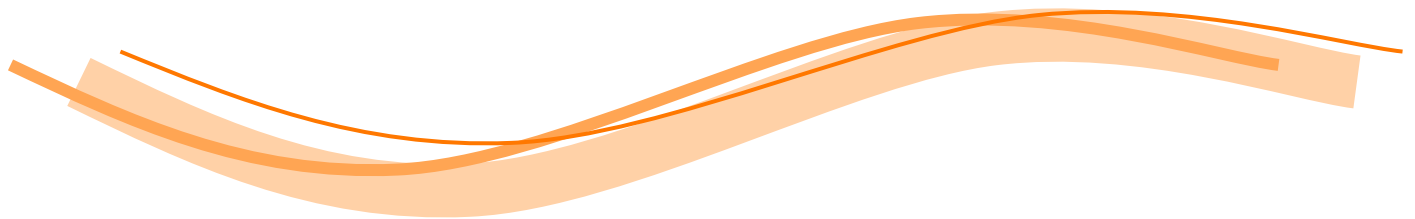




RIVIERA MAYA, SIRENIS HOTELS & RESORTS AND TRANSAT HOLIDAYS





SIRENIS HOTELS, TRANSAT & RIVIERA MAYA	<p>These notes are arranged in three sections:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sirenis Hotels & Resorts – your home 2. Transat Holidays and Nolitours – your hosts 3. The Riviera Maya, Mexico – your playground
SIRENIS HOTELS & RESORTS	<p>Sirenis Hotels & Resorts is an international, family-run company with more than 40 years' experience in the hotel business, based on the island of Ibiza, Spain.</p> <p>They offer first class and luxury hotels located on the island of Ibiza (Spain), Punta Cana (Dominican Republic) and the Mayan Riviera (Mexico).</p> <p>The key dates for Sirenis Hotels & Resorts are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1970: Date of foundation of the hotel group in Ibiza. - 1995: Creation of the Sirenis brand - 2000: Opening of their first hotel in Punta Cana - 2006: Opening of their hotels in the Mayan Riviera, Mexico: the Grand Sirenis Riviera Maya and the Grand Sirenis Mayan Beach - 2012: Opening of two water parks in Punta Cana and Ibiza <p>Website: www.sirenishotels.com</p>
Brands	<p>Sirenis has two brands to choose from:</p> <p>SIRENIS HOTELS & RESORTS</p> <p>Stay here for good service, great fun, wonderful food and a fantastic time. All these hotels are equipped to receive the most demanding guest, offering wide possibilities, from bed & breakfast to All-Inclusive resorts, and providing all the entertainment and activity programmes you need for a great holiday.</p> <p>GRAND SIRENIS HOTELS & RESORTS</p> <p>If you are looking for a high standard of services, in addition to luxury all inclusive, then these Grand Sirenis hotels are the perfect choice. Come and visit their ecological resorts where you will find exquisite gastronomy, first class service and a unique atmosphere. This is what makes the Grand Sirenis hotels special, perfect for both couples and families.</p>
Sustainability	<p>The Sirenis Hotels Group is firmly of the opinion that one of the main attractions to ensure its continuity in the tourist sector, is the respect that is shown towards the environment. Tourism and Environment are linked. Respecting the environment, a rational approach to development, sensible use of the natural resources and minimizing the effect on the environment all go hand in hand with maintaining an attractive tourist offer, guest satisfaction and loyalty towards the hotel</p>

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	<p>chain, together with the awareness of the Group's staff, clients and society in general. Sirenis Hotels & Resorts' company policy is based on three basic lines of action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The conviction that social responsibility should be a company policy, involving all its components - A commitment to achieve the highest possible levels of client satisfaction - Using procedures which are totally respectful of the environment and sustainable development.
Grand Sirenis Maya Resort, Riviera Maya, Mexico	<p>For a luxury 4 ½ star resort with fabulous facilities and lots of extras for Transat Holidays guests - choose the Grand Sirenis Mayan Beach, Le Mirage in Riviera Maya, Mexico. This property is included in the Transat Distinction and the Transat Family and Experience Collections.</p> <p>The neighbouring 4 star Grand Sirenis Riviera Maya resort is available from Nolitours and shares many of the facilities of the Grand Sirenis Mayan Beach, Le Mirage. The resorts are located directly on the beach approximately 34 kms from Playa del Carmen and 92 kms from the Cancun airport. Grand Sirenis Mayan Beach, Le Mirage comprises ten 3-storey buildings surrounded by lush gardens. It offers 456 spacious and elegantly appointed junior suites with balconies and full bathrooms including whirlpool and hydromassage shower.</p> <p>The hotel includes a wide choice of à la carte restaurants (Mexican, Steakhouse, Italian, Cajun & Creole, Brazilian, Japanese, Mediterranean) plus you can pay a little extra for the Gourmet French restaurant.</p> <p>Also enjoy a state-of-the art, full European spa including a sauna, Turkish baths, perfumed baths, a traditional Mexican steam bath and massage rooms with double and luxury double massage tables for couples. The irresistible selection of services and treatments includes massages and body wraps as well as a hairdresser and beauty salon.</p> <p>This modern resort has a Gym, Disco, 3 adult pools, a children's pool and a lazy river. A Kid's Club is available for children ages 4-12 years and larger families will appreciate that the hotel rooms accommodate 2 adults and 3 children.</p>
Accommodation	<p>GRAND SIRENIS RIVIERA MAYA There are 456 Junior Suites and 4 Junior Suites (Handicapped friendly)</p> <p>GRAND SIRENIS MAYAN BEACH LE MIRAGE There are 429 Junior Suites, 4 Junior Suites (Handicapped friendly) and 8 Mini Suites</p> <p>Junior Suites feature:</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 m2 (645 sq ft) • Living Area with sofa-bed • One King size bed or 2 double beds • Individually Controlled Air Conditioning • Mini-bar (Water, soft drinks & beer. Replenished daily) • Ceiling fan • Cable & Sat T.V. 29" screen • In-room movies (Pay per View) • Telephone, direct line • Wi-Fi Internet access (payable) • Iron and ironing-board • Radio / Wake up • In-room Tea & Coffee facilities • In-room Safe • Fully furnished balcony • Full bath • Two person whirlpool • Hair-dryer • Telephone in bathroom • Bathrobes & slippers • Full amenities pack
Facilities	<p>The architecture of the complex is entirely original and novel, combining the comfort and safety of modern structures with the characteristics of the ancient Mayan buildings. A wonderful sensation of spaciousness has been achieved throughout the complex, together with an unbeatable level of comfort, which will prove irresistible for all its guests. There are spacious public areas comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - indoor and outdoor lounges; - the main air-conditioned buffet dining rooms, - three magnificent swimming pools; - separate children's pools, lazy river, sun terraces with loungers and parasols, entertainments area, - mini club (4-12 yrs), - children's play area, - lazy river, - mini market and shops, - hospitality showers, - sports lounge, - Disco AK, - ice cream parlour, - coffee shop, - fit bistro, - games room - a luxurious garden within the hotel grounds completes this fantastic

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	offer of facilities in a superb natural environment. With additional charge: Spa Grand Sirenis featuring extraordinary treatments and massages; hairdresser; Wi-Fi internet.
Restaurants	<p>Guests can find in the main buffets; a very wide variety of international gastronomy with the highest quality standards. They will enjoy breakfast, lunch and dinners.</p> <p>BUFFETS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Akumal • Tulum • 2 buffets in pool areas for breakfast, lunch and snacks <p>During their stay, guests will be able to choose, among different delicious possibilities, their favorite cuisine for dinner:</p> <p>RESTAURANTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • El Rancho (steak house) • El Patio (Mexican) • Cinecitta (Italian) • Las Barcas (Mediterranean) • La Gira Rodizio (Brazilian) • Ikebana (Japanese) • Bayou (Cajun) • Le Relais Gourmand (French/additional charge)
Bars	<p>You can enjoy 8 bars with in the resort, whenever you feel like refreshing with your favorite drink.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Riviera Maya Lobby Bar “Tequila” • Mayan Beach Lobby Bar “Mezcal” • Chiringuito I (beach bar) • Chiringuito II (beach bar) • Healthy Bar “Yalkuito” • Pool Bars (Riviera Maya and Mayan Beach) • Theatre Bar • AK Discotheque
Activities	<p>Gymnasium; table tennis; darts; billiards; bowls; 2 tennis courts; tennis lessons (additional charge); beach volleyball; five-a-side football pitch; outdoor shooting range and archery.</p> <p>Watersports: kayak and snorkeling. Diving centre for deep-sea diving (PADI center) and other motorized water sports and excursions available, payable at the hotel.</p> <p>Day and evening entertainment; dancing lessons and a wide variety of themed evenings and night shows.</p>
Families	<p>Sirenis Hotels has created the Sirenis Family, designed to ensure that the whole family right down to the youngest member, enjoys every moment of their holiday in the Mexico. The children’s clubs cater to all ages, so everyone has a good time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International club

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualified staff • 7-day program offering varied daily activities • Up to 5 hours activities every day • Weekly show for adults and children (with participation of the children) • Gift pack • Children's playground
All Inclusive	<p>This resort is truly all inclusive with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buffet meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) • House wine by the glass with meals • A-la-carte themed dinners: At least 3 guaranteed per person per week • 24 hr Snacks • Disco "AK" (Entrance and drinks) • Domestic and selected international liquors & soft drinks • Water, beer & soft drinks in the mini-bar, replenished daily • Free pool & beach towel service • Non-motorized water sports: kayak and snorkeling • Table tennis; Tennis; Beach volleyball • Gymnasium • Pool aerobics • Introductory diving lesson in the pool • Concierge service • Room Service from 11:00 am to 11:00 pm • In-room Safe
Spa	<p>Relax in this fabulous spa of 2,800 m2 in the heart of the resort. SPA GRAND SIRENIS is surrounded by a natural landscape that is home to the cultural heritage of one of the most ancient and wise civilizations ... The Mayas</p> <p>The Destiny Spa is inspired by the four elements of nature: air, water, earth and fire. Its impressive modern spaces are equipped with the latest technology.</p> <p>The Spa Grand Sirenis offers a large variety of therapies, from exfoliations, facials, massages and three to five day customized programs, to treatments with the ultimate in hydrotherapy technology such as thalassotherapy, the only Wellsystem water beds in the entire Riviera Maya and a Floatarium, where stress disappears when simulating the sensation of floating in the Dead Sea.</p> <p>The stunning Water Circuit encloses outside swimming pools, waterfalls and countercurrent cascades, scented steam rooms, saunas, various sensation showers, pediluvium, jacuzzis, Hamman, Turkish bath, Roman bath, an ice fountain, several relaxation areas with water beds and chromotherapy, just to mention some of the facilities.</p> <p>Treat yourself to a ceremony that purifies body, mind and spirit in the Temazcal, a Mayan heritage steam bath, or enjoy the privacy of a luxurious couples' suite and indulge in the ceremonies that include</p>

