



# Playa del Carmen Beaches

Set on some of the most beautiful beaches on the planet, Playa del Carmen is a sunny playground all year long! Unlike Cancun or Tulum, all of its beaches are public and very easy to access. You can walk the coastline north or south for miles and find your favorite little slice of paradise.

Here, the Caribbean Sea is all different shades of blue, with stunning stripes of aqua and green and navy. Across the channel you can see huge cruise ships glistening in the sun, docked off the island of Cozumel.

One of the most-loved features of Playa is that the beach always seems to be present, or at least not far away! You can suntan and swim a bit, then shop or grab a bite. 5th Ave, the famous pedestrian boulevard in town, runs parallel with the water and you can catch glimpses of the sea at every intersection. Enjoy some shade in the main square by the ferry dock, which is crowned with a huge sculpture framing the gorgeous vista.

As it grew in popularity as a vacation destination, the city has spread out from beyond the coastline. But to this day, the heart of Playa remains tied up with the sea.

**TIP:** Sunrises over the sparkling water are absolutely spectacular--if you aren't a morning person, you may become one on your Playa vacation!

# **2010 BEACH RESTORATION PROJECT**

Beaches are constantly shifting--it's the way of nature. Though Playa del Carmen's beaches are generally protected from harsh waves by the nearby island of Cozumel, storms and strong currents do at times take a toll.

In 2010, a beach restoration project undertook extensive measures to replace eroding beaches in Cancun and Playa del Carmen. Over several months, tons of sand were dredged from the sea floor and deposited on the coastline. This widened all the downtown beaches and made it possible to walk the beach without wading in water!

Unfortunately beach erosion is always an issue and measures to control it are only temporary. Each year you visit, you'll notice the beaches have shifted around a bit; some wider, some narrower than before.

## **CLEANLINESS**

For the most part, downtown beaches [stretching from Playacar north to CTM] are well-maintained and groomed daily. Hotel and resort staff and sometimes local volunteers help to clean beaches of seaweed or debris. Around sunrise, workers can usually be seen raking and cleaning the beach so that visitors can fully enjoy the views all day long.

Some beaches struggle with cleanliness especially after a beach concert or dance festival, as partyers leave disposable cups, bottles and other trash in their wake! The city is currently looking into ways of handling this issue.

## **SAND**

The sand making up Playa's beautiful beaches is actually ground up remnants of coral reef! It's somewhat coarse, [more like flour than powdered sugar] and you'll notice flecks of pink. This white sand is what makes the gorgeous, crystal-clear water possible!

**TIP:** Unlike dark sand, coral sand doesn't get super hot in the sun. It does heat up a little, but it's much more comfortable to walk on with bare feet!

In areas of the beach that are eroded, you may see exposed limestone shelf. Look for little pools in the porous rock, you may find some little fish swimming around in there! But be careful, this soft rock is easily carved by the water and can have lots of sharp edges. Unfortunately some downtown beach restaurants and hotels have lost their sandy beach again lately. (They still a pretty view, but the swimming isn't as great and you'll need aqua shoes or flip flops to get around.)

## **SAFETY**

All along the beach there are newly-built lifeguard towers, and flags proclaiming the status of the water. Beware if a red or black flag is flying--the water is not safe to swim in [this is rare].

The sandy shelf stretching into the water stays shallow for a long time, and waves are usually gentle, making it excellent for families to splash around in and enjoy. Any boating lanes are marked with buoys and ropes. Swimmers need to stay out of these lanes. Lifeguards will whistle at you if you venture over here, out of concern for your safety.

**TIP:** The best and safest areas for swimming are at the beach off the main square, directly to the north of the ferry dock. To the south, in

Playacar, there are lots of great swimming areas with few rocks and minimal boat traffic, though there may be a few Jet-skis.

## BEACH CLUBS

Playa is great for freely wandering the beach and finding your favorite spot. Just throw your towel down basically anywhere you want and lap up the Caribbean sunshine. That's the beauty of this bohemian beach town! But if you'd prefer to lounge at a beach club, there are several to choose from.

