

A tropical beach scene with palm trees, lounge chairs, and a sunset over the ocean. The image is framed by a blue border with rounded corners. The text 'Tulum' is in a blue script font, and 'MEXICO' is in a bold blue sans-serif font. Below the title, the text 'YOUR CLOSE TO HOME DREAM GETAWAY' is written in red. At the bottom right, the author's name 'Michael Midkiff' is displayed in white on a red background, preceded by a small green 'BY' logo.

Tulum **MEXICO**

**YOUR CLOSE TO HOME
DREAM GETAWAY**

BY

Michael Midkiff

WELCOME TO PARADISE!



Tulum is my “close to home” go to! When my children were young, I took them to this area several times. Tulum might not be the ultra-cheap hidden gem it once was, but trust me—it’s still a dream come true. Imagine endless white sands, sparkling turquoise waters, and sunshine that’ll leave you glowing (don’t forget the sunscreen!).

A Little Mayan Magic

Tulum was founded around the 13th century, during the Postclassic period of the Maya civilization. It was called Zama, meaning “City of Dawn,” due to its east-facing cliffs where the sun rises over the Caribbean.

Tulum served as a trading hub, connecting sea and land trade routes. Its position along the coast allowed the Maya to trade goods like obsidian, salt, and jade with other Mesoamerican cities. The city was one of the few Mayan sites to be walled, offering protection from potential invaders.

By the 16th century, when Spanish explorers arrived, Tulum was still active but began to decline shortly afterward due to disease, colonization, and shifting trade routes. The site was eventually abandoned but remained known among local communities and scholars.

Tulum remained a quiet fishing village until the 1980s. In the 1990’s Tulum started attracting backpackers and eco-tourists. It has now evolved into an international hotspot for yoga retreats, luxury resorts, and digital nomads—balancing its mystical past with a modern, boho-chic reputation.

WHY EVERYONE ADORES TULUM



People can't resist Tulum laid-back lifestyle—think morning yoga sessions on pristine beaches, mouthwatering seafood lunches, snorkeling and scuba diving adventures, followed by salsa dancing beneath the stars. Tulum offers a wonderful blend of relaxation and adventure wrapped up in a warm, welcoming atmosphere.

Life in Tulum is definitely not boring. This place is a magnet for retirees and digital nomads looking for a little fun in the sun. The food scene alone is enough to keep you busy—restaurants are everywhere!

Just off the coast, you've got the second biggest reef system in the world—so if you're into diving, snorkeling, fishing, or just cruising around on a boat, you're in the right spot. There are tons of guides and tours available, whether you're a total newbie or a seasoned pro. And hey, if your idea of water activity is chilling in a beach chair, toes in the sand, sipping a fruity drink with an umbrella in it... you'll fit right in. 😂

There are modern movie theaters, shopping malls, and you've got the whole Yucatán Peninsula at your fingertips. Feeling adventurous? You can road-trip down to the Belize border in just over four hours. Be sure to stop in Bacalar to see that dreamy, seven-color lake, and keep going to Chetumal—the capital of Quintana Roo. It's great for a weekend getaway and very authentic Mexican.

MONTHLY COST OF LIVING BREAKDOWN

Live Like a Local:

- Rent: Budget-friendly local apartments range between \$500–\$800/month.
- Utilities: Approximately \$70 (electricity, water)
- Phone & Internet: Around \$25 (stream away!)
- Cable: About \$30
- Groceries: Roughly \$250

Basic Monthly Total: Around \$875/month

A Bit More Upscale:

- Rent: Comfortable condos average around \$1,200 - \$1,400/month.
- Utilities: Approximately \$70
- Phone & Internet: \$25
- Cable: \$30
- Groceries: \$250

Basic Monthly Total: Around \$1,575 - \$1,775/month

Additional Monthly Expenses

- Local Transportation (buses/taxis): Around \$50
- Dining Out (twice weekly): Approximately \$200
- Gym Membership: \$40
- Entertainment: Movies, local events, etc., around \$60