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	<p>private steam bath, exfoliation, body wrap, massage and tea rituals on water beds.</p> <p>And of course, you can always enjoy an outdoor massage in a beautiful palapa with a magnificent view of the Caribbean Sea.</p>
Weddings and Honeymoons	<p>Ask for their wedding packages featuring their Official Wedding Chapel ocean front.</p> <p>Honeymooners benefits available to all newly married couples who have been married a maximum of 2 months prior to arrival at the hotel, documentary proof of which should be presented and noted at the time of booking and on the airline ticket. (Minimum stay 7 nights)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basket of fruit, bottle of sparkling wine and Tequila in the bedroom • Romantic dinner • Superior room category (subject to availability) • Surprise gift • One wedding breakfast served in the room the first day (upon reservation)
Sirenis Tropical Suites Casino and Aquagames Le Mirage, Punta Cana, Dominican Republic	<p>With the Sirenis Tropical Suites Casino and Aquagames Le Mirage there are endless activities for the whole family. This 4 star property is included in the Transat Holidays Distinction Collection – which means added extras for Transat guests in the same way as with the Grand Sirenis property in the Riviera Maya.</p> <p>The neighbouring 4 star Sirenis Cocotal Beach Resort Casino & Aquagames resort is available from Nolitours. This resort shares many of the facilities of the Sirenis Tropical Suites Casino and Aquagames Le Mirage.</p> <p>These Sirenis resorts are located directly on the beach approximately 45 kms from the Punta Cana airport. The Sirenis Tropical Suites Casino and Aquagames Le Mirage comprises twenty 2 and 3-storey buildings. It offers 364 spacious superior junior suites with balconies or terrace, living area with daybed and full bathrooms.</p> <p>The hotel includes a wide choice of à la carte restaurants (Mexican, Steakhouse, Italian, Asian, Mediterranean and Vegetarian plus a Gourmet restaurant). Play all day with the Water Park, daily activities program, beauty salon and nearby golf - and then play all night with the evening entertainment, disco and casino.</p> <p>This modern resort has 2 adult pools and 2 children's pool. The Water Park covers an area of 12.000 square metres and has a swimming pool in the central area of the park. There's a 10 metre high tower with 2 water tubes, 2 open toboggans, kamikaze and free fall twister aquaracer with 4 lane speed slides. There's a themed Caribbean</p>

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	Pirates children's area with 10 children's water slides and 4 splash barrels, plus two other kids areas.
Accommodation	<p>Relax in the spacious, comfortable Junior Suites which, together with their spectacular panoramic view of the hotel gardens, are ideal for couples or families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 Full size beds: 1.35x2m - Living area with sofa - Air conditioning and Fan - Mini-bar - Sat TV - Full bathroom - Furnished balcony - Maximum Capacity: 4 adults or 3 adults + 2 children or 2 adults + 3 children
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 Pools with beach-style access - Terrace and solarium - 24h Reception - Currency exchange and ATM Machine - Internet Business Corner and Wi-Fi - Wellness and Beauty Centre - Nightclub "El Bonche" (adults only, from 11 p.m. to 2 a.m) - Casino - Shops and Mini-Market
Restaurants	<p>Discover a new speciality every night: Japanese, Mexican, International, American, Italian and much more and enjoy your favourite cocktail in any of nine bars!</p> <p>Restaurants in the Resort:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Buffet restaurant "Macao": breakfast, lunch and dinner - Buffet restaurant "Saona" - Mexican Restaurant "Nuevo México" - Vegetarian restaurant "El Vergel" - Italian Restaurant "Cinnecita" - Japanese Restaurant "Jade" - Steak House "El Rancho" - Mediterranean Restaurant "Mare Nostrum" - Gourmet Restaurant "Il Giardinetto" (supplement payable) - Snack bar Restaurants "Bohio" and "Batey"
Bars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lobby Bar "La Pergola" - Lobby Bar "La Pirámide" - Pool Bar "La Yola" - Pool Bar "EL Coralino" - Beach Bar "Uvero"

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bar "Bohio" and "Batey" - Theatre Bar "El Trago" - Theatre Bar "La Caña"
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 Tennis courts (evening illumination with supplement payable) - Tennis Lessons* - 1 Paddle court - 1 Multisports court (Outdoor football and basketball) - Table tennis - Darts - Beach Volleyball - Beach football - Archery - Gym - Mini Driving Range - Non-motorized water sports: Windsurf, kayak, canoe, catamaran - Diving school (PADI) - Motorized water sports* - Dancing lessons - Casino (Slot machines from 4 p.m. to 3 a.m. Table games from 8 p.m.) - Entertainment theatre - Professional shows - Evening entertainments programme - Daytime entertainments programme <p>*Sports with supplement payable</p>
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 Separate pools for children - Mini Club (4-12) - Children's Playground - Recreation games room
All Inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Buffet meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) - House wine by the glass with meals - A-la-carte themed dinners: At least 2 guaranteed per person per week - 24hour snacks - Bars - Domestic and selected international liquors & soft drinks - Free entrance to the Disco - Drinks at Casino (if playing) - Free pool & beach towel service - Non-motorized water sports: windsurfing, canoeing, and snorkelling - Table Tennis, Tennis, Football, Beach volleyball, Pool aerobics - Introductory diving lesson in the pool
Spa	Discover the Beauty Centre at the Sirenis in Punta Cana and take the time to relax... Take advantage of the fantastic facilities and body

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treatments and immerse yourself in a world of sensations...

TREATMENTS

- Body Peeling
- Moisturizing Treatment
- Clay wrap and Mud wrap
- Cellulite Treatment
- Firming Treatment
- Hot stones
- Aromatherapy
- Lymphatic drainage
- Cranial sacral
- Slimming
- Therapeutic

MASSAGES: Relaxing Massage; Reflexology; Sports Massage; Shiatsu

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**TRANSAT
HOLIDAYS,
NOLITOURS &
SIRENIS HOTELS**

Transat Holidays include two Sirenis properties in their winter program and both hotels are particularly suitable for families.

The Grand Sirenis Mayan Beach, Le Mirage in Riviera Maya, Mexico has its own lazy river. With the Sirenis Tropical Suites Casino and Aquagames Le Mirage (and the name says it all) – the hotel has its own Water Park. Water babies of all ages are going to love these resorts! The wide choice of restaurants and dining styles, the Kids Clubs with fun activities and the rooms that can accommodate a family of five are among the many features that make these resorts the perfect choice for a successful family vacation.

In fact the Grand Sirenis Mayan Beach, Le Mirage in the Riviera Maya is part of Transat's Family Collection – which means the experts at Transat Holidays have identified it as particularly family friendly. Less than a 1hr transfer from the airport with priority check in, kids pools, kids menus, kids clubs and entertainment – even an ice cream parlour! All factors that Moms will relate to as the little things that mean a lot. And Dad's wallet will appreciate the kids stay and eat free offers at these fabulous Sirenis resorts.

Everyone in the family is destined to have a great time. Parents will appreciate the varied cuisine and à la carte dining options, plus the select international drinks that are part of the all inclusive plan. There's even a first class coffee shop serving great speciality coffees. Grown-ups can escape to the quiet of the adults only pool or the spa – the Grand Sirenis Mayan Beach has a top class gym and full European spa. Both Sirenis resorts have lavish evening entertainment and the Sirenis Tropical Suites Casino and Aquagames Le Mirage has its own casino.

Transat Holidays and sister company Nolitours offer spectacular Sirenis resorts in the Riviera Maya, Mexico and Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic.

Riviera Maya

For a luxury 4 ½ star resort with fabulous facilities and lots of extras for Transat Holidays guests - choose the Grand Sirenis Mayan Beach, Le Mirage in Riviera Maya, Mexico. This property is included in the Transat Distinction and the Transat Family and Experience Collections.

The neighbouring 4 star Grand Sirenis Riviera Maya resort is available from Nolitours and shares many of the facilities of the Grand Sirenis Mayan Beach, Le Mirage. The resorts are located directly on the beach

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approximately 34 kms from Playa del Carmen and 92 kms from the Cancun airport. Grand Sirenis Mayan Beach, Le Mirage comprises ten 3-storey buildings surrounded by lush gardens. It offers 456 spacious and elegantly appointed junior suites with balconies and full bathrooms including whirlpool and hydromassage shower.

The hotel includes a wide choice of à la carte restaurants (Mexican, Steakhouse, Italian, Cajun & Creole, Brazilian, Japanese, Mediterranean) plus you can pay a little extra for the Gourmet French restaurant.

Also enjoy a state-of-the art, full European spa including a sauna, Turkish baths, perfumed baths, a traditional Mexican steam bath and massage rooms with double and luxury double massage tables for couples. The irresistible selection of services and treatments includes massages and body wraps as well as a hairdresser and beauty salon.

This modern resort has a Gym, Disco, 3 adult pools, a children's pool and a lazy river. A Kid's Club is available for children ages 4-12 years and larger families will appreciate that the hotel rooms accommodate 2 adults and 3 children.

As part of the Transat Distinction Collection you can be sure of all the little touches that make for a special vacation including:

- Direct transfer between the airport and the hotel
- Welcome cocktail and cold towel upon arrival
- Beach towels, bathrobes and slippers in room
- Welcome bottle of tequila
- Separate check-in
- 3 guaranteed reservations for à la carte dinners/week
- Mini-bar restocked daily (water, soft drinks and beer)
- Unlimited domestic and selected international drinks
- 24-hour snacks
- Concierge service
- Room service (10 am to 11 pm)
- Admission to the disco (drinks included)
- US\$10 spa credit per person per week

Punta Cana

With the Sirenis Tropical Suites Casino and Aquagames Le Mirage there are endless activities for the whole family. This 4 star property is included in the Transat Holidays Distinction Collection – which means added extras for Transat guests in the same way as with the Grand

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	<p>Sirenis property in the Riviera Maya.</p> <p>The neighbouring 4 star Sirenis Cocotal Beach Resort Casino & Aquagames resort is available from Nolitours. This resort shares many of the facilities of the Sirenis Tropical Suites Casino and Aquagames Le Mirage.</p> <p>These Sirenis resorts are located directly on the beach approximately 45 kms from the Punta Cana airport. The Sirenis Tropical Suites Casino and Aquagames Le Mirage comprises twenty 2 and 3-storey buildings. It offers 364 spacious superior junior suites with balconies or terrace, living area with daybed and full bathrooms.</p> <p>The hotel includes a wide choice of à la carte restaurants (Mexican, Steakhouse, Italian, Asian, Mediterranean and Vegetarian plus a Gourmet restaurant). Play all day with the Water Park, daily activities program, beauty salon and nearby golf - and then play all night with the evening entertainment, disco and casino.</p> <p>This modern resort has 2 adult pools and 2 children's pool. The Water Park covers an area of 12.000 square metres and has a swimming pool in the central area of the park. There's a 10 metre high tower with 2 water tubes, 2 open toboggans, kamikaze and free fall twister aquaracer with 4 lane speed slides. There's a themed Caribbean Pirates children's area with 10 children's water slides and 4 splash barrels, plus two other kids areas.</p> <p>Full details on each hotel are in the Transat Holidays and Nolitours 2014 brochures.</p>
<p>Transat Collections</p>	<p>Everyone has slightly different priorities when choosing their holiday resort. If you are travelling with young kids, for instance, you will be looking for different facilities to a couple looking for a luxurious escape.....The experts at Transat Holidays have made it easy for you to find the perfect vacation that's right for you by creating the Transat "Collections".</p> <p>Each Collection is made up of resorts in different destinations across the Transat program – but all the resorts have features in common that make them a great choice for, for example, families or golfers. Here is an overview of what each Transat Collection* has to offer.</p> <p>Distinction Collection</p> <p>Resorts in the Transat Holidays "Distinction Collection" offer extra</p>

