TOUR CODE

YU2

ADVENTURESABROAD

MEXICO

Yucatan with Tikal, Guatemala

9 days

Updated 01/11/2013

Day 1 ***Arrive in Guatemala City***

Today we arrive in Guatemala City.

Overnight in Guatemala City. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 ***Guatemala City - Flores - Tikal***

Today we fly from Guatemala City to Flores.

On arrival we embark on a guided tour to experience the mystique of Tikal, possibly the most magnificent of all Mayan sites. Here we discover ancient temples, pyramids and stone structures dating from 500 BC. The five great pyramids of Tikal give this ceremonial centre a majestic grandeur unique among Maya cities. The height of the temples, crowned with tremendous roof combs; the complicated assemblage of the palace structures of the central Acropolis; and the complexity of the chronology of the North Acropolis are staggering to anyone visiting Tikal for the first time. In ancient times Tikal functioned mainly as a ceremonial centre in which the aristocratic elite and their priests ruled, dictated, and directed the activities of the architects, builders, craftsmen, and labourers. All endeavours in the region of Tikal were directed to enhance the city, to glorify the gods, to amass wealth, and to acquire tribute for the ruling upper strata of society. To sustain this activity for over a thousand years demanded a well-disciplined peasantry.

Overnight near Tikal. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 ***Flores, Guatemala - Cancun, Mexico***

Today we fly from Flores, Guatemala to Cancun, Mexico.

Overnight Cancun. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 ***Cancun - Chichen Itza***

Today we travel to Chichen Itza. This is a wonderful archaeological site incorporating the ruins of two different cultures, the ancient Maya and the later arriving Toltecs. The substantial fusion of highland central Mexican and Puuc architecture make Chichen Itza unique. The El Castrillo, the temple of Panels and the Platform of Venus are superb architectural feats.

The most impressive monuments here are the Temple of the Warriors, the group of a thousand columns, the Temple of Kukulcan, the Temple of Chac-Mool and the Ball Court. The Toltecs interest in astronomy and mathematics is evident with a visit to the Astronomical Observatory, perhaps one of the most impressive revelations is the phenomenon occurring during equinoxes, when shadows cast across the ramp of the castle appear to form the shape of a slithering

serpent.

Tonight we include a visit to the Sound and Light show.

Overnight in Chichen Itza. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Chichen Itza - Merida*

Today we drive to Merida, probably the most beautiful town in the Yucatan peninsula. We find that the most enjoyable way to sightsee is from a calesa, or horse drawn carriage. We include a half-day's sightseeing in this most elegant of fashions. During the nineteenth century, European traders flocked to the bustling city to exchange their luxuries for the area's much sought after sisal hemp. The state capital's many buildings and the Moorish and rococo-style mansions of the Paseo Montejo reflect the strong Old World influences.

Overnight in Merida. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Merida - Uxmal*

Uxmal is a stunning place. Uxmal was one of the sites to which the Maya returned again and again in the course of their civilization. The name means 'thrice built'. The Palace of the Governor at Uxmal is considered by many to be the most beautiful of all the Maya structures in Central America. Here some 20,000 hand cut stones have been set into acres of geometric friezes. The nunnery is the quadrangle where vestals allegedly spent a licentious final year of worldly pleasure before their sacrifice to appease the rain god Chac. This truly is a step back into the years of the Maya glory (AD 7-10). The Palace of Large Masks with its magnificent stone mosaics and representations of the ubiquitous rain god.

We also visit the nearby smaller sites of Kabah and Labna. Kabah is the most notable for its Palace of the Masks, the facade of which is covered with innumerable carved masks of the rain god Chac. Labna is another beautiful site. It is famous for its fine sculpture and its arch, this was one of the most ornate built by the Maya.

Overnight in Uxmal. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 7 *Uxmal - Valladolid - Coba*

Today we depart Uxmal for Coba. The morning's drive takes us through Valladolid where we stop for our lunch break. The peaceful Zocalo in the heart of Valladolid is shaded by large trees and surrounded by a variety of restaurants.

We continue on to Coba, one of the grandest Mayan city-states, and have a tour of this impressive site immediately upon arrival. As a large trading center, Coba was connected to other Mayan cities by an elaborate network of roads known as "sacbes". The ancient temples are still surrounded by the thick Yucatan jungle which adds a lot of natural flavour to a rich cultural experience.

After our guided tour you may choose to rent a mountain bike available at the site. A bike is the quickest way to reach some of the most remote parts of this enormous ruined city that once rivalled Tikal in size. Because our hotel is so close to the site you may choose to stay in the site and climb up Nocoh Muh -- the tallest pyramid in the Yucatan. Watching the sun set from the top of this Mayan pyramid over an endless stretch of forests is truly one of Mexico's most magical experiences.

Overnight in Coba. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *Coba - Tulum - Cancun*

In order to beat the crowds, we depart early today for Tulum, one of the most beautiful Maya sites, perched high on the cliffs above the Caribbean. Tulum means "wall" in Maya. The most impressive site at this area is the large pyramid on the edge of the cliff overlooking the sea. A wide staircase leads to a two-chamber temple on the top. Two serpent columns divide the entrance and above the middle entrance is a carved figure of the Diving God. The sight at the top of the pyramid is stunning with a breathtaking view of the ocean and surrounding jungle. You will have free time to explore this site on your own.

From here we continue to Cancun.

Overnight in Cancun. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 9 *Departure*

Departure from Cancun.

BUEN VIAJE! Meal plan: Breakfast.