



American Flamingos © Penny Jarrett

MEXICO

Exploring Mexico's Archaeology, Birds, and Butterflies February 6-15, 2023



Beyond the resorts of Mexico, a world of history, archaeology, culture and natural wonders awaits. Our trip starts in Mérida, the capital of the Yucatán, and a city culturally rich with both Maya and colonial heritage. While in the Yucatán, we will visit the Maya sites of Uxmal and Mayapán. The geology of the Yucatán is unique, and a visit to the Geohidrológica Anillo de Cenotes will provide an opportunity to see sinkholes created from a meteor impact 65 million years ago and take a refreshing swim. A must-do while in the Yucatán is a visit to the 146,000 acre Celestún Biosphere Reserve, home to 304 bird species, including thousands of flamingos. From Mérida, we will fly to Mexico City to visit the archaeological sites of Teotihuacan and Tenochtitlan, the National Museum of Anthropology, and the UNAM Botanical Garden. Then we travel to the central highlands of Michoacán for the opportunity to witness one of nature's amazing wonders – the overwintering of the monarch butterfly. Each winter, millions of monarchs arrive from across the US and Canada. Traveling back to Mexico City, it will be time to return home with memories and photographs sure to last a lifetime.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Go birding by boat among the marshes and mangroves of Ría Celestún Biosphere Reserve, where you will see many bird species and flocks of American Flamingo.
- Visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Uxmal, one of the most impressive and important Maya archaeological sites in the Yucatan.
- Explore Mayapán ruins, which during the Late Post-Classic period was the Maya political and cultural capital of the Yucatán.
- Visit an overwintering site of the monarch butterfly and view thousands of them as they hang in clusters from the trees, drink from streams, feed on wildflowers, and soar in the air above.
- Visit the pyramids at Teotihuacán, one of the most architecturally significant Mesoamerican sites of pre-Columbian times.
- Learn about the Aztecs during a visit to Templo Mayor, Tenochtitlan, the former Aztec capital, located in the center of Mexico City.
- Learn about Mexico's pre-Colombian history from before the Maya civilization through to the Aztecs and the Spanish conquest at the National Museum of Anthropology.
- Visit the UNAM Botanical Garden to discover the great plant biodiversity of Mexico.



ITINERARY

BLD = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

FEB 6 - MERIDA

Upon arrival into Mérida, you will be met and taken to Hotel Casa del Balam, centrally located 2 blocks from the main plaza. If time allows, take a walking tour of the city. Dating back to colonial times, Mérida is a cultural center known as the "white city" for its many white buildings and use of limestone. In the evening, enjoy a welcome dinner and orientation to the program and get to know your guide. After dinner, visit Plaza Grande for a Mayan Pok Ta Pok ceremony, a reenactment of the Mesoamerican ballgame. *Overnight at Hotel Casa del Balam. (D)*

FEB 7 - MERIDA

Early this morning, depart for the Maya ruins of Uxmal. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is one of the most impressive and important Maya archeological sites in the Yucatán. Typical of the Puuc style, the buildings are low horizontal structures with courtyards that are richly decorated with detailed sculptures made from thousands of perfectly polished stones. The ruins are clustered into 15 groups that spread from north to south. Highlights include the Pyramid of the Magician with its Plaza of the Birds, the Ball Court, the Governor's Palace, and the Great Pyramid. Next head to the Mayapán ruins, which during the Late Post-Classic period was the Maya political and cultural capital in the Yucatán Peninsula. The site is about 1.6 square miles and has over 4,000 structures within city

walls. It is estimated that over 10,000 people lived in the city, and several thousand more lived outside the walls. The Temple of Kukulcan, the main temple in Mayapan, is similar to the one at Chichen Itza. Other temples in the ceremonial center include three round ones, which are unusual for the Maya. After exploring Mayapán, visit Geohidrológica Anillo de Cenotes, a vast area of cenotes (sinkholes filled with water). The cenotes were caused by a huge asteroid that hit Earth 66 million years ago. While here, you will have the opportunity to take a swim and snorkel in the crystal clear waters. *Overnight at Hotel Casa del Balam. (BLD)*

FEB 8- CELESTUN

This morning, travel to the village of Ría Celestún via the Paseo de Montejo, a wide tree-lined avenue in Mérida. This area is notable for its many 19th century mansions, evidence of the wealth derived from the sisal industry. Once at the village located on the Gulf of Mexico, take a boat ride in the Ría Celestún Biosphere Reserve to see flamingos and other species. The Reserve is part of a vast wetland corridor located over the mouth of the Yucatan's biggest groundwater basin. It's mangroves, dune and low rainforests are home to a substantial natural heritage, especially in terms of birds. The Reserve is home to more than 300 species of birds, including thousands of flamingos. *Overnight at Hotel Don Gonzalo. (BLD)*

FEB 9 - MEXICO CITY

Early this morning, return to Ría Celestún Biosphere Reserve for a second boat ride. In the afternoon, go birding with local students who are participating in a youth birding and bird conservation program created by Alex Dzib. Later, transfer back to Mérida and connect with your evening flight to Mexico City. Dinner is on your own at the airport. Upon arrival, meet your Central Mexico guide and head to the hotel in the Zócalo (center of the city). *Overnight at Zócalo Central Hotel. (BL)*

