

LIFE IN MÉRIDA™
LEARN ABOUT
MÉRIDA GUIDE

SEP 08/1922 GOBIERNO DEL ESTADO YUCATÁN
BIBLIOTECA CENTRAL ESTATAL
MÁNUEL CEPEDA PERAZA
SECRETARÍA DE EDUCACIÓN PÚBLICA
CALLE 57, MÉRIDA, YUCATÁN, MÉXICO

— AMY JONES & ANGEL RODRIGUEZ —



You are about to embark on an adventure filled time learning all about the magical city of Mérida. There's so much to see, do, and experience here - there's truly something for everyone. I started LifeInMerida.com to provide answers to all kinds of questions including helpful recommendations. Angel and I have dedicated countless hours investigating, experiencing, and researching. I made it my mission to become an expert on Mérida. Therefore, many call us Ambassadors of Mérida.

Being married to a local has definite advantages. Since 2019, I've learned more about the culture, history, and little known details from Angel than I would have on my own. He has a wealth of knowledge that other locals are surprised at! With connections all over the city, if he doesn't know the answer he will find someone that does.

This guide is dividing into the following sections:

- Mérida Overview - Culture and History
- Mérida General - Things to Know
- Mérida Living - Moving Considerations and Daily Life

Good luck with your visit to Mérida!

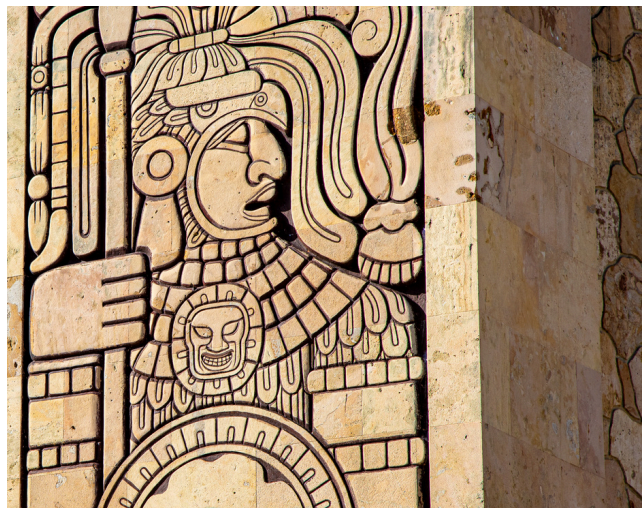
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MÉRIDA OVERVIEW CULTURE AND HISTORY

- At a Glance
- City Orientation
 - City Navigation
 - City Centro
 - City North
 - City Suburbs
- Colonial Charm
- Cultural Sensitivity
- Economic Growth



AT A GLANCE

You'll learn quickly after you arrive that information changes frequently in Mérida. I anticipate this guide will shed some light on confusing topics you've heard about and introduce to you things you may not have even considered.

Mérida attracts a wide variety of socio-economic levels. While it was a well-kept secret for many years, it's now a favorite destination for Mexican Nationals and travelers from around the globe.

- Mérida and the state of Yucatan are among the safest places in Mexico.
- Approximately 50% of extranjeros are snowbirds living in Mérida between November and March.
- "Mérida is booming right now. 10 more years of steady growth is forecasted for the region," stated Aquiles González Chacón of AMPI, the Mexican Association of Real Estate Professionals.
- The Best Places to Live in Mexico as a U.S. Extranjero - Puerto Vallarta, Mérida, Lake Chapala, & Tulum - International Living
- Mérida has long been a favorite of extranjeros, with 1.1% of all U.S. citizens over the age of 50 having established permanent residency. - International Living
- Mérida is one of the top retirement destinations. - CNN Money

When deciding where to stay in Mérida, utilize Google Maps or Google Earth to check out your surroundings. You can virtually see the area to become familiar with it. If you feel uncomfortable, find another location and do the same. Remember, petty crime and property theft happen in any city of a million people. However, in Mérida, violent crime is rare. Most crimes that occur here are crimes of opportunity - not preplanned. Be aware of your surroundings at all times.





AT A GLANCE

Considered one of the most conservative cities in Mexico, Mérida is in the biggest city in the state of Yucatan in Mexico. The Yucatan Peninsula consists of three different states: Yucatan, Campeche, and Quintana Roo as well as parts of Belize and Guatemala. The Yucatan Peninsula separates the Gulf of Mexico from the Caribbean Sea. Out of the 3 states found in the Peninsula, Quintana Roo is probably the most popular. 3 hours west of Quintana Roo, you arrive in the capital of Mérida.

According to CEOWORLD, Mérida is the second safest city in the whole American continent. Moreover, it ranked #21 as the safest city, worldwide. Mérida has twice received the prestigious “Cultural Capital of the Americas” award making it the only city to receive the award twice. Rich in culture, history, and folklore, Mérida is also called The White City. Plaza Grande located in the historical center called Centro has had a UNESCO makeover with cobbled streets and manicured gardens. On any given day, you’ll find live music, street vendors, and horse-drawn carriages clip clopping through the streets.

Population and Demographics

- 2020 population of Mérida was just under 1,000,000 inhabitants
- 51.8% women and 48.2% men
- Estimated 10,000 expats from the U.S. and Canada
- Largest number of migrants in the last 5 years came from:
 - United States (2.38k people)
 - Panama (721 people)
 - Cuba (670 people)

Mérida attracts a wide variety of socio-economic levels. While, it was a well-kept secret for many years, it's now a favorite destination for Mexican Nationals as well as travelers from around the globe.



AT A GLANCE

- Mérida is located in the State of Yucatan, Mexico and is the capital city.
- The current population as of 2024 is estimated at 1,300,000 and growing.
- The biggest city in the state.
- The Yucatan Peninsula separates the Gulf of Mexico from the Caribbean Sea and encompasses 3 Mexican states and parts of Belize and Guatemala.
- Mérida has one of the largest historic districts in the Americas.
- Mérida arose from the merger of three major cultures: Mayan, Spanish, and Lebanese.
- Maya archaeological sites are still being discovered, some dating back to the fifth century A.D.
- About 60 percent of Mérida's population is of Maya heritage.
- The prestigious "Cultural Capital of the Americas" award has been awarded to
- Mérida twice.
- Mérida and the state of Yucatan are among the safest places in Mexico.
- Approximately 50% of expats are snowbirds, living in Mérida between November and March only.
- "Mérida is booming right now. 10 more years of steady growth is forecasted for the region," stated Aquiles González Chacón of AMPI, the Mexican Association of Real Estate Professionals.
- The Best Places to Live in Mexico as a U.S. Expat - Puerto Vallarta, Mérida, Lake Chapala, & Tulum - International Living
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Images: Rafael Heredia-Abuxapqui available exclusively at [Bessanova Producciones](#)





AT A GLANCE

The Maya began as hunter-gatherers and migrated into the Yucatán around 2500 B.C. As agricultural developments prompted more people to abandon hunter/gatherer way, they began to settle into cities, many of which grew quickly. Known as the only group to have existed in the pre-Columbian Americas to have established a complete writing system, the Maya also placed great value in art. The architecture was similarly treasured. Their cities featured spectacular structures such as palaces, astronomical observatories, pyramid-temples, and ceremonial ball courts. The calendar, mathematics, and system for understanding astronomy developed by the Mayan civilization were held in high regard. The Mayans are considered one of the most advanced civilizations of its time. The Maya city of Thó was a center of Maya culture for centuries and because of this, some historians consider Mérida the oldest continually occupied city in the Americas.

During the 16th century, the Spanish Empire began to occupy Mesoamerica and by 1697 the last of the Mayan cities was defeated. Francisco Hernández de Córdova was the first to arrive on the coast of Yucatán in 1517. The Spanish implemented a rigorous program of Catholicization and used stones from the pyramids of Thó to symbolically build Mérida's cathedral. The Spanish colony was arranged by castes, with pure-blooded Spanish people forming the upper class and the indigenous people the lower class.

México won independence from Spain in 1810. However, class divisions between Maya people and Spanish descendants still existed. The Mexican government finally defeated the Maya in 1901 after decades of fighting. This war was considered one of the biggest seeds for the Mexican revolution. Spanish colonists set up haciendas on land grants from the Spanish government. Hacienda plantations began the production of natural fiber rope from the henequen plant. Henequen was known as green gold because it made several local families very wealthy. 19th-century henequen barons hired Parisian architects to build opulent villas along Paseo de Montejo; the Mérida version of the Champs-Élysées.

Images: Rafael Heredia-Abuxapqui available exclusively at [Bessanova Producciones](#)





AT A GLANCE

The colonial city of Mérida was once home to the greatest concentration of wealth in the world. 19th-century sisal barons hired Parisian architects to build opulent villas along Paseo de Montejo, a version of the Champs-Élysées. Drive along Paseo de Montejo and other large boulevards to see a glimpse of the immense wealth and mansions of a time that disappeared as quickly as it began.

Spanish colonists who settled in Mérida laid out the city as a numbered grid. Savvy business owners erected pubs or shops with memorable names on the corners to help people find where to meet. Iconic plaques were eventually installed on these corners include the name of the corner along with a picture. Almost every corner in the historic center of Mérida was given a unique name.

Mérida is called The White City. Some say it is because the buildings are made from white limestone or because it's one of the cleanest cities in Yucatán or from people wearing white clothing. Spanish noblemen known as the "Divine Caste" were also the reason Mérida is called the White City - for their white or light skin and the pure blood of the Spanish.

The Yucatan Asteroid Theory is a scientific explanation of how the Yucatan Peninsula formed. This theory has been studied for years to explain why the geological makeup of the Yucatan Peninsula is so different from the rest of Mexico. Approximately, 65 million years ago an enormous asteroid crashed to the earth's surface in Chicxulub just north of Mérida . The result was the Chicxulub crater. This crater caused dramatic climate change, the end of the dinosaurs, and the creation of cenotes; underground sinkholes filled with fresh water. People still tell stories about the impact and the effect of the asteroid throughout Mexico and the world.



AT A GLANCE

Geography - The city of Mérida is very flat with a maximum elevation of 9 meters above sea level. The main type of vegetation in the area is tropical plants, shrubs, and ground cover as well as henequen fields. While there is little to no surface water in the city, underground rivers and springs run throughout the region. With a humid and tropical climate, Mérida also falls within the trade wind zone of the tropic of Cancer.

Culture - Mérida is the fusion of Latin America, European, Lebanese, Asian, African, and Indigenous cultures, all mixing during the colonial period. This mixing, known commonly as mestizo, produced a unique cultural identity of the basis for modern-day Mérida.

This is found in every aspect of life:

- Food
- Clothing
- Art
- Architecture
- Music
- Language

Mérida architecture is stunning, diverse, and full of history. Visit the city and surrounding areas where you can see the ruins of ancient pyramids, baroque Churches, neo-classical buildings, modern high-rise apartments, art deco homes, and gorgeous remodeled colonial style homes featuring pastel colors so well known in this beautiful city.

Money - The Mexican Peso is the legal tender of Mexico. Currently, the peso is issued in nine different kinds of banknotes and nine coins of different value, ranging from 5 centavos to 1,000 pesos. Banknotes of 20, 50, and 100 pesos are printed in polymer whereas the rest of notes are printed on cotton paper.



AT A GLANCE

Bearing the inscription “The United Mexican States”, peso coins have experienced various changes in design over the years. Additionally, there are special issue, commemorative banknotes for the centennial of the Mexican Revolution and the bicentennial of Mexican Independence.

Religion - Mérida does not have an official religion. However, Roman Catholicism is the dominant faith and deeply culturally pervasive. It is estimated over 80% of the population identifies as Catholic. Many Mexicans see Catholicism as part of their identity, passed on through the family and nation like cultural heritage.

Predominant religious groups:

- Roman Catholic
- Pentecostal, Evangelical, and Mainline Protestant Christianity
- Non-Believers
- Jehovah’s Witness
- Mennonites

Language - The official language of Mérida is Spanish. However, a large percentage of the population speak Maya, one of the indigenous languages. The Mexican government uses Spanish in the majority of its proceedings. However, it recognizes 68 national languages, 63 of which are indigenous. Of the Indigenous languages spoken, two of the most widely used are Nahuatl and Maya.

Music and Cuban Influence - Different styles of music offer culture as well, such as reggaetón, cumbia, bachata, salsa, and, of course, mariachi. The traditional music of Mérida is Trova. Trova first emerged as a music genre in Santiago, Cuba at the end of the nineteenth century. Another heavy Cuban influence in the culture of Mérida is the guayabera shirt. You’ll see many men wearing these beautiful shirts adorned with 2 or 4 pockets and vertical rows of delicately sewn pleats.

Images: Rafael Heredia-Abuxapqui available exclusively at [Bessanova Producciones](#)





AT A GLANCE

Holidays - Mexico's Independence Day is not May 5th, but rather September 16th. Celebrations begin on the eve of the holiday with fireworks, music, and dancing. The next day, parades take place in most neighborhoods.

The most popular food for this celebration is Chiles en Nogada: a green chili pepper stuffed with meat and spices, topped with a creamy sauce, and pomegranate seeds. The colors of the food pay homage to the colors of the Mexican flag: green, white, and red.

Another important celebration is Day of the Dead or Dia de Muertos. A commemoration of death and a celebration of life, celebrations occur on November 1st and 2nd. People create colorful shrines called ofrendas to honor the deceased. Placed in homes, offices, churches, schools, and squares in the weeks prior to the holiday, you'll see ofrendas everywhere. Lit with candles, graveyards are another popular spot for ofrendas. In Yucatan, it is referred to as Hanal Pixan which is in the Mayan language.

Many people take time off during Semana Santa or Easter week. This is one of the most important holidays to spend time with friends and families. Being together during holidays is an integral part of Mexican culture.

The Christmas season begins December 16th with Posadas. These get-togethers symbolize the journey to Bethlehem before the birth of Jesus. You'll find a variety of posadas with some saying prayers and eating fruits with others drinking, eating, dancing, and breaking piñatas. January 6th marks the end of the season with the celebration of Three Kings Day, a holiday where the Three Wise Men traditionally bring gifts to children.



AT A GLANCE

Local government is administered by more than 2,000 units called *municipios* (municipalities), which may be entirely urban or consist of a town or central village as well as its hinterland. Members of *municipio* governments are typically elected for three-year terms. Mexico's major political parties represent a wide variety of political and social perspectives. Nine political parties are currently represented in Congress.

Two parties have a predominant role in Mexican politics:

- Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI)
- Partido de Acción Nacional (National Action Party, PAN)

Two other parties have notable representation:

- Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Democratic Revolutionary Party, PRD)
- Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional (National Regeneration Movement, MORENA)

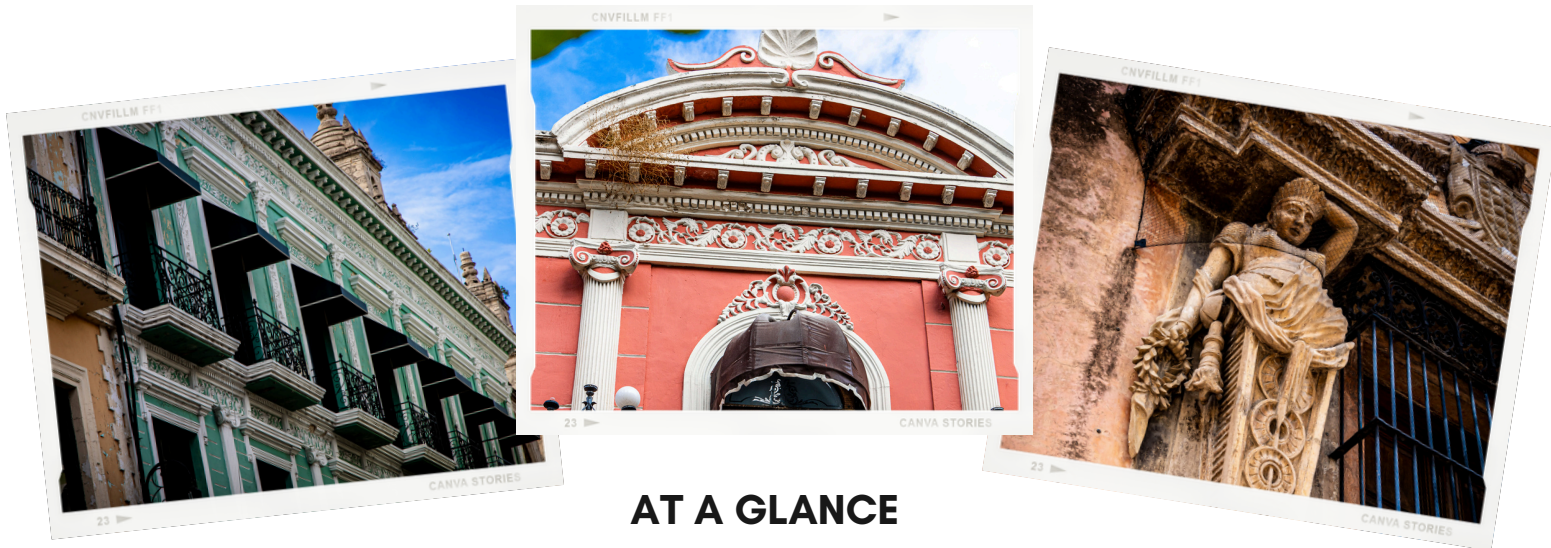
Many states require that no more than 70 to 80 percent of candidates be of one gender. Although all Mexican citizens aged 18 and older are required by law to vote, enforcement is lax. Mexicans living outside the country, including millions in the United States, are now allowed to vote by absentee ballot.

Women and Voting - Women were first allowed to vote in Yucatán in 1917. However, women could not vote in local elections or hold local office until 1947. By the early 21st century, women occupied about one-fifth of the seats in the Senate and more than one-fourth in the Chamber of Deputies, as well as a small number of ministerial and Supreme Court positions.

Gay marriage became legalized in all states in Mexico between 2105 and 2022. Yucatan legalized gay marriage in March of 2022.

Images: Rafael Heredia-Abuxapqui available exclusively at [Bessanova Producciones](#)





AT A GLANCE

Climate - Since Mérida is inland and has low elevation, it is typically a few degrees hotter than in neighboring coastal areas. Located in the northwest corner of the Yucatan Peninsula, you can expect to use air conditioning for most of the year. The temperature normally ranges between 63F and 97F, rarely dropping below the mid-50s or above 103F. It's important to note the most rain falls in September with an average total accumulation of 7.3 inches. Between June and October rainfall accounts for about 80 percent of the city's 40 inches of annual precipitation. Humidity is high during the rainy season but generally does not rise above 76%. The least rain falls around March with an average total accumulation of 0.7 inches.

Safety - Possibly, one of the primary reasons Mérida is so safe is due to a large amount of police scattered throughout the city. The city of Mérida police force is strategically placed all over the city to support, guide, and mostly keep things under control. Extra police officers are added to the Centro (City Center) patrol beat to watch over tourists namely around banks, ATMs, restaurants, and transportation hubs to prepare for high-season which is October through March. Because Mérida is not on a beach, many people come for the tranquility, arts, culture, food, and history. In the words of Mayor Renán Barrera, "Mérida, the safest city in Mexico, has a citizen agenda that is an example to follow in matters of security and public order, thanks in large part to the work of our police corporations. If something distinguishes Mérida in terms of security, it is precisely the prevention actions of the municipal police corporation, as well as the high-quality human capital that integrates it, which forms the first link to build safe cities."

Mérida is:

- The second safest city in North America.
- Considered as safe as Europe.
- Mexico's safest city and the safest city in Latin America.



MÉRIDA AT A GLANCE

The 3 MOST Dangerous Things in Mérida

- Heat - Plan accordingly with sunscreen, hat, or umbrella. You'll be grateful to have a light wrap or sweater with you due to the change between the outside heat and the inside air-conditioning.
- Mosquitoes - Always carry repellent with you. A great trick I found is that hand-sanitizer takes the sting out of bites.
- Sidewalks - Wear comfortable shoes, watch when stepping on and off of curbs. Don't multi-task or look down. Be aware of where you place your feet at all times.

