlich is a fascinating archaeological site due to its historical value and the lush vegetation that surrounds it. The area was settled in 200 BC, although most of its structures were built around 250 to 600 AD. "El Templo de Los Mascarones" (Temple of the Masks) is the most emblematic structure of this site. This is an Early Classic Pyramid built in 500 AD with a central staircase decorated by eight large stucco masks, but nowadays they only remain five of them. It is believed that these masks represent Kinich Ahau, god of the sun. Kohunlich has eight different buildings, some of the buildings of interest include: the Acropolis, Plaza de las Estelas, Conjunto Pixa'an, 27 Escalones (27 Steps), and the residential buildings. It is said that there are approximately 200 structures that remain undiscovered, covered by lush vegetation.

#### **DZIBANCHE**

Established in 200 BC, this archaeological site stretches across 40 km<sup>2</sup>, being one of the largest and most important Mayan cities of the southern part of the Mexican Caribbean. During its heyday, it is said that this site may have competed in dimensions and political power with other Mayan cities such as the imposing Calakmul, located in the neighboring state of Campeche. Meaning "writing in wood" in Mayan, Dzibanché was named by Thomas Gann (English physician and explorer) in 1927, after the sculpted lintels found within Temple VI, also known as the Lintel or Owl Temple. The site is divided into four main groups: Dzibanché, Tutil, Lamay, and Kinichná. El Templo del Búho, el Templo de los Cormoranes, el Templo de los Cautivos and el Templo de los Dinteles are the buildings from the main group that stand out the most. The Temple of the Captive (el Templo de los Cautivos) exhibits a hieroglyphic stairway with intricately carved risers of captives and text, which demonstrates how involved Dzibanché was in the conquest of several Mayan cities.





#### **KINICHNA**

Located 1.2 miles north of the Dzibanché settlement. Its name means "house of the sun god". Dzibanché-Kinichná are a group of buildings that in reality were part of the same city-state. This site is distinguished by the construction of a monumental three-level acropolis that has a series of low platforms located around a small plaza, which are believed to be smaller temples. Kinichná's main pyramid still conserves the stucco ornamentation that resembles the sun. Several jade objects were found in Kinichná.

#### **OXTANKAH**

Its name has three different interpretations: "among three villages", "three neighborhoods", or alternatively "among the breadfruit tree". This is the largest and most important archaeological site of Chetumal's bay. Archaeological evidence suggests that Oxtankah was settled and appears to have experienced a significant boom in its population and economy during the Early Classic Era (250-600 AC) when its rulers controlled other nearby cities. The Mayan settlement had so much power that it expanded to the coast, attaching the island of Tamalcab to its territory. This settlement consisted of ten plazas, two sunken courtyards, more than thirty different buildings, and a cenote. The structures are grouped around two plazas called "Plaza of the Bees' and "Plaza of the Columns" In the first square, building IV stands out for having at the top of the pyramid the remains of what appears to be a sacred labvrinth. The most notable structure in ``Plaza of the Columns" is Structure VI, a truncated pyramid. Three tombs of Oxtankah's elite have been discovered within the pyramid. The rich funerary goods included a jade necklace, a red shell mask, and polychrome ceramics. By the time the Spaniards first arrived, Oxtankah had already been abandoned for about 400 years. In the area, there is also the remains of a chapel that is believed to have been built by the conqueror Alonso de Ávila in 1531. There is also a museum that displays some ceramic pieces found in this place, as well as some maps of the settlement.





long the Grand Costa Maya, you will find impressive natural sceneries that possess the magic to make every visitor fall in love with them. Beautiful lagoons, tropical jungle, astonishing cenotes, exotic cays and islands, fascinating springs, amazing ridges, and majestic rivers are just a few of the hidden gems that this region features, where you will experience total relaxation and calmness.