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inclusions and privileges. So you know this is going to be a bit more of a special vacation. Resorts are chosen for this Collection that are on stunning beaches with beautiful surroundings and that offer attentive service, superb facilities and spacious accommodation. Distinction Collection resorts come with a long list of inclusions:

- Direct transfers between the airport and the hotel (no stopping at other hotels on the way)
- Free WiFi in the lobby
- Welcome cocktail and cold towel in the lobby upon arrival
- Beach towels, bathrobes and slippers in room upon arrival
- Bottle of wine or local specialty in room upon arrival
- Unlimited select international brand drinks
- Mini-bar, restocked daily
- Concierge and turn-down service
- A minimum of 3 guaranteed reservations for à la carte dinners
- Golf or Spa discounts
- Free safety deposit box

Here is an example of Distinction Collection Resorts:

Grand Sirenis Mayan Beach, Le Mirage in Riviera Maya, Mexico.

Experience Collection

The “**Experience Collection**” brings unique ways to immerse yourself in the local culture. An Experience Collection “Duo” combines two different destinations in one vacation – for instance you could spend part of your vacation soaking up the sun on a beautiful beach, paired with exploring the cultural and historic attractions of a town or city.

Or book an Experience Collection “**Escapade**” for a two day adventure with one night away from your resort. Stay in authentic accommodation such as a traditional hotel, a hacienda or an ecolodge and explore the local towns, restaurants, wildlife and scenery.

Here is an example of Experience Collection Resorts:

Grand Sirenis Mayan Beach, Le Mirage in Riviera Maya, Mexico.

Luxury Collection

For the ultimate pampering and indulgence - check out the “Luxury Collection”. Transat’s Luxury Collection represents a world of upscale 5 star resorts offering tranquility and privilege in intimate settings. Expect elegant accommodations, picture-perfect beaches, outstanding service, gourmet cuisine and world class spas. Luxury Collection resorts come with all these inclusions:

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- Free access to VIP airport lounge (where available)
- Private transfers between the airport and the hotel
- Free WiFi
- Luxurious accommodation with whirlpool or hydromassage bathtub
- Welcome bottle of champagne and fruit platter in room upon arrival
- Beach towels, bathrobes and slippers in room upon arrival
- Coffee maker with quality local coffee
- VIP room amenities
- 24 hr room service
- Concierge or butler service
- Waiter service at pool and beach
- Unlimited à la carte gourmet dining with fine wines
- Unlimited premium brand drinks
- Access to the spa facilities
- Complimentary upgrade to Option Plus (Air Transat) and CanJet Select (CanJet)

Here are just two examples of Luxury Collection Resorts:
 Luxury Bahia Principe Cayo Levantado Don Pablo Collection, Samana, Dominican Republic
 Paradisus Princesa del Mar Royal Service, Varadero, Cuba

Family Collection

“Family Collection” resorts are perfect for kids. These resorts are carefully chosen by the experts at Transat Holidays because they have extensive family-friendly facilities, lots of activities for young and old – plus they are great value and offer kid’s discounts. With a Family Collection Resort you can expect:

- Children stay and eat free (up to 2 children/family)
- Most resorts are less than 1hr from the airport, so no long transfers
- Spacious resorts with several pools, including one for kids
- Double, triple and quad adjoining rooms
- Priority check in at the hotel
- Children’s’ entertainment
- Kid’s Club and Mini Disco
- Kid’s Menu
- Free excursion for 1 child under 12 in every family per stay
- Plus enjoy Family air services on your flight with dedicated check in, family pre boarding, priority baggage handling, free seat selection for kids, priority meal service, stroller service at Canadian airports and onboard kid’s surprises

Here is an example of a Family Collection Resort:
 Grand Sirenis Mayan Beach, Le Mirage in Riviera Maya, Mexico.

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	<p>Golf Collection</p> <p>If golf is a big part of your vacation experience – look no further than the Transat Golf Collection for golf friendly resorts offering accessible golf and everything from golf packages to discounts and green fees. Plus your golf clubs travel for free when you book a Transat Holidays package!</p> <p>Here are just two examples of Golf Collection resorts: Grand Bahia Principe Coba Royal Garden, Riviera Maya, Mexico Sandals Grande Riviera Beach and Villa Golf Resort, Jamaica</p>
Option Flex	<p>For even more peace of mind – consider Option Flex from Transat Holidays and Nolitours. For only \$49 at the time of booking, should anything unexpected happen, Option Flex has you covered. You can change your departure date, destination or hotel up to 3 hours before departure. You can transfer your vacation package to a friend or family member up to 7 days before departure. Or you can cancel your trip and get a full refund.</p>
Transat Background	<p>For over 25 years, Transat Holidays has been offering a large selection of vacation options in Europe, Florida and the south, as well as cruises. In addition to more than 200 south hotels available in the form of all-inclusive packages, Transat also offers a wide range of flights, packages, tours and à la carte products in some 30 European destinations. Their packages are flexible and tailored to stays of varying lengths. Their employees aim to exceed vacationers' expectations in order to maintain their position as a market leader here in Canada. They see their role as turning holiday dreams into reality: making the vacation experience of their guests one of the most memorable ever.</p> <p>Transat offer flights from East to West and all in between, such as Hamilton, Thunder Bay, Ottawa and from the West Coast.</p>
Awards	<p>Agent's Choice Awards: For the fifth consecutive year, Transat Holidays was named Wholesaler of the Year by travel agents in 2012.</p>
Brochures	<p>Transat Holidays Sun 2013-2014 and Nolitours Sun 2013-2014 brochures are available at your local travel agent and cover vacations through to October 2014.</p> <p>Also newly released are: Transat Holidays Florida Transat Holidays Cruise Transat Discoveries</p>
Air Transat's New Comfort Zone	<p>With so many new comfort features, you're on vacation the minute you take your seat. Air Transat is giving their fleet a full makeover. Starting in 2012, one by one, the planes and passengers are soaring to new heights in design and comfort. They are rolling out the new cabins over the next two years. For a glimpse of what it all looks like: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZBse6WOCd70</p>

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Air Transat Kids Club	<p>To ensure that your family vacations are fun and unforgettable from beginning to end, Air Transat has created Kids Club so that young passengers can really enjoy themselves whilst onboard an Air Transat flight. It is designed to make air travel a fun experience for young travellers (and for their parents!). Even before the doors of the plane are closed following boarding, every child receives a small bag containing all sorts of surprises and games. The more fun they have, the easier the flight. Furthermore, children who are members of Air Transat Kids Club enjoy certain exclusive privileges.</p> <p>Members of the Air Transat Kids Club will enjoy several benefits that the whole family can share. You can check in at a special "Air Transat Kids Club Members" counter. Thanks to these special counters located in major Canadian airports where Air Transat flies, checking-in is quicker than before. At check-in, special tags will be placed on your baggage; as a result, your baggage gets priority treatment.</p>
Air Transat Upgrades	<p>Air Transat has added more legroom on all their aircraft, making the journey to and from your destination even more comfortable. They have also introduced a new Economy Class meal service on sun destination flights. Passengers flying south will now be welcomed onboard with a glass of champagne, while early morning passengers will be greeted with a mimosa.</p> <p>The meal service has also been improved. The airline will now offer passengers a more complete meal tray, including a choice of two hot meals, a complimentary glass of wine and dessert.</p>
Best Leisure Airline	<p>Air Transat was named World's Best Leisure Airline at the Skytrax annual World Airline Awards, held at the 2012 Farnborough International Airshow, near London in the UK.</p> <p>Distinctions were based on a survey measuring the satisfaction of more than 18 million customers. Conducted over a 10-month period, this survey included over 200 airlines that were rated on 38 different aspects of the passenger experience. The study analyzed customer satisfaction for the Airline Passenger Experience, from check-in to boarding, onboard seat comfort, cabin cleanliness, food and beverages, onboard entertainment, and service of staff.</p> <p>In the past five years, Air Transat has gained other recognitions as a result of its numerous environmental initiatives. In 2011, the Company ranked first worldwide in the Atmosfair Airline Index environmental performance indicator, in the long-haul category. Air Transat also obtained the Platinum LEED-EB (existing building) certification for its headquarters, located within the Montreal–Trudeau airport site. Air Transat was recognized as the Best Charter Airline for the fifth consecutive year at the Agents' Choice Awards, which represents the</p>

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	largest sampling of travel agents in Canada. The airline also received the Family Friendly Airline Award, which acknowledges carriers that provide additional services and extra comfort to children & parents.
Transat Compensation Plan	<p>Transat has introduced a new compensation plan for clients affected by an advanced flight schedule change on all South, Florida and Europe flights, packages and cruises. This new policy applies to all bookings made with Transat Holidays.</p> <p>Applicable to schedule changes within 45 days of departure.</p> <p>Schedule change of 3 to 12 hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transat will offer a \$50 voucher for future travel. <p>Schedule change of 12 to 24 hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transat will offer a \$75 voucher for future travel. <p>Schedule change of 24 hours or more and cancelled flights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients can cancel their flight and are entitled to a full refund in the event of a schedule change of 24 hours or more. • Transat will offer a \$50 voucher for future travel to clients who cancel. • Transat will offer a \$100 voucher for future travel to clients who accept the date change. • Clients who choose a product at a lower fare will be refunded the price difference, whereas clients who select a product at a higher fare will be required to pay the balance. <p>Schedule change of 3 hours or less</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No compensation will be offered to clients experiencing a schedule change that is delayed or advanced by 3 hours or less.
Transat Club Class	<p>Enjoy exclusive privileges such as complimentary seat selection, wider, more comfortable leather seats, a choice of gourmet meals and fine wines, priority check-in, baggage service and boarding.</p> <p>Club Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated Club attendants • Attentive, personalized service • Exclusive, spacious Club cabin <p>Drinks & Snacks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome cocktails • Complimentary non-alcoholic drinks, snacks and bar service <p>Club Privileges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased baggage allowance • 40 kg checked/15 kg carry-on • Exclusive, rapid check-in counter in most airports • Priority boarding

