



Global Explorers

WHERE // The Maya Yucatan: Mexico

Program Highlights

- ☞ Cool off in the Yucatan's famous freshwater cenotes, take a "lazy river" float down a freshwater canal and snorkel at a section of the world's second largest barrier reef.
- ☞ Marvel at the awe-inspiring Maya ruins of Chichen Itza and admire the beachside temples of Tulum.
- ☞ Snorkel alongside whale sharks, the largest fish in the world, and camp on the deserted beaches of Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve.

Program Description

Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula may seem close to home geographically, but the natural wonders and ancient cultures of this region reveal an exotic land. The Yucatan's lush vegetation, idyllic beaches and monumental ruins call out to the explorer in us all. The Maya Yucatan program brings us off the beaten path and introduces us to Maya and Mexican cultures, past and present. We explore the pros and cons of development and tourism and visit the communities that exist outside of the Yucatan's trendy Riviera Maya. This exciting program highlights global issues that affect life everywhere, exploring the delicate balance between human life and environmental concerns.



"This was the most wonderful, enlightening, and meaningful thing I have ever been a part of."
- Jaelyn, Student Explorer

Pre-Travel Curriculum

- ☞ Coastal ecology, tropical conservation, ecotourism and sustainable development.
- ☞ Maya history, Mexican culture and Spanish language.
- ☞ Leadership skills, service learning and responsible travel knowledge.



Program Itinerary

Days 1 – 2

After a brief travel day from our home city to Cancun, Mexico, we take a short drive to our hotel in the small fishing town of Puerto Morelos. Here, we watch the sun set on the beach and discuss the forces shaping the local ecology, culture and economy. We begin our next day with a snorkeling trip at one of the most amazing coral reefs in the Yucatan. We spend the night in Puerto Morelos again, but not before a visit to a nearby botanical garden to learn about ethnobotany and to search for wild spider monkeys.

Days 3 – 4

We begin with a visit to the breathtaking ocean vistas and beachside ruins of Tulum. Just south of here lies Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve, our home for the next two days. This afternoon we spend some time kayaking in the Reserve's brackish lagoons, then camp on the beach at Boca Paila and search for nesting marine turtles. After a good night's sleep, we wake to the sound of ocean waves and do our best to clean up items of trash that may have drifted here. After a visit to the ruins of Muyil, we relax during a "lazy river" float back toward our campsite where we go for a night kayak and search for turtles once again.

Days 5 – 6

After breaking down camp, we visit and swim in two cenotes – limestone sinkholes that create brilliant freshwater

pools. Later, we visit with local Maya women from a handicraft cooperative in a small interior village. We also tour a small tortilla factory and move on to the colonial city of Valladolid, where we spend the night in an historic estate-turned-hotel. On Day 6, we venture even further off the beaten path to a small Maya community to conduct a service project alongside the local people.

Day 7

This morning we head to one of the most incredible archaeological ruins in the world: Chichen Itza. Following our visit we cool down in nearby Dzitnup Cenote and return to Puerto Morelos, where we spend the next two nights at our beachfront hotel.

Day 8

Today we are truly fortunate to participate in one of the most astonishing wildlife experiences on Earth: snorkeling with whale sharks. We swim alongside these gentle giants as they elegantly glide through the water and fill their mouths with plankton. The afternoon is spent relaxing at our hotel where we have some time to write in our journals, reflect on the amazing experiences we've had and think about the issues we've explored.

Day 9

This morning we board our plane in Cancun and travel home.

Program Details

Expedition Length: 9 days

Location: Mexico – Quintana Roo, Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve, Yucatan

What's Included:

All lodging in Mexico; all meals and drinking water in Mexico; all transportation in Mexico; all daily activities and related fees; Global Explorers Expedition Leader; local guides and drivers; all gratuities; basic travel insurance; airport departure fees; preparatory materials and support; t-shirts and journals; carbon offsets for international air travel. Tents are provided for camping in Boca Paila.

What's Not Included:

International airfare between your home city and Cancun, Mexico; passport fees; immunization fees; spending money (for souvenirs and extra snacks); Sleeping bags and sleeping pads for camping; expenses as a result of travel delays or cancellations that fall outside of Global Explorers' control.

Maturity Level:

This program is open to middle school and high school groups.

Group Size:

We require a minimum group size of 10 paying participants for this program.

Accommodations:

Students stay in clean, safe and modest hotels and lodges with shared rooms and twin beds. Students camp for two nights on the beach with no facilities but have access to facilities throughout the daytime on camping days. Food is delicious and healthy local cuisine. Fresh drinking water is always available.