Adjusted Monthly Total:

- **Local Lifestyle: About \$1,225/month**
- **Upscale Lifestyle: Around \$2,125/month**

Best Neighborhoods for Retirees & Digital Nomads

1. La Veleta

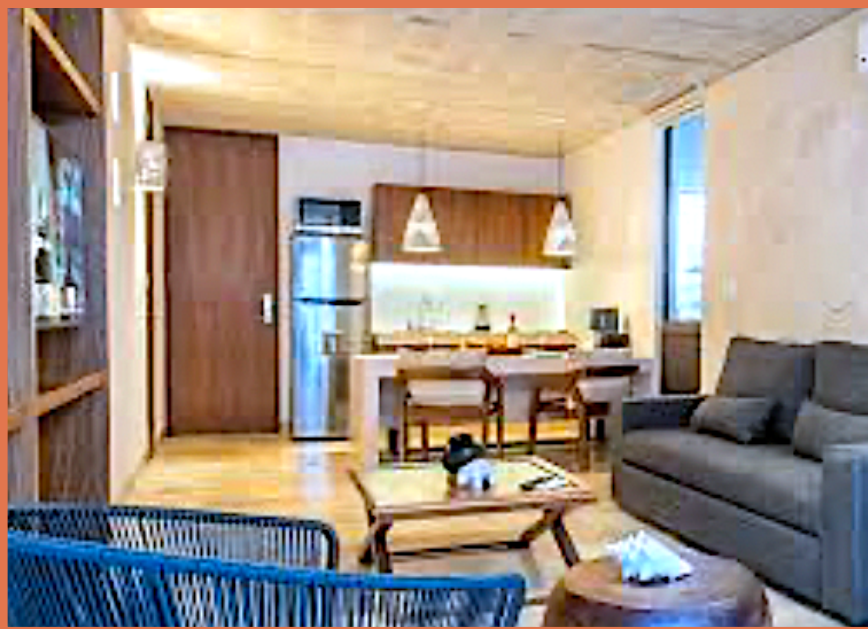
- Ideal for: Digital nomads, young expats, and budget-conscious retirees
- Monthly Rent: \$700–\$1,500 USD for 1–2 bedroom apartments
- Description: La Veleta is a vibrant and rapidly developing neighborhood known for its eclectic mix of cafes, coworking spaces, and boutique accommodations. It's popular among digital nomads due to its affordability and proximity to amenities. The area offers a blend of modern apartments and traditional homes, providing options for various budgets.

2. Aldea Zama

- Ideal for: Retirees and professionals seeking a tranquil yet connected environment
- Monthly Rent: \$1,000–\$2,000+ USD for upscale condos
- Description: Situated between Tulum Town and the beach, Aldea Zama is a master-planned community featuring wide streets, green spaces, and modern infrastructure. It's known for its luxury condos, gated communities, and a peaceful atmosphere, making it appealing to retirees looking for comfort and security.

3. Tulum Town (Centro)

- Ideal for: Budget-conscious individuals and those seeking an authentic local experience
- Monthly Rent: \$500–\$800 USD for 1-bedroom apartments
- Description: Tulum Town, or Centro, is the heart of the local community, offering a more traditional Mexican lifestyle. It's characterized by local markets, street food vendors, and a variety of shops. While it may lack the



