

Tulum on a budget



The ruins of Maya temples by the beach at Tulum

Tulum's coastline, with soft, sandy beaches, clear, turquoise waters and balmy breezes, makes it one of the top holiday destinations in Mexico. Even better, it's accessible to those on a tight budget.

👁 SIGHTS

IK Lab

(iklab.art; Carretera Tulum Ruinas km 5)

In this contemporary art gallery, guests enter barefoot, as the floors are meant to be a part of the art: they're polished cement and bejuco (vine-like wood). Opened by the great-grandson of art collector Peggy Guggenheim, it's a dreamlike exhibition space of meandering expanses under patterned wood domes.

Tankah

(i-akumal.com/tankah-bay)

Tankah is a picturesque stretch of beach with high-end accommodation and restaurants that back onto mangroves. There's everything you could want: clear-as-glass water, Maya ruins and jungle.

Tulum Ruins

(inah.gob.mx; Hwy 307 km 230)

The ruins of Tulum preside over a rugged coastline, a strip of brilliant beach and shades of green water that'll leave you floored – those Maya occupants must have felt pretty smug each sunrise. Entry costs less than the price of a coffee in the UK, an absolute bargain.

🔥 ACTIVITIES

Aktun-Ha

(Car Wash; Hwy 109 km 8)

Legend has it that taxi drivers used to wash their cabs here, and to this day Aktun-Ha is referred to as 'car wash', despite the story being somewhat questionable. It's still a good swimming spot, and several dive shops schedule cave and cavern diving classes here, from beginner to advanced.

Community Tours Sian Ka'an

(siankaantours.org; Calle Osiris Sur)

This group runs excursions to the magnificent Reserva de la Biosfera Sian Ka'an, including birdwatching tours, visiting Maya ruins, swimming in an ancient canal or kayaking. Community Tours is a sustainable tourism project run by a small group of families; the tours are affordable and proceeds go straight back into the local community.

Salsa Sunday

(lazebratum.com; Hotel La Zebra, Carretera Tulum-Bocapaila km 8.2)

Take free salsa dancing lessons at 6:30pm on Sundays at beachside La Zebra, then dance to live salsa music from 7.30–10.45pm. It's a festive Tulum tradition.

✂ EATING

Antojitos la Chiapaneca

MEXICAN

(00 52 984 112 32 49; Av Tulum, cnr Acuario Norte)

A good, cheap option to get your taco fix, even if you often have to wait for a table at this popular spot, or belly up to the counter. As well as al pastor (spit-roasted marinated pork) tacos, the Chiapaneca does tasty Yucatecan snacks, such as panuchos (fried tortillas with beans and toppings).

La Nave

ITALIAN £

(facebook.com/lanave.tulum; Av Tulum)

This open-air Italian joint is perpetually packed. There are delicious pasta dishes, like shrimp or lobster ravioli, brick-oven pizzas, and an assortment of meat and fish dishes on offer, and it's all comfortably within budget.

Los Aguachiles

SEAFOOD ££

(facebook.com/losaguachilesrm; Av Tulum, cnr Palenque)

Tuna tostadas go down oh so nicely with a michelada (beer, lime and Clamato juice) in this cantina-style restaurant at the south end of town.

Taquería Honorio

MEXICAN ££

(00 52 984 134 87 31; Satélite Sur s/n)

It began as a street stall and became such a hit that it's now a taquería with a proper roof overhead. Come for the cochinita pibil (marinated pulled pork), served on handmade tortillas or tortas (sandwiches). Also well worth seeking out here are Yucatecan classics, such as relleno negro (shredded turkey in a dark, chilli-based sauce).

🍷 DRINKING

Batey

(facebook.com/bateytulum; Centauro Sur 7, btwn Av Tulum & Andrómeda Oriente)

Mojitos sweetened with fresh-pressed cane sugar are the main attraction at this cheap and cheerful Cuban bar, with music acts in the garden. Most nights the crowd spills into the street; inside, cane is pressed on a mangle attached to the back of a florally painted VW Beetle.

Papaya Playa Project

(papayaplayaproject.com; Carretera Tulum-Bocapaila km 4.5)

Fashionable hotel Papaya Playa Project hosts monthly full-moon parties at its beachside club, usually for a small cover charge. There's an inclusive party atmosphere, giant hammocks and a sustainable ethos.

Good to know

Sound Tulum is a two-week electronic music festival, running 29 December to 13 January 2019. Events take place at venues around Tulum. See the website for lineup, venues and tickets (soundtulum.com).



TULUM ON A BUDGET



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Sleeping

Cabañas Playa Condesa ££

Best for rustic living
(playa-condesa-tulum.webnode.mx)

These cabins by the beach have basic rooms (with mosquito nets) and shared bathrooms.

Casa Abanico £

Best for a warm welcome
(facebook.com/casaabanico.tulum)

This appealing little hotel has bright rooms, friendly staff and pretty gardens with gravel paths.

El Jardín de Frida £

Best for a botanical garden
(fridastulum.com)

The main house, dorms and private rooms are painted in colourful Mexican pop-art style at this solar-powered eco-hostel.

El Paraíso ££

Best for beach vibes
(elparaisohotelulum.com)

For relaxation, come here to find a beach with palm trees, palapa parasols, a swing-chaired bar and soft white sand.

Hotel Latino £

Best for pared-down style
(hotellatinotulum.com)

There's a petite plunge pool and a minimalist concept here. The upstairs rooms are quiet, with spacious balconies.

Mango Tulum ££

Best for finding a secluded spot
(mangotulum.com)

A peaceful, comfortable, mid-range stay offering large rooms overlooking a swimming pool and garden.



FURTHER READING

Pick up our *Cancún, Cozumel & the Yucatán* guide (£15.99), which features Tulum. It's also available as an eBook (£11.19).