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical travel items (on Europe flights) • Free headsets • Canadian newspapers <p>Comfort & Refinement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider, more comfortable leather seats • More leg room • Complimentary Seat Selection • Choice of gourmet meals • Choice of wine and more
Option Plus	<p>This Economy class option includes many priority privileges and services including priority check-in, priority baggage handling, an extra 10kg baggage allowance and even champagne. Here's what you get:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance seat selection on roundtrip flights • Priority check-in at a dedicated counter • Priority baggage handling • Priority boarding • Complete Air Transat travel kit on flights to European destinations • Snacks from the On Board Bistro selection • Alcoholic beverages during drinks service 200ml bottle of champagne (Sun and Europe) • Supplementary baggage allowance up to 10 kg per flight segment • Wine or beer with the meal • Headsets <p>The cost is \$79-\$119 for southbound destinations and \$99-\$209 for European destinations as at January 2013</p>
Transat and Sustainable Tourism	<p>Transat recognizes the prime importance of the environment, host communities, cultural diversity, and their relationships with their employees, customers and partners. Transat is firmly committed to the responsible development of the tourism industry, and has adopted the following definition of sustainable tourism:</p> <p><i>"Sustainable tourism entails respect for nature, as well as for host communities and their values; it combines positive socio-economic benefits for local populations with an enriching experience for travellers."</i></p> <p>The issue of the environment, as far as Transat's own facilities are concerned, is a clear and basic target. Their environment committees have implemented concrete initiatives with regard to recycling, conservation of resources, the disposal of obsolete electronic equipment, and raising employee awareness.</p> <p>Air Transat has begun developing an environmental management system that could lead to an ISO 14001 certification in the future. To find out more, consult the Transat and the Environment sections at their</p>

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	<p>website:http://www.airtransat.ca/en/Info/the-environment-its-everyones-business.aspx?ExitID=69&ContentType=voyageur</p> <p>Eco-responsible certified hotels Transat urges its hotelier partners to excel in social and environmental responsibility, and formally recognizes the efforts of accommodations that commit to certification in this area. Certified establishments must maintain performance levels to continue using such labels. The indicators used vary depending on the certification scheme, but many certification organizations have begun aligning their benchmarks with the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria. To help you make an informed choice when you take your next vacation, Transat list six certifications for hotels and beaches. You can also find certified hotels by searching by destination.</p> <p>Certifications for hotels</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Biosphere Responsible Tourism 2. Green Globe 3. Green Key 4. ISO 14001 5. Travelife <p>Certification for beaches</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Blue Flag
Gift Certificates	<p>Here's your chance to make a loved one's dream come true. With Transat gift certificates you can offer the gift of travel from packages to car rental. Transat gift certificates are valid on all Air Transat, Nolitours, or Transat Holidays products in their brochures. They can be redeemed at a travel agent's office at the time of reservation. To order your gift certificates call 1-800-322-6649.</p>
Hurricane Policy	<p>Nolitours and Transat Holidays provide you with true peace of mind. Vacationers can travel secure in the knowledge that you will be protected should a hurricane affect your destination city in Florida, Mexico, the Caribbean or Central America. This Nolitours/Transat Holidays policy covers reservations for departures between June 1 and November 30, 2013. If the conditions stipulated in the policy are met, you may choose one of these four options:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Travel at a later date 2. Travel to another destination city 3. Travel to the booked destination city 4. Cancel with a full refund in credit vouchers
Nolizone	<p>Nolitours' lively nolIZONE was specifically created for travellers who would like to step outside their resort, meet new people and really get to know their destination. With tons of fun activities throughout the day and night, your biggest dilemma will be deciding what to do next. Introduced in 2011, the It Zone in Puerto Plata was so successful that this concept</p>

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	<p>has been launched in other destinations. Their noliZONE representative will always keep you informed on upcoming activities and events, and you can also visit www.nolizone.nolitours.com to get the latest news and updates on what is going on in the noliZONE.</p>
Social Media	<p>Stay in touch with Transat and Nolitours at their two Facebook sites: http://www.facebook.com/airtransat http://www.facebook.com/nolitours</p>
Groups	<p>Group rates are available – as few as 10 adults make up a group. Talk to your travel agent to check the current details of Transat’s group deals.</p>
Transat Discoveries	<p>This is Transat’s program to the exotic destination of your dreams! It features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - international flights on scheduled airlines like Cathay Pacific, Air France, KLM, South African Airways, Air Canada and LAN - 4 star accommodation (some 3 and 5 star) and transfers - Small-group tour with English-speaking guide - Unique experiences with most meals and excursions included <p>For more information contact your travel agent and view the tour itineraries in the brochure or at www.transatdiscoveries.com</p> <p>Here are some of their destinations they offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beach stays in Thailand and Vietnam - Health retreats in Tunisia and Morocco - Diving in the Red Sea and Galapagos Islands - Overland safaris in Kenya and Tanzania - More options in over 40 countries.
Transat Excursions in Riviera Maya	<p>Transat and Nolitours offer a wide range of trips to enhance your stay in the Riviera Maya and these are pre-bookable on their websites before you leave home. As at February 2013 these include:</p> <p>CHICHEN ITZA Tour the capital of the Mayan Empire, one of the richest ancient cultures in the world. Built in 600 A.D., it was one of the most important ceremonial and religious centres in America. Test the acoustics in the ball court and see the well-preserved artifacts.</p> <p>CENOTE MAYA Visit the archaeological site of Ek-Balam. Discover the mysterious Maya Cenote, enjoy its beautiful formations and immense natural pool with a 262 ft diameter. During the tour you will see different Maya communities. Bring home your memories with the beautiful photographs taken during the activities.</p> <p>COBA MAYAN VILLAGE</p>

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The real Mexican tour! Discover the highest pyramid on the Yucatan Peninsula. Visit a small Mayan village and meet the inhabitants who will show you how they make chewing gum from tree resin.

ATV

Ride through the jungle paths and swim in hidden cenotes, famous for its ageless rock formation, where you can observe stalagmite and stalactites. You will be in control of your own vehicle with a professional guide to lead the way through the terrain and jungle paths. Ride past secret white sand dunes, a magical wilderness with stunning views. This amazing eco-adventure will take you on an incredible journey, riding through trails in an untouched rainforest, open fields and maybe you can see different kinds of animals like coatis (similar to raccoons), deer and wild boars.

SIAN KAAN BIOSPHERE

Depart for the Sian Kaan biosphere. Your guide will take you along a dirt road so you can observe the biosphere's natural beauty. Then, return to Punta Allen, a small fishing village. Enjoy a leisurely boat ride. You'll have the opportunity to see dolphins, manta rays, lobsters, sea turtles and many different kinds of birds.

XEL-HA AND TULUM

Go swimming at Xel-Ha, one of the most beautiful natural aquariums in the entire Mayan Riviera, followed by a tour of Tulum, the only walled Mayan city. Enter the fortress on the west side of the ceremonial city, which still features ancient paintings.

ISLA MUJERES TOUR

Step aboard and sail the crystal clear waters of Isla Mujeres on a brand new 75 ft maxi catamaran. The friendly crew will guide you on an unforgettable sailing and snorkelling experience. Open bar and buffet included.

RIO SECRETO

Discover the secrets of a real underground river, the longest and most spectacular in the region, and travel on a fantastic journey into a world of extraordinary beauty. A wonderful addition to your Tulum visit.

COBA MAYAN ADVENTURE

A day filled with excitement and adventure! Discover the Yucatan's tallest pyramid. Explore a Mayan village, walk through the jungle and go rappelling, zip lining, swimming in cenotes and canoeing in fresh water lagoons, followed by a delicious traditional meal.

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	<p>SWIM WITH DOLPHINS In the heart of the Hotel Zone in Cancun, discover the amazing experience of swimming with dolphins in an interactive atmosphere. Visit the aquarium and discover a world fantasy and colour. Learn and be amazed at the colour and shape of hundreds of marine species. Enjoy the experience of swimming with dolphins during the hour program. In addition to caressing, kissing, feeding the dolphins, and letting them foot-push you at full speed in this unforgettable interactive experience.</p> <p>JUNGLE MAYA Discover the world's longest underground river, before snorkelling in the Nohoch Nah Chiich cavern. Then ride through the rain forest in an all-terrain Mercedes Benz Unimogs to Yaxmuul, a unique natural pool. At Kantenah Natural Reserve go rappelling down a beautiful cenote and zip line over jungle foliage. Then, participate in a traditional Mayan purification ceremony.</p> <p>XCARET Visit a majestic park by the sea filled with the natural and cultural treasures of Mexico. You'll see underground rivers, unparalleled flora and fauna and more than 40 attractions. Then enjoy "Xcaret México Espectacular", a must-see show that will complete your day of fun.</p>
Social Media	<p>Stay in touch with Transat and Nolitours at their two Facebook sites: http://www.facebook.com/airtransat http://www.facebook.com/nolitours</p>
Groups	<p>Group rates are available – as few as 10 adults make up a group. Talk to your travel agent to check the current details of Transat's group deals.</p>
Current Deals Jan 2014	<p>Special Deals with Transat and Sirenis - Transat currently has some very special deals with Sirenis this year:</p> <p>Kids Stay Free – One child under 13 stays and eats free AND second child stays and eats free from April 1 to Dec 23, 2014 at the Grand Sirenis Mayan Beach and Grand Sirenis Riviera Maya</p> <p>\$1239 Toronto to Grand Sirenis Mayan Beach 1 week 10th Feb 2014 + tax \$352 for a total of \$1591 \$1469 Montreal to Grand Sirenis Riviera Maya 1 week 11th Feb 2014 tax included</p> <p>Check out their website at www.TransatHolidays.com and www.Nolitours.com for latest deals.</p>

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RIVIERA MAYA, MEXICO	<p>It starts with a special location - the Riviera Maya is mystical, mesmerizing and magnificent... The Mayan coast is a favourite spot around the world for vacationers seeking beauty combined with Mexican hospitality.</p> <p>The area boasts intriguing Mayan ruins, spectacular scuba diving, eclectic towns & villages and adventurous eco-tour options - not to mention upscale shopping, sizzling nightlife and tantalizing cuisine. Serviced by the Cancun International Airport, the Riviera Maya is a destination not to be missed. Flights are available with Transat from airports right across Canada.</p>
Location	Southeast Mexico, facing the Caribbean.
Geography	The Yucatán's Caribbean coast is 380km long, stretching from Cancún all the way to Chetumal, at the border with Belize. The northern half of the coast has been dubbed the "Riviera Maya"; the southern half, the "Costa Maya." In between is the large Sian Ka'an Biopreserve.
Name	<p>The Mexican name for the Atlantic coastal region of the Yucatan Peninsula is "Riviera Maya", named after the Mayan People. The English use is either Maya Riviera or Mayan Riviera.</p> <p>Cancun comes from "Kankun" (a single word written with the two "k's"), which means "pot of snakes" or "nest of snakes" in Maya.</p>
Language	Spanish, but English is widely spoken in the resort areas
Currency	One Canadian Dollar = 12 Mexican Pesos (23 rd Jan 2014)
Tipping	10-15%
Government	Democracy. Enrique Peña Nieto was elected President in the Federal election of 2012.
Documentation	<p>Passports are required for Canadian citizens, but no Visa is necessary.</p> <p>Unaccompanied minors traveling to Mexico no longer need a notarized letter from their parent or guardian authorizing the trip as of February 2013. The regulation has been suspended for a year by the Ministry of Tourism and National Institute of Migration. Prior to the temporary suspension, anyone under 18 traveling alone or accompanied by a single parent or legal guardian had to carry a notarized letter signed by both parents or by the one not travelling with the minor granting permission to enter/exit the country.</p>
Time zone	Central Time
Health	No inoculations needed; drink bottled water to avoid 'turista', an upset stomach.
Safety tips	<p>Car break-ins are just about the only crime here. Despite concerns about safety in Mexico which have been largely created by lurid media reporting, Mexican tourist destinations remain as safe as most other major destinations.</p> <p>For instance the murder rate in this part of Mexico – the Yucatan – is the same as the rate in Canada.</p>