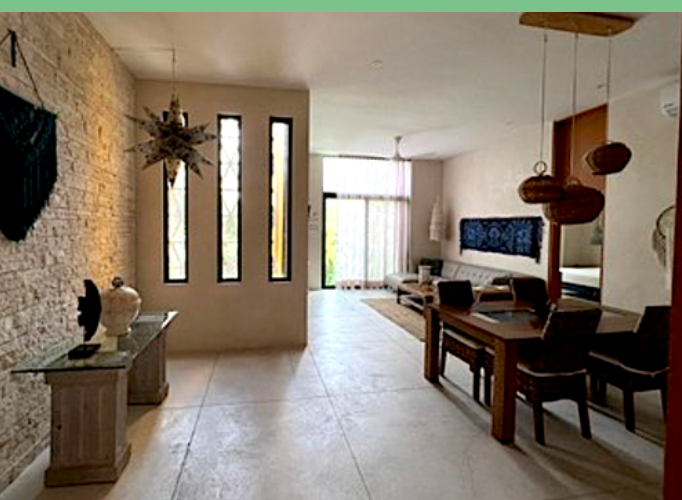
Apartment



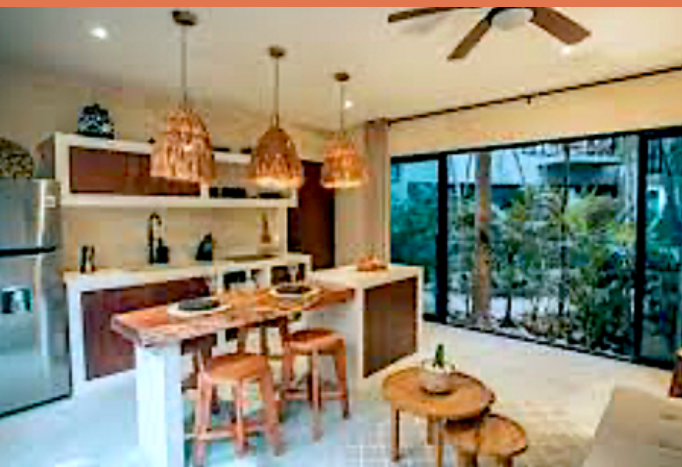
Shopping



Apartment Pool



Apartment



Downtown



Downtown



modern amenities of newer developments, it's a favorite for those wanting to immerse themselves in local culture.

4. Region 15

- Ideal for: Eco-conscious residents and investors
- Monthly Rent: \$800–\$1,500 USD for modern eco-friendly homes
- Description: Region 15 is an emerging neighborhood that emphasizes sustainable living. It's attracting attention for its eco-friendly developments and proximity to nature. The area is still developing, offering opportunities for investment and a quieter lifestyle away from the bustling town center.

5. Selvazama

- Ideal for: Families and individuals seeking a sustainable and community-oriented environment
- Monthly Rent: \$1,200–\$2,500 USD for family-sized homes
- Description: Selvazama is a newer development focusing on sustainability and community living. It offers modern amenities, green spaces, and is designed to foster a sense of community among residents. It's particularly appealing to families and those looking for a balanced lifestyle.

These neighborhoods each offer unique advantages, catering to different preferences and budgets. Whether you're a retiree seeking tranquility or a digital nomad looking for connectivity and affordability, Tulum has a neighborhood that can meet your needs.

Now let's get to the FOOD!! If you want to eat well but not spend a fortune, check out these restaurants.

Tulum Best Restaurants!

1. Cocina Las Veracruzanas

- Cuisine: Veracruz-style Mexican
- Description: Located in Mercado Tulum, this unpretentious eatery specializes in traditional dishes from Veracruz like pozole, barbacoa, and arroz a la tumbada. The setting is simple, but the food bursts with authentic flavor, making it a great option for travelers looking to eat like a local. Items below \$5 USD

2. Taquería La Eufemia

- Cuisine: Beachside Tacos
- Description: This colorful, lively beach shack is known for its affordable tacos and party vibe. Located right on the sand, it's a perfect spot for casual eats and cold beers with a sea breeze. Try the shrimp or pastor tacos while enjoying the laid-back music and hammock seating. Around \$3.25 USD per taco