Please remember to be a responsible traveler and help us protect our natural wonders and the species that inhabit them.



rand Costa Maya is the perfect combination between adventure and nature, which can be enjoyed by interacting with different animal species. A truly unique experience you will treasure forever. Some of the fascinating species that you can interact with on Grand Costa Maya include manatees, (around the Chetumal Bay and Xcalak) crocodiles, and tarpons (around the Chinchorro Bank Biosphere Reserve). There are also several places where you can go bird watching, like Isla de los Pájaros in Bacalar or the Cenote Cocodrilo Dorado, located in the village of La Unión, near Chetumal.



Our destination is an ideal place to establish a true connection with nature and there is no better way to do it than respecting all the flora and fauna species that inhabit them.



hetumal is the gateway to the Grand Costa Maya, formerly known as Chactemal, it was founded by sailors and was a very important commercial port back then. Nowadays, it is the capital city of Quintana Roo. ✓ Its tourist attractions are amazing: its landscapes, culture, ancient history and the exquisite flavors of its traditional cuisine.

# LOCATION



Chetumal is located in the southern part of the Quintana Roo state, near the border

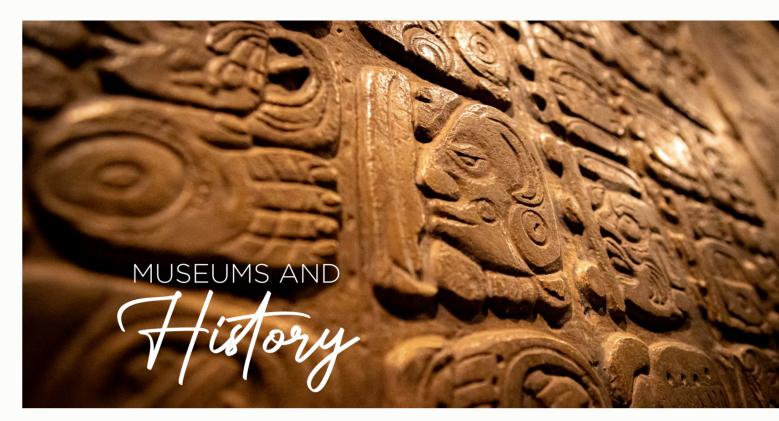
#### DISTANCE

39.5 km (24.6 miles) away from Bacalar 143 km (88.6 miles) away from Mahahual

#### **ACCOMMODATIONS**

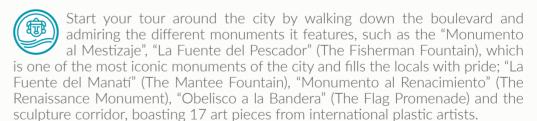


Currently, Chetumal has 77 hotels and 2,229 rooms; ranging from small and cozy hotels to business class hotels.



ormerly known as Payo Obispo, Chetumal is a place rich in history, which can be appreciated by admiring the monuments that are dotted around the city, as well as its colorful, English-style wooden houses and its museums, where you will learn about the Mayan culture and the history of this magnificent city.

# **BOULEVARD BAHÍA**



#### THE MUSEUM OF MAYAN CULTURE





#### THE CITY MUSEUM

Located inside the Cultural Center of Chetumal, this museum explains the history of Chetumal, from its foundation, the Caste War, the creation, and restitution of the territory, to their customs and traditions.

#### THE CHRONICLE HOUSE



Located in Parque de los Caimanes, "Casa de La Crónica" is a historic and cultural place that tells the story of Chetumal through different pictures.

# THE LIGHTHOUSE MUSEUM



This museum has a great historical value since it was built in 1949, ten years after the city changed its name to "Chetumal". Nowadays, the lighthouse features an impressive museum dedicated to the preservation of the nautical-historical heritage of Chetumal.





#### PAYO OBISPO SCALE MODEL



Located inside a traditional English-style wooden house, the Payo Obispo Scale Model shows the city's old architecture, which consisted of colorful buildings and dirt roads, similar to other Caribbean countries that were influenced by Great Britain. This scale model was made by Luis Reinhardt Mc-Liberty, who during the fifty anniversary of the city's reincorporation into the Federal territory, (1986) had the idea of making a scale model from the 20th century when the city was called "Payo Obispo".