General Safety Tips for Mérida Mexico

- Don't leave valuables in sight in your home or car where anyone might be tempted.
- Don't give keys to your housekeeper, gardener or pool man.
- Always be home when any service provider is at your home.
- Pay attention to your gut instinct - it is always right.
- Always be aware of your surroundings and who is around you.
- If you are walking at night, keep an eye and ear out for unusual activity around you.
- Avoid dark streets is one of the most important safety tips for Mérida Mexico.
- Don't bring anything to Mérida you can't afford to lose.
- Never keep all of your money in one place. Keep a little bit in your wallet for easy access and the majority of it in another part of your wallet, purse, or bag.
- Keep copies of your passport (unless directed by authorities to keep your original documents on you - normally this only happens in times of emergency).
- Do not ever allow the police to take your ID, passport, or license tags.



CITY ORIENTATION

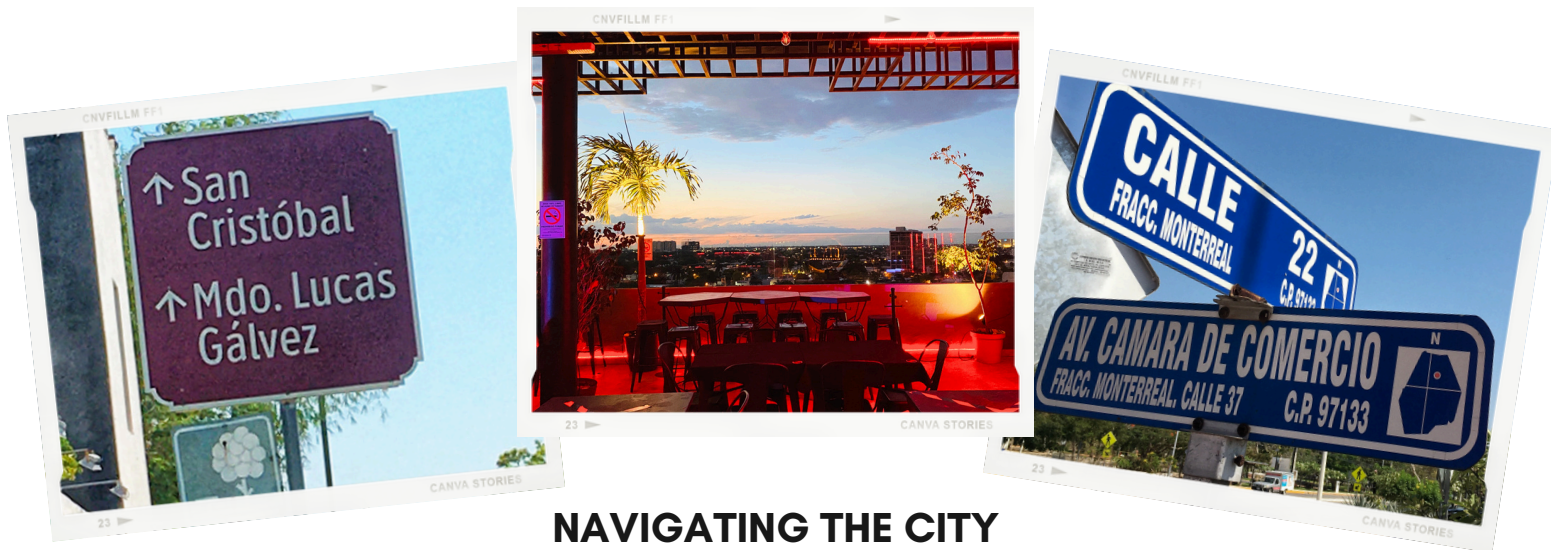
Whether you are a history buff, foodie, lover of the arts, hand-made crafts collector, or looking for a relaxing vacation experience, Mérida has it all. As the capital of the state of Yucatán, it attracts a wide variety of people from all walks of life. While Mexico has suffered negative news, many people move to and visit Mérida regularly. Yes, at first, Mérida will seem hard to navigate. Once you understand how the streets run and the layout of the diverse and different neighborhoods called colonias, you'll gain more confidence over time.

Notable Areas of the City

- Paseo de Montejo
- Prol. Paseo Montejo
- Centro
- The North
- The Periferico
- Suburbs

Quick Orientation Lesson

- Even-numbered streets run north-south, with lower-numbered streets starting in the east and increasing to the west.
- Odd-numbered streets run east-west, with lower-numbered streets starting in the north and increasing to the south.
- Larger avenues have names such as Av. Cupules, Av. Itzaes or Av. Colon.
- Find Plaza Grande in the city center.
- Then, relate that to the Periferico to see how the city is laid out.
- The Paseo Montejo is the central boulevard that runs North and South.
- Once you have these landmarks, you'll have a better sense of the layout of Mérida.



NAVIGATING THE CITY

Each neighborhood will have its own set of address numbers. For example, you will have a Calle 41 in several different neighborhoods. To reduce confusion, you will notice that the cross streets are used along along with the zip code.

A typical address can look like this:

Calle 41 #559 x 80 y 82

- Calle 41 is the street
- 559 is the number of the house or establishment
- 80 y 82 help you find your destination by giving you the cross streets noted between "x" streets 80 and "y" 82

You may also find that the address numbers do not run in consecutive order. Remember you need to have all three parts of the address to find your destination. Occasionally, you will see addresses with letters as well. If you are unable to find your exact address, keep walking a block or two and it will appear.

Paseo de Montejo – Named after Francisco de Montejo, the Spanish conquistador who founded the city in 1542, the Paseo de Montejo is the main boulevard running north and south.

Prolongation Paseo Montejo or Prol. Montejo – Meaning the "extension of the Paseo," this boulevard continues until it connects in the north with Federal Highway 261, also known as the Periferico.

Calle 60 – An intriguing and little-known fact is that Calle 60 was the old promenade avenue before the construction of the Paseo de Montejo. That's why you also see smaller-scale mansions along this historic street. Calle 60 is the longest street in the city, terminating in Progreso. There's a new and more modern road to Progreso now.



NEIGHBORHOODS

Ultimately, neighborhoods in Mérida radiate from the city's center that locals call “The Downtown” and Plaza Grande. This historic city center features an elegant park and breathtaking Cathedral San Ildefonso. Plaza Grande is a beautiful place to experience the heartbeat of Mérida. There are also newsstands, coffee shops, restaurants, and various retail establishments.

The Zocalo (buildings surrounding the plaza) include:

- Cathedral San Ildefonso
- Governor’s Palace
- Casa Montejo
- MACAY Museum
- Olimpo Cultural Center
- Ayuntamiento or City Hall

Colonias in Centro

- Ermita - Calle 66 x Calle 77 y Calle 77-A
- Garcia Gineres* - Av. Colón x 20 y 23
- Mejorada - Calle 57, Parque de la Mejorada
- Dragones Arches - Calle 61 #440, Parque de la Mejorada
- Del Puente Arch - Calle 50, Parque de la Mejorada
- San Cristóbal - Calle 50 X 69
- San Juan - Calle 67 x 62 y 64
- San Juan Arch - Calle 67 x 62 y 64
- Santa Ana* - Calle 60 x 45
- Santa Lucia - Calle 60 x 55
- San Sebastian - Calle 72 x 75 y 77
- Santiago* - Calle 70 x 57 y 59



NEIGHBORHOODS

*These neighborhoods have popular local markets. Slow Food Market in Garcia Gineres is only open on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. For ease of navigation, use the Monumento a la Patria and the Fiesta Americana Hotel for reference points.

Ermita - The names La Ermita and Ermita are interchangeable. Dedicated to Nuestra Señora del Buen Viaje or Our Lady of the Good Journey, the Ermita Church was initially built in the 1700s as a wayfarer's shrine.

Garcia Gineres and Parque de Las Americas - Don Joaquín Marcial Garcia Gineres arrived from Cuba in 1898, accompanied by his wife and brother. He was quite a visionary, proposing a project to develop an abandoned part of Mérida known as San Cosme.

Mejorada - One of the oldest buildings in the city, dating from the 17th century, Mejorada Church features a lovely cupula, one of the first on the peninsula. The church, "Del Transit of Our Lady," is dedicated to the Virgen del Carmen and resembles the Mejorada in Madrid.

San Cristobal - In the 1540s, Francisco Montejo and his conquistadores set aside this area to house the Indians from Central Mexico, who helped them conquer the Mayans. San Cristóbal Church, called Our Lady of Guadalupe, was the last one that Spaniards built in the Yucatán with its foundation stone laid in 1757.

San Juan - Located just four blocks south of the Plaza Grande, the church of San Juan is my favorite in Mérida. This church, dating back to 1770, is breathtaking with its magnificent yellow color, architectural details, and magnificent presence in the park. The beautiful arch, built in 1690, marks the beginning of the "royal road" to Campeche. Originally, one passed under an arch like this to get into or out of Mérida.



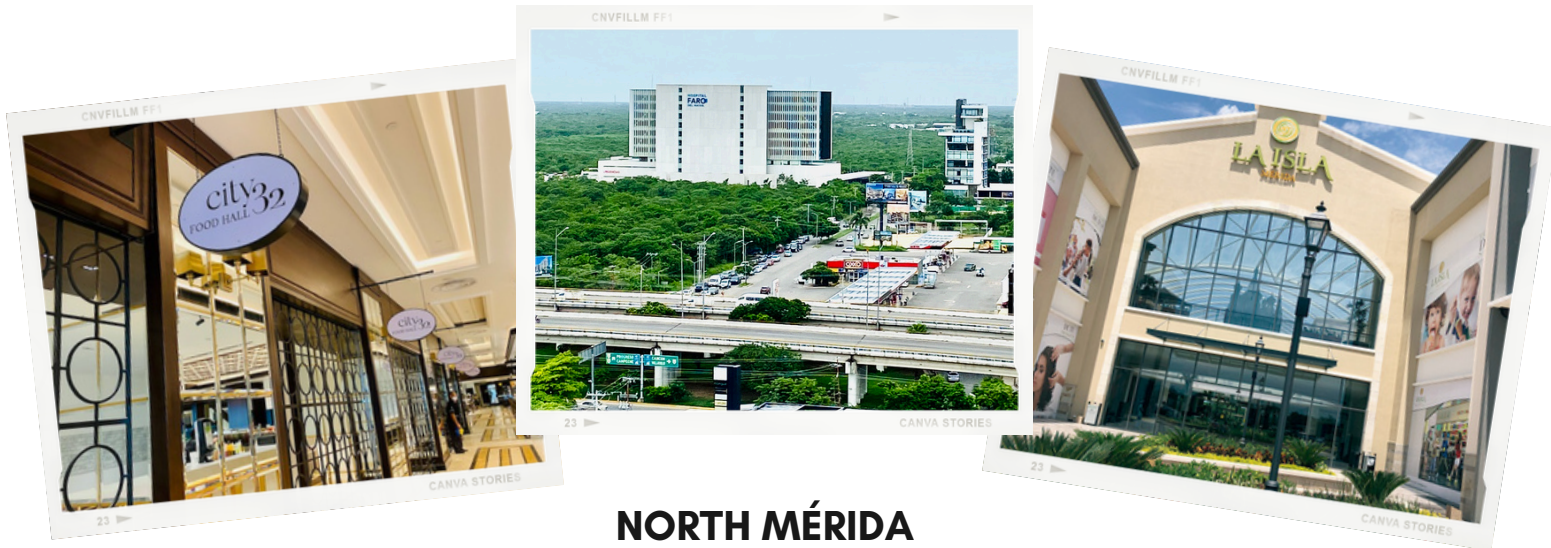
NEIGHBORHOODS

San Sebastian - In colonial times, San Sebastian was part of an area given by the senior Francisco de Montejo to his son. Wanting large estates to be built, he removed Indigenous Mayas from outlying and relocated them into the area now known as San Sebastian. This was the area where the disenfranchised local Mayans and lower-class immigrants lived for hundreds of years.

Santa Ana - At the corner of what is now Calle 60 at 47, one of the famous arches of Mérida stood to demarcate the city's outskirts. Unfortunately, it was demolished in the 19th century. Santa Ana Park was famous for the orange trees found in the square. It was also the location of a renowned bakery, "Los Catalanes," which distributed its exquisite bread in carts pulled by mules wearing bells on their necks. This bakery is attributed with the invention of pan frances.

Santa Lucia - The patron saint of Santa Lucia dates to the 4th century. A bright-eyed young woman was born in Italy. As was common then, she had a dowry that would be given to her husband upon their marriage. Before the wedding, her fiancé asked her to denounce her faith. Because she would not do this, she was arrested, tortured, and blinded. The etymology of her name is "lux" (Latin), translated to light. She is known as the patron saint of the blind.

Santiago - Santiago was one of the first areas the conquistadors settled after arriving in Mérida. Approximately 350-400 years ago, this area was relegated to the indigenous Indios and artisans. Named for the Patron Saint of Spain, the church of Santiago was founded in 1637. Little remains of the original structure other than a modest sanctuary with a baroque statue of Santiago and a dated inscription at the entry.



NORTH MÉRIDA

North Mérida is a vibrant and dynamic city area, with many distinct neighborhoods offering an array of lifestyle options for those who choose to make it their home. These neighborhoods have something for everyone, from bustling plazas to quiet residential streets. Because most people research Centro, there's little information about North Mérida. So, let's look at "The North," as locals call it, with unique qualities and a different look and feel. While you'll find some areas modern and sleek, others feel more local and are more characteristic of Mérida.

Altabrisa - Altabrisa is a recognizable area due to the popularity of Altabrisa Mall, Star Medica Hospital, and many medical offerings. It's both a sought-after residential area and a thriving commercial district.

City Center and City 32 - The City Center area includes a large shopping center with Walmart, banks, restaurants, a cinema, and other retail stores. Many people confuse the name with the center of the city (Centro). City 32 is one of the newest multi-use complexes in North Mérida, located directly across the street from the City Center shopping area. Offering a mix of restaurants, retail, a food court, and a hotel, you'll find it's a relaxing spot for coffee or an elegant dinner.

The Montes - Montecristo, Montebello, Monterreal, Montes de Ame, Montecarlo: You may have heard this area referred to as "The Montes." Housing options in The Montes are varied. You'll find traditional Mexican-style homes; some are referred to as compounds because they take up an entire block.

The Harbor Mall, Costco, and Galerías - This area is where the most commercial growth is happening, including the new U.S. Consulate. Many high-rise condos, a greenbelt with a pond, a park, and a walking trail exist. You can choose from a luxurious lifestyle with



NORTH MÉRIDA

upscale housing and modern amenities or a more local lifestyle in colonias such as Xcumpich and Francisco de Montejo.

Francisco de Montejo - Francisco de Montejo is a large area consisting of Francisco de Montejo I, II, III, and IV. This area attracts locals, young professionals, and families due to its location and affordability.

Las Americas - A residential neighborhood we call a master-planned community. You'll find neat rows of low-rise homes, primarily white. Not to be confused with Parque Las Americas in Colonia Garcia Gineres.

La Isla - Most popular in this area is the La Isla Mall, featuring over 100 stores, restaurants, and a movie theater—a favorite hangout spot for locals and a popular destination for visitors. La Isla features several high-rise condo complexes overlooking a beautiful, landscaped pond with a walking path.

Temozon Norte - A popular, growing community known for its modern design and gated communities in the La Isla area. It is common to find high-end amenities in residential areas, such as tennis courts, paddle courts, playgrounds, and security.

Cabo Norte - Cabo Norte is designed for upscale living and offers residents a luxurious and modern lifestyle. The community is gated, offering maximum security to its residents. Enjoy a beautiful lake with a jogging and biking path, a soccer field, a basketball court, and a playground for children. Cabo Norte is also the location for Casa Elite Senior Living Community, the only one of its kind in Mérida.



MÉRIDA SUBURBS

Suburbs - While the city center offers a vibrant cultural scene, the suburbs provide a quieter, more affordable lifestyle. Discover the benefits and drawbacks of living in the suburbs and a list of towns to consider. One of the most significant advantages of living in Mérida's suburbs is the lower cost of living.

- Dzityá
- Candel
- Gran Santa Fe Norte
- Xcanatun
- La Ceiba Country Club (with golf course)
- Cholul
- Conkal
- Yucatan Country Club (with golf course)

AREAS TO AVOID

Neighborhoods to Avoid - As a general rule, neighborhoods close to and south of the international airport are ones to avoid. These are considered rougher barrios where drugs are sold, and violence can occur. Be aware of your surroundings at all times. Importantly, avoid neighborhoods located south of the Periferico, including:

- Piedra de Agua
- Kanasin and Dzununcan
- Juan Pablo
- Mulchechen and Vergel



COLONIAL CHARM

Colonial Homes - Colonial homes add to the charm of Centro. From private residences to museums to restaurants to city buildings, the scale of colonial homes is quite dramatic.

Some of the best examples of these colonial homes are these restaurants in Centro:

- Restaurante Amaro at Calle 59 #507 x 60 y 62
- Casa Yucatan Restaurante at Calle 60 #445 x 49 y 51
- Museo de la Gastronomía Yucateca (MUGY) at Calle 62 #466 x 55 y 57
- La Chaya Maya Casona at Calle 55 #510 x 60 y 62
- Cafe Montejo Mérida at Calle 59 #584 x 72 y 74

Pasta Tiles - The paste mosaic technique was first invented by Arabs over 3,000 years ago. However, its period of splendor and popularity did not come until the 19th century. Pasta tiles were first introduced to the Yucatan Peninsula in the 16th and 17th centuries. Spanish and French ships seeking Mexican gold, silver, cacao, and other valuables to take back to Spain packed the tiles as ballast. When the ships landed, the tiles were dumped on Yucatecan beaches, catching the eyes of fishermen, locals, artisans, and masons. The cement tiles were intricately designed with multiple colors. They were first known as “mosaicos de pasta.” In the second half of the 16th century, Yucatecan artisans began developing their designs and procedures with help from tile artists from Talavera de la Reina in Spain.

Esquinas de Mérida - Scattered around Centro, you’ll see charming square plaques on some corners. These are called the Esquinas de Mérida or the Corners of Mérida. These plaques were installed by savvy business owners who owned pubs or shops to help people navigate the city center. Red and white plaques included the particular corner's name and a drawing. It was much easier for residents to remember the corner's name than navigating the confusing street numbers.



CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Recognizing the distinction between different cultures is critical to being culturally sensitive. It's essential to acknowledge that cultures differ in terms of the ways people communicate and interact with each other without placing any value judgment on them. Being sensitive to culture means knowing that not everyone is the same and recognizing that your culture is not inherently superior. In this interconnected world, the importance of this understanding cannot be overstated. Unfortunately, some individuals disregard the value of being aware of cultural diversity. They operate as if the planet is their exclusive domain and only focus on what is in their bubble.

Cultural Customs - Social etiquette matters tremendously in Mérida. Be sure you respond kindly to greetings; always start a conversation or a message with a greeting. Please (por favor) and thank you (gracias) go a long way.

Greetings - It is normal for strangers on the street to tell you buenos dias (good morning), buenas tardes (good afternoon), or buenas noches (good evening). Etiquette is to respond in kind or to offer the greeting first. Always say goodbye to someone before leaving, especially at a gathering or dinner. Leaving without doing so can imply that you did not enjoy the gathering or their company.

Communication - It is polite to start with a greeting when sending messages. Most locals will wait for your response and then tell you what they want and vice versa.

Be Specific - with what you need and make no assumptions. If you ask for a glass of water, ask for natural water with (or without) ice. This culture does not assume anything. Therefore, you are responsible for asking for exactly what you need down to the most minor details, to avoid frustration on both sides.



CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Restaurants – You’ll have to ask for your check at a restaurant as Mexican servers think it rude to rush you or bring your check to you. Additionally, you can sit and enjoy your conversation and companionship as long as you like. Please tip your waiter/waitress accordingly.

Mañana – The word mañana means morning, tomorrow, and never. At times, mañana is a polite way of saying no. It is considered rude to tell someone no (thus saying mañana).

Elderly – Show heightened respect to those who are noticeably older. Let them pass when in public. Allow them to take your seat on buses if the others are full.

Eating – Be aware of the spiciness of the food. If you do not have a good tolerance for spicy food, tell your Mexican counterpart or restaurant server. Many meals have multiple components with different levels of spicy heat.

Meals – Meals can last quite a long time, especially if there are multiple dishes and servings. Mexicans prefer socializing over meals and do not like being rushed when eating.