3. El Rincón Chiapaneco

- Cuisine: Traditional Mexican
- Description: This modest local spot offers homestyle Mexican favorites such as enchiladas, sopas, and panuchos. Popular with residents, it provides a great glimpse into everyday Yucatecan cuisine and hospitality. Under \$5 USD per dish

4. Antojitos La Chiapaneca

- Cuisine: Mexican Street Food
- Description: For tacos al pastor straight off the spit, this spot is unbeatable. La Chiapaneca is



always buzzing at night with locals and travelers grabbing quick, delicious street eats. Add your own toppings from the self-serve salsa bar. Most items under \$1 USD

5. Taquería Honorio

- Cuisine: Seafood
- Description: A no-frills, family-style restaurant specializing in fresh local seafood. Their ceviche mixto is large enough to share, and their pescado frito (fried fish) is crispy and flavorful. Portions are generous and prices are among the best for seafood in Tulum. Most dishes under \$10 USD

6. El Camello Jr.

- Cuisine: Seafood
- Description: A no-frills, family-style restaurant specializing in fresh local seafood. Their ceviche mixto is large enough to share, and their pescado



Local Bar

frito (fried fish) is crispy and flavorful. Portions are generous and prices are among the best for seafood in Tulum. Most dishes under \$10 USD

7. NÜ Tulum

- Cuisine: Modern Mexican
- Description: NÜ brings a refined take on Mexican cuisine using sustainable, local ingredients. The open-air jungle dining room, candlelight, and gourmet interpretations of classics like octopus with mole create a sophisticated yet approachable experience. \$30–\$55 USD per main dish

8. Kin Toh by Azulik

- Cuisine: Avant-garde Mexican
- Description: Elevated—literally and figuratively—Kin Toh is known for its treehouse dining pods, artistic presentations, and dramatic sunset views. The food is luxurious and experimental, rooted in Mexican traditions. \$30–\$50 USD per dish

9. Hartwood

- Cuisine: Wood-fired Mexican
- Description: Hartwood's reputation is global, with a menu that changes daily based on local catch and farm produce. Dishes are grilled over open flames and the restaurant runs off solar energy, making it a pioneer in sustainable fine dining. Around \$50 USD

10. Arca

- Cuisine: Contemporary Mexican with Mayan Influences
- Description: Arca is one of Tulum's culinary stars, known for its wood-fired cooking and jungle-chic vibe. The menu is seasonally driven and creatively plated, often featuring dishes like charred octopus or aged pork belly infused with traditional Yucatecan spices. \$25–\$45 USD per dish; cocktails \$15–\$20 USD

POPULAR GATHERING SPOTS IN TULUM

1. Babel Café (Tulum Town)

- Vibe: Casual café and coworking spot
- Why Go: A favorite among digital nomads for strong Wi-Fi, good coffee, and a relaxed atmosphere. It's common to find people networking or working here for hours.

2. Papaya Playa Project (Beach Zone)

- Vibe: Boho-lux beach club and hotel
- Why Go: Known for its full moon parties and beachside events, this upscale spot attracts creatives, influencers, and remote workers looking to unwind. Expensive but iconic.

3. Holistika Tulum (La Veleta)

- Vibe: Wellness and community hub
- Why Go: Offers daily yoga classes, art installations, a vegan restaurant (Tierra), and regular community gatherings. Great for those into mindfulness and holistic living.

4. Batey Mojito Bar (Centro)

- Vibe: Wellness and community hub
- Why Go: Offers daily yoga classes, art installations, a vegan restaurant (Tierra), and regular community gatherings. Great for those into mindfulness and holistic living.

5. Tulum Art Club (Centro)

- Vibe: Art café and coworking space
- Why Go: Combines culture and productivity. A quieter alternative for those wanting a more artistic, inspirational vibe while working or connecting with others.



