



Things to Do in Puerto Morelos

Although Puerto Morelos is a small city, there is plenty to do, especially if you love the sun and sea. Nestled between protected mangroves and colorful coral reefs, the town site is quaint and the beaches are wide. Unwind, relax and explore the unspoiled beauty of this serene stretch of the Caribbean!

SNORKELING AND DIVING

The second largest reef in the world (the Mesoamerican Reef), runs parallel with the Mayan Riviera coastline; spanning all the way to Honduras. Without doubt, some of the best snorkeling and diving around can be found off Puerto's shores. Since the reef is protected as a national reserve, it's a lot healthier than sections of reef elsewhere.

Warm and inviting, the water is crystal-clear and the currents are typically gentle enough for any average swimmer to enjoy. You'll also like the fact that this is generally not a crowded destination like Playa del Carmen, Akumal or Tulum.

TIP: Snorkeling independently off the beach is not permitted. In order to explore the reef, you have to sign up for a tour with a registered local guide. There is a small park entrance fee (a few dollars USD), which is covered in your tour price. You'll receive a colored bracelet showing you're allowed to be in the reserve. This ensures your safety and regulates the number of visitors to the reef.

For you certified divers out there, check out the wreck dive (at 90 feet), or try a night dive (the neon colors of the reef fish and corals really pop)! There are lots of dive shops to choose from in town. This is a fantastic place to get your PADI diving certification if you've been wanting to check that off your bucket list.

You don't have to be a diver, though, to enjoy the Caribbean's underwater treasures. The reef is usually only 6-10 feet below the surface. Snorkelers will often see a gorgeous array of sea life, including eagle rays, turtles, squid, nurse sharks, barracuda, grouper, parrot fish, angel fish, etc. You may even see a manatee in the wild (rare but does still happen here). On a sunny day, bring your underwater camera and capture the beauty of the undersea world!

FISHING

Lining the beach near the town square and lighthouse are dozens of "pangas" or "lanchas" (small boats), with eager captains and crew to take anyone fishing in the waters just beyond the reef. The popular catch includes delicious grouper, snapper, or tuna. You can easily stop and inquire about pricing and trip length as you stroll the boardwalk and main square. These boats will offer the cheapest and most negotiable prices.

If you want to spend a bit more money and go out in a little more comfort, you have several options as well. Just make your way to the south end of the beach to Pelícanos Marina. Here you can get aboard 20 to 28-foot private charter fishing boats that are equipped with a fighting chair and few more creature comforts. Alternatively, you can book a fishing charter from the El Cid Marina (about 2 Km south of the town square). Through El Cid you'll find the highest prices but most likely the best charter boats and equipment.

NOTE: There is no shore fishing permitted in Puerto Morelos since it is all protected national park.

BEACHES

There is no bad beach in Puerto Morelos! The beach stretches from just south of Hacienda Morelos Hotel north to the bottom tip of Cancun if you can walk that far. The beach near the town square has the most activity. This is where many of the locals go as well as where many of the snorkeling, and fishing boats moor. As you traverse the beach north towards Cancun, it gets less and less populated.

There is a beautiful section of undeveloped and uninhabited coastline just north of town, between the last few houses in Puerto and the Desire Pearl resort about a kilometer up the beach. This is a great stroll if you want to get away from it all.

The beach in Puerto Morelos is wide and flat and beautiful. You can sprawl out and set up shop practically anywhere. Usually there are local vendors strolling the beach selling fruit, food, pastries, jewelry, and other crafts along the main stretch of beach.

There are a couple very nice little beach clubs along the beach to the north.

MY PARADISE

This is a pretty and new little elevated beach bar that will let you use their lounge chairs and umbrellas as long as you're a paying customer. It is only a two-minute walk north of the main square.

UNICO

This is just a bit further north up the beach and is a beautiful little spot. It also offers massages as well as snorkel tours out of the beach club. They will charge you a small fee on top of whatever you purchase to use their lounge chairs and umbrellas or personal palapas.

Whatever stretch of beach you land on, you won't be disappointed!

CENOTES

Cenotes are freshwater sinkholes to underground rivers, like natural wells. Some are flooded caverns with impressive stalagmites and stalactites, others are collapsed caves that have become swimming holes. Most are crystal-clear, with incredible visibility for snorkeling and diving. They play a key role in the ecology as aquifers; filtering rain water and run off before mingling with the sea.

FUN FACT: There are no lakes or rivers in the Yucatan Peninsula, but there are thousands of cenotes! That's due to the soft, easily-eroded limestone shelf that blankets the region.

To the ancient Mayan people, cenotes were the only source of freshwater and were viewed as sacred. At some sites, archaeologists have found submerged artifacts and even skeletal remains dating back thousands of years.

LA RUTA DE LOS CENOTES

The "Cenote Trail" is a paved road that cuts through the jungle, leading to several cenotes. It runs west from Highway 307, on the southern

outskirts of Puerto Morelos. You'll see a large archway with lettering identifying the trail.

