

YUCATAN

MERIDA HOTEL OR HOMESTAY



DAY ONE – Arrival Merida / Hotel or Homestay

Merida is the cultural and artistic heart and soul of the Yucatan Peninsula. When the Spanish invaded Merida, the original Maya city was called Th'o. Though it is a large city, Merida retains a distinct smaller city charm in the centro historico. This historic city offers insight into a rich culture, incredible cuisine, bountiful boutiques, authentic souvenir bargaining and friendly people.

Los Aluxes Hotel is strategically located between the Zocalo and the popular Paseo Montejo. The AC hotel facilities include a solarium, pool, and a popular restaurant.

HOMESTAY GROUPS: Host families are interviewed, selected and monitored by the Institute of Modern Spanish, founded in 1995. The school serves as the central meeting point. On the initial excursion, a member of the host family accompanies the students to the meeting point. Most families are within walking distance while a few might prefer public transportation or safe, private taxis. Host families live in middle to upper middle-class northern suburbs of Merida.

DAY TWO - Uxmal / Choco-Story *InterAction*

Uxmal has a magical feel and deep spirit not found at other Yucatan sites. Follow your guide as you explore Uxmal. This archeological site is a wonderful balance of jungle, wide open spaces, and the classic Puuc (hills) architecture of the Maya. Buffet lunch. Next, visit Choco-Story, where you'll travel back in time to an era of splendor in a Maya pueblo setting. Learn about daily life, cornfields, gardens, and learn how cacao is transformed into chocolate. Choco-Story is a sensory museum where you will be able to taste a natural cacao beverage, watch the live crafting of hand-made ceramics by regional artisans, and witness a Maya ceremony.

DAY THREE - Guided walking tour / Bargaining Markets

Start your morning with a guided walking tour of Merida's Centro Historico. Explore the 16th century San Ildefonso Cathedral, built on the site of a former Maya temple, the Casa de Montejo and Palacio Municipal. Browse boutiques, arts and craft stores and hone your Spanish in the bargaining market, recognized as the Mecca of Markets.

DAY FOUR – SOMOS / Humanitarian *InterAction*

Participate in our exclusive **SOMOS** humanitarian *interAction*. After arrival, you'll receive a list of the most needed items and will stop at a major mall, where you will purchase those items, recommend \$15. Then, complete your **SOMOS** experience as you interact with the children. Afterwards, the balance is available for teacher-led or teacher-approved small group activities.

DAY FIVE – Domingo en Merida / Optional excursions

Sundays in Merida is a free, incredible and iconic cultural experience. Souvenir, flea markets, food kiosks and live concerts transform the Centro Historico into a family fiesta.

OPTIONS: 1. (\$85) *Hacienda Sotuta de Peon is literally like traveling back in time over a hundred years ago. Explore a restored mansion and witness the step-by-step process of henequen (natural rope) from plant to fiber and from fiber to finished product. Conclude with a mule-driven "truck" ride just like the plantation workers of old. Cool off with a dip in the hidden pristine cenotes.*
2. *Marvel at vibrant pink flamingos during an idyllic boat ride on a full-day tour of the spectacular Celestun Wildlife Refuge (\$85). During your excursion, observe mammal species that inhabit the beautiful Biosphere as a local guide directs your attention. Cruise through atmospheric mangroves before reclining on the soft sands of a local beach.*

DAY SIX – Chichen Itza / Cenote Swim

Journey to Chichen Itza, one of the New Seven Wonders of the World. Explore the ruins in the coolness of the jungle morning. Following your exploration, enjoy lunch and an opportunity to cool off with a swim into the clear, fresh water of a pristine *cenote*.

DAY SEVEN – Playa Progreso

Relax on your scenic drive to Progreso Beach, the heart and soul of this popular beach destination. The laid back, friendly lifestyle is notable. Popular water sports and/or beach chairs (optional, pay direct) are available on weekends or when cruise ships arrive.

DAY EIGHT – Return to USA



8 DAYS



7 NIGHTS

Merida Hotel or Homestay



GROUP MEALS

HOMESTAY includes all meals

HOTEL includes daily breakfast and either lunch or dinner