Papaya Playa Project



Babel Cafe



Farmers Markets



Tulum Art Cafe



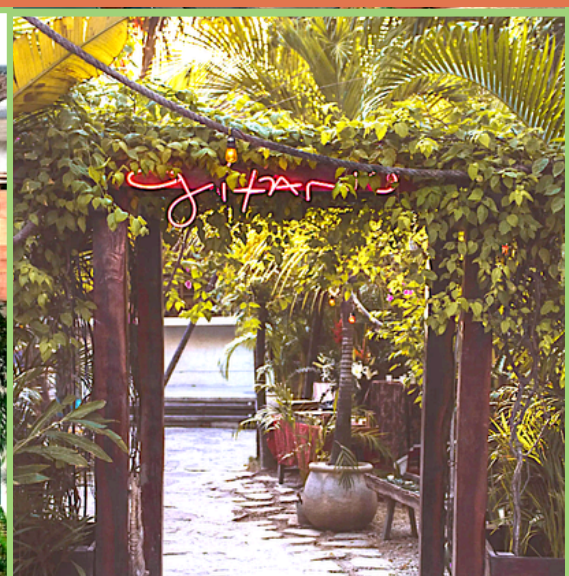
Batey Mojito Bar



Holistika



Digital Jungle



Gitano Jungle Road

6. Tulum Market Days (Local Markets)

- Vibe: Authentic and local
- Why Go: Weekly markets such as the Tulum Farmers Market (at Gypsea Market) bring together residents and visitors to shop local produce, crafts, and foods.

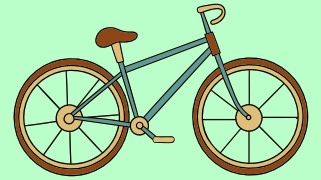
7. Gitano (Jungle Road)

- Vibe: Upscale dining and nightlife
- Why Go: A stylish restaurant that turns into a DJ-fueled party scene on weekends. Great for cocktails and mingling with a chic crowd.

8. Digital Jungle (La Veleta)

- Vibe: Coworking and coliving
- Why Go: A growing spot for remote workers to collaborate, attend events, and meet other digital nomads in a productive yet social setting.

Getting around Tulum is easy and affordable, with several great options depending on your budget, comfort level, and how far you're going. Here are the best ways to get around:



1. Bicycle

- Price: \$5–\$10 USD/day (or \$30–\$60 USD/week)
- Description: Biking is one of the most popular and eco-friendly ways to get around Tulum. It's perfect for short distances between Tulum Town, the beach, and nearby cenotes. Many hotels and Airbnb rentals offer bikes, or you can rent from shops like Ola Bike or IBike. Flat terrain and dedicated bike paths make this a pleasant choice—just be cautious of traffic on the beach road.

2. Scooter/Motorbike Rental

- Price: \$25–\$40 USD/day (discounts for weekly rentals)
- Description: Great for solo travelers or couples, scooters offer a flexible way to navigate Tulum's spread-out layout. You can easily reach the beach zone, Aldea Zama, and even places like the Coba ruins. Fuel costs are minimal, but a valid driver's license is required. Helmets are provided, though not always enforced.

3. Taxis

- Price: \$5–\$25 USD per trip (varies by distance; beach to town typically \$10–\$15 USD)
- Description: Taxis are readily available, especially in Tulum Town and the beach zone. However, they don't use meters, so prices should be negotiated beforehand. Taxis are convenient but not cheap—fares are significantly higher at night or during high season. They're best used sparingly or for quick transport.

4. Colectivos (Shared Vans)

- Price: \$1–\$3 USD per ride (20–50 MXN)
- Description: These shared minivans run along Highway 307 between Tulum, Playa del Carmen, and other towns. While not ideal for inner-town travel, colectivos are great for budget-friendly trips to Akumal, cenotes, or even day trips north. They're fast, cheap, and reliable, but don't expect luxury or strict schedules.