Rushing Through Meals – Here, dining is an experience. It’s not just about eating and trying to be finished as fast as possible. It’s meant to be slower and more pleasurable. Everything takes time, including service and receiving your bill.

Criticizing Food and/or Culture – There’s nothing positive in comparing everything you eat, see, and experience to how things are “at home.” Many comment that food, service, and other details are not “up to their standards” or “not what they expected.” Try to see this as a unique experience without judgment, expectations, or comparison.



CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Food Modifications - Requesting alterations to traditional dishes and local cooking styles is insensitive. The exception is if you request modifications due to an allergy or dietary restriction. Most regular restaurants can't accommodate special dietary restrictions. However, other specialty restaurants, such as vegan, vegetarian, and gluten-free, cater to dietary needs. The point is to find the restaurant that caters to your needs vs. asking a restaurant to change to your needs. Recently, I saw someone ask for a Thai restaurant to make a vegan dish by removing the fish sauce. Notably, this was impossible as the fish sauce was the prominent flavor of the dish.

Not Venturing Out of Centro - Centro is the comfort zone for many due to its familiarity. But seeing the other side of the coin is important, too. Witnessing how people live south of Centro and in The North is important. Don't limit your perspective to one area. Venture out to experience what the rest of the city is like and has to offer.

Hours of Operation - Hours of operation for merchants and restaurants are different here. Sometimes, you'll find a shop closed when it's supposed to be open, and there's no explanation. Other times, restaurants stay open longer than posted hours. Be flexible in expectations as issues occur behind the scenes. This affects patrons, but please don't hold it against the shop owner. Some situations take precedence over being able to open or close on time. Adapt as well as you can.

Dating - If someone of the opposite gender invites you to dinner, it could be interpreted as a romantic gesture. Ask a friend to join you to reduce the chances of a misunderstanding. You might be expected to pay for the meal if you're a man.

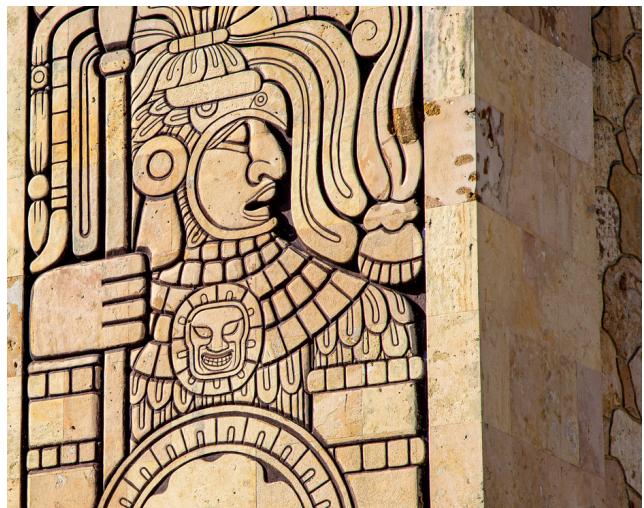


ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mérida is experiencing a period of rapid growth and development, with exciting opportunities for businesses and residents alike. A surge of ambitious commercial and industrial projects are significantly contributing to the city's economy. Mérida is transforming into a bustling hub for both business and tourism. The government has implemented various incentives and programs to encourage investment, such as tax breaks and grants for businesses that create jobs in the area. Additionally, the government has invested in infrastructure, including the creation of technology parks and the expansion of high-speed internet access. Construction of new highways and bridges, and the expansion of public transportation have made it easier for people to travel. As a result, many companies have established operations in the region, creating job opportunities, and contributing to the local economy.

From commercial projects and warehousing to a new U.S. Consulate, here are some exciting facts:

- In the coming years, Mérida is expected to be a pillar city of the country, reaching a growth of 4%.
- Mérida is ranked third in Mexico for growth in manufacturing.
- Mérida ranks first in the nation for ease of doing business.
- The U.S. Chamber of Commerce declared the Yucatan is the best state in Mexico to invest in due to ease of doing business, energy, security, and investment in infrastructure.
- Located just twenty miles from the commercial Port of Progreso, manufacturing in Mérida is expanding rapidly.
- North Mérida is the fastest-growing area in the Yucatan Peninsula.



MÉRIDA GENERAL TRAVEL TIPS

- Airbnb
- Arriving in Mérida
- Avoiding Scams
- Activities
 - Beaches
 - Cenotes
 - Maps
 - Haciendas
 - Kid Stuff
- Beating the Heat
- Bringing Meds
- Grocery Stores & Markets
- Insects
 - General
 - Mosquitoes
- Itinerary on a Budget
- Pharmacies - Buying Meds
- Police
- Safety
- Spanish
- Tipping
- Toilet Paper
- Transportation
- Water Tips
- FAQs



AIRBNB

You have several choices of platforms for rentals. Notably, the most popular is Airbnb. I highly recommend staying in Centro to take full advantage of all the activities, cultural events, and meet others. If you are here for a short stay, you might consider a hotel as this removes any issues with Airbnb. You'll get to learn the city, talk to people about what they like or don't like about certain areas, and experience different seasons, such as the rainy season for areas that flood, etc.

Now, let's discuss items you may want or need in an Airbnb

- Air-conditioning
- Consistent Wi-Fi
- Swimming Pool
- Instruction Manual
- Essentials
- Washer & Dryer
- Services / Service Providers
- Electricity

Air-conditioning Units

- Central air systems are not part of the construction in Mexico. Therefore you have A/C units called mini-splits strategically placed in the house.
- Look at the photos to see where the mini-splits are located then verify with the owner. It can be common that the photos are old and show a mini-split in a room that has since been removed. Also ask about ceiling fans, their location, and their state of operability.

Consistent WiFi

- Be sure to verify with your host there is consistent and strong WiFi. Also, I've heard some hosts install security cameras inside houses. While Airbnb requires hosts to disclose cameras and security systems, not all hosts do. If you want to check if a security system or cameras are installed, unplug the WiFi. Typically if the host has these items in place, you will receive a call or a message asking if the WiFi is down.



AIRBNB

Property Instructions

- Sometimes hosts will provide a type of instruction manual. If you arrive and can't find the manual, here are some critical things you might ask:
 - Will you be required to buy your own toilet paper, paper towels, trash bags and water?
 - When and where is the trash pick up?
 - What is the WiFi information including the password?
 - If it is a long-term stay, what is the schedule for the service providers (maid, gardener, pool)?
 - Are extra linens provided? If not, are you responsible to take the linens and towels to the lavanderia?
 - What is the process for broken or damaged items?
 - Where is the nearest hospital or clinic in the event of an emergency?
 - Check and double-check the house rules in the online agreement before booking. When in doubt, contact the host as many times as needed until you are comfortable.

Pool

- Easing the heat, especially the weather of the grueling summers, in Mérida will help you; mind, body, and soul.
- Pools come in a variety of sizes from small, dipping pools to large, lap pools. No matter what the size of the pool, be sure to ask when the pool will be serviced. Most importantly, ask if the pool service provider has a key to the house.

NECESSARY Essentials

- A coffee pot with coffee, sugar, and mugs may seem like common sense but sometimes it's not. There's nothing more frustrating than wanting a cup of coffee the morning after you've arrived and you don't have what you need. The same goes for toilet paper, trash bags, and water.



AIRBNB

My Essentials List

- Coffeepot, coffee, sugar, and mugs.
- Wine/beer opener, glasses, bowls, plates, silverware, cooking utensils, pots and pans.
- Small appliances including microwave, toaster, toaster oven and cooktop (some locations only supply a one or two-burner hot plate and advertise that it is a full kitchen).
- Paper and plastic goods like trash bags, paper towels, and toilet paper.
- Bottled water - either small bottles or large ones - at least to get started (don't drink tap water).
- Extra towels and linens.
- Pool towels (if not provided, I bring my own).
- Hot water (yes, sometimes there isn't any hot water).

Important questions to ask PRIOR to booking:

- Are you on a busy street such as a bus route?
- Does the bedroom face the street?
- Where is the nearest grocery store or market?
- Who else has keys to the property?
- What size are the beds? (I've been surprised before when booking a house that listed a double bed only to find 2 twins pushed together to make a double.)
- Are the stairs close to the unit (if upstairs)?
- Will I have access to a working elevator (when applicable)?
- Is any construction happening close-by or next door?
- **Will I be responsible to pay for electricity during my stay?**



ARRIVING IN MÉRIDA

Every year, 2.5M passengers travel to, from and around Mexico. Manuel Crescencio Rejón International Airport (MID) is Mérida's growing modern airport. Located on the southern edge of the city, it is about 20 minutes by car from the city center. Cancun International Airport (CUN) is a popular choice for visitors to Mérida. Cancun is a busy international airport that receives major international airlines as well as charter airlines. Flights into Cancun can be much cheaper than flying direct. So many people opt to fly into Cancun then take the ADO bus service from Cancun to Mérida.

There are several ADO stations in Mérida. Be sure to check locations, days and times for the best options. Taking the bus can add 4 - 6 hours to your trip, so plan accordingly. Cost ranges from \$25 to \$65 USD depending upon the level of service. The higher the service, the less frequency of departures.

I like to fly directly into Mérida even though it's a little more expensive. I take into account cost savings on the airfare vs:

- transferring to ADO station
- waiting for the bus
- travel time to Mérida

When I add up the extra time, it is worth the slight increase in airfare to save time, effort, and energy. It's important to have choices, especially when traveling. Whether you are interested in getting to your destination as quickly as possible or want to take time along the way, you'll have options and information to find what works best for you.

- Uber - While you can take Uber to the airport, you CANNOT use Uber to pick you up from the airport. Do not try to walk out to the street to meet your Uber driver. This can result in a fine. However, many take the risk.
- Taxis - Taxis are available on the ground level of the airport. Going into Centro, the fare should be between \$300 - \$350 MXN - cash and credit cards are accepted.



AVOIDING SCAMS

Be aware of the various scams often used to prey on unsuspecting foreigners. Unfortunately, the most common scams target people unfamiliar with the customs and practices of Mérida. To help you stay safe and alert, find out about the most common scams and some tips on spotting and avoiding deceitful people and situations. You'll find the advice here invaluable; some of the information here may surprise you.

Most common scams:

- Giving money directly to a vendor for house repairs
- Inflated taxi fares
- Real estate "investments" - developments or land
- Gas stations (no longer common but worth mentioning)
- Children selling touristy products (bracelets, necklaces, flowers, etc.)
- Getting overcharged in restaurants (not often, but it does happen)
- Paying deposits upfront for rentals or a house purchase without a contract
- Renting a house without a contract

Fluent English = instant trust. This is probably the most glaring way to get scammed. Yes, this happened to me, too...more than likely, it will happen to you at some point.

Scammers can be incredibly deceiving and easily blend in with regular locals and tourists, making it challenging to spot them. However, if you keep a keen eye out for these common red flags, you may be able to avoid falling victim to their deceitful schemes.

- High-Pressure Sales Tactics
- Unrealistic Offers
- Asking for Personal Information
- Distractions



AVOIDING SCAMS

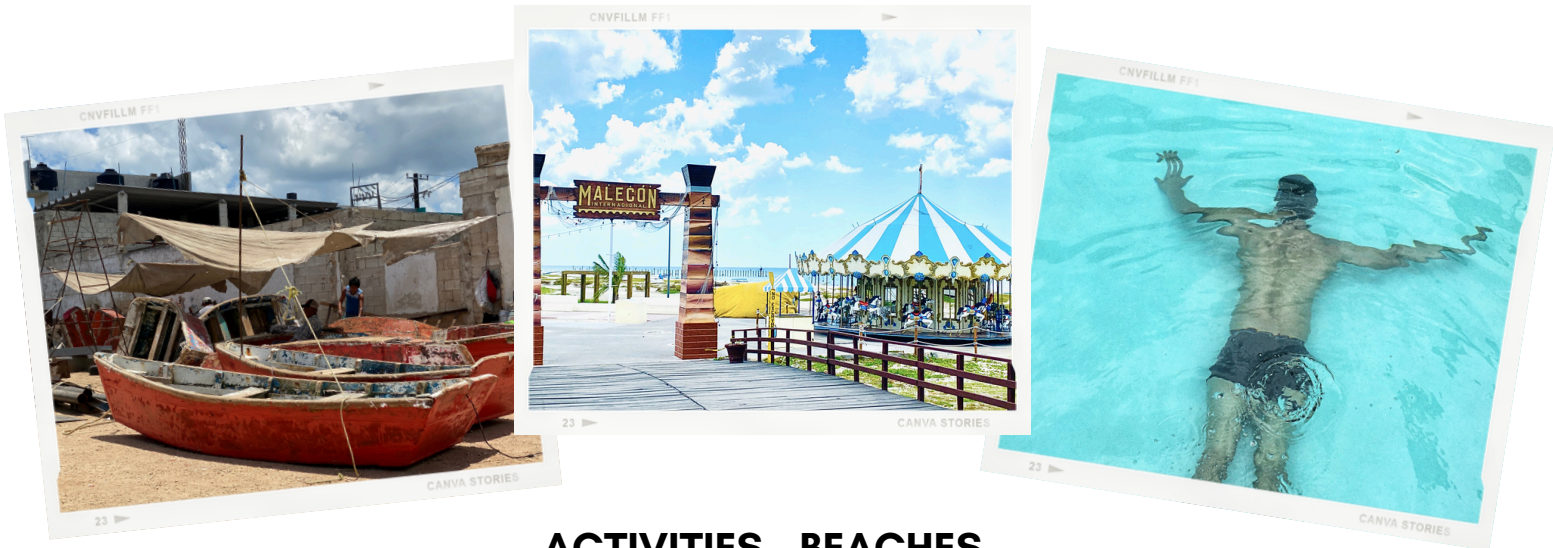
It's essential to remember that scammers come in all shapes and forms. Trust your instincts and always stay vigilant. If something seems off or too good to be true, it's best to err on the side of caution. It's crucial to be cautious and stay alert, and you'll be able to enjoy a safe and enjoyable trip. The best way to avoid falling prey to scams is to remain vigilant and keep your guard up.

- Research Before You Travel
- Be Wary of Overly Friendly Strangers
- Don't Show Off Your Wealth
- Be Cautious When Using ATMs
- Use Trusted Service Providers
- Don't Share Your Personal Information
- Trust Your Instincts

No matter how careful you are, there is always a risk of falling victim to a scam. In the unfortunate event that you get scammed in Mexico, there are some steps you can take to minimize the damage and recover from the situation.

- Report the Incident
- Cancel Your Cards
- Monitor Your Accounts
- Seek Legal Advice
- Learn from Your Experience

PROFECO (Procuraduría Federal del Consumidor) is a government agency tasked with enforcing the law and investigating possible violations. They respond to complaints from residents and tourists, perform random inspections on Mexican businesses, and have the authority to fine or close businesses that are in violation. You can report any issues you have to this agency.



ACTIVITIES - BEACHES

Fortunately, you'll have your pick of quite a few beaches close to Mérida. Each of these beaches is unique. Some are more popular with expats while some are quieter, local spots.

Progreso Beach

- The most popular beach destination among locals and tourists alike is Progreso. Only 27 miles from Mérida, Progreso is the number one choice for a quick and easy day trip. Approx 30 - 45 minutes.

Chelem Beach

- Popular with ex-pats, Chelem will give you local flavor while helping you feel at ease with the Mexican culture. Many ex-pats frequent Chelem for the sand, the sun, the quaint local restaurants, and easy access. Approx one hour.

Chuburna Beach

- This is a very popular location for people who leave Mérida due to the high humidity during the summer. Chuburna has many choices of restaurants with fresh fish as the main course. Approx one hour.

Chicxulub Beach

- Famous for being the epicenter of a crater caused by a meteorite resulting in many cenotes (and possibly the end of the dinosaurs). Find a large variety of shops, restaurants, and some modern amenities. Approx 45 minutes to one hour.

Celestun Beach

- Celestun is a quaint fishing village most familiar for the flamingos that inhabit its clear waters and mangroves. The best times to see these intriguing birds are in the fall and winter. Approx 75 minutes.

Sisal Beach

- The Port of Santa Maria de Sisal was one of the most important ports for the exportation of henequen fiber familiar as sisal. If you want to visit both Celestun and Sisal, I recommend going on separate days. Approx 75 minutes.



ACTIVITIES - CENOTES

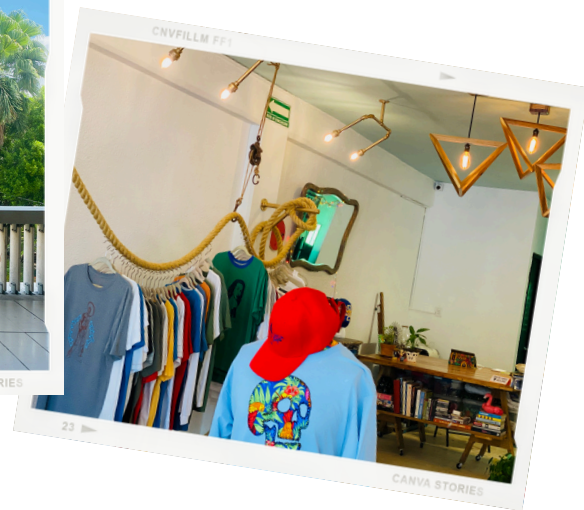
Over 66 million years ago, an asteroid crashed into a place called Chicxulub on the coast of the Yucatan Peninsula. The impact of the energy release was substantially more than the atom bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The damage altered the limestone in the area making it more susceptible to erosion. The impact also led to a chain of catastrophic events including extinction of the dinosaurs. While the beautiful Ring of Cenotes was created, it was at the expense of this devastating event.

Cenotes also played an important role in the Maya religious belief system. The Maya believed cenotes to be a gateway to the underworld called Xibalba. The god of rain, Chaac, lived at the bottom of these sacred wells. The Maya performed rituals and ceremonies at sacred cenotes to ask for rain and good crops. Some cenotes have produced human remains however all indications point to possibly an alternative burial place, in the Xibalba, so that the human could await the next cycle in life.

**If you are limited in your time or physical capacity,
you can see a cenote in the Costco parking lot.**

A few cenotes in close proximity to Mérida:

- Yaal Utzil
- Hacienda Mucuyche
- Cuzama
- Yaxbacaltun
- Hacienda Sotuta de Peon
- Homun
- Santa Barbara
- Dzonbacal
- San Antonio
- Kankirixche
- Hacienda Oxman
- Ik Kil
- Yokdzonot
- Zazil Tunich
- Sambula
- X'batun



ACTIVITIES - MAPS

This project by Bill Eakins
[Go Experience Mexico](#)
has maps/locations for the following:

- Pueblos Mágicos - Magical towns
- Colonial Cities - Ciudades Coloniales
- Coastal Cities & Towns - Playas
- Border / Frontera - Transport / Transporte - Logistics / Logística
- UNESCO - World Heritage Sites
- Archaeological / Arqueológica - Historical / Historico
- Natural Areas (water) - Áreas Naturales (agua)
- Natural Areas (land) - Áreas Naturales (tierra)
- Hot Springs - Aguas Termales

If you would to donate to thank you Bill for his efforts,
you can do so **HERE:**

https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=N5CJNJMJ6YRWA



ACTIVITIES - HACIENDAS

Here are just a few of the many Haciendas in the area:

Hacienda Yaxcopoil - A well-maintained henequen plantation located about 20 miles from Mérida. Along with the Maya artifacts displayed in the museum, you are also able to experience the splendor and grandeur of one of the most important and authentic haciendas during its time. Known for its size and magnificence, both from livestock and henequen fields, its name in Maya means "place of the green aspens".

Location: Federal Highway 261, Calle 21 #500 - Kilometro 220, Yaxcopoil 97396

Hacienda Santa Cruz - Travel back in time to immerse yourself in colonial opulence at its finest. Visit the Valentina Restaurant located on the terrace of the old machine house which overlooks an exotic garden featuring palms, orange and flamboyán trees, and other ancient tropical plants.

Location: Calle 86 S/N, Santa Cruz Palomeque 97315

Hacienda Sotuta de Peon & Cenotes - Immaculately restored to its former glory, learn how a traditional hacienda harvested mass quantities of fibers of the henequen in the 1800's. The sisal fibers from the plants are used to make various products including rope, rugs, and handbags.

