

Mayan Mysteries and Coral Reef Ecology

Credits: 4 semester hours.

Dates: June 8 - 16, 2010

Cost: \$1800. does not include airfare. Cost without tuition is \$1670.

Description: What ancient people stalked these rainforests? How did they build temples and astronomical observatories? Why did their civilization collapse? Stand in awe at the power and demise of the Mayan culture. Then slip beneath the crystal Caribbean seas as you snorkel or dive the Mexican coral.

Mexico Itinerary:

Day 1: Fly to Cozumel. Check into our hotel. Depending on flight times, we may have time for an early evening snorkel from the beach.

Day 2, 3, 4: We will spend our mornings exploring one of the most beautiful coral reefs in the world from our dive/ snorkel boat. During the afternoons, we will have class discussions about coral reef ecology, symbiosis, taxonomy, and human impacts on the reefs of the world. As twilight falls, the whole reef population changes as the nocturnal creatures awaken. During offshore snorkels in early evening, we will see many more species. One afternoon we will also explore the Mayan Ruins on the Island of Cozumel. Optional: At least one night dive from shore.

Day 4 afternoon: We will catch the ferry across the blue Caribbean to Playa del Carmen, where we will pick up our rental vans. Traveling south, we will explore the Xel Ha Maya Ruins and the Tulum Ruins. We will sleep this night in cabanas right on the beach.

Day 5: We will start the day with a morning snorkel in the Grand Cenote near Tulum. The Yucatan Peninsula has no rivers. The surface water sinks through the porous limestone forming caverns. When the cave roofs collapse, a cenote is born. The Ancient Mayans depended upon the cenotes for their water needs. Traveling inland, we will tour one of the greatest Maya cities of Coba. Situated in the Mexican jungle, Coba was the dominant, most important city in the Yucatan before 1000 A.D. At Coba, tourists are still permitted to climb the great pyramid of El Castillo. After touring Coba, we will continue our journey inland the great city of Chichen Itza. Optional: You can attend a magnificent light show during the evening hours at Chichen Itza. Although the program is in Spanish, you can rent headphones for an English translation. The program presents a brief and “enlightening” history of the Maya culture and Chichen Itza. We sleep at a hotel close to the ruins. Two pools and a nearby cenote are also evening options.

Day 6: We will enjoy our morning in the Yucatan by exploring the most famous ruins of Chichen Itza. After lunch, we will continue our journey onward to Uxmal. Optional: another great light show in the evening at Uxmal.

Day 7: After touring the amazing ruins at the city of Uxmal, we will travel along the Puuc Route and explore the Maya ruins of Kabah, Labna, Sayil, and Mayapan. Our journey now will start to lead us back to the Caribbean coast. We will spend the night in the “magical” little town of Izamal, where we can choose a horse drawn carriage ride through the city or a light show on an ancient Catholic church. Our B & B in Izamal boasts some of the best birding in the Yucatan among their gardens.

Day 8: Before leaving Izamal, we will tour the Maya ruins of Itzamna and then head eastward to a refreshing swim in the Dzitnup Cenote near Valladolid. A newly excavated ruin of Ek Balam (Black Jaguar) will be our last Mayan exploration. From the top of the Caracol, it is easy to see all the way across the jungle to Coba. The Caracol, at 100 feet high, is easily taller than any pyramid in Chichen Itza or Uxmal. We will arrive back at the seashore in time to explore the beaches and the night life of Cancun.

Our Mexico trip will also include a study of modern day culture, as we enjoy testing out our Spanish and tasting delicious seafood and Mexican food. Descendants of the Mayans abound and are often selling their artwork and crafts

Day 9: Fly back to Denver.

To register, send in your check (made out to The Colorado River Trip) to:
Joyce Webb
255 Jack Boot Way
Monument, CO. 80132