5. Car Rental

- Price: \$30–\$70 USD/day (plus insurance and gas)
- Description: Renting a car offers freedom to explore farther destinations like Sian Ka'an Biosphere, Coba, or Valladolid. Roads are generally in good condition, but parking in the beach zone can be tricky or expensive. Insurance is strongly recommended, and rental companies often charge extra fees—book in advance for the best deals.

6. Electric Scooters or Golf Carts

- Price: \$20–\$50 USD/day
- Description: A fun and trendy alternative, electric scooters and golf carts are increasingly common, especially in Aldea Zama and the beach areas. They're easy to operate and environmentally friendly, though not ideal for long-distance travel.

7. Walking

- Price: Free! 😊
- Description: Many areas, especially Tulum Town (Centro), are walkable. If you're staying near restaurants, cafes, or markets, walking is safe and convenient during the day. However, due to lack of consistent sidewalks and low lighting, walking long distances—especially to/from the beach—isn't ideal after dark.

8. Private Drivers & Transfers

- Price: \$60–\$120 USD for airport transfers; ~\$20–\$50 USD for local trips
- Description: For comfort and convenience, especially from Cancun airport, hiring a private driver is a stress-free option. Companies like eTransfers or Cancun Airport Transportation offer door-to-door service. Great for families or travelers with lots of luggage.

9. Ride-Sharing Apps

- While Uber is available in some parts of Mexico, it's not currently active in Tulum due to local taxi union conflicts. That means most visitors rely on taxis or walking instead of ride share apps.

TULUM'S MUST-SEE & DO ACTIVITIES

Visit Tulum Archaeological Site

Description: Perched on a cliff overlooking the turquoise Caribbean Sea, the Tulum Ruins are among the most scenic archaeological sites in Mexico. Once a major Mayan trading port, the site includes temples, watchtowers, and the iconic El Castillo. You can explore on your own or hire a local guide for deeper insights into its rich history. **\$4–\$5 USD entry fee; guided tours \$20–\$40 US**



Tulum Ancient Ruins

Explore the Sian Ka'an Reserve

A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Sian Ka'an is a massive nature reserve featuring lagoons, mangroves, and diverse wildlife including dolphins, turtles, and manatees. Most visitors access it via a guided tour that includes a boat ride, snorkeling, and sometimes even a Mayan canal float. It's a must for nature lovers and adventurers.

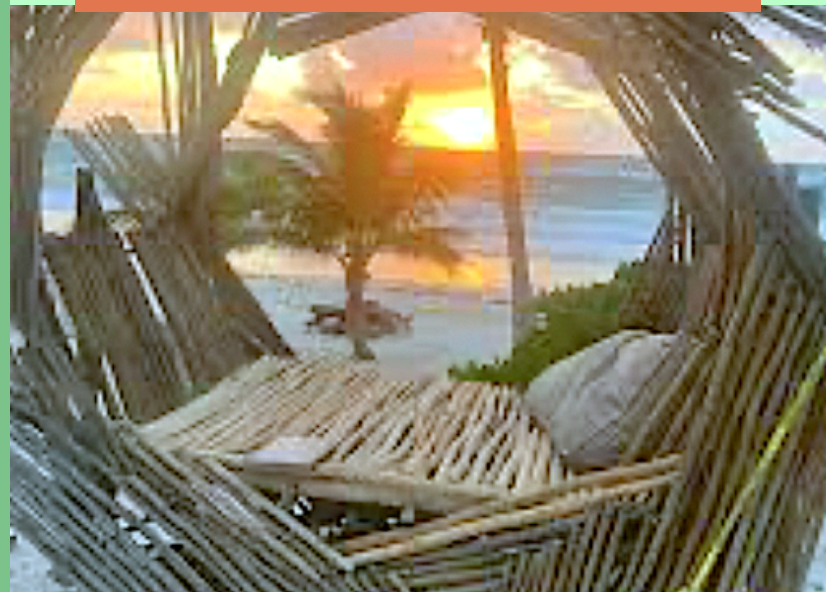
\$70–\$150 USD for guided boat tours



Tulum Ancient Ruins

Relax at a Beach Club

Tulum's beaches are world-famous and spending the day at a beach club like Nomade, Coco Tulum, or Mia offers a mix of luxury and relaxation. You can enjoy loungers, drinks, and fresh seafood with your feet in the sand and music in the background. Some clubs have free entry with food/drink purchases, while others charge a cover. **\$10–\$30 USD minimum spend or day pass**