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	<p>Mexico's Former President Felipe Calderon told the 2011 World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) summit in Las Vegas that the murder rate in Mexico was lower than in much of the US. "The rate of homicide is 15-16 per 1,000 – lower than in Washington DC, in Pittsburgh or in New Orleans," he said. "It is lower than in Puerto Rico. Yucatan has a rate of less than two per 1,000 – similar to places in Europe." The president also suggested the US bore a responsibility for the increasing violence. He said: "There are 8,000 gun shops along the US side of the border with Mexico. We seized more than 100,000 guns from criminals and 85% were bought in the US." A sobering thought...</p>
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CLIMATE	
General climate	The average annual temperature of the Riviera Maya is 25.5 degrees Celsius, with fluctuations of 5 to 7 degrees. Occasional hurricanes (e.g. Emily and Wilma in 2005)
Today's weather	25 degrees with sun and cloud in Cancun (24 th Jan 2014)
Best time to visit	Year round (the hurricane season is July-Nov, but you would be very unlucky to encounter one of these storms)

GETTING THERE	
Flying time	4.25 hours from Montreal and Toronto
Cities and Towns	<p>Cancun</p> <p>Cancun is situated on the south-east coast of Mexico in the state of Quintana Roo in the Yucatan Peninsula. Warm white powdery sand beaches and turquoise crystal clear waters together with the famous Mexican hospitality make this a place like no other.</p> <p>There are a thousand and one things to do in Cancun. There are many world-class luxury hotels dotted all along the edge of the beautiful Caribbean Sea, and on the other side you have the Nichupte Lagoon with many romantic waterside restaurants and trendy bars. Add a full range of water sports, including some of the world's most exquisite snorkeling and scuba diving, plus championship golf courses and you have a location that will delight even the most discerning traveler.</p> <p>For water sports enthusiasts, Cancun offers some of the best scuba diving, snorkeling and fishing in the world, owing to the Great Mesoamerican Reef just off the coast of Cancun. This is the second largest reef in the world – second only to the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.</p> <p>In Cancun you have such a varied choice of cuisine, with everything from downtown traditional Mexican restaurants to ultra-chic bistros. You will find something to suit all tastes and budgets and will get fantastic service with a smile wherever you go. Cancun's Hotel Zone is renowned for its nightlife, boasting some of the best nightclubs in the world playing</p>

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everything from salsa to disco to R & B and live music venues. You will find something to suit all ages and tastes.

Downtown Cancun offers a captivating mixture of tradition and modernity. If you like to enjoy a real local atmosphere in a safe and friendly environment then this is the place to come! In downtown Cancun you will find hotels for all budgets- many small local restaurants offering regional and specialty cuisines and some really cool bars and live music venues. There is a wide choice of shopping venues from the Mercado 28 – a handicrafts market – to the super modern shopping mall Plaza Las Americas.

The **Cancun Aquarium** located near Cancun's hotel zone boasts a large numbers of fascinating Marine life exhibits. There is also an area to get up close to various marine life including star fish and sea cucumbers.

Playa Mujeres – This is a newly developed destination a little to the north of Cancun and features an endless beach, a brand new marina and some luxurious resorts. It's the perfect spot for a quieter vacation but it's still very close to the bright lights of Cancun. The Isla Mujeres is just offshore and makes for a lovely excursion by small boat.

Puerto del Carmen - Playa, as it is called, is the most happening place on the coast - a delightful beach (especially when the wind and currents are flowing in the right direction), hotels for every budget, a good choice of restaurants, and an active nightlife, most of which is on or around Quinta Avenida (Fifth Ave.), Playa's well-known promenade. In the last few years the town has grown quickly, and local residents and the tourism board are working to keep it from becoming a smaller version of Cancún.

Puerto Morelos - This town between Playa and Cancún remains a little village affectionately known by the locals as "Muerto Morelos" (muerto means "dead") for its phenomenally quiet low season. It has a few small hotels and rental houses, and nearby are a few secluded spa resorts. The coast is sandy and well protected by an offshore reef, which means good snorkeling and diving nearby, but the lack of surf means sea grass and shallow water. If you're looking for good swimming, head farther down the coast. If you're looking for a relaxing seaside retreat with a clean beach in an easygoing community, this will work for you.

Puerto Aventuras - The first major town south of Playa is a modern condo-marina development with a 9-hole golf course, several restaurants, and a few hotels. You might come here to go deep-sea fishing or swim with dolphins.

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	<p>Akumal - A bit farther south is Akumal and Half Moon Bay. The community is relatively old for this shore, which means that it's already built up and doesn't have the boomtown feel of Playa and Tulum. Akumal has a strong ecological orientation and is a prominent scuba and snorkeling center. The locals are a mix of Americans and Mexicans, who enjoy the unhurried lifestyle of the Tropics, making this a good place to relax and work on your hammock technique. There are a few hotels; most of the lodging is rental houses and condos. Consequently, the town is a favorite with families who enjoy the calmness of the place and can save money by buying groceries and cooking for themselves.</p> <p>Tulum - The town of Tulum (near the ruins of the same name) has a hotel district of about 30 palapa (palm-leaf roofed) hotels, which stretch down the coast of the Punta Allen peninsula. A few years ago it was mainly a destination for backpacker types, but with some of the most beautiful beaches on this coast and many improvements in hotel amenities, it now attracts people with big budgets. Construction is booming, both in the town and along the coast. Here you can enjoy the beach in relative solitude and quiet.</p>
Distances	<p>The tranquil paradise of the Mayan Riviera stretches more than 100 km south of Cancun offering stunning beauty with ruggedly beautiful beaches, lush vegetation and a charming Mexican atmosphere.</p> <p>Cancún – Tulúm130 km Cancún – Cobá167 km Cancún – Chichén Itza193 km Cancún – Puerto Morelos ...32 km Cancún – Xcaret72 km Cancún – Xel-Há124 km</p>
Ferries	<p>You can take a ferry to Cozumel, which you catch in Playa del Carmen. There are two ferry lines transporting passengers now. The ferries leave every hour. The ride is approximately 45 minutes, depending on the sea conditions \$11</p> <p>The island of Isla Mujeres is located off the coast and is accessible by boat from Puerto Juárez.</p>
Car Rental	All major companies are represented here.
Buses	A colectivo is a mini-bus that runs up and down the coast along highway 307 from Cancun to Tulum. It is an inexpensive way to travel up and down the Riviera.

ACCOMMODATION TYPES	All Inclusive resorts predominate here, but there are smaller, pension type properties in Playa del Carmen.
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LIFESTYLES	
Kids	Xcaret is a developed Nature Park, eighty kilometers south of Cancún

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	<p>and 10km south of Playa del Carmen. Xcaret (pronounced "ish-cah-ret") is an ecological and archaeological theme park that is one of the area's most popular tourist attractions. It's the closest thing to Disneyland that you'll find in Mexico, with myriad attractions in one location, most of them participatory. Signs throughout Cancún advertise Xcaret, which has its own bus terminal to take tourists there at regular intervals. Plan to spend a full day.</p> <p>Tres Rios ecoadventure park 25 minutes south of Cancún is actually a nature reserve on more than 60 hectares of land. Tres Ríos www.tres-rios.com offers families a beautiful natural area for kayaking, canoeing, snorkeling, horseback riding, or biking along jungle trails. It's definitely less commercial than the other eco-theme parks and is essentially just a great natural area for participating in these activities. The entrance fee - \$22 for adults, \$19 for children - includes canoe trips; the use of bikes, kayaks, and snorkeling equipment; and the use of hammocks and beach chairs once you tire yourself out. Extra charges apply for scuba diving, horseback riding, and other extended, guided tours through the preserve and its estuary. You can also opt for an all-inclusive package that covers admission, diving, horseback riding, and all food and beverages. It costs \$75 per adult, \$62 for kids under 12.</p> <p>The ecopark at Xel-Ha (tel. 998/884-9422; www.xelha.com), 13km south of Akumal, attracts throngs of snorkelers and divers with its warm waters and brilliant fish. The beautiful, calm cove is a perfect place to bring kids for their first snorkeling experience. Xel-ha (shell-hah) also offers dolphin swims and has food and beverage service, changing rooms, showers, and other facilities.</p>
Teens	<p>In Cancún, the Parque Nizuc marine park offers guests a chance to swim with dolphins and view them in their dolphin aquarium, Atlántida. The price of the dolphin swim (\$135) includes admission to the park. It's a fun place for a family to spend the day, with its numerous pools, waterslides, and rides. Visitors can also snorkel with manta rays, tropical fish, and tame sharks. It's at the southern end of Cancún.</p> <p>Xplor: Xplor is a unique underground world, with four activities that invite you to Xplor and rediscover your emotions and senses immersed in nature. This unique place is found in the heart of the Riviera Maya on the highway to one side of Xcaret. Xplor offers you the chance to dive deep into the entrails of the Earth in way that would previously have been unimaginable, submerging yourself in a sea of stalactites and stalagmites, navigating on an underground raft, after a fantastic flight through the jungle, or like a modern Xplorer, driving an amphibious</p>

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	<p>vehicle that can travel equally on water and underground and also through the intricate paths filled with thick foliage.</p> <p>Selvatica: the adventure kingdom is strategically located in between Cancun and Playa del Carmen (only 30 minutes away from either town). With over 330 acres of jungle, their 3 high-rope circuits including the "Aventura" zipline circuit (11 cables), plus its brand new "Extremo" course (12 ziplines), and America's first A.C.C.T. fully certified Aerial Trek (high ropes course with over 20 elements), Selvatica offers adventures for everyone, from 6 to 96 year olds.</p>
Honeymoons & Weddings	<p>The Riviera Maya is a popular destination for weddings and honeymoons. These are best arranged through the tour operator with the resort itself.</p>