Location: Municipality of Tecoh Yucatan, Mérida 97822

Hacienda Xcanatun - The first restored hacienda in the area features elegant grounds, an exceptional restaurant, many special events, and day passes to use the pool.

Location: Calle 20 S/N x 19 y 19A, Comisaria Xcanatun 97302

Hacienda Ya'axka - An exceptional restaurant with outstanding ambiance and attentive service.

Location: Carretera Dzitya, Dzitya 97302



ACTIVITIES - KID STUFF

While Mérida is a mecca of culture, arts, and history, there's also ALOT of fun and cool stuff to do for kids AND adults! This list is just scratching the surface of the exploration one can do around the city and nearby. Enjoy!

The list is divided into the following sections:

- Outdoor activities
- Indoor activities
- Outside the city

Outdoor Activities

- Bici-Ruta on Paseo de Montejo - every Sunday from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm.
- Horse-drawn or electric carriage rides - available for \$400 pesos (approximately)
- El Centenario Zoo - Location: Av. Itzaes S/N x 59, Centro
- Garcia Rejon Market - Location: Calle 60 #501A y 65, Centro 97000
- Parque de Las Americas - Location: Av. Colón x Calle 20 y 23, Garcia Gineres 97070
 - Fountain
 - Library
 - Kid's Area
 - Amphitheater
- Parque Aleman - Location: Calle 21 #281F, Miguel Aleman 97148
- Parque Kalia - Location: Calle 22 #280B, Monterreal 97133
- Parque Tabentha - Location: Av. Camara de Comercio, Residencial Montecristo 97130
- Area de Juegos - Location: Calle 60 x 45A, Francisco de Montejo II 97203



ACTIVITIES - KID STUFF

Indoor Activities

- Mérida English Library Story Time - Location: Calle 53 #524 x 66 y 68, Centro
- El Gran Museo del Mundo Maya (Mayan World Museum) - Location: Calle 60 #299E, Unidad Revolucion 97110
- La Isla Mall - Location: Calle 24 #608, Santa Gertrudis Copo 97305
- Ice skating at Galerias Mall- Location: Calle 3 #300 x 24 y 60, Zona Industrial - Unidad Revolucion 97110
- Flip Out Mérida Plaza Akropolis - Location: Calle 61 #400, Fracc. Las Americas 97302
- Wild Place Macroplaza - Location: Calle 44 #601, Itzimna 97138
- Recorcholis Altabrisa - Location: Calle 7 #222, Col. Altabrisa 97133

Outside the City

- Parque Zoológico Animaya - Location: Calle 60 #866, Caucel 97314
- Hacienda Sotuta de Peon & Cenote Tour - Location: Carretera Federal 261, Calle 21 #500-Kilómetro 220, Yaxcopoil 97396
- Mucuyche Hacienda and Cenotes - Location: Mucuyche 97825
- Sendero Jurasico - Location: 79 QW + 8M, Chicxulub Puerto 97326
- Meteorite Museum - Location: Calle 19 #142, Boulevard Turistico Malecon, Progreso 97320
- Progreso Malecon - Location: Progreso
- El Corchito Ecological Reserve - Location: Libramiento S/N, Progreso
- Mirador de Muna - Location: Hoppelchen-Uman 760, Abala 97840
- Choco-Story Museum - Location: Uxmal 97899
- Celestún - Location: Celestún 97367
- Xcambo -Location: 97405
- Mayapan - Location: Carretera Mérida - Chetumal Telchaquillo, Tecoh 97824



BEATING THE HEAT

When the hottest months of Mérida are in full swing, it's impossible to avoid the intense Yucatan Summer heat. While longing for cooler evenings of December and January, this chapter will help you get through hot temperatures. Now, you may never ever become fully accustomed to the scorching Summer months. But, there are certainly things you can do to feel more comfortable. Drink water more often than you think: You might be thinking, "this is obvious right?" But, you need to be drinking A LOT more than what you're used to. Every time you exert just a little bit of energy in this heat, it is of paramount importance that you take into consideration drinking more water than what you are accustomed to. Add it to your to-do list or whatever it takes!

Local Tips:

- Take a water bottle with you wherever you go. You can freeze your bottle of water (make sure to pour a little out first) to keep it cold. Keep cold water in an insulated water container. Enjoy the variety of aguas frescas available everywhere.
- Take a siesta in your hammock - A little siesta in the afternoon during the hottest hours helps reset your energy. A siesta is even better if you have a hammock. Sleeping in a hamaca helps you to be cooler as well as circulating air all around your body. It doesn't get any more delightful than than feeling the warm breeze as you gently swing in your hammock. Cotton hammocks are cooler. Nylon hammocks are sturdier and come in brighter colors. Don't leave your hammock in direct sun. The way to lay in a hammock is to angle yourself at a diagonal across the hammock.
- Utilize malls and shopping centers for walking: you'll find some of the best malls in this part of the country including: La Isla, Galerías, The Harbor, and Altabrisa. You can also try City 32, a smaller complex which is quieter with less people. Choose a mall that has covered or underground parking to keep your car cool while you're inside. Alternatively, use a window sun shield for protection.



BEATING THE HEAT

- How to swim if you don't have a pool – while a pool should be on your must-have list, sometimes it's just not possible. First, opt for a location with a pool. But if this isn't possible, don't panic. Head to the beach for a few weeks – that's what the locals do. Find a gym with a swimming pool, a water parks, or other locations with pools. Check hotels that offer day passes. For a reasonable price, you can use their facilities for the day. Sometimes, the day pass also includes lunch and/or drinks.

MOST IMPORTANT? YOUR HOUSE!

Here are the best suggestions to help you through the sweatiest part of the year:

- Houses on odd numbered streets get more air flow than houses on even numbered streets. Why? A house on an odd numbered street faces north/south and gets more cross-breeze from the coast than an east/west facing house.
- A good cross-breeze is a great way to bring the temperature down. However, make sure you have screens on windows and doors before opening them to mosquitoes, bugs, flies, and other critters.
- Maintain and regularly clean air-conditioning units. Cleaning every six months is recommended.
- Curtains and/or blinds can block out some of the intense sunlight and reduce heat.
- Install large tarps called malla sombras to stop glare from the sun. These are helpful in rainy season too if raindrops hammer your house and windows.



BRINGING MEDS

Some over-the-counter meds commonly used in the U.S. are prohibited in Mexico. Ones that contain stimulants are specifically prohibited as well as any meds with codeine. It is illegal to bring some products such as inhalers or allergy and sinus medications that contain pseudoephedrine like Actifed, Sudafed, and Vicks inhalers. If you still have questions about medications, ingredients, and other products, contact the (DEA) U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration or U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Medication FAQs

- Can I bring all medication? You are allowed to bring the amount of medication you need for the time you are in Mérida plus a little extra in case of an emergency.
- Does medication need to be in original containers? All prescriptions should be in the original containers. If this is not possible or if you take controlled substances such as insulin, have a note from your physician to accompany the medication.
- Does TSA check my pills when leaving the U.S.? While TSA does not require passengers to have medication in prescription bottles, the laws of the country you are entering may differ.
- Do I have to declare my medication? No, UNLESS it contains a controlled or illegal substance.
- Is it better to keep medication with me or put them in my checked luggage? It is ALWAYS recommended to keep ALL medication with you at all times.
- What medication is not allowed? Products containing stimulants – pseudoephedrine, such as Actifed, Sudafed, and Vicks inhalers or codeine – are prohibited.
- Can I take unmarked pills on a plane? Yes, however it is not recommended. Unmarked pills can be confiscated and may not be replaceable at your destination.
- Can I bring ibuprofen or acetaminophen? Yes.
- Can I bring Benadryl? Yes.
- Can I bring Adderall? Yes, but keep in the original bottle. For extra protection, carry a prescription or doctor's note.



GROCERY STORES & MARKETS

Mérida has a plethora of grocery stores, markets, mercados, tiendas, tendejons and other places that sell a variety of products, foods and beverages. Depending upon the location in the city and the size of the store, the variety of goods will vary from store to store. For example, some of the larger local stores carry household items similar to Wal-Mart with a variety of goods and products from food, large appliances, household items, fabric, and mattresses to pharmaceuticals, electronics and clothing. Smaller stores carry only the basics.

Neighborhood Markets

- Santiago
- Lucas de Galvez
- San Benito
- Miguel Aleman
- Santa Ana

Specialty Items

- Slow Food Yucatan
- Seafood - Pablo Ku
- Tortillerias
- Local Fruit & Vegetable Stands

Familiar Stores

- Walmart
- Costco
- Sam's Club

Local Stores

- Soriana
- Bodega Aurrera
- Aki, Super Aki
- Chedraui, Chedraui Selecto

Just because you found a product once, doesn't mean it will be there the next time. Stock up if you find something special. - Supply and demand, cost of importation, weather, and seasons have a big impact on pricing and availability of goods. - More than likely you will have at least one grocery store, market, tienda or fruteria close to you. - Frequent local tiendas and tortilleria to support your neighbors. - Don't assume all stores with the same name will carry the same products. Stores carry products based on the needs of the neighborhood. - Bodega Aurrera is the Mexican brand for Walmart.



INSECTS - GENERAL

Visiting and living in Mexico, I've learned that I will have companions of the insect kind, no matter what. The biggest problem you will encounter is ants. Learning how to deal with these pesky creatures will help you tremendously!

How to get rid of insects:

- Employ the services of a professional pest control company
- Use products specifically created for ants and insects
- Make your own organic pest-control or poison-based solution

Baby Powder for Ants

- Why is baby powder so effective? Ants breathe through their skin and the baby powder clogs it up. It is also a desiccant. Ants do not like it, and will not cross a baby powder line. Place a thin line around countertops, drawers, floors, etc. It gives new meaning to don't cross the line.

Borax & Beer for Roaches

- Place a small amount of borax (called ácido bórico) in a large water bottle top (the garrafone size). Use caution around pets. This solution also works for ants and cockroaches.

Electric Racket for Flies

- You can purchase electric rackets (it looks like a tennis racket with the face of a mosquito on it) at most grocery stores or from street vendors. You can swat all kinds of pests with this gem.



INSECTS - GENERAL

Other Insects

- Earwigs, beetles, scorpions, termites, and fleas. You'll find the cockroach is present all year long.

Earwigs

- Earwigs love moisture and close tight spaces. These little guys will propagate quickly during the rainy season. It's common to see them falling out of doorways, hiding in the folds of fabric, or hunkered down in the laundry room.

Pantry Moths

- More than likely, you've had some experience with pantry moths. Again, common sense says to keep your dry food store it in airtight containers and frequently check for any eggs or activity. Pay attention to expiration dates and get rid of the food as soon as you can.

Tips

- Clean up spills immediately
- Use air-tight containers
- Remove the trash daily
- Sweep problem areas often
- Degrease and remove all oily products from counters, cabinets, drawers, and sinks

Remember:

- Ants constantly move toward or away from something. Ants are smart. And that means they are smarter than we are.
- Most insects are just annoying.
- Frequency can spike in the spring, summer, and rainy season.



INSECTS - MOSQUITOES

Mosquitoes are everywhere with the exception of extremely cold environments (think Antarctica). In extremely humid conditions they can be prolific. Humidity and rain between April and November, increases the concentration of mosquitoes. During rainy season, they are worse from June to October. Unfortunately, September is the all-time high due to being the highest month with the most rainfall annually. Since the Yucatan peninsula is considered a sub-tropical region, you'll find plenty of these little guys flying around, swarming, and looking for yummy individuals to feast on. During late fall and winter, the amount of mosquitos decline significantly. Unfortunately, they don't vanish entirely. Mosquitos in Mérida tend to be more active after dusk BUT female mosquitoes will bite any time of the day.

Mosquito-Borne Diseases

- Malaria
- Yellow Fever
- Chikungunya
- Dengue Fever
- Zika Virus

Symptoms of Dengue Fever

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Rash
- Aches and pains - muscle, joint, or bone pain
- Eye pain - typically behind the eyes
- Dengue Fever feels like the flu.



INSECTS - MOSQUITOES

Symptoms of Zika Virus

- Rash
- Itching all over the body
- High temperature
- Headache
- Joint pain (with possible swelling in the smaller joints of the hands and feet)
- Muscle pain
- Red eyes (conjunctivitis)
- Lower back pain

If you think you have been bitten by a mosquito and present any of these symptoms, go to your nearest clinic or hospital.

Tips to Reduce Attraction

- Mosquito repellent – products with DEET or natural oils.
- Clothing – wear long-sleeved shirts or pants.
- Windows & doors – only open if screens are installed.
- Candles, coils, & incense – use products with citronella or sandalwood.
- Electronic devices – small plug-in devices that use oil or emit high-frequency sounds. The most popular looks like a small tennis racket that you can swat all kinds of pests with.
- After-bite products – essential oils or bite pens sold in most pharmacies and grocery stores.
- Reduce breeding areas – look for standing or stagnant water in garden ponds and unused fountains. Be sure to overturn water buckets and any other containers that collect water, no matter how small.



ITINERARY ON A BUDGET

One of the most fun things to do is create a list of things to do and see. By sharing my insider's perspective, you'll get some great ideas for exploring the city. One of the BEST things about Mérida is the variety and quality of food and restaurants. Visiting Mérida is not just about the food, it's also about the experience you will have learning about the culture, the community, and the connection people have to each other.

- #1 Take a walking city tour - Available daily at Plaza Grande.
- #2 Lucas de Galvez Market - Anything and everything you can imagine, a must see.
- #3 Izamal and Valladolid - Two of Yucatán's magical towns.
- #4 Cenotes - Cenotes are underwater caverns filled with natural water. Prevalent in the Yucatan Peninsula, these sinkholes played an important role in Mayan cosmogony.
- #5 Mercado 60 - With live music nightly, this is an "all-in-one" spot. Try the ice cream from Helados Colon in the Food Court.
- #6 Esquinas de Mérida - Find these distinctive white and red plaques in Centro - the old way to navigate the city.
- #7 Slow Food Market - The farmers' market of Mérida. Bring your own bags for your purchases. There are also several delicious restaurants in the same area.
- #8 Explore South of Plaza Grande - Find just about anything you need at a lower price while shopping with locals. Here you will also experience the heartbeat of Mérida.
- #9 Live Music - Many venues have music regularly. Check out La Negrita and Dzalbay. Find both on Facebook for their calendar of events and music lineup.
- #10 Visit Artists on the Paseo - Sundays between 9:00 am - 2:00 pm during the BiciRuta.
- #11 Find small, local kitchens - cocina economicas offer home cooked, delicious meals.
- #12 Rent a bike on Sunday mornings - Paseo de Montejo BiciRuta.
- #13 Take a photo in front of the colorful Mérida sign at Plaza Grande.
- #14 Eat a Marquesita - the flavorful dessert you'll never forget!



PHARMACIES - BUYING MEDS

Thousands of people cross the border annually to purchase medications at lower costs. As you might expect, easy access to medications leads to self-diagnosis, prescribing, and, at times, unpredictable results. While pharmaceuticals can be a considerable bargain, ensure you know what you are getting. Be cautious and careful about anything else you purchase outside your home country. While the FDA oversees the U.S. drug industry, prescription drugs in Mexico are not as heavily regulated. Don't purchase your medication from anyone other than a legitimate pharmacy.

Be cautious and ask questions before purchasing:

- How is the medication stored and handled?
- How is it is refrigerated medication, has it been kept at the correct temperature?
- Does the medication have an expiration date?
- Be sure to inspect the packaging thoroughly.
- Don't accept it if you have second thoughts.

If you need a pharmacy, keep these tips in mind:

- Not all pharmacies are the same.
- Some pharmacies will carry your medication, others will not.

You may also wonder if supplement and vitamin stores are in Mérida. Yes, they are, but you'll have to research to see if they carry what you need. If not, you can search on Amazon. However, be sure to ONLY order from companies in Mexico, as delivery from other countries will not happen. Supplements get caught in customs and they will be returned. I've had it happen a few times. Check Google Maps to find a location nearest you. In Spanish, search for suplementos or alimentos.



PHARMACIES - BUYING MEDS

U.S. Customs Regulations - Check the U.S. Customs website as information changes. At this time a prescription from a U.S. physician is required to bring more than 50 dosage units across the border. U.S. Customs agents may prohibit a supply that is for more than 60 to 90 days.

Customs Declarations - When bringing back these types of medications:

Declare all drugs to the appropriate customs official.

Transport all medications in their original containers.

Carry only the quantity needed for personal use.

Ensure you have a prescription or a written statement from a physician for these medications.

If you still have questions, contact the U.S. Drug Enforcement Admin (DEA) and/or U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Undoubtedly, healthcare does not have to be difficult and expensive. All it takes is an open mind and some careful research to discover what works best for you. You may find that a trip across the border, like many Arizonans, Californians, New Mexicans, and Texans, to be extremely beneficial and cost-effective.

Don't buy medicine without your doctor's approval. Even though medications are available for sale without a prescription, they could harm your health. While this information may provide some great insight into buying medication in Mérida, keep in mind breaking Mexican laws regarding the purchase of drugs may lead to your arrest in Mexico. Penalties for drug offenses are strict. Convicted offenders can expect large fines and jail sentences.



POLICE

Possibly, one of the primary reasons Mérida is so safe is due to a large amount of police scattered throughout the city. The city of Mérida police force is strategically placed all over the city to support, guide, and mostly keep things under control. Extra police officers are added to the Centro (City Center) patrol beat to watch over tourists namely around banks, ATMs, restaurants, and transportation hubs to prepare for high-season which is October through March.

Mérida police typically cruise around with their blue and red lights flashing. If you see flashing lights across the entire bar or on the front part of their car, this means you need to pull over. Their vast presence here is to be visible and available in the event of a major situation.

To minimize corruption of police in Yucatán, incentives have been implemented for the entire police force:

- salary above the national average
- access to health services for officers and their family in the event of an accident in private hospitals
- Infonavit benefits (subsidized home loans)
- Opportunity for their children to have a 100% scholarship for registration and tuition at any public and private university in the state.
- In addition to the above scholarship is an additional \$2,800 pesos for food and transportation expenses.



SAFETY

Because Mérida is not on a beach, many people come for the tranquility, arts, culture, food, and history. The majority of visitors are Mexican Nationals from other states. Like any city of a million people, petty crime and property theft do happen. However, in Mérida violent crime is rare. When you are looking at visiting Mérida and trying to decide where to stay, utilize Google Maps or Google Earth to check out your surroundings. You can virtually see the area to become familiar with it. If you feel uncomfortable, find another location, and do the same. Pay attention to the date on the images. Some may be older however you will still be able to get a feel for the area.

Safety Tips

- Don't leave valuables in sight in your home or car where anyone might be tempted.
- Don't give keys to your housekeeper, gardener or pool man.
- Always be home when any service provider is at your home.
- Pay attention to your gut instinct - it is always right.
- Always be aware of your surroundings and who is around you.

If you are walking at night, keep an eye and ear out for unusual activity around you. Avoid dark streets.

- Don't bring anything to Mérida you can't afford to lose.
- Never keep all of your money in one place. Keep a little bit in your wallet for easy access and the majority of it in another part of your wallet, purse, or bag.
- Keep BLACK & WHITE copies of passport unless directed by authorities to keep your original documents on you. COLOR copies are illegal!
- Do not ever allow the police to take your ID, passport, or license tags.



SPANISH

The MOST IMPORTANT thing you can do is learn important and necessary phrases along with simple, conversational Spanish. When you are able to communicate, even at a basic level, it will improve your experience tremendously.

- Hola (my favorite) - "We employ a communicative approach to teaching the Spanish language that will supply all of the tools you need to achieve a full experience of learning and immersion in the language as well as the local and national culture."
- Habla - "Habla connects people across communities building a world of understanding in which culture is not a barrier, but rather a possibility. It is a school and cultural center committed to connecting people across languages, cultures, and countries."
- Duolingo Learning App - "Everyone learns in different ways. For the first time in history, we can analyze how millions of people learn at once to create the most effective educational system possible and tailor it to each student. Our ultimate goal is to give everyone access to a private tutor experience through technology." *Download in App Stores*
- Institute of Modern Spanish - "By replacing the memorization of Spanish language grammar rules with total cultural experience, we enable our students to leave our programs with a knowledge of Spanish that is practical, culturally applicable, and long-lasting. Our programs explore the language as it is used in today's Spanish speaking communities around Latin America and throughout the world."
- La Calle - "We offer a wide range of courses including group classes, private classes, special classes for DELE Exam and more."