If you've rented a car you can drive out this way and explore to your heart's content--the paved road stretches for miles. Be aware, though, that off the main trail, the jungle roads to the cenotes are not paved and often in poor condition. This is a good choice if you're an independent adventurer; since you can basically check out any cenote you like. (There are some cenotes that aren't included on any paid tour but you can visit if you drive yourself.) You can alternatively book a tour in town and be escorted to the best cenotes around. Several have zip-lines, bike trails, and ATV trails.

TIP: Entry fees vary at each cenote; ranging from 100 pesos to 250 pesos per person (about \$8 to \$18 USD). Check with your tour operator if that includes snorkel gear or life jackets. Sometimes this equipment is rented separately on-site. Some cenotes are closer to town than others, so book a full day so you can really savor the experience.

KinHa is a fun day for the whole family. It involves touring two different cenotes, with several zip-lines over the water. This is a well-developed site, with restrooms, diving platforms, ATV trails and snack shacks. (20km from highway, then off-road)

Las Mojarras is one of the closer cenotes to town and has a hammock area where you can relax after a refreshing swim. The water isn't as crystalline here compared to other cenotes--it looks more like an average lake, but still very pleasant. (12.2km from highway)

La Noria is accessed by a staircase with a platform and has a partial cavern. The limestone formations are stunning. There are basic bathrooms on-site. Watch for bats! (20km from highway, then off-road)

Cenote Zapote has great submerged formations and is worth checking out if you are an experienced cave diver. The other smaller cenotes clustered nearby offer jump-off platforms and zip-lines. (20km from the highway)

Siete Bocas is a true cylindrical cenote, with a staircase descending into the cenote's mouth. The water is quite cool and refreshing. There are picnic facilities surrounding the cenote. (15km from the highway)

SELVATICA

This aerial-adventure park is located about 22 km from Highway 307, on the "Ruta de los Cenotes," on the way to the town of Leon Vicario. It's easy to find if you are driving a rental car. Soar on a zip-line over the jungle canopy, splash through the mud in all-terrain vehicles, get your photo snapped with macaws and then cool off with a cenote swim.

TIP: This is a full day of activities and great for families! The kids will be smiling all day long. Pack your GoPro, towels, and snacks. Lunch is provided but may not be enough for big appetites.

PARKS AND ZOO

BOTANICAL GARDENS

Located on the highway just south of town, this pretty place is more than just a garden! Take a walk through the jungle and mangroves and watch for exotic birds, spider monkeys, coatis and other wildlife. There is a cool suspension bridge to walk across and an observation tower looking out over the mangroves.

Plants and trees are labeled (in Spanish), and there is an area with zapote trees, from which gum (chicle) is extracted. You can rest in the screened-off hammock area if the walking tires you out. The gardens still need some development and care, but this is a good outing if you want to get away from crowds of tourists and get back to nature!

TIP: Bring water, insect repellent and good walking shoes. If you are a bird enthusiast, bring those binoculars too! It will take 2 hours or so to fully enjoy the park. To get the most out of it, consider booking an English-speaking guide in advance.

CROCOCUN ZOO

This is a conservationist, interactive zoo, located right on the highway on the northern edge of Puerto Morelos. Guides will let you play with spider monkeys and hold baby crocodiles, to name just a few! The grounds are beautifully lush and you'll feel like you're stepping into another world. Reasonably priced, this is a fun option for your family, especially if you want to learn about the local wildlife and ecosystems.

The zoo is very easy to reach by bus, shuttle or taxi. It is well-marked so you'll find it easily if you're driving a rental car. An on-site café provides frappes, breakfasts, baguette sandwiches and desserts.

TIP: Since it's not large, a visit to the zoo will only take a few hours tops. Bring insect repellent for the jungle trail walk.

SHOPPING

There is some shopping around the main square on the seaside part of town. You'll find several artisan shops with locally made items like hand-painted pottery, woven linens and garments, seashell mobiles,

and natural products with Mayan chocolate and honey. Stroll down the side streets of Rojo Gomez, Rafael Melgar and Niños Heroes for more shops and markets.

TIP: At most shops, items are not labeled with prices. Expect to barter a little!

For the more serious shopper, visit Cancun's Hotel Zone (high-end stores), or Playa del Carmen's famous 5th Avenue. Staying in Puerto Morelos means you're not far from anything!

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL AND NIGHTLIFE

"Joya" is the first-ever permanent Cirque du Soleil show outside of the USA. It's an absolute feast for the senses! Uniquely written and designed for the Mayan Riviera, this show will take your breath away.

The modern, air-conditioned theatre is nestled in lush grounds featuring a beautiful waterfall. It's located about 12 minutes south of Puerto Morelos on Highway 307, near the Vidanta Resort. Taxis will take you there, and there is ample parking if you drive.

There are 4 different levels of tickets to choose from—VIP, Dinner + show, Champagne package, and Show only. All levels get to enjoy live music half an hour before the performance. Every seat in the intimate theatre provides an excellent view so you can be fully absorbed in the show.

TIP: For a special night out, we recommend the Champagne Package. A chilled bottle of bubbly (or wine), plus sensational appetizers will help you really savor the occasion!

There is not much nightlife in the sleepy little town of Puerto Morelos, but you can catch live music at some spots like Unico Beach Club, La Sirena (on the square), and Micheladas (at the highway junction).

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