Most beachfront restaurants offer lounge chairs and palapas or umbrellas if you buy a bucket of beer or get something from their menu. This is a nice option if you don't want to lay on the sand! Just stroll the beach, working your way north from the ferry dock, and see what your choices are. Part of Playa's charm is the sheer variety...you can explore and find a place that's just perfect for you and your crew!

A few popular choices right downtown are WAH WAH'S [between calle 2 and 4], **ZENZI** [off calle 10], and **BLUE PARROT** [off calle 12]. All of these have fantastic menus and nightly live entertainment as well, so you can stay well after sunset if you feel like it!

**MAMITA'S** is the hot spot for the young, beautiful crowd. It hosts annual festivals like BPM and the Riviera Maya Jazz Festival. No matter when you visit throughout the year, the music is thumping, bass is bumping, and a fun carefree spirit is in the air! There are lounge chairs and umbrellas arranged in rows for you to chill with your friends. If you feel like it, there are Jet-skis and catamarans for rent, along with stand-up paddle boards. You can go parasailing or book a dive. There are great eats and drinks, too. It's all right here.

Prepare to be pampered with concierge service and elegant lounge areas at neighboring **KOOL BEACH CLUB**. It has a fantastic deck and swimming pool to cool off in, too. You can find both of these beach clubs at the end of calle 28.

The only forno oven right on the beach in Playa? It's further north, at **CANIBAL ROYAL**. You can find this idyllic spot near CTM, or calle 46. It's away from the noisy crowds, and serves up excellent food in an eclectic atmosphere. The variety in music is great, not house or techno beats all the time!

Visit during Happy Hour at **INDIGO BEACH CLUB** and enjoy great discounts on gourmet dining and spectacular cocktails. The Balinese/Thai vibe at this small downtown spot is so alluring and relaxing. To find this place, look for the tasselled umbrellas near the fishing pier. It's nestled in the El Taj hotel, between calle 12 and 14.

## **BEACHES AROUND PLAYA DEL CARMEN**

To find your postcard-perfect beach, sometimes you have to venture out beyond the city a little! If you feel like experiencing an amazing beach day, try some of these spots. They're not too far outside Playa, and they're more than worth the trip!

Between Playa and Tulum are some of the most scenic beaches you've ever seen. The sand gets softer, more powdery, and the water just gets bluer. (Remind you of a Corona commercial? This is where some where actually filmed!)

A short drive south of town you'll find **PAAMUL**, a protected bay with a few restaurants and a camping area. This is a pretty decent snorkeling spot, and the kids will enjoy beachcombing here! **PUNTA VENADO** is

also a gorgeous spot, with horseback riding, cycling trails, and a secluded beach area perfect for getting away from it all but staying in style!

Working your way south, you might want to check out **XPU-HA** or **XCACEL**. Both beaches are popular with local residents, and known for their stunning beauty. If you're into kiteboarding, for sure visit XpuHa.

**TIP:** Xcacel not only has miles of pristine coastline edged with coconut palms, but also has a small cenote [freshwater swimming hole] that's a short walk from the beach. It's well-developed, with a wooden pathway through the jungle and deck with stairs to enter the cenote.

## **NUDITY**

There are no nude beaches in or around Playa del Carmen. (There are a few resorts in nearby Puerto Morelos and Cancun that offer nude beaches.)

Mexico is a country with conservative standards, and local people in the region do not approve of any kind of nudity. However, Playa does attract an international crowd, with visitors from Europe and the Americas. So that leaves a lot of room for a wide variety of bathing suit attire or lack of it!

Clustered mainly around certain hotels or beach clubs between Constituyentes and CTM [the north end of town], you may see lots of topless tourists or scantily-clad beachgoers. If this is something that bothers you, be aware! The public beaches, such as near the main square off Juarez or Constituyentes, rarely have this phenomenon.

**TIP:** In Mexico it is illegal to be nude in a public place--and that includes the beach--although this is not strictly enforced!

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