



**Tia Stephanie Tours**

## **Yucatan Family Adventure February 17-24, 2017**

### **Day One: Friday, Feb. 17, Arrive Merida, Welcome Event, OVERNIGHT MERIDA (D/Snack)**

Depending on arrival time, we'll organize activities. In the evening, enjoy a fun meet and greet, welcome event.

### **Day Two: Sat, Feb. 18, Market Tour and Cooking! Explore town for local crafts, including hammocks. Evening of Dancing. OVERNIGHT MERIDA (B, Cooking Class)**

Today we'll explore the local food market and find foods that are on our list! (food treasure hunt). Gathering together, we'll cook and enjoy our meal. Explore local craft markets (look for things on your list), evening show and tell of local craft items. Possible Salsa dancing, or evening watching dancers in Merida.

### **Day Three: Sun, Feb. 19, Mayapan Ancient Ruins, Bike Ride, Swim in Cenote, Hike as Early Explorers, Learn of Ancient Maya rituals and meanings of Caves and Cenotes. (Stevens and Catherwood for a day!) Picnic at Cenote. OVERNIGHT MERIDA (B, Picnic)**

Today begins with a visit to Mayapan, an incredible archeological site located in central Yucatan where we'll explore and learn about the important architecture, structures of the Maya in the Late Post-Classic period. The Maya were masters of math, astronomy, architecture. We'll visit the Temple of Kukulcan and the Observatory, which are similar to Chichen-Itza, but on a smaller scale and much less visited. From here, we'll hop on our bikes and ride 3 miles towards the amazing cenote Nomozon to refresh in its crystal clear waters. Here, we'll have a special expedition, much like in the days of Stevens and Catherwood, who explored Yucatan in the 1840's. We'll be explorers for the day, learning about ancient Maya rituals and meanings in nature. Returning to Merida, our evening is at leisure. There are wonderful music and dance events in the streets of Merida to enjoy!

### **Day Four: Mon. Feb. 20, Celestun, Flamingos, Birds, Boats and Beach! OVERNIGHT MERIDA (B, L)**

Today we'll experience nature at its finest, by visiting the Celestun Biosphere Reserve, a large coastal wetland and wildlife refuge. We will join a special cooperative who will take us in canoes and kayaks to explore various ecosystems, including mangroves, coastal areas, lagoons and beaches. During the winter months, this region attracts the second largest greater flamingo population in America. In addition to the flamingos, this is an ideal region for bird watching in general. After our boat and nature excursion, we'll head to the beach to have an amazing seafood lunch in a small palapa on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico. Our evening in Merida is free, but

we highly recommend the “Vaqueria” traditional and colorful dance of Yucatan, in the central plaza!

**Day Five: Tues., Feb. 21, Puuc Hills, Arrive Lodge at Uxmal for Lunch and Swimming, Cacao Museum, Light and Sound show at Night, OVERNIGHT UXMAL (B, L)**

We say goodbye to Merida and begin our journey to the Puuc Hills, land of the Classic Era Maya. Arriving at Uxmal, we settle into the Lodge at Uxmal, enjoy a pollo pibil lunch in a Maya Hut, before relaxing and swimming in the hotel pool. In the late afternoon, we can visit the Cacao Museum to learn about the ancient Maya and their ceremonial use of cacao. At night, we experience the amazing Uxmal Light and Sound show!

**Day Six: Wed., Feb. 22, Uxmal Site a.m, Maya Community Santa Elena in p.m., OVERNIGHT MERIDA (B, L)**

We visit the site of Uxmal in the morning, when it is cool and less crowded. Typically, we just see a few cats! We can explore some of the nooks and crannies of this ancient Maya ruin, before we depart to visit a community of the Maya of today. We'll spend the afternoon with families here. Returning to our Lodge, we swim and relax by the pool.

**Day Seven: Thurs., Feb. 23, Sotuta de Peon, Izamal, Return to Merida, OVERNIGHT MERIDA (B, L)**

Our day begins with a journey to explore a living plantation where sisal fiber is stripped from the agave plant and is made into twine and rope. These plantations in Yucatan, supplied the ENTIRE ROPE INDUSTRY, particularly important in SHIP BUILDING and RIGGING up until the DATE? We will try our hand at rope making to see how it was done “back then”. We'll ride on a “TRUCK”, pulled by a mule, in the way the fiber was formerly transported. The mule led truck will lead us to a refreshing sink hole, where we'll enjoy a refreshing swim, in a cave! By now we understand what these caves and sink holes (cenotes) meant to the Maya of the past and the Maya today.

In the early afternoon, we visit the Golden City of Izamal, to learn about its history and tour this charming town, including the Franciscan Monastery, San Antonio de Padua. We'll see how the Spanish built directly on top of the former Mayan cities. It is a strong visual of one of the greatest clashes of culture in world history. After our touring, we'll settle into a favorite traditional Yucatecan restaurant Kinich to eat some of the best traditional Yucatecan cuisine on the Peninsula. Cochinita pibil, queso relleno, papadzules are some of their famed dishes. Our last evening in Merida is Free to Explore and to say goodbye to your favorite places!

**Day Eight: Fri., Feb. 24, Return Flights Home (B)**