# THE STATE'S HOUSE MURAL



Located on the Boulevard Bahía, the State House is one of the most emblematic buildings in the city. Here you can admire the mural "Forma, color e historia de Quintana Roo", which tells the story and origins of the city.

# THE YOOK'OL KAAB PLANETARIUM



A fun thing to do in Chetumal. The planetarium offers you the chance to admire the stars, as it has some independent telescopes, and also a moon and a solar telescope, but also a digital dome theater where they play movies and documentaries.







LAGUNA MILAGROS: Located in Huay Pix, 15 minutes away from Chetumal. This lagoon is part of the Hondo River lagoon system and it is an excellent place for nature lovers. Some of the activities that can be performed here are paddleboarding and kayaking. Around the lagoon, there are many restaurants where you can enjoy the local dishes. There is also a trailer park area.

CALDERITAS: Located approximately 5 miles away from Chetumal. It is an ideal place to try the best seafood in the area, as it features several picturesque palapa restaurants overlooking the sea. Take a boat ride around the bay, go birdwatching and visit the unspoiled cays.



ISLA TAMALCAB: One of the islands that you will get to visit when booking "La Ruta de los Cayos" (The Cays Route). This tiny uninhabited island of white sandy beaches and calm waters is located right in front of Calderitas. It is an incredible place for wildlife observation. Some of the species that can be found here are spider monkeys, tepezcuintles, badgers, herons, and ospreys. Here you will also spot some Mayan vestiges, as the island was part of the ancient Mayan city of Oxtankah. Some of the things you can do in Isla Tamalcab include snorkeling, kayaking, and tours around the bayside onboard a sailboat or a boat.

away from Calderitas, this beautiful lagoon, is named after the father of the first children born to a European man and a native Mexican woman. called "mestizos" (Gonzalo Guerrero). It stands out for being the habitat of several endangered species, such as manatees. In this place there is an Attention and Rehab Center for mammals, where specialists are in charge of taking care of "Daniel", a manatee that was found in September 2003, and that if you are lucky enough you will be able to see it during your visit. Take a boat ride around the Guerrero Lagoon and admire the different species of birds that live there.

LAGUNA GUERRERO: Located 14 miles

**RAUDALES:** Located 12 miles away from Chetumal, and a mile away from the Guerrero Lagoon, this place hides a beautiful spring of pristine waters and a restaurant where you can try some traditional dishes of the southern area of Quintana Roo. Kayak, go birdwatching, and bike riding along its hidden trails.

XUL-HÁ: Located 15 miles away from Chetumal, Xul-Há is a small village that boasts an incredible lagoon. Its Mayan name translates to "where the water ends", due to its geographical location in relation to the strait that connects Xul-Há with the Bacalar Lagoon. Xul-Há's lagoon has crystal clear waters, where you can snorkel, kayak, or swim. The lagoon is part of the lagoon system that's located in this area and connects directly to the Hondo River.

**CENOTE COCODRILO DORADO:** Located in La Unión, 68 miles away from Chetumal, on the natural border with Belize. Here you

can perform several nature and adventure activities such as hiking, mountain biking, kayaking along the streams, swimming in the springs, horseback riding, and of course visiting the Cenote Cocodrilo Dorado, which unlike other cenotes in the Yucatan Peninsula, is located at the foot of a small mountain range. The wall that surrounds it on one side reaches 70 meters in height and is considered the best place in all of the Mexican Caribbean to practice rappel.

RIBERA DEL RÍO HONDO: Located in the natural border with Belize. This place is dotted with springs where you can perform thrilling nature and adventure activities, such as mountain biking, bird watching, rappelling, and trekking.





