



## **SURVIVING THE HEAT IN MÉRIDA**

### ***Your Essential Guide to Staying Safe in one of Mexico's Hottest Cities***

Mérida sits just 350 kilometers north of the Tropic of Cancer, placing it squarely in one of the most intensely sun-baked zones on the planet. This proximity means near-vertical sun angles, brutal UV radiation, and temperatures that routinely climb above 38°C (100°F) — often feeling closer to 45°C (113°F) or even higher with humidity factored in.

***The Yucatán Peninsula offers little topographic relief: no mountains, a flat limestone plain, and concrete areas that absorb and radiate heat relentlessly.***

What makes Mérida especially dangerous is how deceptively gradual heat exhaustion can set in. Visitors — and even acclimatized locals — can go from feeling perfectly fine to dangerously ill in a matter of minutes, especially when exerting themselves outdoors, skipping fluids, or underestimating the midday sun.

Heat exhaustion doesn't announce itself loudly. You may feel mildly tired or slightly dizzy and attribute it to jet lag or a big lunch — until it suddenly isn't mild anymore. Every year, tourists are hospitalized simply because they didn't take the heat seriously. This guide will help ensure you aren't one of them.

#### **RECOGNIZING HEAT EXHAUSTION: KNOW THE SIGNS**

*Heat exhaustion occurs when your body overheats and can no longer regulate its core temperature effectively. Watch for any combination of the following:*

#### **Early Warning Signs**

- Heavy, excessive sweating — or, alarmingly, a sudden stop in sweating
- Cool, pale, or clammy skin despite being in extreme heat
- Fatigue, weakness, or a sudden drop in energy
- Dizziness or lightheadedness, especially when standing up
- Nausea or an upset stomach
- Headache — often throbbing and persistent
- Muscle cramps, especially in the legs or abdomen
- Fast, weak pulse

#### **Serious Warning Signs (Escalating to Heatstroke)**

- Confusion, disorientation, or slurred speech
- Loss of consciousness or fainting
- Hot, red, dry skin — sweating has stopped entirely
- Rapid, strong pulse
- Core body temperature above 40°C (104°F)



## **IMPORTANT: Know the Difference**

Heat exhaustion is serious but treatable with prompt first aid. Heatstroke is a life-threatening emergency requiring immediate medical attention. If a person stops sweating, hasn't urinated for several hours, becomes confused, or loses consciousness — call emergency services immediately. Do not wait.

## **WHAT TO DO IN A HEAT EMERGENCY**

If you or someone with you shows signs of heat exhaustion, act immediately and in this order:

- **MOVE TO SHADE OR A/C** — Get indoors or into deep shade right away. Any air-conditioned space (pharmacy, restaurant, mall, church) will do.
- **COOL THE BODY FAST** — Apply cold, wet cloths to the neck, armpits, and groin. If possible, use a fan. Immerse in cool (not ice-cold) water if available. This is an invaluable time to have a pool.
- **HYDRATE** — Sip cool water or an electrolyte drink slowly. Do not chug large amounts at once if the person is nauseous.
- **LOOSEN CLOTHING** — Remove excess layers and loosen tight clothing to help the body release heat. Remove all clothing, if possible.
- **ELEVATE THE LEGS** — Have the person lie down and raise their legs slightly to improve circulation.
- **MONITOR** — Watch the person closely. If they do not improve within 15 minutes, call emergency services.

EMERGENCY NUMBER IN MEXICO: 911

If the person loses consciousness, stops breathing, or shows signs of heatstroke — call 911 immediately.

The main hospital in Mérida is Hospital O'Horán: +52 999 924 4111

For tourist emergencies: SECTUR Hotline: 800 987 8224 (toll-free within Mexico)



## **PRACTICAL TIPS FOR BEATING THE HEAT**

### ***Timing Is Everything***

- Plan all outdoor activities before 10:00 AM or after 5:00 PM — midday sun is brutal and largely unavoidable outdoors
- Siesta hours (1–4 PM) exist for a reason — take them seriously
- If visiting ruins or walking tours, book early morning departure times only

### ***Dress Smart***

- Wear loose, light-colored, breathable fabrics — linen and lightweight cotton are ideal
- Cover up rather than strip down — long sleeves in light fabric protect from UV better than bare skin
- A wide-brimmed hat is critical for any time outdoors
- Carry a small portable fan or misting bottle

### ***Hydration Strategy***

- Drink at least 3–4 liters of water per day — more if you are active outdoors
- Add electrolytes: coconut water, sports drinks, or oral rehydration salts
- Avoid alcohol and excess caffeine, which accelerate dehydration
- Eat water-rich foods: fresh fruit, cucumber, watermelon — all widely available in Mérida's markets

#### **YOUR DAILY HEAT SURVIVAL CHECKLIST**

- ✓ Sunscreen SPF 50+ applied before leaving accommodation
- ✓ Wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses
- ✓ At least 1.5L of water on your person
- ✓ Electrolyte sachets or sports drink
- ✓ Light, loose, long-sleeved clothing
- ✓ All outdoor plans scheduled before 10 AM or after 5 PM
- ✓ Emergency numbers saved in your phone



### **Navigate the City Like a Local**

- Walk in the shade — Meridanos stick to the shaded side of the street. Follow their lead
- Pop into churches, pharmacies, and shops to cool down — nobody minds
- Take taxis or Ubers for any distance over 1 block on foot during midday
- Nearby cenotes (underground freshwater pools) offer the perfect cool-down escape

### **Protect Your Skin**

- Apply SPF 50+ sunscreen 30 minutes before going outside, and reapply every 90 minutes
- UV intensity in Mérida regularly hits 11–12 on the UV Index — the maximum "Extreme" category
- Sunburn dramatically impairs your body's ability to regulate heat — protection isn't optional, it's mandatory

#### **AMY'S PERSONAL TIPS**

- ✓ Don't spend more than 2 hours outside the house during the months of May, June, July, & August
- ✓ Try not to go outside the house 2 days in a row - take a rest day in between
- ✓ Have your groceries delivered during the hot season (Rappi, Uber Eats, etc.)
- ✓ Keep bags of ice in your freezer for emergencies
- ✓ A swimming pool is important to have - use it as often as needed
- ✓ Take multiple cold showers daily - as often as needed
- ✓ Don't push yourself further or longer than you need too - when you start feeling the effects of heat exhaustion, you've pushed too much
- ✓ Drink electrolyte enhanced water - available from Oxxo, Costco, & most grocery stores
- ✓ Have Electrolit drinks on hand in your house
- ✓ Use cold water bottles on your body to help you cool down faster, especially if outside your house

***Mérida is a magnificent city — its food, culture, and architecture are world-class. Respect the heat, plan smart, and you'll have a safe and unforgettable experience.***