

Diving in Playa del Carmen

From bull sharks in crystal clear water to fascinating fresh-water cenotes, diving in Playa del Carmen is a great addition to your Mexican vacation.

Highlights

El Museo Subacuático de Arte

The MUSA, located next to Cancun, is an underwater contemporary museum of art consisting of over 500 permanent life-size sculptures from English artist Jason deCaires Taylor.

Cenote Diving in Yucatan

With around 6000 cenotes, Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula and its extensive subterranean waterways are ideal for experimenting with cavern diving. The popular Cenote Dos Ojos is accessible to most divers.

Bull Sharks in Playa del Carmen

From November to March, get up close and personal with majestic bull sharks as they arrive in Playa del Carmen for breeding season.

Diving in Playa del Carmen

Quick facts

On the eastern edge of the Yucatán Peninsula, divers can find magical cenotes, pelagic encounters and beautiful reefs at Playa del Carmen in the Caribbean Sea.

Dive sites here feature beautiful caverns and healthy reef systems off sandy shores. You'll also have access to Cancún's dive sites including MUSA, an underwater museum and the world-famous Isla Mujeres. Otherwise, do

not miss the opportunity to dive in the glassy cenotes or perhaps head out to Cozumel or Banco Chinchorro.

Diving in Playa del Carmen can be completed by boat or from shore, depending on your preference. A 16% tax is levied on all diving activities in Mexico.

When to go

Diving in Playa del Carmen is year-round. For uncrowded dive sites, book between May and November. For pelagic encounters, pick December to April.

December to April

There is no bad time to dive in Playa del Carmen. In fact, the water temperatures remain constant year-round and cool only slightly during the winter months.

December to April is considered the best time to visit Mexico and therefore is the most popular time to dive in the Caribbean. Because the winter months constitute high season, you should make sure to book as early as possible in order to secure the best rate.

On average, water temperatures vary between 77 and 82°F (25 and 28°C) in Playa del Carmen. From November until March, Bull Sharks are commonly found off the coast, and many other pelagic species are attracted to the area by the slightly cooler temperatures during the winter months.

May to November

The best time for cenote diving is between May and September. These months bring the best light to the caves and result in the better photographs.

Also note that diving in the Caribbean is possible year-round, but you'll find the best visibility throughout the summer. Do keep an eye on the forecast during the summer and early fall. These seasons are subject to the occasional hurricane. When there isn't a hurricane, the weather during the summer is hot and humid with the occasional rain shower.

June to September in particular is best for whale sharks near Isla Mujeres should you choose to take a day trip from Playa del Carmen. And from May to September, green and loggerhead turtles arrive to lay their eggs along the Riviera Maya.

As an added bonus, the summer months are low season throughout Mexico. At this time, you'll find the best deals on diving and accommodation. If you enjoy uncrowded, Caribbean dive sites, travel to Mexico between May and September.

Where to dive

Beginners will delight in the reefs offshore of Playa del Carmen. Advanced divers can head to the open sea. And tec divers should try cenote diving.

Snorkeling in Playa del Carmen

Playa del Carmen is also the perfect retreat for topside spotters. Snorkeling here is possible at a multitude of sites just offshore. In fact, you should be able to walk into the water and snorkel at most of the area's resorts. If you have the chance, take a small trip to dip your head into a fascinating cenote or visit Isla Mujeres where you can snorkel with whale sharks from June to September.

Best dive sites in Playa del Carmen

With more than 20 dive sites nearby Playa del Carmen, there's enough diving to keep you busy for weeks in this region of Mexico.

To start with the cenotes, several are worth exploring, but a local favorite is Cenote Dos Ojos which allows tec divers to practice their rebreather skills.

Pared Verde is one of many reef systems offshore of Playa del Carmen. Many tropical fish species make this sandy refuge their home. If you'd prefer a deeper reef system, check out the infrequently dived Punta Venado which offers healthy corals and pelagic encounters. There is also a great wreck, called Mama Vina, just a 20-minute boat ride south of Playa del Carmen.

Finally, don't miss a dive at Los Arcos during Bull Shark season from November to March.

What to see

Playa del Carmen is home to a variety of marine life from huge sharks to tiny macro critters. The major attraction in terms of wildlife are the female bull sharks that grace the area with their presence from November to March. There are also eagle rays, Loggerhead Turtles and Green Turtles to be found nearby. Occasionally, sailfish and whale sharks might be spotted at sites further from shore.

The healthy Playa del Carmen reefs also play host to a variety of tropical species. Vigilant divers may spot lobsters, groupers, eels, angelfish, stingrays, sergeant majors as well as hundreds of colorful fish.

Location

Playa del Carmen is a resort center on the Caribbean coast of Mexico, approximately 1 hour south of Cancun. Because of its location on the Riviera Maya, Playa (as it is known locally) features a wide range of tourist activities including golf, boating and inland excursions.

Originally a small fishing village, Playa del Carmen made a name for itself when it began the passenger ferry to Cozumel. In the past few

decades, all-inclusive resorts have bloomed on either side of the town. Today, Quinta Avenida is the epicenter of life in Playa. You'll find souvenir shops, restaurants and small boutique hotels on this colorful avenue.

Other attractions

Known as the all-inclusive resort capital of Mexico, Playa del Carmen boasts a huge array of activities. Kids and adults alike will enjoy the ziplines, dune buggies and cave exploration offered by the eco theme parks, Xplor and Xcaret. Even if you aren't diving in the cenotes, make a point to stop by one to take in these unique environments and perhaps even splash around in one. Finally, make some time to discover the region's Mayan ruins. Tulum and Chichen Itza make great day trips from Playa del Carmen.

Getting there

The nearest airport to Playa del Carmen is Cancun International Airport. From Cancun, you should arrange a private transfer, taxi or rental car to the resort area. It is also possible to fly into Cozumel International Airport and take the ferry across to the mainland from there. Once in Playa del Carmen, you can use taxis, rental cars or the power of foot to move from point A to point B.