UNIQUES	<p>Coba: Set inland, deep in the jungle, surrounded by shallow lakes and accessed by "sac-be's", a network of formal limestone roads built by the Mayans over a 1000 years ago, awaits the ancient city of Coba, located about 40kms west of Tulum, Coba served as a Ceremonial centre that flourished during the Classic Period (300-1000 A.D.), with 50,000 inhabitants. Coba, the capital of the largest Late Classic Empire in the Northern Lowlands, the city's most important structure is the Nohoch Mul, which is the tallest pyramid in the Yucatan Peninsula, stands 138 feet tall. The road to Cobá begins in Tulum and continues for 65km; there are also buses to Coba from Puerto Del Carmen</p>
Surprising	<p>Cenotes The Sacred Waters of the Riviera Maya</p> <p>The natural wonders of the Yucatan Peninsula are countless, but some of the most unique to the area are the cenotes. Cenotes are created by an underground river system and are fresh water sink holes that the Maya considered to be sacred. In addition they were an incredibly important resource as a fresh water source, and the Mayans also believed they were the entrance to the underworld. Cenote, (say-NOH-tay) called dzonot (ZO-note) by the ancient Maya were defined by the Motul dictionary, a dictionary of Mayan hieroglyphics, as "abysmal and deep" or "hole filled with water".</p> <p>Millions of years ago, the Yucatan Peninsula was covered by the ocean. Some 15,000 years ago, during the last Ice Age, the sea level descended approximately 250 feet.</p> <p>For thousands of years, the porous land surface, formed by fossilized coral and limestone, has filtered rainwater, which dissolved parts of the subsoil. This process created a system formed by flooded underground rivers and caves. This phenomenon is truly unique, and makes up the largest network of caverns in the world.</p> <p>Cenotes are formed when the roof of a cavern collapses due to erosion. The level of the water also contributes to the creation of cenotes: if it is too</p>

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low, it does not provide enough support, which causes the roof to weaken and cave in.

The depth of each cenote depends of the amount of natural debris that has accumulated through erosion in addition to the remains of the roof that collapsed. The water that gathers in these amazing natural wonders is a crystal clear turquoise color with a very pleasant temperature.

The stalactites and stalagmites that form inside the cenotes are true natural works of art. In many, holes in the ceiling allow the sunlight to filter into the cenotes, giving the scene a magical feeling. The cenotes of the Yucatan Peninsula should be seen by all, but keep in mind that they should be protected so that they are here for generations to come. You can do your part in local conservation by not using any lotions, sunscreens, perfumes, or repellents prior to swimming in a cenote. Many cenotes provide showers that you can use to rinse off before going in. There are four different types of cenotes - those that are completely underground, those that are semi-underground, those that are at land level like a lake or pond, and those that are open wells. Some of them are accessible for swimming and cave diving, some of them are not accessible at all, and some are actually dry cave systems that can be explored.

Sizes and shapes of the cenotes differ according to their location. Some cenotes have been found to hold quantities of ancient offerings and jewelry, apparently thrown in the depths by the Mayas who once inhabited the area.

Currently, an estimated **six thousand cenotes** have been found in the Mexican states of Yucatan and Quintana Roo. In the Riviera Maya, many cenotes have become famous, for their individual features offer different types of amusement for their visitors.

In most cases, cenotes offer basic facilities such as bathrooms, dressing rooms and parking. Entrance can run anywhere from free to 100 pesos depending on where you go. Here are a few names to Google:

Tres Bocas

Cristalino

Cenote Azul

El Jardin de Eden

Chemuyil

Dos Ojos

Yax Mul

Casa Cenote

Gran Cenote

I can personally recommend **Cenote Sammula** near Valladolid in northern Yucatan - it is darkly inviting... Head down steps into Cenote Sammula, a magical world of water and light. Lit by a hole in the collapsed roof of the cenote, the waters of the underground lake below are

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	<p>illuminated by sunbeams which dance among the cave fish swimming around me. From the outside world, roots from a tree cascade downwards towards the water. A unique experience!</p> <p>Also El Gran Cenote near Tulum, which is a part of the second largest underground river system in the world. It was fascinating to swim and snorkel through a connected system of caves with crystal clear waters and underwater stalagmites and stalactites. Beneath me I tracked the lights of cave divers exploring the deeper passages...</p>
History	<p>Tulum: A popular excursion combines a visit to the ruins at Tulum with the ecological water park Xel-Ha . A wall surrounds the site on three sides, which explains the name (tulum means fence, trench, or wall). Its ancient name is believed to have been Zama, a derivative of the Maya word for "morning" or "dawn," and sunrise at Tulum is certainly dramatic. The wall is believed to have been constructed after the original buildings, to protect the interior religious altars from a growing number of invaders. It is considered to have been principally a place of worship, but members of the upper classes later took up residence here. Between the two most dramatic structures - the Castle and the Temple of the Wind - lies Tulum Cove. A small inlet with a beach of fine, white sand, it was a point of departure for Maya trading vessels in ancient times. Today it's a playground for tourists, and you can enjoy a refreshing swim. Admission to the site without a tour is \$3.50 168km SW of Cancún</p> <p>Coba: Older than most of Chichén Itzá and much larger than Tulum, Cobá was the dominant city of the eastern Yucatán before A.D. 1000. The site is large and spread out, with thick forest growing between the temple groups. Rising high above the forest canopy are tall and steep pyramids of the Classic Maya style. Of the major sites, this one is the least reconstructed. But the structures themselves and the surrounding jungle and twin lakes make the experience enjoyable. This is not a cenote area, and the water has nowhere to go but stay on the surface. The forest canopy is also higher than in the northern part of the peninsula.</p>
Books	<p>Frommer's Cancun, Cozumel & the Yucatan</p> <p>Maya Roads by Mary Jo McConahay see my review of this lovely book: http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/Planning/ChrisBookPicks.aspx#18</p>
1000 Places to see before you die	<p>Chichen Itza, 2.5 hours drive from Cancun is the Granddaddy of Mayan ruin sites in the Yucatan Peninsula and one of the most grandiose in the Mayan world. What also makes this a wonderful site to visit is there has been much restoration done, the grounds are manicured and there are tourist services including restaurants, small museum, and stores selling items not found in Playa del Carmen or Cozumel. This is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site.</p>

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Must Sees	<p>Sian Ka'an biosphere reserve is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is a wonderful place to spend a day if you love wild, natural landscapes. In this case it's all about low, partially submerged coastal limestone plain that is home to a rich diversity of both marine and terrestrial life such as jaguars, margays, pumas, ocelots, tapirs, monkeys and anteaters.</p> <p>Xcaret: Hanging out on the beach, scuba and snorkeling, cavern diving, visiting ruins, taking a siesta in a hammock under a grove of palm trees, hiking through tropical forest, meeting native Maya peoples - Xcaret has all that plus handicraft exhibitions, a bat cave, a butterfly pavilion, mushroom and orchid nurseries, and lots of wildlife on display (the park has several conservation programs for endangered species), native jaguars, manatees, sea turtles, monkeys, macaws, flamingos, and a petting aquarium. Children love it.</p> <p>What probably receives most of the comments is the underground river (a natural feature of the park and common in much of the Yucatán) that's been opened in places to allow snorkelers to paddle along with the current. There are also a number of tours and shows, including charros (Mexican cowboys) from the state of Jalisco, and the Totonac Indian voladores ("flyers" who do a daring pole dance high above the ground) from the state of Veracruz. Xcaret is 10km south of Playa del Carmen. It's open daily from 8:30am to 9pm. Admission prices are \$54 for adults, \$28 for children 5 to 12. www.xcaret.com</p>
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SPORTS ACTIVITIES	
Golf	<p>Currently this region features 10 quality golf courses, created by world class designers such as Robert Trent Jones, Jr., Robert von Hagge, Jack Nicklaus, Greg Norman and P.B. Dye. The Mexican Caribbean will generate more than 200,000 rounds of golf a year.</p> <p>This new Golf Paradise has already been host to International tournaments like The Mayakoba Golf Classic Riviera Maya - Cancun (the first PGA Tour Event to be held outside of the United States or Canada). Perhaps the best known is the Pok-Ta-Pok Club, a Robert Trent Jones designed course where a round will cost \$105 including cart.</p> <p>The golf courses in Cancun and the Riviera Maya feature challenging fairways that present players with distinctive curves and gentle hills, all framed by colorful tropical vegetation. Some are even built around ancient Mayan temples. From tee to green, views of the Caribbean's turquoise waters and pure white beaches stretch out in the distance with an abundance of wildlife in view.</p>

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Cancun Golf Club at Pok Ta Pok - Robert Trent Jones Jr

Cancun Golf Club at Pok Ta Pok, designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr. in 1976, is considered a leader in golf in this region. Those who visit Cancun know that playing a round of golf on this course is a must.

Hilton Cancun Golf Club

The 18-Hole, Par 72 Championship golf course at Hilton Cancun Golf Club is set within 150 acres of tropical paradise. With lush fairways tended with the utmost care meandering through ancient Mayan Ruins, this challenging, yet fair golf course is enjoyable for golfers of all handicaps

Moon Spa & Golf Club – Jack Niklaus Signature Golf Course

Moon Spa & Golf Club is one of the Nicklaus Signature Golf Courses in Cancun and the Riviera Maya and was designed with a unique concept of environmental conservation. It is surrounded by a beautiful landscape, natural mangroves and exotic animals. This 27-hole course will be an unforgettable experience.

Riviera Cancun – Jack Niklaus Signature Golf Course

Two brand new golf courses can be found at the Riviera Cancun with the famous Jack Niklaus Signature design. With Par 72 and undulating fairways at the edge of the turquoise Caribbean sea it will be an exhilarating experience for any golfer.

Mayan Palace Riviera Maya – Jack Niklaus

This is another Niklaus Design golf course found at the Mayan Palace Riviera Maya between Cancun and Playa Del Carmen. It features traps of radiant, white sand, lakes surrounded by natural rocks and the intense color of the greens. The extraordinary natural landscape featuring lakes and native Mayan vegetation all make for a challenging yet beautiful golf course.

Cozumel Country Club – Jack Niklaus

The Cozumel Country Club has been carefully crafted from the surrounding mangrove marshlands and tropical rainforest to preserve its environmental integrity, as well as providing attractive challenges for players of every skill level.

El Camaleon Mayakoba – Greg Norman

El Camaleon Mayakoba designed by Greg Norman stretches from the jungle to the mangroves and on to the most beautiful ocean views.