There are also many wonderful people in Mérida who are available for one-on-one private lessons. Pricing can vary from a little less to a little more however with a private teacher your experience is completely customized based on your needs and wants. These private instructors can be found and vetted in many of the Facebook groups created for expats visiting or living in Mérida. Buena Suerte!



TIPPING

How, where, what, and when to tip is such a confusing subject. The task of tipping in Mérida is complicated, at best. Ask ten people about tipping, and you'll get ten different answers. The easy answer is a few pesos to a percentage of the bill, depending upon the situation. This is another situation where understanding cultural differences and economic aspects provides insight and respect for hard-working locals. Some say, "Be generous with your money." Others say, "Be cautious so you don't spoil the waiter." And the ever-present, "I don't want to get gringo priced." I agree there is a delicate balance, but . . . how do you find it? It's a continual source of confusion and a topic of conversation with expats and locals alike.

Sometimes, people think it is fun, more convenient, or a novelty to tip in U.S. dollars. This causes undue stress on the service provider. Conversion fees are charged when foreign currency is exchanged for pesos. For locals, it is a hassle to exchange the money and further reduces the tip. The old standard of tipping only a few pesos up to 5% at restaurants in Mexico is outdated. Mérida is a center of arts and culture. Hardworking locals travel up to 4 hours round trip. They have to use their daily wage to pay for a taxi to get home. Please tip appropriately.

Terminology

Restaurant Check = La Cuenta

Tip = Propina

Service Not Included = Servicio No Incluido

Service Included = Servicio Incluido

Tax = IVA

Receipt = Nota

Receipt for Tax Purposes = Factura (this will always include a 16% tax fee)



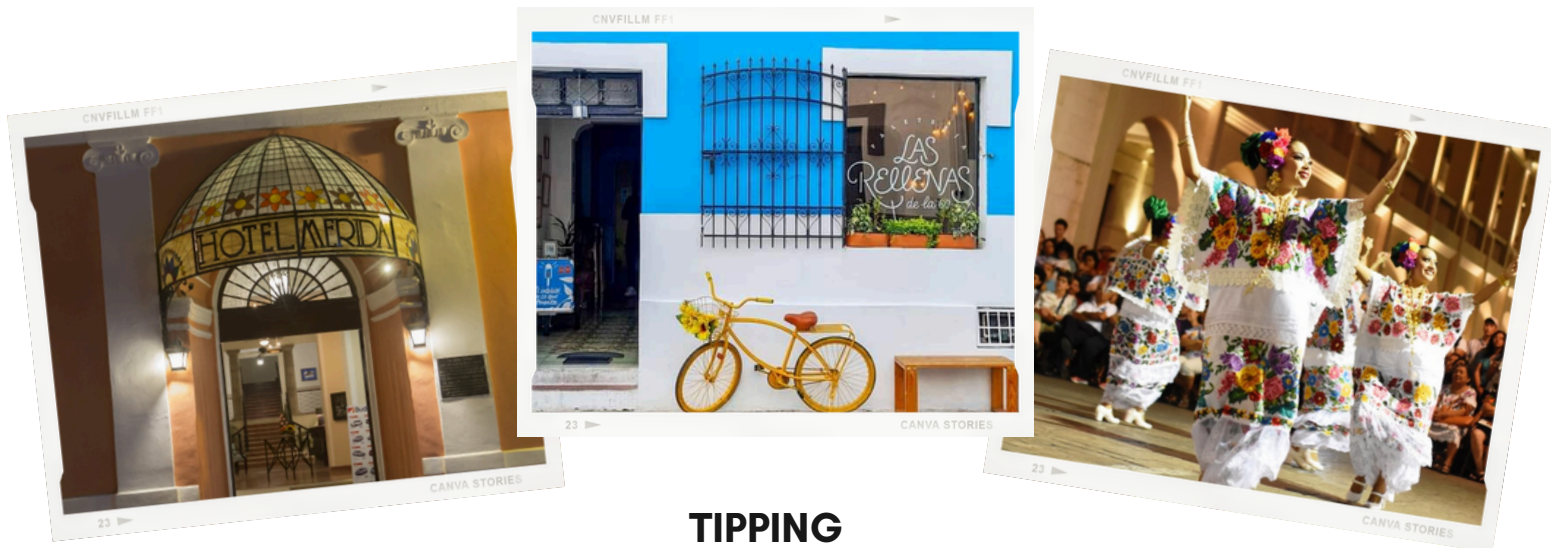
TIPPING

Most service providers, like waiters, live almost exclusively on tips because the daily wage, called *salario minimo*, is low. The 2024 rate is \$248.93 pesos per day. The 2025 estimate is \$262 pesos per day. A day is considered eight hours or more. If the schedule is less than eight hours, the *salario minimo* is cut in half. It is not common to receive more pay for more than eight hours, even if it is up to 16 hours. Therefore, most people work 2 to 3 jobs to make ends meet. New regulations are in process. However, not all businesses nor employers will conform.

Did you know your waiter may NOT keep all of their tips? They have to share their tips with other workers in the restaurant, such as the host, manager, runner (the person who delivers your food), bartender, and kitchen staff*. The more people that attend you, the more the waiter has to share. This ranges from 4% to 10% at some higher-end restaurants. *There are cases where waiters have to pay out of their pocket if they don't make enough to tip the restaurant staff . . . sad but true.* *This is the same as in the U.S.; it's not unique to Mexico.

Restaurants – The longer you linger, tip appropriately. *Sobremesa* is one of the most charming aspects of this culture. *Sobremesa* is lingering after a meal to connect, chat, relax, and enjoy the company you are with, even if the company is your own. No matter where you are, you are never rushed to finish your meal or cup of coffee. This is both a different and refreshing change of pace. Waitstaff will not bring your check until you ask for it. Go with your gut when tipping and add a few more pesos. Your generosity will be appreciated.

- Restaurants: 15 – 20% (please be generous – an extra dollar or two means a lot)
- *Cocina Economicas*: \$10 – \$20 pesos
- Street Food Vendors: \$2 – \$4 pesos



TIPPING

Most importantly, be aware of service expectations:

- First, remember this culture is slower than most other cultures. Don't expect to get the same level of service you have "back home."
- Second, you have to ask for what you want or need. Don't expect your server to know automatically.
- Third, be patient. Don't expect the full attention of your server, even if you are the only customer.
- Fourth, understand that things will be lost in translation even if your server is fluent in English. Don't expect your server to have complete knowledge of the nuances of the English language.
- Fifth, your server wants you to be pleased with their service. They rely mainly on tips to support themselves and their families.
- Sixth, there are times when a server may not be able to bring you small bills for change so you can tip them.

When paying in cash, use large bills and save smaller bills and coins for tips.

Keep small denominations like \$20-, \$50-, and \$100-peso notes as well as \$1, \$2, \$5, and \$10-peso coins handy for tipping.

Hotels – Did you know it is customary to tip hotel staff? Today's rate is \$40+ pesos per day. This can also apply to the bellboy, concierge, and other service providers up to \$80 or \$100 for exceptional service and care.



TIPPING

Grocery Stores - These are the people to tip when going to the grocery store, all with the same tip scale. Tip from \$5 pesos to \$20 pesos per person. Retired grocery store baggers may or may not live on social security. Parking lot attendants help you in and out of parking spaces. They may also help load groceries into your car. If you're taking an Uber, they wait with you patiently and then load the groceries for you. Attendants are also called "viene viene" meaning "come come." Tips may be the only form of income for some people.

Uber or Taxi Driver - While tipping is not expected, it is appropriate to tip if the driver is especially helpful, such as helping with groceries or luggage - \$20 to \$50+ pesos.

Delivery Service Providers - Two of my favorite words in Mérida are Servicio Domicilio or home delivery - from \$20+ pesos.

Musicians and Street Performers - Depending upon the number of people - \$5 to \$20 pesos per person for street performers. It's typical to tip the group leader of Mariachi groups from \$100 to \$200, and they will split between the musicians. If you're in a live music venue, \$50 to \$100 pesos per set in spots like La Negrita, El Cardenal, or Dzalbay.

Personal Services - Massage therapists, hairstylists, spa attendants, and other personal services - a tip of 15 to 20% is appreciated but not expected.

Gas Station Attendants - If pumping gas only - \$5 to \$10 pesos. If performing other services - \$15 to \$25 pesos.

Tour Guides - This can be one of the most difficult to tip. The amount will depend on the type of tour, so it varies. Tips are not expected, but they are appreciated.



TIPPING

Here are some suggestions found on other expat and tour forums:

- Multi-day group tour: \$100 pesos/day for the tour guide and \$40 pesos/day for the driver.
- Private tour: \$150 - \$200 pesos/day and \$60 pesos for the driver.
- One-day tour: 10%+ is standard.

Data was researched carefully and thoroughly because tipping is a touchy subject. I've lived and worked in Mexico before. Angel, my husband from Tabasco, has lived in Merida since 1993. He's been involved in the service industry since 2010. I spoke with Angel, his co-workers, and others, some of whom work in grocery stores as baggers. Because our focus is bringing information to expats, this is from locals' perspective working in heavy expat areas. In my view, it's crucial to understand how the other side lives to realize how impactful and vital tipping is. It's so impactful that an extra dollar or two given by customers can be the difference between getting a second job to make ends meet.

Many service providers live outside the city in suburbs, such as Cauce, about 11 kilometers from Plaza Grande. Even though it's only 11 kilometers from the city center, the bus makes many stops. Our friends in the service industry report it can take up to 2 hours one way on the bus, which many of them take into Centro. From a cost aspect, it is affordable. However, if they work past the hour when the bus they need has stopped their route, they have to take a taxi or ride platform to get home. Often, it will cost them their entire day's minimum salary to get home at night, leaving only the tips they make to support themselves and their families. At times, it may cost them even more than their minimum salary. Notably, knowing this one small factor can completely change the perspective of tipping.

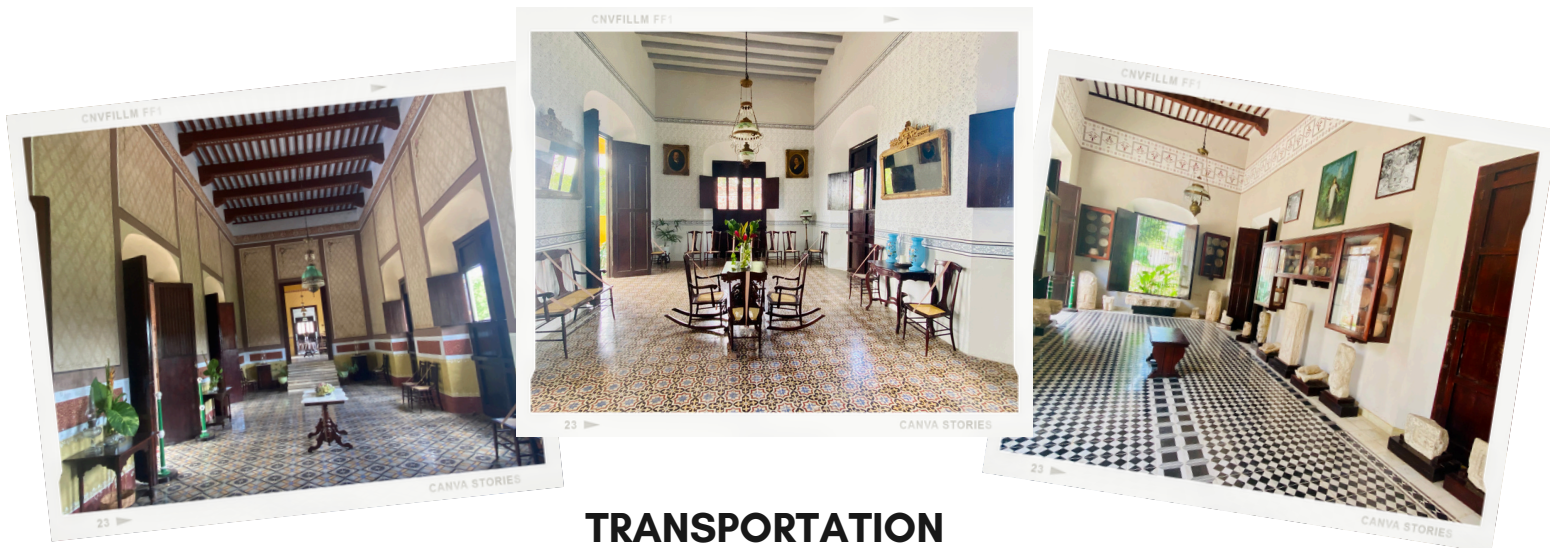


TOILET PAPER

This may seem like a very unusual topic however it is very important to know the do's and don'ts of toilet paper while you are in Mexico (and specifically Mérida). Can you flush it? Yes. Should you flush it? Probably not. Pay attention to any signage then follow the directions. If there are no signs, look around for the trash basket. Typically if there is one next to the toilet, that is an indicator to not flush. The wise saying is when in doubt, don't flush.

- Why a “no-flush” rule? Toilet paper or waste product gets stuck inside of the red clay pipes used here. Over time, the pipes can become clogged stopping the flow of waste.
- Does Mérida have a sewer system? No, there is no centralized sewer system. Everyone is on a septic system.
- What about restaurants, businesses or hotels? The standing rule is no paper products are permitted in the toilet. When in doubt, ask.
- What if I forget? If you forget, it's likely other people have too. You don't want to be the one that causes a backed up or overflowing toilet.
- Fold, scrunch, or toss? There is after-wiping etiquette. No one wants to see the evidence of your bathroom experience so toss is not an option. Only choose fold or scrunch (trust me on this one).
- Best brands? Elite, Kleenex, and Regio along with the Costco brand Kirkland.
- What about the smell? The smell will be vastly different in your home than it will be in the grocery store bathroom.
- Should I be worried about a sanitary issue? Some people say that used toilet paper can spread disease. This can be true if the soiled paper is on the floor and the bacteria is transferred via shoes or hands.

I cannot stress enough about washing your hands. Wash. Wash. Wash. And wash again. As long as the trash bag is changed frequently, sanitation is not an issue.



TRANSPORTATION

With a population of 1.3 million and growing, Mérida offers many kinds of transportation, from ride platforms to buses and vans to private drivers. However, the public transportation system can be confusing. It can be frustrating when trying to find routes, fares, and times. Don't worry! It takes time to learn to navigate in and around the neighborhoods. But it's well worth your time, energy, and effort to save money or if you are on a tight budget.

Ride Platforms - Yes, there is Uber in Mérida, BUT . . . there's one small catch: Uber may NOT be your best option for ride platforms. Notably, Uber is probably the number one choice for most travelers. It is known worldwide. It is easy, understandable, and familiar. Something we all need when traveling in a foreign country. More than likely, you already have the app ready to go. After using other ride platforms, I have found that Uber is not my first (or even my second) choice. Unfortunately, Uber drivers in Mérida are known to cancel their rides frequently.

- Didi: is most similar to Uber. Set up a profile and use a credit card to pay. It is very reliable.
- InDriver: the fastest AND the most reliable ride platform.
- Regular taxi: always negotiate the fee upfront, as metered taxis do not exist.

Private Drivers - This is a popular choice, and numerous private driving services are available. With private driving services, you can design your itinerary and schedule. You can choose where to go, how long to stay, and what activities to engage in. Furthermore, private drivers can also help with translation, navigation, and other practical matters, making your trip more enjoyable and stress-free.

Public Transportation - Mérida has an extensive public transportation system that moves you all over the city to the beaches, archaeological sites, and other nearby cities such as Cancun, Valladolid, Izamal, Tulum, and Playa del Carmen. Main staging areas are within two to three blocks of the Plaza Grande and around San Juan Park.



TRANSPORTATION

Camiones and combis frequently run with flat fares (tarifa unica) of approximately 8 to 12 pesos. You'll pay another fare if you need to change your bus or combi to reach your destination. Many changes are happening to increase public transportation and make it easier for locals, tourists, and especially the service industry. Most routes start at 4:30 a.m. and end, on average, at 11:00 p.m. However, routes are being added for the service industry for late-night travel on combis from 11:00 p.m. until 5:00 a.m. For routes: merida.transpublico.com/category/rutas/

- Moovit App - Provides routes, times, and walking distance to the correct bus stop.
- Va-y-Ven Bus - Check out the newest public transportation system with service around the city, night routes, and select Centro destinations from the airport: vayven.yucatan.gob.mx/

Car Rentals - An excellent way to see the sights and experience the city's unique culture. It also allows you to explore independently, navigate the streets, and learn the layout of Mérida and the surrounding areas. However, it is essential to carefully consider the details of the rental process, rules, and guidelines.

Requirements and documents for the rental process:

- Valid driver's license
- Credit card
- Insurance (NOT insurance from your credit card - you'll need local insurance)



WATER TIPS

The most frequently asked question when you are getting ready to travel to Mexico, “Is the water safe?” To be completely safe, only drink sealed, bottled water. What do locals do? Most locals don’t drink a lot of water but when in Mexico, do as the locals do: don’t drink the tap water.

- Brushing teeth with tap water? Until you are used to the environment, use bottled water.
- Washing fresh fruits and vegetables? Most people use Microdyne.
- Making coffee or pasta? Use bottled water.

What about ice? In restaurants, ask if the water has been filtered. If you’re not sure, just say no. If you are at home, make your own ice vs. buying a bag of ice.

Lime Juice - A trick I learned from a local many years ago. Limes have high acidity which can neutralize some dangerous bacteria. Specifically in foods that have been stored or washed incorrectly. Many restaurants bring limes for drinks and food. I always ask for extra and squeeze the juice on almost everything. I think one of the main reasons I’ve never gotten sick is the use of lime juice.

Tips and Tricks

- Avoid swallowing water in the shower.
- Avoid putting your water into a ceramic or pottery container (called a garrafone) unless you plan to clean it regularly.
- Do not reuse/refill plastic bottles.
- For bottled water, ensure the cap is sealed.



FAQ'S

How much money should I bring when visiting Mérida?

- Mérida is a heavy cash destination. When purchasing items in retail stores, for restaurants or larger shops, accommodations, you can use a credit card. For street vendors, artisans, local shops, cash is king. Plan for about \$500 USD in cash and use a credit card for the rest. I usually order pesos and ask for small bills (\$20, \$50, \$100, \$200) from my bank before leaving the US however currency exchange locations are available with a fair rate. Have your passport in hand. Each bank will have a limit on how much you can exchange. We prefer and recommend currency exchange locations vs. banks.

What is the main form of communication?

- WhatsApp is probably number one and FB Messenger is popular too. Download the WhatsApp app and be sure you enter the correct digits to contact someone locally from a foreign phone number - +52 then the number you are calling (add the + sign)

Be aware when you use an ATM:

- When withdrawing currency from an ATM, it will ask you if you accept the currency exchange. ALWAYS say NO. This is a way for the bank to make a little extra money. By choosing NO you will have the current currency conversion. Most ATM's have a daily limit of \$16,000 pesos.
- Some ATMs ask if you want to ensure your withdrawal. You can choose NO as well.



FAQ'S

Important Apps to have during your visit:

- WhatsApp - use for standard texting
- Google Translate - helps with communication
- Rappi - delivery service for just about anything
- Uber or DiDi - transportation
- Duo Lingo - for conversational Spanish
- Google Maps - for directions, road closures and up to date traffic

Does Mérida have fast and/or reliable internet?

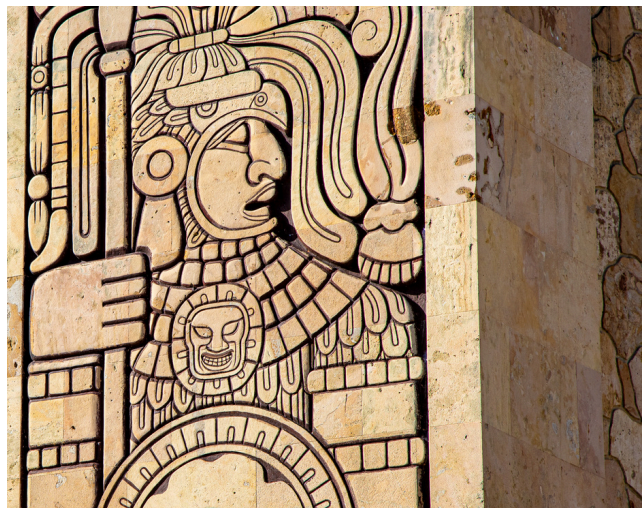
- The answer is both yes and no. It will completely depend upon where you are. I would say to expect fast and/or reliable internet that is available in the U.S. can be an unreasonable expectation. Be sure and ask your hotel or Airbnb host this important question. I have the fastest, most reliable service in Mérida and I still experience problems at times, especially when it is super windy or rainy.