FEB 10 - MEXICO CITY

After breakfast, attend a presentation on the distinction between the Maya and Aztec people. Then visit San Juan Teotihuacán located just outside the city. Teotihuacán is a world-famous archaeological site that covers 32 square miles and contains many structures, including two large pyramids. The Pyramid of the Sun, at a height of more than 200 feet, is one of the largest structures created in the pre-Columbian New World. After exploring the ruins and museum, have lunch and then return to the Zocalo to visit Templo Mayor. After the destruction of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan, the Templo Mayor, like most of the rest of the city, was taken apart and the area redeveloped with new structures by the Spanish colonizers. After exploring the site and museum, walk across the Zocalo to our hotel. *Overnight at Zócalo Central Hotel. (BLD)*

FEB 11 - MEXICO CITY

This morning visit the National Museum of Anthropology, which houses the world's largest collection of ancient Mexican art and also has ethnographic exhibits about Mexico's present-day Indigenous groups. Highlights include the Sun Stone or Aztec Calendar, a model of Pakal's tomb in the Maya exhibit room, and the jade mask depicting the Zapotec Bat God in the Oaxaca exhibit room. Have lunch and then visit the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) Botanical Garden, founded in 1959 to preserve and study Mexico's unique flora. Mexico is home to more plant species than the U.S. and Canada combined. It also has the highest diversity of cactus plants in the world, with an estimated 800-plus recorded species. *Overnight at Zócalo Central Hotel. (BLD)*

FEB 12 - JUNGAPEO

This morning, depart for the town of Jungapeo, stopping in Toluca for lunch en route. Upon arrival check in at Hotel Agua Blanca located in the Jungapeo canyon. The hotel is surrounded by lush gardens and beautiful scenery. After settling in you will have time to explore the hotel grounds, which overlook a river and include trails and mineral spring pools. *Overnight at Hotel Agua Blanca. (BLD)*

FEB 13 - JUNGAPEO

Early this morning, take part in optional birding around the lodge grounds. After breakfast, visit El Rosario Reserve. This large overwintering colony normally contains well over 100 million adult monarchs and has an excellent trail system winding through the fir-covered slopes on which the colony is located. At this time of year, they may take flight for an hour or more for water and nectar before returning to their roost on the tree limbs or trunks. The hike to arrive at the colony may reach up to 10,000 feet and will require hiking up the mountain. Hiking will be at your own pace with birding opportunities along the way. A portion of the hike can be done by horseback rental (around 100 Mexican pesos, cash only, each way). Once at the site, spend half of the day enjoying the colony. Please note restrooms are located at the bottom of the mountain. Later in the afternoon, return to the lodge for dinner and an optional hike to a nearby waterfall. *Overnight at Hotel Agua Blanca. (BLD)*

FEB 14 - MEXICO CITY

Start the day with another early optional morning birding walk. After breakfast, depart Agua Blanca and return to El Rosario Butterfly Sanctuary for a second day with the monarchs. Later in the afternoon, return to Mexico City. This evening enjoy a farewell dinner at the hotel. *Overnight at Zócalo Central Hotel. (BLD)*

FEB 15 - DEPART

Transfer to the airport for the flight home. *(B)*

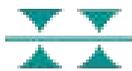
LAND PRICING \$3,925

Price includes accommodations, meals, entrance fees, and activities as indicated in the itinerary, private transportation unless otherwise noted in itinerary, non-alcoholic beverages with meals, expert birding naturalist guide for duration of program, carbon offset and donation to the Mound House.

International airfare, gratuities, and items of a personal nature are not included.

ESTIMATED AIRFARE \$525*

Miami-Merida / Mexico City-Miami *This is an estimated rate and it is based on availability and subject to change until booked.



About

HOLBROOK TRAVEL

Our mission is to facilitate a true connection between our travelers and our destinations.

Since 1974, we've taken thousands of travelers on expeditions across Latin America, Africa, and destinations beyond. We combine reliable travel support with deep knowledge to create enriching travel experiences.

Since our founding, Holbrook has been at the forefront of ecotourism and sustainability. We are dedicated to fostering best practices of ethical travel: conserving the environment and local natural resources, and improving the well-being of local communities in all our destinations.

Our Commitment to Sustainability

Our core values are rooted in responsible travel. We make every effort to work with locally owned lodges, tour providers, organizations, and guides that uphold these standards. We actively seek out information that affects the communities and environments we visit, and we aim to educate travelers about local and global conservation efforts in order to cultivate richer, more meaningful connections for both travelers and locals alike.

Holbrook Sustainability Policy

We know sustainability is as important to our travelers as it is to us. Whether visiting a city, a rural village, ancient ruins, or a rainforest, it is possible to do so responsibly by designing travel programs that are mindful of the potential social and environmental impacts. Our programs follow the principles defined by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC). In partnership with our suppliers and field partners, we are committed to:

Maximizing social and economic benefits to local communities and minimizing negative impacts

Providing education and training externally and internally

Integrating sustainability where possible throughout our programs

Conserving biodiversity, ecosystems, and landscapes

Reducing our carbon footprint and raising awareness about climate change

Holbrook Travel participates in sustainable global travel by collaborating with and supporting local conservation projects, non-governmental organizations, and community-based programs that advance conservation and sustainable development.