In the south of Chetumal, there is an amazing place called Ribera del Río Hondo, which has helped formed beautiful springs of crystal clear waters, hidden gems with unparalleled beauty. These are some of the most popular springs in the area:

- Sacxan
- El Aguaje
- El Manantial



- Palmar
- Acapulquito
- El Estangue



Don't miss the opportunity of booking the "Ruta del Río Hondo" tour in which the guide will take you around some of the most beautiful springs.





n Chetumal, in addition to the fresh seafood, you can also try some Belizean dishes, such as coconut rice and beans, meat pie or curry shrimp, seafood or Edam cheese empanadas, coconut tamales, and pilpil fish, made with a gravy sauce that's made with honey and garlic, a special recipe from the southern part of the Mexican Caribbean. In the evening, Boulevard Bahia opens up to street vendors selling snacks and sweets like marquesitas, a crispy crêpe rolled and filled with jam, chocolate, or cheese.



A trip to Grand Costa Maya isn't complete without trying its exquisite and original desserts and sweets, such as the "machacados", a pozol (an iced cold drink made with maize and raw cacao), or the ciricote nance and papaya sweets.



hetumal has a Convention Center that can hold meetings, incentives, conventions and events:



A modern building that pays homage to the Mayan culture. It is a masterpiece designed by Mexican architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez and it is located on Boulevard Bahía.

It can hold up to 2,400 people due to its  $3,411 \text{ m}^2$  (36,597.3 sq ft).





his "Pueblo Mágico" (Magic Town) is an amazing destination that stands out due to the beauty of its landscapes. Bakhalal, as it was originally called means "place of reeds" in Mayan. The Lagoon of Seven Colors is one of Bacalar's main draws; swim, snorkel, kayak, paddle or go on a boat ride across its waters and admire its fascinating natural colors surroundings.



#### LOCATION

Bacalar is located only 30 minutes away from Chetumal.

#### DISTANCE

39.5 km (24.6 miles) away from Chetumal 105 km (65.2 miles) away from Mahahual



# **ACCOMMODATIONS**

Currently, Bacalar has 128 hotels with 1,239 rooms available, including boutique hotels, bungalows, and small hotels.





Fort of San Felipe: Built around 1725 and 1733, the fort tells Bacalar's story in relation to the Mayans and pirates. The fort was built to protect the town from the constant attacks of British, French, Deutch, and African pirates who came in the search of palo de tinte (blackwood). In 1858, the fort was taken by the Mayans during the Caste War. Nowadays, it holds the Piracy Museum which displays a collection of scale pirate ships, guns, canons, weapons, maps, etc. This military structure consists of four bastions at each of its corners, 11 cannons (originally, they were 34), and a 4-meter-deep pit.

San Joaquín church: Located in downtown Bacalar, this church dates from the 18th century and is dedicated to Bacalar's saint, San Joaquín. Inside the building, you will find the saint's figure. Its murals tell the story of the Caste War. Outside the church, you will see its beautiful gardens. The local legend says that at night outside the church you can see some ghosts who died during the Caste War, which took place from 1847 to 1901 between the Mayans, the criollos, and mestizos, who were descendants of the Spaniards.

Casa de la Cultura: Located around the main square, the Casa de la Cultura, a cultural center, is another one of the historic buildings, from the 19 century. This place offers dancing, poetry, and acting workshops, but it also holds some temporary art exhibitions, concerts, and plays.



# **BACALAR LAGOON**

Also known as the Lagoon of the Seven Colors. The lagoon holds the first evidence of life on Earth, the stromatolites, microbial communities that have been around for 3.5 billion years and that are important oxygen generators. These curious structures that look like rocks are actually delicate living fossils that grow very slowly, and they are only found in a few salty lagoons or bays on Earth.



We invite you to be a responsible traveler by taking a quick bath before you get into any of our bodies of water in order to remove any chemicals from your body, (body lotions, perfumes, sunblock, makeup, deodorants, etc.) as these products pollute the water. Don't forget to wear a long-sleeved rash guard to protect yourself from the sun.