El Camaleon Mayakoba is the first golf course in Mexico to be chosen by the PGA. They now hold the PGA Tour, and have committed to carry

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	<p>out the PGA event during the third week of February for the next several years.</p> <p>Playacar Spa & Golf Club – Robert Van Hagge Playacar Spa & Golf Club was designed and constructed under the supervision of the famous architect Robert Von Hagge. This magnificent golf course surrounded by a diversity of lakes and exuberant vegetation, is considered to be one of the most challenging golf courses in Cancun or the Riviera Maya.</p> <p>Iberostar Playa Paraiso Golf Club – P.B. Dye Iberostar Playa Paraiso Golf Club, located about 30 minutes south of Cancun, is the latest creation of world-renowned golf course architect P.B. Dye. The vertical movement and distinctive rock work are signatures of a typical P.B. Dye design. This world-class layout features conditions seen only at the best golf destinations around the world.</p> <p>Cancun Country Club Cancun Country Club consists of two 18-hole courses – one designed by Tom Fazio, considered to be one of the world’s great golf design architects and one by Nick Price.</p>
Fishing	<p>Sportfishing Riviera Maya is one of the best sportfishing hotspots in the world... Sportfishing in Cancun is on a ‘catch and release’ basis and goes in seasons. From February to April the top catches are kingfish, barracuda, small shark, grouper and blue marlin. From April to August you will find blue marlin, sailfish, tuna and mahi-mahi. Then from September to February catches include barracuda, snapper and mackerel. Book a sportfishing excursion and you are guaranteed an exhilarating day out!</p> <p>Fly fishing The lagoon system around Cancun offers the angler all year round opportunities to catch and release a great variety of species such as tarpon, bonefish, barracuda, sea trout, and red snapper. Fly fishing can be done in the sea, lakes, lagoons or rivers and is done in shallow, clear waters using artificial bait called a fly. You can book fly fishing lessons with one of the many tour operators.</p> <p>The fishing is best March to August; you can arrange a day of deep-sea fishing at one of the numerous piers or travel agencies for around \$220 to \$360 for 4 hours, \$420 for 6 hours, and \$520 for 8 hours for up to four people. Marinas will sometimes assist in putting together a group. Charters include a captain, a first mate, bait, gear, and beverages.</p>
Horse riding	Rancho Loma Bonita: 30 minutes south of Cancun has a 5 hour

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	package riding through mangrove swamps to the beach for a swim \$54
Hiking	The long stretch of beach by the resorts is ideal for strolls by the ocean
Cycling	Bikes are available for rent in Puerto del Carmen and Cancun
Diving	<p>Riviera Maya offers an unimaginable world of underwater beauty and is one of the best places in the world for scuba diving; it's famous because of its shallow reefs alive with the dazzling colours of fish and coral. Scuba diving in Cancun is so popular largely because of the Great Mesoamerican Reef (the Gran Arrecife Maya). This is the largest reef in the Western Hemisphere and the second largest coral reef in the world. The Great Mesoamerican Reef stretches from Punta Nizuc, which it at the tip of the Cancun Hotel Zone, all the way to the Bay of Islands in Honduras. Cancun's coastline is home to nearly 100 coral species, 350 molluscs and 164 species of reef dwelling fish.</p> <p>The Riviera Maya is also the home to the hawksbill sea turtle, crocodiles, lemon sharks and manatees.</p> <p>There are many fascinating scuba diving venues for both the novice as well as the more experienced diver. You have a choice of open water diving along the reef and there are also several sunken boats to add to the adventure. If you go inland along the Cancun – Tulum corridor you will find many caverns and cenotes, also known as "sink holes".</p> <p>Cyan-Ha Diving Centre arranges reef and cavern diving. Many of the hotels have free introductory dives and dive shops.</p>

CULTURE	<p>Mayan Culture</p> <p>The Mayan civilization was among the original cultures of the New World and spanned more than 3,000 years. The Mayans lived mainly on the Yucatan Peninsula in the eastern one third of Mesoamerica and at its peak had one of the most densely populated and culturally dynamic societies in the world. Mayan culture is known for its spectacular art, impressive architecture, and sophisticated mathematical and astronomical systems which were all way ahead of their time.</p> <p>Mayan Architecture</p> <p>Mayan architecture spans many thousands of years. The most dramatic and easily recognizable are the fantastic stepped pyramids in places such as Chichen Itza and Coba to name but a few. A year ago Chichen Itza was named as one of the seven wonders of the world, and has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site for 20 years.</p> <p>The Mayan Calendar</p> <p>The Mayan Calendar was not the original Mesoamerican calendar, but with the refinements the Mayans made, it became the most sophisticated. The Mayan calendar along with the Aztec calendar are</p>
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	<p>the best documented and most completely understood of all the Mesoamerican calendars. This year, 2012, the Maya Long Cycle of over 5,000 years ends on December 21st and there has been much written about what this portends...</p> <p>Mayan Scripture and Mayan Art Mayan scripture is the only known fully developed written language of the pre-Columbian Americas. Mayan art is considered by many to be the most sophisticated and beautiful of the ancient New World.</p> <p>Mayan Tree of Life The Mayan civilization recognised the four primary compass directions and each was associated with a colour – East with red, North with white, West with black and South with yellow. They also had a fifth ‘direction’ which was the center and this was a blue-green colour. The center was represented by a great ceiba tree known as the Mayan tree of life. This tree connected the center of the Earth with both the underworld and the heavens.</p> <p>Mayan Gods There were thirteen Mayan gods belonging to the thirteen of heavens of the Mayan religion and nine gods from the nine underworlds. Natural elements such as the stars and the planets, crops, numbers, days and periods of time each had their own gods. The mood of the Mayan gods changed according to the days in the Mayan calendar or the position of the sun, moon and stars. Some of most notable gods are Chaac – God of Rain and Thunder, Ixchel – jaguar goddess of midwifery, Ah Puch – God of Death.</p> <p>Today, the Mayan civilization and their descendants form sizable populations throughout the Maya area known as the Mundo Maya and maintain a distinctive set of traditions and beliefs. Over 500 different Mayan languages continue to be spoken today.</p> <p>To visit some of these sites and experience the beauty of the Mayan civilization really is an opportunity not to be missed during your Cancun vacation. There are many tours available from your hotel or tour operator.</p>
Museums	<p>Museo de Arte Popular Mexicano, located at on the second floor of the El Embarcadero Marina, Bulevar Kukulcán Km 4. It displays a representative collection of masks, regional folkloric costumes, nativity scenes, religious artifacts, musical instruments, Mexican toys, and gourd art.</p>

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	<p>Shipwreck Museum, Puerto Aventuras - a fascinating display of wreckage and artifacts collected from shipwrecks along the eastern coastline. Exhibits include 16th century breech-loading cannons and an elephant tusk from the wreckage of a 17th century ship carrying African slaves and ivory.</p>
Festivals	<p>Santa Semana: Holy Week is a huge celebration in Mexico with colourful street processions...but be sure to book early as everywhere is sure to be very busy.</p> <p>Spring Equinox is celebrated with parades to welcome the spring and at Chichen Itza's main pyramid, the shadows align and the plumed serpent moves slowly from the top of the building to its base...</p> <p>Winter Equinox will be another major event and most Maya sites, as this is the day when their 5,000 year Long Cycle ends.</p> <p>Riviera Maya Jazz Festival November</p> <p>The annual Riviera Maya Jazz Festival attracts an enthusiastic crowd to Mamitas Beach in Playa del Carmen to enjoy free performances by national and international acts.</p> <p>http://www.rivieramayajazzfestival.com</p>

ATTRACTIONS	<p>Beautiful lagoons and bays full of colorful fish & sea turtles</p> <p>Fascinating Mayan ruins at Tulum, Coba and Muyil</p> <p>Second-largest barrier coral reef in the world</p> <p>Miles of white sand beaches</p> <p>Unique "eco-archeological" theme parks, Xcaret & Xel-Ha</p> <p>Lots of Cenotes - natural pools of clear water- amazing to swim in</p> <p>Aktun Ha - giant caves on road to Coba</p> <p>Playa del Carmen - the fastest growing city in Latin America</p> <p>Cozumel Island for diving and snorkeling</p> <p>Magnificent resorts and hotels</p> <p>Diverse shopping</p> <p>Fabulous food</p>
Beaches	<p>Almost the whole length of the Mayan Riviera is bordered by beautiful white sand beaches. These beaches have recently been considerably enhanced with additional sand to make them broader and better than ever after recent coastal erosion.</p>
Wildlife	<p>The Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve</p> <p>Down the Riviera Maya a few kilometers south of the Tulum ruins, you'll pass the guardhouse of the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve. The reserve is a tract of 500,000 hectares (1.2 million acres) set aside in 1986 to preserve tropical forests, savannas, mangroves, coastal and marine habitats, and 110km of coastal reefs.</p> <p>The area is home to jaguars; pumas; ocelots; margays; jaguarundis; spider and howler monkeys; tapirs; white-lipped and collared peccaries; manatees; brocket and white-tailed deer; crocodiles; and green,</p>

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	<p>loggerhead, hawksbill, and leatherback sea turtles. It also protects 366 species of birds -- you might glimpse an ocellated turkey, a great curassow, a brilliantly coloured parrot, a toucan or trogon, a white ibis, a roseate spoonbill, a jabiru (or wood stork), a flamingo, or one of 15 species of herons, egrets, and bitterns.</p>
<p>Wildlife – Whale Sharks</p>	<p>Swimming with Whale Sharks Whale sharks are the gentle giants of the ocean. They are the largest fish in the world measuring up to 40 feet (12 meters) and weighing up to 15 tons. Fortunately for those of us that want to swim with the whale shark they are totally harmless and peaceful. During your vacation in Cancun you have the once in a lifetime opportunity to get up close to one of these amazing creatures.</p> <p>Whale Shark Facts The whale shark is a fascinating creature to behold, with its wide mouth extending to 5 feet when open. The whale shark swims with its mouth open, close to the surface of the water, and just sucks in the plankton. It then closes its mouth and forces all the unwanted water out of its gills and only the plankton remains. The whale shark has a unique checkerboard pattern on its back made up of creamy white spots and pale horizontal and vertical stripes with a white underbelly so is easily distinguishable. This pattern is why it is also often known as the Domino.</p> <p>Whale Shark Season If adventurers want to take advantage of this phenomenon, you must bear in mind that the whale sharks are usually found around the islands of Holbox and Contoy from May until September, although mostly during the months of July and August. They gather here due to the nutrient -rich water around these shores. In fact, 30th August has now been formally established as the Mexican Day of the Whale Shark.</p> <p>Tours to Swim with Whale Sharks You can book tours to swim with the whale sharks leaving Cancun from Punta Sam, which last about 5 hours, or you can take a trip to Isla Holbox and book it while you are there. If you choose to experience swimming with the whale shark you will be accompanied by experts who will provide you with all the necessary information to better understand the behaviour of these wonderful creatures. Take a look at some of our recommended tour operators. If you would like to swim with a whale shark just remember there is nothing to fear... they feed exclusively on plankton and are therefore completely harmless to humans. The experience is truly amazing and one you will never forget.</p>