Google Search & Trip Advisor

- These are the BEST ways to find what you are looking for BUT I highly recommend calling in advance before setting out to visit your desired location. Many locations do not update their hours. Before you spend time and money (and frustration), double check to make sure they are open first.

Notify Credit Card Companies & Banks in Advance

- This may seem like common sense however it is one of the most overlooked things to do in preparation for your trip. Let them know where you are going and how long you will be gone.



MÉRIDA LIVING MOVING CONSIDERATIONS AND DAILY LIFE

- Amazon / Delivery Services
- Cost of Living
- Driving
- End-of-Life Plan
- Expats
- Jobs
- Medical
 - Care
 - Clinics & Hospitals
 - Doctors & Dentists
- Moving
 - Research
 - Tips
- Real Estate
 - Short-Term Rentals
 - Long-Term Rentals
 - Buying



AMAZON

While you still have the convenience and brand recognition of Amazon, there are a few differences for Amazon in Mexico. However, this shouldn't be a surprise. It's quite common that other countries have different rules from shipping to importing to delivering.

- **Does my existing Amazon account transfer to Mexico?** Unfortunately, the answer is no. You will have to open a new account under Amazon.com.mx. AND, the Amazon.com.mx is ONLY in Spanish.
- **How does Amazon Mexico work?** Some items are available in Mexico while others are imports. This will clearly show up as "Importación". Sometimes the import fee is included in the delivery (with prime) and sometimes it's not. You can see the pricing when you click through.
- **Does Amazon ship to Mexico from other countries?** It depends on what you're looking for. Be sure to look at the shipping costs and possible delays for customs clearance, if applicable.
- **Can I buy from Amazon (in my home country) and ship to Mérida?** Possibly. Sign in to your account and refine your search to "products that ship to Mexico."
- **What is the process for receiving a delivery?** Be sure your shipping address is perfect including the street, the house number, and the cross streets. Include any other relevant information. Importantly, you MUST be at home to receive the delivery. Your delivery driver may have a van, motorcycle, car or other form of transportation.
- **What happens if I miss my delivery?** Either, the driver will contact you directly to reschedule OR you'll get a message from Amazon.
- **Can I pick up my package at another location?** You may have the option to pick up your package at another location such as an Amazon locker or DHL or Dunosusa. Options are available at checkout.
- **What is the process for returns?** Sometimes, you can have a delivery service pick up the product. Other times, you'll need to take the product to a delivery service location such as DHL or Estefeta. You'll need to go through the return process in your Amazon account and print a return label.



DELIVERY SERVICES

Download the following apps and take a peek at all the options they offer. On some, you can pay with credit card or cash directly to the driver. You may find when using a foreign card, there may be an issue. If so, call your card company to assist you with adding your card. If there is an item not available, your driver will contact you for a replacement or a refund.

- **Mercado Libre** - The Mexican version of Amazon, ML offers a variety of products including alcohol and vehicles. You can see reviews of sellers, products and compare prices with Amazon. ML is only in Spanish but you can translate easily with Google Translate. Download the ML app and set up an account. Like Amazon, you can pay with credit card or cash deposit in Oxxo.
- **Rappi** - Provides users with almost anything they need including groceries, alcohol, pet supplies, medication, and food from local restaurants. Rappi even offers a courier service that allows you to send packages to other locations in the city. I use Rappi frequently, especially in the summer. Rappi allows you to make special requests as well.
- **Cornershop** - Just like Rappi, this delivery service offers delivery of the same products. Some people prefer one service to the other.
- **Pharmacies** - Many local pharmacies (farmacias) offer delivery services for medications and health care items. Some pharmacies have an app like Farmacias del Ahorro while others you have to call directly.
- **Didi and Uber Eats** - Both deliver food from restaurants. You'll find some restaurants prefer one app to another. For example, the same restaurants may not be on all three apps (Rappi, DiDi, Uber Eats). Try all three and see which you like better.



COST OF LIVING

Budgets can be one of the most difficult to predict until you live here. Your particular lifestyle dictates your expenses, fixed costs, and flexible costs. I highly recommend taking at least one or two research trips to determine actual costs. There is something here for everyone, no matter how you want to live. Most people will tell you it is incredibly affordable to eat out. That's a true statement to some degree. But it also depends on WHERE you eat. Anything is affordable in Mérida if you live like a local. But the question remains, "How do YOU want to live?"

Budget Considerations

- Travel
- Business
- Cell Phone
- Health Insurance
- Transportation
- Start-up Costs
- Standard Living Expenses
- Location
- Household
- Water
- Food
- Entertainment
- Personal Choices and Services
- Clothing
- Emergency Fund
- Electricity/Air-conditioning
- Other Utilities
- Service Providers

Remember, how you live will determine the actual cost of living. I always recommend keeping an itemized list of your expenses for 90 days to determine where you spend your money. You can adjust as needed once the first 90 days are under your belt. No matter where you live, your cost of living is dramatically impacted by your lifestyle. You may choose to live like a local. You can also live a more luxurious lifestyle on a much lower budget than you'd pay in many locations in other parts of the world. Mérida provides almost anything you'd ever want or need, from goods and services to various neighborhoods and housing choices. It is also close to the beach, so you can escape the city for the quiet serenity of the ocean waves just a few miles away.



COST OF LIVING

The most expensive living costs are:

- Housing
- Electricity
- Food
- Medical, if there are special needs

One Month Sample Budget in USD (pending exchange rate)*

- **Housing** (2-bedroom, furnished): \$800 - \$1,500 avg (varies based on the area and amenities)
- **Utilities:** \$75 - \$250 (electric, gas, water, trash - varies based on usage)
- **Entertainment:** \$200 - \$350 (eating out, museum fees, etc.)
- **Weekly Domestic Help:** \$0 - \$250 (maid, pool cleaning, gardener)
- **Internet:** \$25 - \$50 (high speed)
- **Transportation:** \$30 (public transportation)
- **Uber:** \$25 - \$125
- **Groceries:** \$250 - \$450

**While this is a GENERAL sample budget, each item can vary significantly based on your lifestyle and number of people in your family.*

Naturally, when purchasing products from other countries, they are considered imports. This means the price is significantly higher. You'll find U.S. brands like Sargento, Brianna's, and Kikkoman at a premium price. In general, items are cheaper in the local markets. Costs for fruits and vegetables vary by season. Chickens, pigs, turkeys, and anything grown or raised locally if bought from local mercados, including Lucas de Galvez.



COST OF LIVING

People are flocking to Mérida for quality medical care, slower pace, relaxed lifestyle and, most of all, cost of living. Have you ever felt like the older you get, the more expenses you have? Once I began comparing the cost of living in the U.S. to Mexico, the choice was obvious. It all came down to this: my dollar would go much, much farther in Mérida. Having a list you can easily refer to helps greatly.

Overlooked Considerations

- **Travel** - Will you need to travel often to and from your home country (U.S., Canada, Europe, etc.)?
- **Business** - Will you have meetings that will require you to attend in person in your home country?
- **Phone** - Will you keep your cell phone or will you convert to a Mexican number?
- **Insurance** - Do you have health insurance and/or will you want health insurance in Mexico?
- **Transportation** - Do you want to have a car in Mérida? If so, car purchase, insurance, and gas costs will need to be part of your budget.
- **Start-up costs** - Are you bringing some things with you or do you plan to completely start over? Determining costs to purchase items vs. shipping or bringing them in suitcases should be factored in as well.

Take Into Account

- **Location** - Are you within walking distance of a market or will you need to take Uber?
- **Household** - Do you need a washer and/or dryer? Or would you consider/prefer to take your items to the lavanderia? Weigh the cost of electricity vs. outsourcing your laundry.
- **Electricity** - Keep track of your usage, temperature, climate, and time of year for a baseline cost.
- **Utilities** - Internet, gas, cable, trash.



COST OF LIVING

- **Service providers** – Pool service providers, house cleaning, gardeners are the typical ones to hire.
- **Water** – Putting water into your budget may seem odd but you have many options when it comes to bottled water.
- **Personal services** – Cut, color, manicure, pedicure, etc.
- **Alternative care** – Massage, acupuncture, spa visits.
- **Entertainment** – Eating out, dancing, museum fees, city tours.
- **Clothing** – Due to the weather, clothing and shoes may be replaced more often. Lighter fabrics helps to stay cooler in the scorching heat of the summers where “mucho color” is a daily greeting.

Keep in mind, your actual cost of living is determined by how you live. I always recommend keeping an itemized list of your expenses for a period of 90 days to determine exactly where you are spending your money. Once you have the first 90 days under your belt then adjust as needed.

Moving to a completely new and unfamiliar place, I needed a little “emergency fund” for unknowns. Creating this fund had a tremendous impact on lowering my stress level when unforeseen expenses popped up. It's normal to have a few unexpected expenses in the beginning. Because I had money set aside for unforeseen expenses, it did not add any financial stress. What did I use this fund for?

- Rental issues and needed to move so I lost my deposit.
- New clothes for the hot weather.
- Floor fans to help circulate air better.
- Household items.



DRIVING

Thinking about driving in Mérida? Go slow, watch the streets, and look out for the numerous vehicles and pedestrians. Pay careful attention to cars stopping in front of you to allow their passengers to get out of the car. Uber drivers are notorious for stopping quickly on both the left and the right-hand sides of the street.

- **Drive “The Mexican Way”** - Observe how the locals drive and fall into their examples. You’ll eventually find your way that is a combination of locals, expats, and foreigners.
- **Street Parking Caution** - Parking is a challenge, especially on the narrow streets of Centro. At times, another car parks so close that you can’t get out of your parking place.
- **Respect Speed Limits** - The majority of Mexicans do not speed. Any kind of traffic offense leads to dealing with the police so just don't do it.
- **One-Way Streets** - There is a system of one-way streets that grid the city. Look for (1) small directional signs, (2) the direction the cars face or (3) the direction the street signs face.
- **Mexican Speed Bumps** - From a rope across the road to dots on the road to larger humps and massive bumps, all these are used to reduce your speed.
- **Passing Tips** - When you want to pass, frequently look all around you to make sure a motorcycle, bike or oncoming car hasn’t snuck up behind you.
- **Respect the Police** - If you get pulled over for any reason, normally the first thing you hear is about “el respeto” or respect. You may even have to remind the police you are a tourist or new. BUT, always do it with respect AND patience. Do NOT in any circumstance argue or raise your voice.
- **Mexico Car Insurance** - Insurance offered by your credit card or your local insurance company does not cover you in Mexico. Police may ask to see a copy of your rental agreement. If you don’t have insurance on your contract, they may write you a ticket.
- **Right on a red?** - NO! Only when you see the "continua" sign (above) can you turn right. You'll see a sign with an arrow pointing to the right. When in doubt, wait for the green light.



DRIVING

- **Pedestrians** - Pedestrians do not have the right of way. Pedestrian crosswalks are massive topes (road humps) the same height curbs and cross all lanes of traffic.
- **Large and in charge** - The largest vehicles rule the road. Trucks, buses and delivery vans live on the dangerous side as they know other drivers avoid them at all costs.
- **Alto Doesn't Mean Stop** - While Alto means stop, it's more of a suggestion to yield. I've been honked at for stopping. Use your best discretion for stopping vs. yielding.
- **Accidents** - Do not move your car OR interact with the other driver. Notify your insurance agent and wait for them. They will interact with the police on your behalf.
- **Day Drive First** - Learn to navigate the narrow streets, watch out for smaller vehicles including motorcycles and bicycles during the day helps you at night.
- **Two-way streets turn into one-way streets** - without any warning or signage. Always look at the direction cars are facing if you are unsure. You may see people waving at your or cars blinking their lights. This is a signal you are going the wrong way.
- **Pumping Gas** - You won't find any self-serve gas stations. Attendants direct you into the proper lane. Tell the attendant how much gas you want and how you will pay. A little tip of a few pesos is appropriate.
- **Lane Marking** - Narrow, neighborhood streets typically don't have any type of lane indicators. You may find faded yellow crosswalk lines with a white line indicating **where to stop at a red light**.
- **Glorieta Rules** - The center of the round islands typically showcase memorial statuary or monuments. Pay close attention to what other drivers do to learn how to navigate the roundabouts called glorietas.
- **Motorcycle Accidents** - Motorcycles of all sizes including scooters zip in and out of traffic at lighting speed. Use special caution when driving.
- **Green Angels** - If you break down on a highway, there is a free service called Green Angels. Call 01-800-987-8224. If in emergency, dial 078 or +52 999.983.1184. If you break down in town, walk to the nearest establishment and ask for help. People in Mérida are extremely helpful especially in a time of emergency.



END-OF-LIFE PLAN

It's hard and maybe even impossible to think about your demise and eventual death. But no one is immortal. Planning for what will happen when you die while you still have your mental and physical health is paramount. An End-of-Life Plan is probably the MOST important thing you can do. It is also the most overlooked. Preparing for this inevitable event makes the process easier and helps loved ones. Death in a foreign country can actually put a strain on everyone involved from neighbors to loved ones to the Mexican authorities. An End-of-Life Plan is just as important for young adults as it is for older adults. Accidents happen all the time. Notably, this is a subject that many of us prefer to avoid.

Important Information

- Advance health care directives from other countries are not valid in Mexico.
- Shipment of remains is expensive with red tape.
- Consider cremation vs. the expense of shipping remains home.
- If you are sure you want to be shipped back to your home country, consider buying repatriation of remains insurance.

Register with S.T.E.P. - For Americans, register with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program. S.T.E.P. advises you of security risks and assists with connecting you to friends and family in the event of an emergency.

Five Wishes - Important topics and considerations that you may not have even thought about. It's also important to note that there is no guarantee that ANY of your requests will be honored by doctors, hospitals, or other medical care service providers. It is up to the interpretation of the professional who is in charge of your medical care on a case by case basis. www.fivewishes.org



END-OF-LIFE PLAN

Start with the 5 D's

- Discuss your desires with loved ones
- Decide what you want
- Document your wishes
- Disseminate all relevant documentation
- Display your wishes in an easily visible location

Is there someone you trust to act on your behalf? If you are solo, do you have 3-4 local friends or neighbors you can share your preferences with? Speak to them about what you want and how you would like your wishes carried out. Be sure they have emergency phone numbers for next of kin, your doctor, hospital, and funeral company, and contact information. Can your primary physician be called to declare the cause of death? Make sure your trusted person will call your physician to declare the cause of death and write it on the death certificate. This is also the best way to ensure your end of life wishes are carried out.

Do not call 911, an ambulance, the fire department, or the police. Call the doctor for the death certificate called a *Certificado de Defunción* then call the funeral home.

How are services be paid for? Who will pay for the funeral services, attending doctor, death certificate, and other related expenses? Some funeral homes let you pre-pay for their services. Is cremation an option? Many expats opt for cremation because loved ones may want to preserve their ashes. Cremation is the best option with the least amount of hassle and expense. Inquire at a funeral home for more details. What happens if you die without any documentation or representation? Your consulate is informed and will then contact your next of kin. If no one claims your body, it is placed in a communal grave.



EXPATS

It's natural to want to connect with others who have been where you've been. Gaining knowledge from an extranjero's experience is valuable. There's also comfort in connecting with others from your home country. Where to meet extranjeros is a frequently asked question.

Current statistics estimate approximately 1,000,000 extranjeros live in Mexico. In a country with almost 125 million people, that's not a lot. According to several reliable online sources, the extranjero community in Greater Mérida including snowbirds averages about 1% of the population. In a city with about 1,400,000 people, that's not a lot either. One of the things I love about Mérida is that you can choose your community. Whether you want to be part of a heavy extranjero circle or opt for a more local lifestyle, there is something for everyone here.

Where Expats Gather

Restaurants and Cantinas

- Hennesy's
- Rosas y Xocolate
- Dzalbay Cantina
- La Negrita

Popular Neighborhoods

- Santa Lucia Park
- Plaza Grande
- Paseo de Montejo
- Calle 60

Facebook Groups

- Search for Mérida

Popular Grocery Stores & Markets

- Costco
- Walmart
- Sam's Club
- Slow Food Market
- Santiago Market
- Santa Ana Market



JOBS - WORKING AS AN EXPAT

Sunny skies, tropical breezes, and a relaxing lifestyle create the perfect environment to work as an expat. Advancements in technology as well as improving infrastructure contribute to the growth of Mérida.

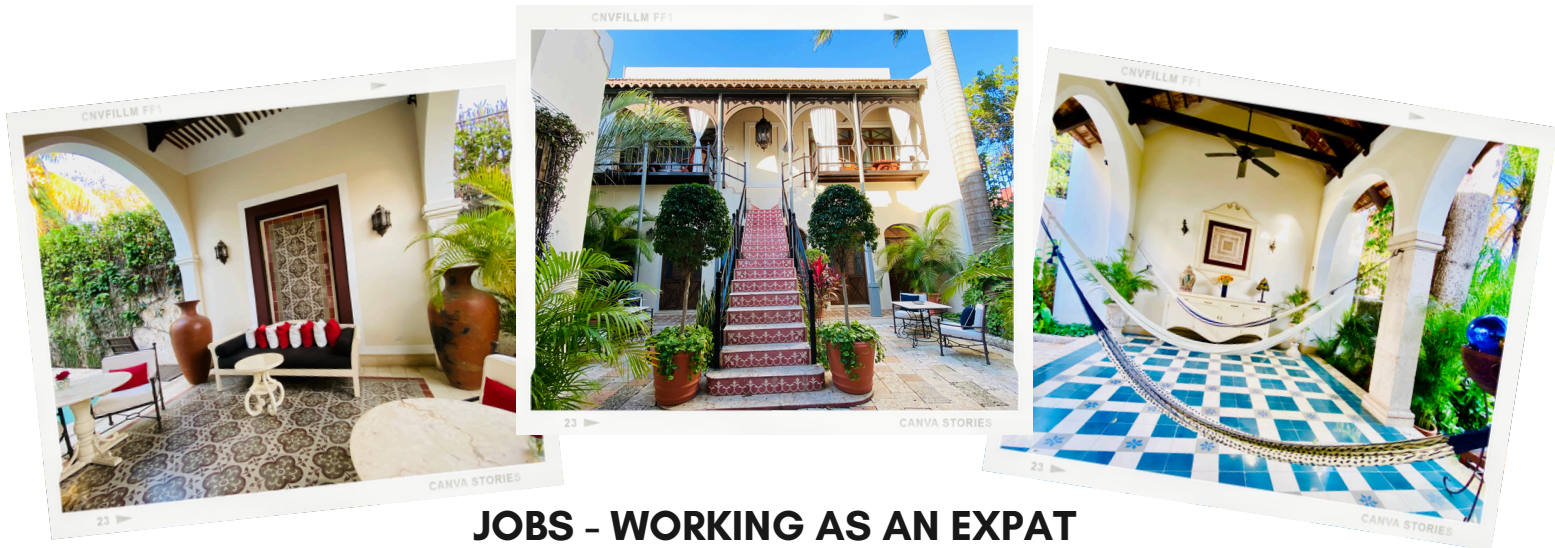
- Attractive Benefits
- Quality healthcare
- Real estate bargains
- Low cost of living
- Personal safety
- Financial security

Working Legally

You'll need temporary or permanent residency with a work permit issued by the Institute of Immigration (INM). The only exception is if you offer online services only. At the moment, it is a bit difficult to qualify for a work permit unless you open your own business.

