

Magic MEXICO



Lake Bacalar

Ventures, Adventures & Incentives

with

(YOUR COMPANY'S LOGO)

TOUR PROGRAMME

Day 1 - Saturday – ARRIVAL - Upon early evening arrival at Mexico City Airport, our Flemish/French/English-speaking guides will meet group and escort tour members to one of the capital's fabulous hotels: the Presidente Intercontinental, Camino Real, one of the Sheratons or similar, located either in fashionable Polanco district,



Mariachis!!

just minutes from some of the best restaurants and boutiques in town, facing or close to emblematic *Paseo de la Reforma* and Chapultepec Park, or in the heart of the city's remodelled Historical Centre, an experience not to be easily forgotten.

We are welcomed with a cocktail party, to the accompaniment of a typical local *Mariachi* band, playing some of the all-time favourites of Mexico's musical tradition.

After some free time for freshening-up in our rooms, we meet for a delicious buffet-dinner, a first encounter with the often sophisticated and always tasty Mexican cuisine. Then it's bedtime, for a well-deserved night's rest!

Day 2 - Sunday - MEXICO CITY & THE PYRAMIDS - A comprehensive visit of the

ancient Aztec capital, including the *Zócalo*, with National Palace and Diego Rivera's famous murals, the impressive Cathedral and the vestiges of the pre-Hispanic *Templo Mayor*. Tour continues to Chapultepec Park, for a visit to the National Museum of Anthropology, exhibiting pre-Columbian art at its best, including the famous *Aztec Calendar* and the sculpture of the gruesome earth goddess *Coatlicue*, the snake-skirted one.



The Zócalo

Proceed to San Juan Teotihuacan, where a poolside luncheon will be served at charming *Villas Arqueológicas*: a Mexican buffet with a French touch, and a traditional guitar trio as an adequate accompaniment. After luncheon we start inspecting the awe-inspiring pyramids of the Sun and Moon and walk down the



Sun Pyramid



Temple of Quetzalcóatl

Road of the Dead to the Citadel, to wonder at the unique Temple of Quetzalcóatl, with its stone-sculptured plumed-serpent heads. Return to hotel in Mexico City.

This evening we drive out for dinner to a remarkable restaurant, El Candelero, which features stunning interiors that evoke the splendour of 18th-century Mexico, decorated with hand-painted walls, antique-filled armoires and elaborate table settings. The fare: Mexican *nouvelle cuisine* at its best, accompanied by a tasting session of *tequila*.

Day 3 – Monday – THE MAYAN JUNGLE - Transfer to Mexico City airport for a flight –just under two hours- to Mexico’s last frontier, in the extreme southeast of the country: arrive at Chetumal, on the border with Belize, already a port in Mayan days, and start a short overland journey that will take us, soon, deep into the Quintana Roo jungle.



The Explorean

This is the farthest corner of the Yucatan Peninsula, which together with the neighbouring Central American states of Guatemala and Belize shelters one of the very last still remaining, extended, rain forests in the Northern Hemisphere of the continent. We eventually arrive at exclusive *The Explorean* lodge, a unique hotel perched on top of a hill and overlooking the silent immensity of the green, virgin jungle. Its grandiose design has got a monolithic elegance that echoes the majesty of the near-by Kohunlich ruins, and yet the architects have cleverly



The Explorean's lobby; the jungle in the background

softened the grandeur by using thatched roofs and a village-like setting for the deluxe accommodations. The combined effect is comfortable, spacious and pleasing to the eye: *The Explorean* is the natural basis for *soft* adventure tours, which include ruins' trekking, bird watching, kayaking and sailing. However today, after enjoying a delicious luncheon that will serve as an introduction to the *gourmet* cuisine of Yucatan, the afternoon is yours.

Take advantage of the marvelous mild climate, to enjoy the many facilities this five-star jungle lodge has got to offer: the extra-long swimming pool and adjoining jacuzzi, a sauna and massage room, not to mention the attractive lobby bar, with

its open-bar and/or help-yourself service, plus the unbeatable panoramic view over the jungle.

After dinner in the large thatched-roof dining *palapa*, tour members will be ready for a well-deserved rest in the charming casitas (small houses) with thatched roofs that have very posh modern interiors, stucco-beamed ceilings and décor that reflects the indigenous culture.

Day 4 – Tuesday - KOHUNLICH – THE SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE – Today we start a full day of activities: “Jungle-Indiana Jones” in the tropical forest! Group will be divided into three teams, which will participate, between today and tomorrow, on a rotary basis, in up to three of these exhilarating activities:



A) Jungle walk to the nearby, magnificent ruins of Kohunlich. The site is best known for its Temple of the Masks, an Early Classic pyramid whose central stairway is flanked by huge humanised stucco masks. Built around 500 AD, this is one of the oldest constructions at the site. Although little is known about these impressive ruins, many archaeologists believe Kohunlich may have been one of the most important cities in the lower Petén region. In today's world, its *Temple of the Masks; detail*

broad range of architecture, natural beauty, and expansive, uncrowded seclusion set it apart from the more widely toured sites. Return to hotel for a swim and luncheon, and be ready for your next adventure.

