

Why you should add Mérida to your Mexico hit list

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Head inland from the shores of Cancun to find the vibrant, tropical heart of the Yucatán.

The largest city in the **Yucatán peninsula**, located 22 miles off the Gulf of Mexico, Mérida is often overlooked in favour of its too-cool coastal cousin, **Tulum**. But with its historic streets, bustling markets, and lush rainforest, Mérida and its surrounding municipalities is a feast for all the senses.



Locals may be quick to tell you that Mérida is the most beautiful city in the Yucatán, and it's also one of the safest—not to mention an epicentre of art and

culture. With its colonial past, the city is a melting pot of influences, and its history is rich: Mérida has the highest indigenous population within any Mexican metropolis.



In more recent years, the city's fading glamour has attracted artists and bohemians, who have settled in Mérida to restore its dilapidated buildings and give them a fresh allure. A walk through the cobbled streets of downtown will reveal **buildings painted in a rainbow** of contrasting colours.



While on the grand Paseo de Montejo, modelled after the Champs Élysées, you'll find lavish pastel-washed haciendas and stately federal buildings, such as the lime green baroque revival Palacio del Gobierno, and the pink Palacio Municipal, both open for public tours. For a brief period around the turn of the 20th century, Mérida was said to house more millionaires than any other city in the world, and the city's sisal barons commissioned Parisian architects to build the opulent villas and buildings you'll see scattered throughout the heart of the city.

STAY



Photographed by Karyn Millet

Chablé Resort and Spa, Chocholá

Half an hour by car from Mérida, this newly opened resort in the remote heart of the Mayan rainforest, is one of the most luxurious destinations in the Yucatan.



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Set on the 750-acre grounds of a former 19th century hacienda and sisal factory (with its own cenote and beautifully preserved ruins), Chablé houses a collection of 38 casitas and two villas, each with a private pool and deck area, designed by Mexico City-based interior architect Paulina Moran.



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Overseen by Jorge Vallejo (whose Mexico City restaurant Quintonil was awarded 11th place in the **2018 World's 50 Best Restaurants list**), the culinary program at Chablé is impressive, and features organic ingredients sourced from the resort gardens. Fine dining restaurant Ixi'im is run by chef Luis Ronzon, formerly of Noma, and offers a contemporary take on Mexican dishes, accompanied by a cellar showcasing the world's largest tequila collection. Perhaps the highlight of a stay at Chablé is the spa and wellness program, with treatments inspired by ancient Mayan rituals.