Job Search Strategies

- Industry associations
- Search online employment sites
- Utilize social media
- Check out local online forums and bulletin boards
- Ask locals and other expats
- Understand the culture
- Online presence and profile should be current



JOBS - WORKING AS AN EXPAT

Jobs for Expats

- Work for U.S. company with a location in Mérida or Telework
- Community, Social or Religious Work
- Teach English TEFL/TESOL
- Start Your Own Business or Buy an Existing Business
- Create an Airbnb “experience” through sharing your expertise
- Offer personal and/or professional services

A Few Ideas

- Pet Grooming or Pet Sitting
- Organizing or Personal Shopper
- Web Design, Tutoring, Copywriting or Proofreading
- House Painting or Interior Decorating
- Dog Walking
- Private Chef Service
- Companionship, Childcare or Eldercare
- Private Driving

NOTE

- When working in Mexico, you’ll file taxes in Mexico.
- If working remotely, you’ll file taxes in your home country. There’s no “double tax” for extranjeros.
- A different country means different tax laws and banking practices. Avoid surprises by hiring an international CPA.
- You can drive in Mexico with the license from your home country as long as it is current.



MEDICAL - CARE

Mérida offers affordable, world-class medical services and health care.

Hospital Levels - Levels have nothing to do with quality, but rather quantity and breadth of facilities and care.

- **First-Level Hospitals:** Hospitales de Primer Nivel
 - **Second-Level Hospitals:** Hospitales de Segundo Nivel
 - **Third-Level Hospitals:** Hospitales de Tercer Nivel
-
- **First-level hospitals** provide care for patients without serious injury. They have testing and monitoring equipment and provide First Aid. These are similar to what we would think of as a clinic.
 - **Second-level hospitals** offer basic services and outpatient care. They have the ability to provide surgical and recovery facilities along with specialist services but without emergency facilities.
 - **Third-level hospitals** are equipped for high complexity health problems requiring more technology and state of the art equipment. They have patient rooms and surgery rooms. They offer specific surgical specialties including trauma, neurosurgery, cardiovascular surgery, and the like.

Specialized Clinics - Currently, close to twenty different clinics provide surgical and recovery services. Similar to a second-level hospital, a clinic provides the same services but only for one specialized area.



MEDICAL - CARE

Medical History - It is ALWAYS recommended to have your medical history with you. It takes time for doctors or facilities here to obtain records from your practitioners at home.

Due Diligence - Be prepared prior to your arrival. If traveling, research and locate the hospitals and clinics close to your accommodations. If you have a medical issue, be sure to find the clinic or hospital that can treat you.

Insurance - Don't take for granted that your medical insurance will also cover emergencies or procedures while you are out of the country. You may explore travel insurance. Many policies do NOT cover the costs of air ambulance service. Additional insurance for ambulance/medevac service is also strongly recommended for all travelers. It is also a good idea to get a 24/7 phone number from your insurance carrier.

Payment - All doctors, hospitals and medical facilities, public or private, require full payment in cash or credit card, at the time of service. Unless you are in a hospital pre-qualified by your insurance, medical professionals and facilities will NOT bill your insurance company. They will provide receipts or itemized statements so that you can submit to your insurance carrier for reimbursement.

Consumer Rights - If you believe you are being charged unfairly, contact PROFECO, the government consumer rights protection agency: profeco.gob.mx or call 01-800-468-8722 and ask for an English-speaking operator.

Medicare / Medicaid - Generally do NOT cover medical expenses incurred outside of the U.S. but depends on your policy. Visit medicare.gov and cms.hhs.gov



MEDICAL - CLINICS & HOSPITALS

Emergency Services - In the case of an emergency, prices are much less than what you would pay out of pocket for the same services back home.

Medical Tourism - Mexico is ranked as the second destination in the world for medical tourism. Yucatan is the most successful state for health, education, and safety.

Hospitals

Faro del Mayab, the newest private hospital tailors services to medical tourism and the expat community. It is part of the Mexico City-based Médica Sur Network; the only hospital chain in Mexico with a strategic alliance with the Mayo Clinic in the U.S. Located in the North part of the city.

- christusmuguerza.com.mx/hospital-faro-del-mayab

Clínica de Mérida offers the closest Emergency facilities of a Tercer Nivel (third-level hospital). The hospital is familiar with ex-pats and many of the doctors speak English. Located in Centro.

- clinicademerida.com.mx

CEM Sureste is a small hospital with doctors' offices, an Emergency Room and other facilities. Specifically available for tourists and visitors, although it serves locals as well. Located in Centro across the street from the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

- cemsureste.com

There is a significant history of expert care in Mérida. Along with the continual evolution of educational programs, state of the art equipment, medical professional here are intent to heal, help and assist those in need of medical procedures. For a complete list of doctors and specialites, read the full article: lifeinmerida.com/merida-mexico-hospital/

OFFER A - General Discounts

- \$350 ER Consultation - Adults
- \$450 ER Consultation - Pediatric
- 35% Discount on laboratory and imaging service (applicable only to outpatients, does
- not apply to contrast or sedation, special or surrogate studies)
- 15% Discount on hospitalization and emergency services
- 15% discount on stress test and electrocardiogram (by appointment only, stress test
- directly in check up area)
- No charge for blood pressure checks or injections
- To obtain the benefits and discounts above, it is an essential requirement to present the digital membership that is obtained by registering in the following link or QR code: <https://www.christusmuguerza.com.mx/activa-socio-christus?pin=4699>



OFFER B - Benefits for preferred patients with a minimum hospital stay of 1 night

- Upgrade to master suite room (subject to availability).
- One meal a day at no charge for a companion.
- Family kit at no charge for a companion during the stay.
- Admission one night earlier for scheduled surgeries before 7am the next day at no
- charge (subject to availability).

To obtain the benefits described in section B it is necessary to send an email to: enrique.ceballos@christus.mx or flor.shiels@christus.mx to request “benefits for preferred patients” - please state this in the subject line of the email.

If you have any other questions about this special offer, please contact me:
amy@lifeinmerida.com or WhatsApp +52 999.192.6197 (Mexico) or +1 901.257.9209 (U.S.)



MEDICAL - DOCTORS & DENTISTS

Mérida boasts some of the finest medical services and physicians in the region. The city is home to an array of hospitals, clinics, and healthcare providers dedicated to delivering exceptional medical care to patients from all over the world. With a wealth of experience and a commitment to excellence, Mérida's doctors are renowned for their skills, compassion, and commitment to patient-centered care. Whether you're looking for routine check-ups, specialist consultations, or emergency care, Mérida has a wealth of hospitals, clinics, and medical professionals at your disposal. It's essential to find a reliable and trustworthy doctor.

In a recent survey I conducted with 100 extranjeros living in Mérida, 100% preferred seeing a Mexican doctor vs. an American doctor. Why?

- More time spent with patients
- More personal care and attention
- More follow-up and detailed information supplied
- More affordable cost of office visits: general doctors \$500 - \$700 MXN, specialists \$800 - \$1,400 MXN

While it's key to consider the location, choosing the closest doctor may not be the best option. Schedule a consultation to evaluate communication and bedside manner. This allows you to ask questions, get a feel for their personality, and how they approach patient care. A good doctor should be able to communicate clearly, listen attentively, and show empathy towards their patients. Don't be afraid to switch doctors if you don't feel comfortable or confident. Your health and well-being are too important to settle for anything less than the best.



MEDICAL - DOCTORS & DENTISTS

Notably, the things I love most about the private healthcare system in Mérida:

- High level of care of the doctors
- Quality of the medicines
- Ease of making appointments
- State of the art medical equipment
- Follow-up system by professionals, hospitals, and clinics

Many professional dental clinics in Mérida have state-of-the-art technology and high-quality care. It's important to vet your dentist and research the procedures you need to make the best choice. Not all dentists are the same. Ensure they are trained and reputable. Do thorough research, read reviews, and ask for recommendations and testimonials from other patients. Credentials should be visible in the dental office.

Many times, dental work has a guarantee. Know all details, especially whether a future or follow up appointment is included. Don't worry about the water. It is filtered to keep it safe and potable. Some dentists are members of the American Dental Association. This doesn't mean the ADA has pre-screened them or monitors their dental work. Anyone with a valid license can be a member. Many dentists are trained in the U.S. and Europe, resulting in highly experienced dentists. The Mexico Dental Association is a member of the World Dental Federation. Thus ensuring a standard system of quality control and assessment.

Nitrous oxide is not permitted in Mexico. But dentists can prescribe something to relax you, such as Valium or Xanax. You may want to request a fast-acting sedative. Dental offices may not meet your aesthetic expectations. A simple dental office makes it possible for dentists to offer lower prices. With this in mind, furniture is typically less modern, and the walls may be bare. This is NOT an indication of the level of expertise or quality of care.



MOVING RESEARCH

In 2006–2007, I lived in the Riviera Maya area of Mexico and fell in love with the culture, food, people and lifestyle. It was this experience that won my heart. I knew I would eventually end up living in Mexico. As I grew older, I began soul searching. I didn't want to wait for retirement to start living my life. I asked myself what am I waiting for? I started researching and speaking to others about recommendations for different cities to move, both in the U.S. and in Mexico. My plan was to make a list of my top 5 then visit each one. Then I would narrow down the list or pick THE ONE and make my move. Here are the things I considered:

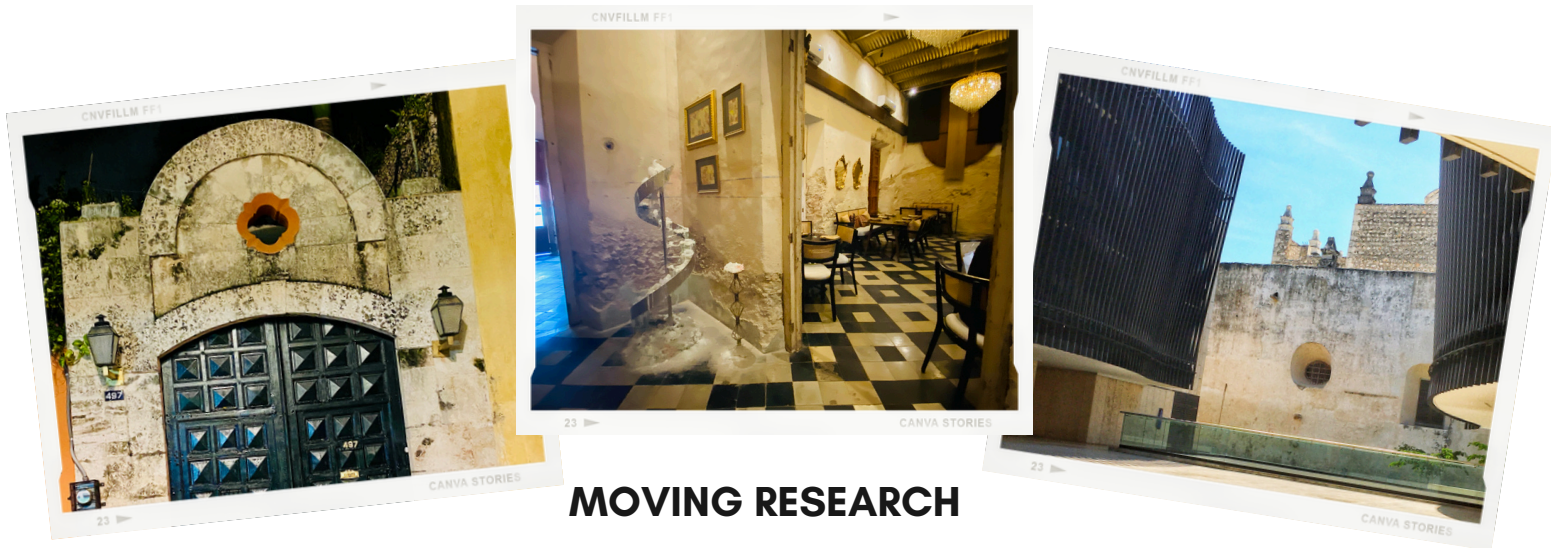
- **Within the U.S. or outside the U.S.** - I chose Mexico.
- **Accessibility** - I looked at accessibility including cost, flight time and airport location. In the event of an emergency, would I be able to get back to the U.S. quickly?
- **Time zone** - Being in the same time zone was important for me.
- **Cost of living** - I compared my current budget of “exist and get by” and a future budget of “thrive and be alive.” While financial costs were important, I took into consideration the mental, spiritual and emotional costs. I didn't want to just exist any longer. I became more interested in LIVING.
- **Be selfish** - I say this because that's what people may tell you when you talk about moving. They find every way possible to convince you not to do it, offer free advice and give you lots of what if's. My response is always the same, “I don't live my life on what if's that usually NEVER happen.”



MOVING RESEARCH

- **Consider wants, needs, must-haves, like-to-haves, and deal-breakers** - Sometimes determining what you don't want helps you find what you do want. I wanted to live in a location that was rich with arts, heritage and culture; a vibrant city with comforts of home as well as authentic local lifestyle.
- **Consider population dynamics** - This was HUGE and something I didn't even think about until I was pretty far into the process. I realized I wanted a bigger city vs. a smaller city. The smaller the population, the quicker the ex-pat population would overtake the local population. Additionally, in a smaller city, I may not be able to find or order things I might need or want (you know, those Amazon.com delivery types of purchases).
- **Based on my research, here are the cities I selected:**
 - Mérida
 - Lake Chapala/Ajijic
 - San Miguel de Allende
 - San Cristobal de las Casas
 - San Luis Potosi

Because I was familiar with Mérida after living in the Riviera Maya, I decided to travel to Mérida first. Before I left, I needed to think about why I wanted to move. In 2019, I had my most successful year in business yet I still felt like something was missing. I yearned for something more, something different, something substantial. I had no idea what that looked like or how to go about getting it. I always ask clients, "What do you want? What are you willing to do to get it?" Now, it was time to ask myself those same questions. I created a plan and a timeline for myself. I think that is one of the most important things you can do. While it is possible to move in less than three months, it is more reasonable to establish a timeline between three months to one year.



MOVING RESEARCH

To help start the process:

- Sell residence or review rental terms (if renting).
- Sell car or review car lease terms (if leasing).
- Determine what to take with you, sell, give away or store.
- Decide what need to do and find on your research trip.
- How will you get here (fly or drive)?
- Where will you stay (hotel, short-term / long-term rental)?
- If renting, have you seen the location and/or neighborhood **in person**?
- Are pets coming with you?
- Is your legal paperwork in order (banking, wills, Power of Attorney, Medical Directives, etc.)? You'll need these for your home country as well as in Mexico.
- Have you chosen a local bank?
- Will you apply for temporary or permanent residency before leaving your home country?
- Have you researched medication availability, health insurance and medical professionals?



MOVING TIPS

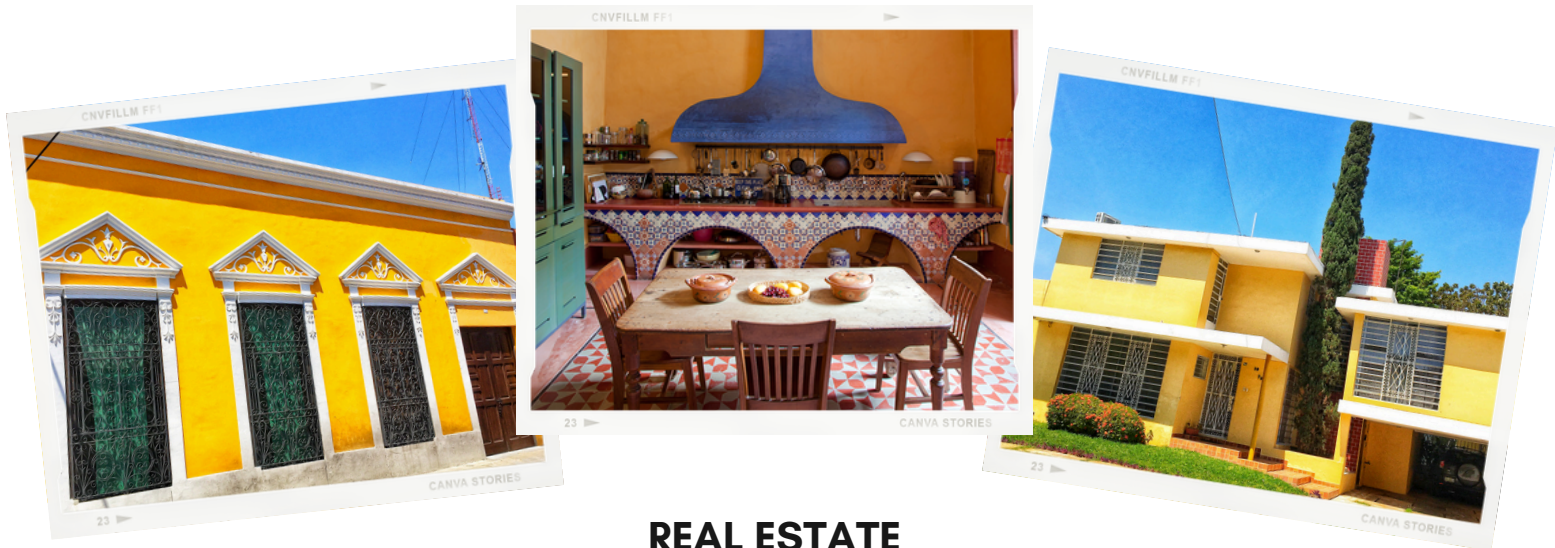
“Life might be difficult for a while, but I would tough it out because living in a foreign country is one of those things that everyone should try at least once. My understanding was that it completed a person, sanding down the rough provincial edges and transforming you into a citizen of the world.” – David Sedaris

- Home will be a new place with many differences: language, currency, and lifestyle, just to mention a few.
- Challenges will be the same whether you move locally or internationally. You will still lose your glasses, misplace the cord to your computer or drop your phone.
- Enjoy the new (and fresh): friendships, grocery stores, paying bills, and living. Take your new life adventure in stride.
- Communication will take on a new form and variety. Explore what’s best for you and let your friends and family know what’s best for you.
- Guilt is inevitable and will wane over time. Lack of availability or believing you are being selfish contributes to feelings of guilt. Keep in mind, this is all about YOU!
- Visiting friends and family will be less often that you would like. For a frame of reference, how often do you see them now?
- Managing expectations is part of the process; not only yours but others as well.
- You’ll become a local quicker than you think. Before you know it, people will be asking for your help and advice.
- Emotions will run high at times and then level out. Give yourself permission to be sad, angry, frustrated, and overwhelmed.
- Connections with friends and family may intensify or fade away. It’s part of the evolution.
- Ask for help when you need it. Adjustments to anything new can be a challenge; a new culture and new language will be even more so.
- Trust yourself and the process. Every single occurrence in life happens for a reason.



MOVING TIPS

- Establish a routine like morning coffee in the pool, journaling, meditation, or walking. Having items on a schedule will help create balance and stability.
- Write down lessons, reflections, and perceptions. Getting things out of your head helps process, adjust, and adapt in a healthy way.
- Accept ANY change is hard. Implement coping mechanisms when times feel tough. Look back on the reasons you decided to make this change and remember where you came from and what you wanted to move towards.
- Break down tasks into small, action items so you don't get exhausted or stuck. Just like eating an elephant, do it one small bite at a time.
- Take it one day and one step at a time. Don't overload yourself with too much too soon.
- Spend time every day reflecting on what you learned, what you could have done differently, and celebrate your accomplishments, large and small.
- Take a break when you need a break. It's ok to say no, cancel appointments, or just stay at home. Recognize when you need time and space to recharge your batteries.
- Create nourishing and beneficial habits. Starting over can truly mean starting over in every aspect of your life.
- Staying in gratitude helps to stay grounded. End every day grateful for at least one thing or person and the lesson, help or insight.
- Focus on the journey and not the destination. So many times, we miss what is right in front of us trying to get to the finish line. Slow down and enjoy the ride.
- Expect life to get messy, at least for a while. With a major upheaval in life, this is inevitable. Remind yourself it's temporary, the dust will settle, and the chaos will become calm in time.
- Trust you are exactly where you are supposed to be at any given moment and the decisions you need to make.
- Enjoy the new life and experiences you are creating. You've given yourself the greatest gifts of freedom, joy, happiness, surrender, and pleasure.



REAL ESTATE

Renting in Mexico is very different from renting in the US and other countries. Mexico has many unique and contractual nuances that need to be carefully examined. You will also find distinct differences between American owners and local owners; both of which can have challenges or similarities. It's imperative to know details and subtleties to be completely informed.