# **CENOTES**

There are three cenotes within the Bacalar Lagoon: Cocalitos, Negro, and Esmeralda. The Cenote Cocalitos has some swings and hammocks inside the water where you can relax while listening to the birds chirping. The Cenote Negro, also known as "Cenote de la Bruja", (The Cenote of the Witch) has a 130-meter diameter and a 100-meter depth. Surrounded by lush vegetation, the Cenote Negro owes its name to the intense cobalt blue tone of its waters. Some of the activities you can do here are paddleboarding, snorkeling, and scuba diving. The Cenote Esmeralda has a spring from where the water emerges feeding the lagoon. The only cenote located outside the lagoon is the Cenote Azul, which is 200 meters wide and 90 meters deep. Here you can swim and even canoe. This place has a restaurant, famous for offering delicious seafood.



# BACALAR RAPIDS

The rapids connect the Bacalar Lagoon with a smaller one called Xul-Há. These two water bodies connect through the Estero de Chac, also known as El Canal de Los Piratas (The Pirates Canal), which is where stromatolites can be found. Let yourself be carried away by the soft currents, kayak, or paddleboard across its waters, and admire its fascinating pristine waters.



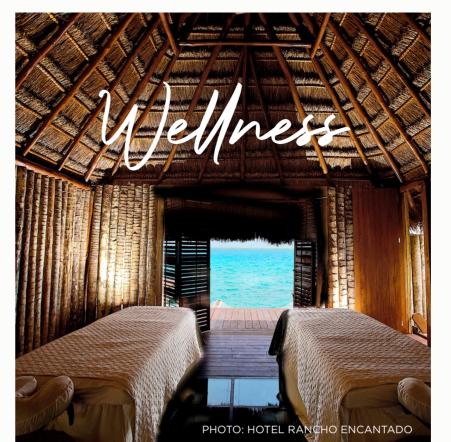




n Bacalar you can enjoy many water activities, highlighting the ones that have a low environmental impact, as locales are interested in protecting and maintaining the lagoon so that it doesn't lose its vibrant hues.

Kayaking or paddleboarding around the lagoon are experiences that are worth doing, especially at dawn, to admire the sunset and

listen to the sounds of nature. If you are an early bird and you want to stay active during your vacation, we recommend you book a sup yoga class, where you will meditate and do yoga on a stand-up paddle board. A unique experience that will transport your mind, body, and soul to another place, while at the same time connecting you with yourself and the environment. Go on a sailing excursion onboard a boat, sailboat, or pontoon, which is a flat-bottomed boat, very common in Bacalar and the neighboring country of Belize.





he wellness experience in Bacalar invites you to feel part of nature, offering rustic yet incredibly charming spas, some of them located in overwater bungalows overlooking the Lagoon of the Seven Colors, the perfect setting for having a spa treatment or Mayan ritual with medicinal plants and local ingredients such as honey, coconut, cocoa, among others. The many wellness experiences in Bacalar invite you to blend with nature, offering rustic yet incredibly charming spas, some of them located in overwater bungalows overlooking the famous Lagoon of the Seven Colors, being the perfect setting to have a spa treatment or Mayan ritual using medicinal plants and local ingredients such as honey, coconut, and cocoa among others.





acalar is one of the best wedding destinations in the Mexican Caribbean. The so called "Lagoon of Seven Colors" will be the perfect set for you to say "I do" to the love of your life. The surrounding area is full of magic and lush vegetation. This charming little town offers certified wedding planners and top suppliers who will please you with everything you need to have the wedding of your dreams. After the wedding, you can choose Bacalar or any other destination in the Mexican Caribbean for your honeymoon.



small and picturesque village that boast alluring turquoise waters, which make it the perfect destination for unplugging yourself. The only thing you will need is a hammock by the beach to admire the mesmerizing Caribbean Sea and let yourself be carried away by the sound of the waves and the ocean breeze. Mahahual is the only cruise ship port in the southern part of the Mexican Caribbean.



# LOCATION

Located less than 2 hours away from Chetumal.