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Parks	<p>There are many beautiful nature reserves and protected areas you can visit in this region. You will get the opportunity to observe monkeys, flamingos, whale sharks, marine turtles, crocodiles and many more creatures in their natural habitat. You can arrange guided tours lasting from one day to several days where you can pursue activities such as kayaking, hiking, snorkeling and diving.</p> <p>Cozumel Reef National Park In 1996, an 11,988-hectare area of sea and coral reefs, was declared the Cozumel Reef National Park. Cozumel is the Caribbean's premier dive spot with 85% of the region's dive sites. Isla Mujeres West Coast, Punta Cancun and Punta Nizuc National Park. It covers 8,673 hectares of reefs that are part of the Mesoamerican Reef System. The estimated age of the base coral is 125,000 years and the reef consists of a chain of coral formations of varying sizes. The park protects a triangle of reefs off the west coast of Isla Mujeres, Punta Cancún and Punta Nizuc.</p> <p>Isla Contoy National Park The island, covering 5,126 sq. hectares, was declared a National Park on February 2, 1998. The coral reefs within the park's perimeter -called an "islet"- are located south of the island and mark the beginning of a 389-kilometer barrier reef running along the coast of Quintana Roo. This is the birthplace of the Mesoamerican Reef System.</p> <p>Puerto Morelos Reef National Park The 9,066 square-hectare park was set up in 1998. The barrier reef borders the Isla Mujeres West Coast, Punta Cancún and Punta Nizuc National Park.</p> <p>Chinchorro Bank Biosphere Reserve The Chinchorro Bank Biosphere Reserve was created in 1996. The country's best-preserved reef system covers 144,360 hectares. A platform reef, it has the largest commercial population of pink conch and Caribbean lobster and is important for the fishing industry. It is also a sea turtle nesting ground and at least 93 bird species live in the area's mangroves. The reef is a fantastic spot for divers. It is also a magnet for scientists who study its biodiversity and underwater archaeological heritage (there are more than 20 shipwrecks here).</p> <p>Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve Declared a United Nations World Heritage Site, the Biosphere Reserve was created on January 20, 1986 and the Uaymil Flora and Fauna Protected Area and the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reefs Reserve were created in 1994 and 1998, respectively. The three reserves cover</p>
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	<p>an area of 650,000 square hectares. They incorporate areas of the principal ecosystems found in the Yucatán Peninsula and the Caribbean, where both Mesoamerican and Antillean species flourish. The barrier reef extends for some 120 kilometers and covers approximately 15,000 hectares</p> <p>In the language of the Mayan peoples who once inhabited this region, Sian Ka'an means 'Origin of the Sky'. Located on the east coast of the Yucatán peninsula, this biosphere reserve contains tropical forests, mangroves and marshes, as well as a large marine section intersected by a barrier reef. It provides a habitat for a remarkably rich flora and a fauna comprising more than 300 species of birds. I explored this UNESCO World Heritage Site guided by EcoColors who took me via small boat across the lagoons and through the mangrove channels to an island with a Mayan ruin. I then drifted with the current down a one kilometer channel through the mangroves in one of the most peaceful journeys of my life.</p> <p>We returned via this boardwalk, observing the rich bird life en route. Amazingly, on a tiny island in the middle of the Sian Ka'an mangrove lagoons, this Mayan customs house preside over a now empty landscape of 500,000 hectares of wilderness. I entered its dark, cool rooms and was eerily transported back in time...</p> <p>There are few roads in this watery wilderness, so we explored by hiking the trails near Muyil, boating across the lagoons and swimming in the mangrove channels. It's a beautiful place and all the more precious because it exists so close to the mass resorts of the Riviera Maya - the northern part of the park is just 40 minutes south from Tulum.</p>
Historic Sites	<p>Tulum Ruins is a relatively small site. It has an excellent beach for swimming and cooling off, shopping and food. This makes an easy half-day excursion and is simple to get to anywhere on the Mayan Riviera from Tulum to Playa del Carmen. You can use a tour company or go there yourself via colectivo.</p> <p>Coba is deep in the jungle a 45 minutes drive off of Hwy 307 just before Tulum. There is a lot more to see here than Tulum including large temples/pyramids. Taking a colectivo here can be done but it's not recommended; better to rent a car and drive yourself in or take a tour.</p> <p>Muyil is a beautiful smaller site on the edge of Sian Ka'an Biosphere - which I highly recommend as it is off the main tourist track and you can have the site to yourself. I was escorted by local operator EcoColors who explained the restored building pictured below. The guide led me through the site on trails in the jungle through which ancient pyramids suddenly rose to greet me. This pyramid is over a thousand years old</p>

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	and sits in a clearing in the forest with the sounds of the jungle all around. Here, too, was a good example of the Mayan highways through the forests of the Yucatan. They were raised causeways built from the local limestone and now mostly reclaimed by the jungle once again.
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OTHER ACTIVITIES	
Shopping	<p>As one of the world's premier tourist destinations the shopping in Cancun is as impressive as one would imagine. You will find everything from ultra-chic designer stores and famous brand names, to flea markets and souvenir shops selling Mexican local handcrafts. Cancun shopping is duty free so you can find some real bargains on cosmetics and fine jewellery. There are many shopping malls in Cancun: here is a list of just some of the great places to go if you fancy shopping in Cancun whether it be for a new designer outfit for yourself or a gift to take home to your loved ones</p> <p>La Isla Shopping Village, Cancun La Isla Shopping Village is a glittering, ultra-trendy shoppers' paradise on the banks of the Nichupte Lagoon in the Hotel Zone Cancun. You will find over 150 shops here all under a giant canopy with a series of canals and small bridges designed to create a Venetian look. There is an amazing aquarium here as well as fabulous restaurants and cinemas showing movies in English and Spanish.</p> <p>Kukulcan Plaza & Luxury Avenue Kukulcan Plaza & Luxury Avenue are adjacent to each other in the Hotel Zone. Between them they boast more than 250 shops and boutiques in exclusive and luxurious surroundings including world famous brands such as Louis Vuitton and Cartier. There are many specialty restaurants, bars and cafes and even a bowling alley if you are looking for something fun to do.</p> <p>Plaza Caracol Plaza Caracol is situated just north of the Cancun Convention Center. There are over 200 shops and boutiques where you will find everything from Ralph Lauren and Sunglass Island to chic perfumeries such as Ultrafemme to souvenir and silver jewellery stores. There is also a great choice of restaurants and cafes if you need to take a rest from shopping in Cancun.</p> <p>Also, Fifth Avenue in Playa del Carmen is a good shopping street.</p>
Markets	<p>Market 28: Also known as the Mercado 28 this is a huge flea market situated in the heart of downtown Cancun. It is a fun place to buy your souvenirs, Mexican handcrafts and silver jewelry at half the price of the</p>

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	<p>Hotel Zone. Next door you will find Plaza Bonita, built to resemble a small Mexican village with colourful architecture and shops selling good quality Mexican handcrafts and pieces of art.</p> <p>Chichen Itza has a lively handicrafts market. It's good to go to a region where handicrafts are still an important part of the local culture. Wooden and painted carvings are a common handicraft of the Maya people and you can see craftsmen carving the soft woods in villages all across the Yucatan.</p> <p>Mayan potters love bright colours! Many of the patterns reflect Mayan mythology and the carvings on the temples in the Mayan cities. They are great value, but not easy to get home safely, so consider taking packing materials with you if you think you may purchase some on your trip.</p> <p>Jewelry features silver designs and Mexican turquoise in a variety of forms. Remember to bargain and to check that the silver is pure. Colourful hammocks make a typical Mayan gift to bring home and are very packable for the journey home.</p> <p>Expect to bargain for your purchase, but the key is to do so respectfully and cheerfully with the vendor, so that both buyer and seller exit the transaction feeling good!</p>
Nightlife	<p>For a night out, Playa del Carmen is the place to go. Almost all activity take place around Playa's 5th Avenue which is a pedestrian walk way filled with restaurants, sidewalk cafes, bars, handicraft stores where people from all over world get together giving this town its cosmopolitan atmosphere - The Blue Parrot is particularly well known.</p>

CUISINE	
Food	<p>The annual Mexico-Caribbean Food Festival, featuring special menus of culinary creations throughout Cancun, is held each year over the first two weeks of November.</p>
Drink	<p>Tequila! Tequila is a blue agave-based spirit made primarily in the area surrounding the city of Tequila, 65 kilometres northwest of Guadalajara, and in the highlands (Los Altos) of the western Mexican state of Jalisco. Try the different varieties available.</p> <p>Beer: Many think that as long as it is cold and being imbibed anywhere in Mexico... whatever it is, it IS the best beer. Bohemia, Negro Modelo, Modelo Especial, Dos Equis, Dos Equis Amber, Pacifico, Montejo, Victoria, Tecate Light, Sol, Leon and the ubiquitous Corona are all well liked and satisfying. Carta Blanca is also an old, satisfying beer. Barriardo Lessardo is pretty good as well.....</p> <p>When touring off of the resort find a small convenience shop. They will give you a few options other than the norm. Try the Corona Familiar (a</p>

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	<p>huge quart) which cannot be bought in Canada. It tastes a bit stronger but is more pleasant tasting than the regular corona. Also, try the Corona Cerveza de Barril. (They look like little "Mickey" Bottles.) It is also much better than Corona regular. If you have the opportunity to be in Mexico over the Christmas season, try the Noche Buena by Dos Equis. It is a darker full flavored brew that is not exported either and can only be found in Mexico.</p>
Restaurants	<p>The resort located restaurants are often first class in this area. U.S. based franchise chains dominate the Cancún restaurant scene. These include Hard Rock Cafe, Rainforest Cafe, Tony Roma's, TGI Friday's, Ruth's Chris Steak House, and the gamut of fast-food burger places.</p> <p>La Cueva del Chango in Puerto del Carmen is recommended: Good food in original surroundings with a relaxed "mañana" attitude. True to its name ("The Monkey's Cave"), the place suggests a cave and has little waterways meandering through it, and there are two spider monkeys that hang about in the back of the place. You'll enjoy great juices, blended fruit drinks, salads, soups, Mexican specialties with a natural twist, and handmade tortillas. The fish is fresh and delicious.</p> <p>Yaxche: The menu in this Puerto del Carmen eatery makes use of many native foods and spices to present a more elaborate regional cooking than the usual offerings at Yucatecan restaurants. Excellent examples are a cream of chaya (a native leafy vegetable), an exotic chili stuffed with cochinita pibil and the classic Mexican-style fruit salad with lime juice and dried powdered chili. There are several seafood dishes that are fresh and well prepared.</p>

MORE INFO	
Brochures	Transat Holidays and Nolitours Sun 2014 brochures are available at all travel agents.
Websites	www.TransatHolidays.com www.Nolitours.com www.rivieramaya.com for destination information

AIRLINE PARTNER	Air Transat
Flight details	Flights direct from Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa and many other Canadian airports directly to Cancun for Riviera Maya. www.airtransat.com

PERSONAL	<p>I have visited the Mayan Riviera, Puerto del Carmen and Cancun many times. I have also explored the atmospheric archaeological sites of Chichen Itza, Muyil, Tulum and Coba. I have boated and hiked through Sian Ka'an and explored some of the cenotes: El Gran Cenote and Cenote Sammul. I can also recommend the EcoColors team –</p>
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	Kenneth, Alfonso and Carlos – for showing me the wonders of both the Mayan and the natural world in Yucatan. www.ecotravelmexico.com
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