Facebook Groups - You'll find valuable information from people who already live in Mérida. Actually, the plethora of comments, recommendations, and discussions around neighborhoods, rentals, and buying houses can help you narrow down or eliminate areas that may not be right for you. There are postings by landlords, property managers, owners, and, yes, scammers. I urge you to conduct your due diligence on any and all of the properties posted. MANY will tell you it's the Wild, Wild West where ANYTHING goes. Don't get duped or scammed. This is why I also recommend hiring a trusted professional.

Online Listing Advice - Because there is no MLS (Multiple Listing System), many properties are found online or in Facebook Groups, Pages, and even Facebook Marketplace. It's common to find the same property listed by multiple times. Never, ever give money upfront. Visit the property, meet the owner or agent. Do your research and collect in-depth facts and particulars.

What to expect:

- advertised properties not available
- different prices for the same property
- multiple people advertising the same property
- bait and switch listings



REAL ESTATE - RENTING SHORT TERM

Try a short term rental first - It takes time to get accustomed to a new city. It's smart to rent for 3 months to 6 months in different areas. Making a decision based on emotions vs. practical necessities may cause you stress and anxiety down the road. Be patient when deciding where you want to live. Additionally, spend some time in a variety of houses and different neighborhoods.

List needs, wants, and deal breakers - A short term rental helps you make educated decisions for a long term rental. For example, you may think a pool is a want. But, once you spend a scorching summer in Mérida, a pool becomes a need. Subsequently, a washing machine may be compromised because there is a lavandería around the corner. Keep your needs, wants, and deal breakers list in a spiral during your short term rental research. Make notes, jot down thoughts, and keep it handy as a reference point.

Search for your perfect spot - Renting for a short amount of time means the risk is relatively low. Now, you have the opportunity to learn the area, speak to other people, and educate yourself before a long term commitment.

Important considerations:

- Are you close to grocery stores, restaurants, etc.?
- Can you walk or take Uber easily?
- Do you feel safe?
- Is the noise level acceptable?
- Do you need to spend more for a better location?



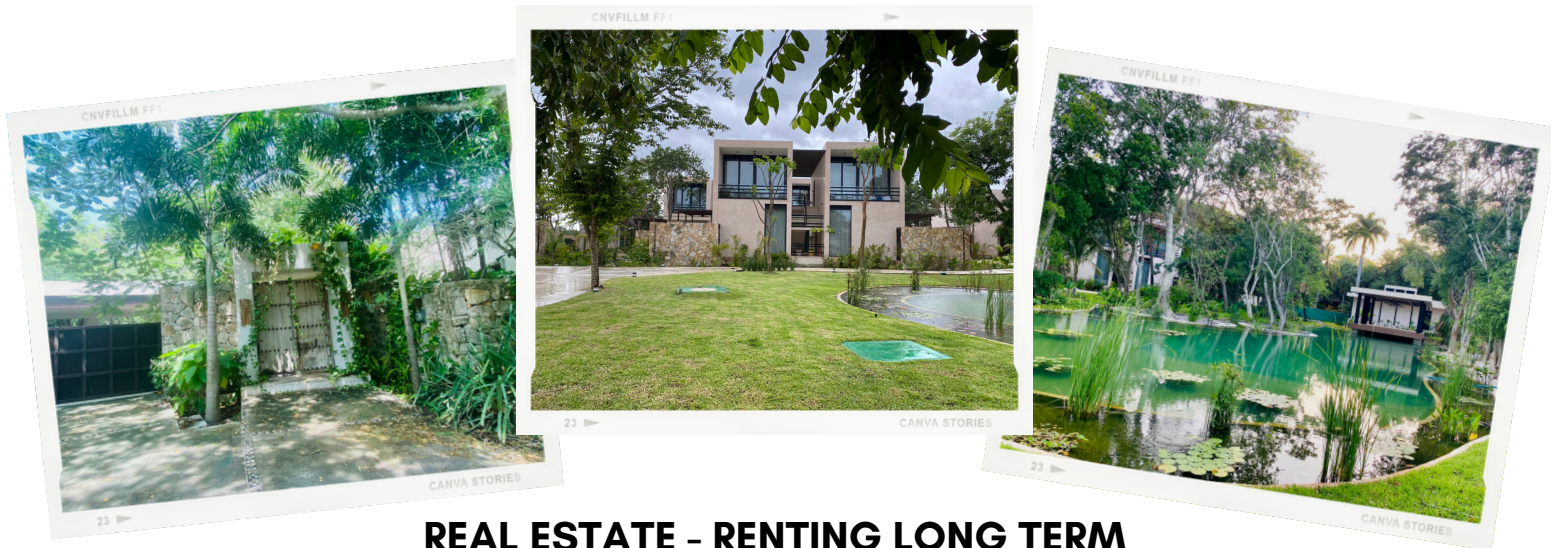
REAL ESTATE - RENTING LONG TERM

Understanding cultural differences - While Mérida is a sophisticated and popular destination, cultural differences exist in customer service, common sense, and other important areas. Getting used to how things work, including understanding cultural differences, is a big benefit. It also helps determine what type of owner, landlord, or management company you might be willing to rent from.

Hire a professional - It's critical to hire someone with outstanding credentials and references. Keep in mind, the rental contract must be in Spanish to be valid. By request (and possibly for an additional fee), the contract can be translated into English. This helps to understand the details and provides peace of mind. It's imperative to be aware of all nuances, differences, terms and agreements.

Deposits and professional fees - In Mérida, owners, landlords, and property managers don't ask for background checks, references, or credit history. More than likely, as a foreigner, you'll be asked to give a second deposit

- **Deposit:** one month's rent.
- **Guarantee:** known as an Aval. An Aval can be one of two things: 1) a local property owned by the renter that can be used as collateral OR 2) a third party guarantor that will co-sign or allow their property to be used as collateral.
- **If no aval:** then another deposit is required.
- **Contract fee:** this fee is for the notary and/or attorney to draft the contract. There are no standard contracts in Mérida.



REAL ESTATE - RENTING LONG TERM

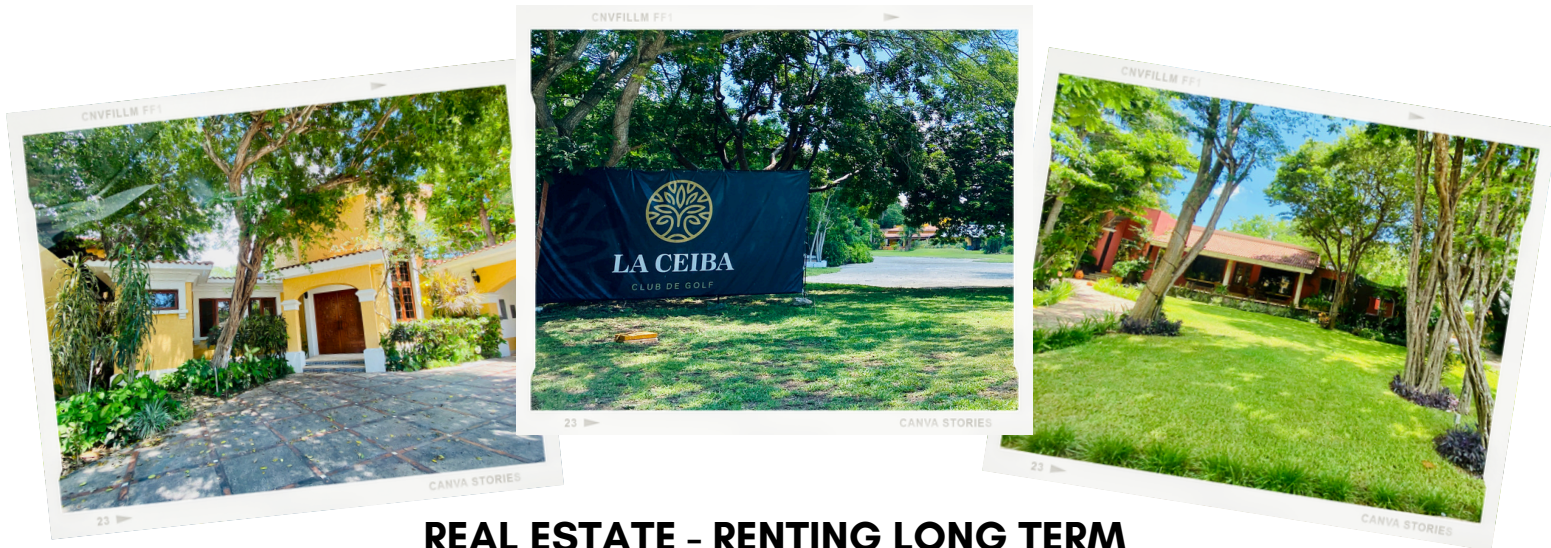
Vet your chosen neighborhood – When you decide on a neighborhood, visit frequently. Drive or walk around during the day, at night, chat with neighbors. Do whatever you need to do to ensure you know as much as you can. Streets change dramatically from one block to the next in all directions. More stress occurs from making quick decisions without having all the pertinent information at hand and not doing investigative research about your chosen neighborhood.

- Are you on a major bus street that you didn't notice before?
- Are you close to a fire station, police department, or a busy tienda (small convenience store)?
- Is there a noisy cantina close?
- Do you feel this is an area where you will be able to come and go with ease and convenience?

Property owner information – Just as the owner may require qualifying information from you, you unquestionably have the right to ask for information as well. Dealing with the owner, landlord, or property manager should be a pleasant experience. If they have a Facebook or other social media account, do some research on them. What are they posting? How do they comment? Are they respectful? Combative? Negative? Professional? By now, you know social media is a powerful vetting tool. Pay attention to how they interact with others to gain more information.

Review contract differences

- **Notices:** do you have to give notice before you leave, or is your contract automatically up at the end of the term? Many times, it is to your advantage to sign an additional year of pagues or payment promises. This way, you don't have to pay an additional contract fee if you decide to extend your contract.



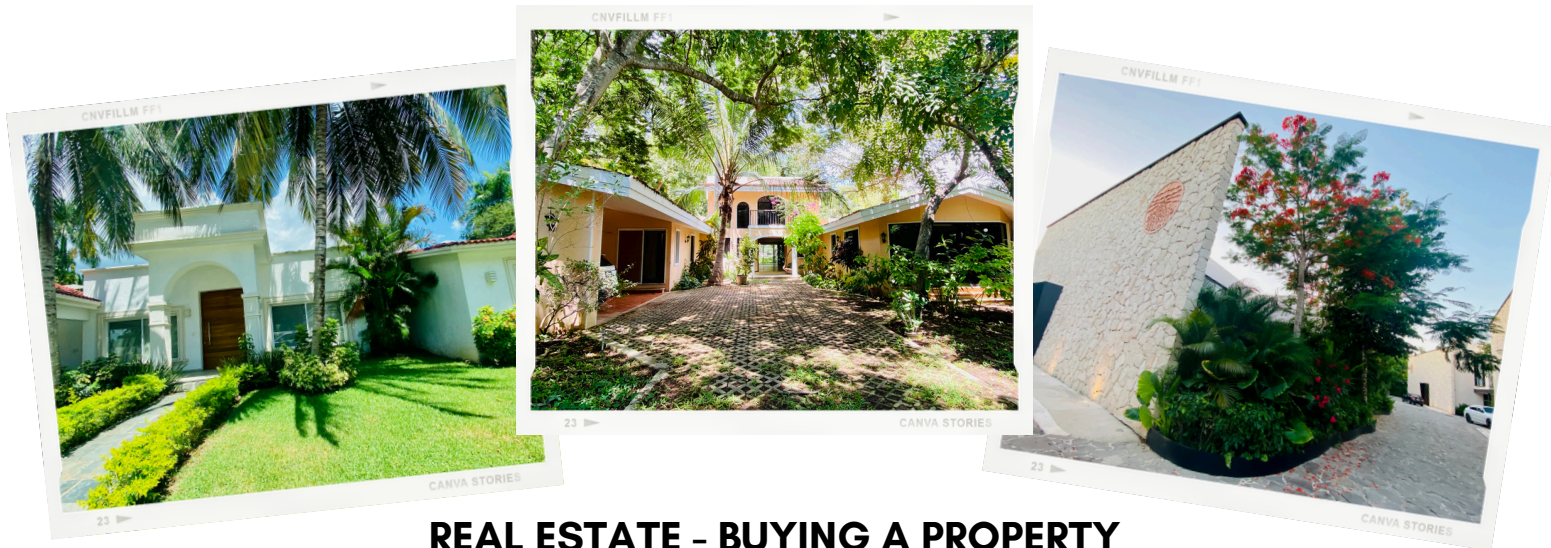
REAL ESTATE - RENTING LONG TERM

- **Repairs:** who is responsible for repairs, whether large or small? Typically, the renter is responsible for any and all repairs. This is a detail that might be negotiated.
- **Property alterations:** sometimes an owner allows you to make alterations to the property if it enhances the value or marketability. Anything you do needs to be specifically outlined and agreed upon in writing.
- **Specific permissions:** inquire about pets, smoking, guests, and other details.
- **Default by renter:** if you don't leave at the exact date and time on the contract, does the owner have the ability/right to keep your personal belongings and/or deposit?
- **Utilities and maintenance:** who is responsible for utilities and other services such as electric, gas, water, trash, pool and grounds maintenance, house cleaning, etc.? Include language that discusses the recourse if the owner does not pay for a service they've agreed to pay.

Regardless of what you hear, contract terms are negotiable. Start with a formal contract, review it, then obtain professional advice on items that need clarification, negotiation, or alteration.

REAL ESTATE - BUYING A PROPERTY

In order to legally own property within 50 km from a coastline or 100 km from an international border, the Mexican government created a trust called a fideicomiso. In this type of trust, a Mexican bank is designated as the trustee and, as such, has title to the property and is the owner of a record. The bank, as trustee, buys the property for the foreigner with the fiduciary obligation to follow instructions given by the foreigner who is the trust beneficiary. The trust beneficiary retains and enjoys all the rights of ownership while the bank holds the title to the property. The foreigner is entitled to use, enjoy, and even sell or will the property that is held in trust.



REAL ESTATE - BUYING A PROPERTY

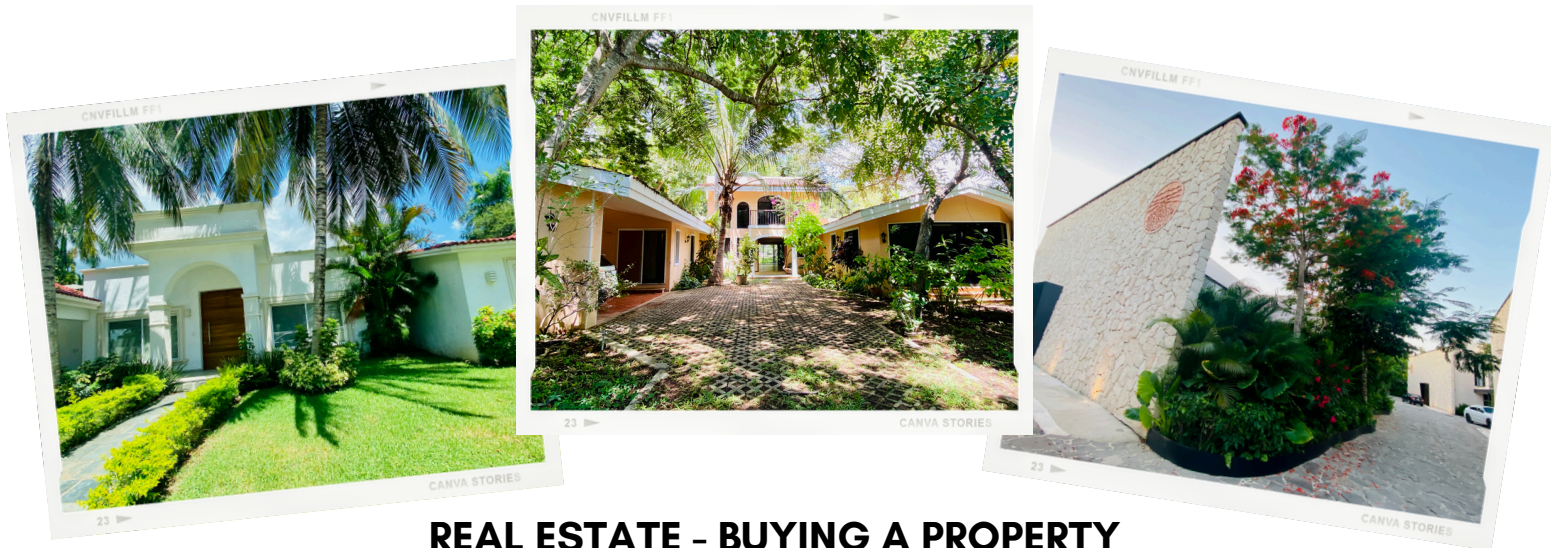
The beneficiary can:

- instruct the bank to sell or lease the property at any time
- develop and use the property to his liking
- benefit from any sales or transfers within the provisions of the law.

The beneficiary has a contractual right under the trust agreement to all benefits that may result from the use or sale of that property, even though he does not hold title to the property. The buyer should always have their own licensed Mexican attorney with a “cedula profesional.” This document is a registered license to practice law in Mexico and includes a photo of the attorney and his signature. In addition to formalizing your real estate transaction, an attorney can be very helpful in saving your money. An attorney can inform the buyer regarding his or her legal options as well as tax planning considerations, closing costs which should be paid by the seller, and ways of taking title to the trust rights which make sense for the particular circumstances of a specific buyer.

Fideicomiso Trust

- Granted for 50 years and is renewable in perpetuity.
- The trust is renewable at any time (for another 50 years) by applying to the bank.
- If the 50-year period expires without renewal, the owner has another 10 years in which he may apply to renew the trust.
- The existing trust may be transferred to a new owner and will be good for the remainder of its 50-year period, or the trust may be renewed at that time, if a property is purchased that already has a fideicomiso in place.
- If the property is already in a fideicomiso, probate and transfer tax is avoided when the property is transferred.



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Meet the team

The humans behind Life in Mérida™

A foreign resident and a Mérida native, guiding you through the move you're actually making.



Amy

Co-founder • The Mérida Ambassador

From	Dallas, Tx
In Mérida from	2019
Background	Relo & real estate
Happy place	Santa Lucia
Restaurant	Micaela
Best Tacos	Jefe de Jefes

After 30 years in Dallas, I came to Mérida on a research trip in 2019. Three months later, I moved. I'm still finding something new to love every day. Mérida isn't for everyone — people feel it or they don't. For those of us who do, it's enchanting.

Before starting Life in Mérida™, I spent decades in real estate and relocation. These days I focus on what brings me the most joy — helping others navigate the things I had to learn the hard way. Including how to slow down and actually enjoy life here.



Angel

Co-founder • The Local Insider

From	Tabasco, MX
In Mérida from	1993
Background	Culture & Hospitality
Happy place	Mayan Pub
Restaurant	Manjar Blanco
Best Tacos	El Negro

My background is in food and hospitality — if you join one of our tours, you'll figure out pretty quickly that Yucatecan cooking is a particular obsession. I love walking clients through the culture, the history, the neighborhoods, and slipping in a Spanish lesson along the way.

I joined Amy full-time in 2022 to expand our services and tours. In 2024 we launched Life in Mérida™ Real Estate — representing buyers and renters so they understand the culture and the process, not just the paperwork.



"Life in Mérida™ is a labor of love. We've spent years building the resource we wish we'd had."

What started as a blog has grown into the work we do today — scouting trips, a real estate brokerage, a monthly newsletter, a YouTube channel, a private community, and a library of free guides.

We're not slick relocation consultants with a polished pitch. We're two people who've been in the trenches with you — honest about what works, what doesn't, and what's worth it. Our goal isn't to sell you on Mérida. It's to help you figure out if it's the right move, and to make the transition easier if it is.

If you're considering Mérida, we'd love to hear from you. Reach Amy directly at: amy@lifeinmerida.com

What readers are saying



I truly felt like I gained an immense amount of knowledge about an incredible city with the Learn About Mérida Guide. Amy and Angel are worth their weight in gold.

— Eva G.



We purchased the guidebook bundle. Each one was truly helpful with many things we hadn't considered. Amy has done the research and gets to the point with facts.

— Suzy & George B.