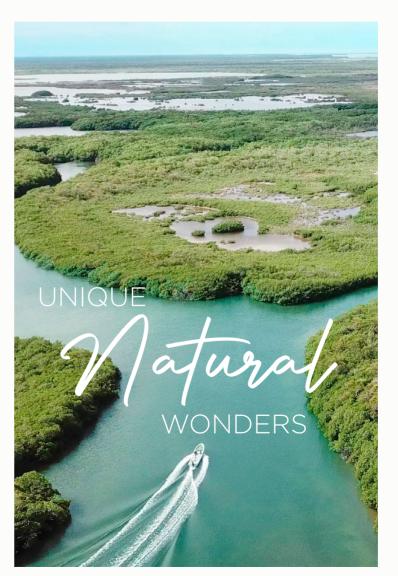
#### DISTANCE

142 km (88.5 miles) away from Chetumal 105 km (65.2 miles) away from Bacalar



# **ACCOMMODATIONS**

Currently, Mahahual has 44 hotels and 577 rooms available, ranging from bungalows and hostels to boutique hotels..



# CHINCHORRO BANK BIOSPHERE RESERVE

A protected area and the largest coral atoll in Mexico, part of the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef which is considered the world's second-largest barrier reef in the world. Besides the reefs, this beautiful place features a lagoon and three cays: Norte, Centro and Lobos.

# XCALAK NATIONAL REEF PARK

A natural paradise for divers, since it is home to a wide variety of marine life and is also part of the Mesoamerican Reef.



ahahual is one of the best places in the Mexican Caribbean for diving, mainly because of the depth and its beautiful coral formations. The Mesoamerican Reef is located just 350 meters from the coast and sprawls across more than 70 kilometers along Grand Costa Maya. Visibility varies according to weather conditions but is usually between 18 and 30 meters (60 to 100 feet). The best season for scuba diving is in summer, when the average water temperature is 29.5°C, while in winter it is 24°C.



Around Mahahual there are more than 20 dive sites, all of them teeming with tropical fish and other marine life species.



# EL MALECÓN



The waterfront promenade is Mahahual's most representative spot, which runs along 1,700 meters and sits right in front of the ocean. Here is where you'll find the bulk of the village's lodging options, restaurants, bars, beach clubs, souvenir shops, and Mahahual's traditional colorful wooden houses.

Take a picture in Mahahual's iconic photographic parador, located next to the lighthouse.

# MAYÁ LOST KINGDOM



A theme water park inspired in the 1940's expeditions. Some of its attractions include zipline circuits, water slides, and a lazy river, among others.

# XCALAK



It is a small fishing village that has one of the last unspoiled beaches in southern Quintana Roo. This off-the-beaten-path spot is the perfect place for travelers who want to relax while enjoying nature. Right in front of its coast, lies Xcalak's National Reef Park and the Chinchorro Bank Biosphere Reserve. Xcalak is a privileged place because it is the home of the manatees, a marine species considered in danger of extinction.





Visit the museums and monuments of Chetumal.



Do a day excursion to the archaeological sites of Chacchobén, Kohunlich, Dzibanché, Kinichná and Oxtankah...



Dive around the Chinchorro Bank Biosphere Reserve.



Book a tour around the Lagoon of the Seven Colors onboard a pontoon.



Discover Bacalar's story in relation to the pirates by visiting the Fort of San Felipe.



Walk around Mahahual's boardwalk and spend the day at one of its charming beach clubs.



Have lunch in Calderitas.



Admire the beautiful sunrises and sunsets at Chetumal's Bay.



Visit another destination in the Mexican Caribbean: Isla Mujeres, Holbox, Cancun, Costa Mujeres, Riviera Maya, Puerto Morelos, Playa del Carmen, Tulum, Cozumel, Maya Ka'an.

# MEXICAN CARIBBEAN



BACALA-R

ΜΛΗΛΗUAL













**I**SLA MUJERES









QUINTANA ROO Tourism Board

# MEXICANCARIBBEAN.TRAVEL