B) Mini-vans will transfer participants to a jungle lake of crystal-clear waters, where kayaks are waiting for a canoeing venture taking them through the lake's bends and lush vegetation, until eventually reaching a tributary of Bacalar Lagoon.



Xul-ha jungle lake.

There is time for snorkelling and for swimming before driving back to our base at The *Exploreal*, to have luncheon before we start on

our next adventurous activity.

C) A fun-filled journey full of surprises: by *jeeps* or lorry, over rough unpaved country roads, through the sub tropical jungles of Tres Garantías, close to the Guatemalan and Belizean borders. Arrive at the ruins of Chican-ha, an old, abandoned Spanish monastery, where a colony of howler monkeys and other specimens of the local fauna have substituted the original monastic tenants.



Explore this intriguing witness of the history of Mexico's evangelisation, and join a hike through the surrounding, deep jungle. Then return to the *Exploreal* for an invigorating luncheon, before proceeding with your afternoon activity.

The whole group meets in the evening for drinks at the bar, the ideal setting to compare notes and comment on the day's events and incidents. Following cocktails, a farewell Gala Dinner will be served under the tropical, starry night.

Day 5 – Wednesday - MAYAN RIVIERA – This morning, after early breakfast, each team proceeds to complete its *soft-adventure* routine. Those too tired from yesterday's *roughing it*, have a tempting alternative: spend the morning at the poolside, and just enjoy life!

Towards the end of the morning, group is transferred by a modern, air-conditioned motorcoach, to the shores of Xul-ha Lake, a heavenly spot where we are served a delightful open-air grill luncheon, and have a further opportunity for swimming, kayaking or sailing on small, slim catamarans.

After luncheon, we start our bus journey north, through the plains of the Peninsula, until reaching Mexico's fashionable resort areas of Tulum and Puerto Aventuras, on the sunny Mayan Riviera, where tranquillity reigns with clear, open skies, long stretches of beach and a small town atmosphere.



On the Mayan Riviera

white powder beaches and the brilliant, turquoise Caribbean Sea. This tropical oasis is only minutes away from the natural aquarium of Xel-ha, and close to eclectic Playa del Carmen, the casual, international playground of this spectacular Riviera.



Xel-ha aquarium

Day 6 – Thursday – SAFARI - An early morning start on a jeep safari- excursion to the most famous of all Mayan archaeological sites will be offered today: **CHICHEN ITZA**, where arts and sciences flourished during the classical period, making it a religious centre of increasing importance, as evidenced by the vestiges of the imposing erected buildings.

Visits will include the classical Maya, as well as the Maya-Toltec sectors, with such landmarks as the Observatory, the Pyramid of Kukulcán, the Ball Game Court and

the Thousand Columns' Hall. A poolside luncheon will be served at a charming *hacienda*, once the headquarters of the first archaeologists who worked at this site in the 19th century.



Kukulcán Pyramid

As of the middle of 2007 Chichén Itzá, and more specifically its landmark, the Kukulcán Pyramid, also known as *El Castillo*, has been selected, by means of a world-wide survey, as one of the New Seven World Wonders, N7W for short.

Return to hotel in the late afternoon, stopping en-route at Cancun, the flashy international

resort on the Mexican Caribbean. The evening is free for tour participants to enjoy the hotel's facilities and to choose among the varied gastronomic options for dinner.

Day 7 – Friday - BEACH AND SUN - Enjoy a day of leisure at the beach, the day is yours to make the best out of it. Swimming, snorkelling, diving, water-skiing and sailing, are some of the available options for a memorable journey.

For those tour members wanting to dig deeper into the mysteries of the ancient Maya culture, an optional tour to the ruins of TULUM, the only well preserved Mayan site on the seashore, will be offered. Built on top of a cliff overlooking the immensity of the blue Caribbean Sea, the site is remarkable in many aspects, being one of the few pre-Hispanic cities on Mexican territory fully surrounded by a protective wall.



Tulum

We visit its main pyramid, El Castillo, as well as the intriguing Temple of the Descending God.

This evening group meets on the beach for a spectacular Farewell Party, with a *gourmet* dinner and 'live music for dancing under the starry tropical sky, into the wee hours of the morning.

Day 8 – Saturday - HASTA LA VISTA - Another morning of leisure, sun and beach activities. After a last poolside buffet luncheon at our hotel, it's time to say *hasta la vista*, before transferring to Cancun airport for departure back to Mexico City. Last formalities and perhaps a last spree through the many tempting duty-free shops, then we'll be ready to board our homebound flight while bidding, not without regret, a hearty...

...farewell to Mexico