The Beach Life



My Son with an Iguana



Me with Monkey



Beautiful Water



Take a Yoga or Wellness Class

Tulum is a global wellness destination, with yoga classes and sound healing sessions offered daily in studios like Yāan Wellness, Sanará, and Holistika. Whether you're into vinyasa flow, ecstatic dance, or traditional temazcal ceremonies, Tulum's wellness scene is both grounding and transformative. \$10–\$25 USD per class; retreats vary widely

Bike Beach Road or Jungle Paths

Renting a bike is a great way to explore both Tulum Town and the beach zone. You can cruise past boutique shops, jungle art, and stylish cafes. There are dedicated paths in places like Aldea Zama, and the flat terrain makes riding easy—even in the tropical heat. \$5–\$10 USD per day bike rental

Visit Kaan Luum Lagoon

Just 15 minutes south of Tulum, Kaan Luum Lagoon is a surreal turquoise swimming spot with a deep, dark cenote at its center. The shallow edges are perfect for lounging or paddleboarding. It's less touristy than the beach and ideal for a half-day trip immersed in nature. \$5–\$10 USD entry fee

Stroll Thru Tulum Pueblo (Town)

For a more authentic side of Tulum, head to the Pueblo (Town). Visit local taquerías, artisan markets, and murals that give you a sense of daily life. It's also the place for budget eats, affordable souvenirs, and more laid-back nightlife. Free; meals \$5–\$15 USD.



Coba Mayan Ruins

Day Trip to Coba Ruins

Less than an hour from Tulum, Coba is a sprawling ancient Mayan city surrounded by jungle. You can rent a bike or hire a tricycle taxi to explore. Though climbing the main pyramid (Nohoch Mul) was once a highlight, it is now usually closed—but the site remains majestic and less crowded than Chichen Itza.

\$5 USD entry; bike rentals \$3 USD; tours \$40–\$80 USD

Bike the Beach Road or Jungle Paths

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\$5–\$10 USD per day bike rental

Enjoy Tulum's Nightlife

Tulum has a surprisingly dynamic nightlife scene. From live music at Batey Mojito Bar to jungle parties at Gitano and rooftop DJ sets at Confessions, there's something for everyone. Many places host themed nights or full moon parties, drawing a mix of locals and travelers. Free–\$10 USD entry; drinks \$5–\$12 USD



Mayan Ruins & Cenotes

Chichen Itza offers an impressive journey into Mayan history, highlighting magnificent structures and carvings, while Tulum provides a picturesque view of ancient ruins atop cliffs overlooking crystal-clear waters. Cenotes like Gran Cenote and Cenote Azul are natural wonders ideal for swimming, snorkeling, or diving, offering magical underground landscapes.

Spending the Day at Xel-Há

Xel-Há is a paradise for nature lovers, offering snorkeling with colorful fish, lazy river floats, cliff jumps, zip lines, mangrove explorations, unlimited food and drink, and interactions with dolphins. Perfect for a day full of adventure and relaxation.

Exploring Xcaret

Xcaret blends culture and entertainment—swim through underground rivers, enjoy vibrant cultural performances, visit wildlife exhibits, or unwind at pristine emerald water beaches. End your day with a spectacular evening show that celebrates Mexican heritage. I found this show quite interesting. Definitely worth seeing!



Day Trip Xel Ha
Massage Under the Falls

Walkability & Popular Routes



To understand the distances, consider that walking from Tulum Town to the beach takes about an hour, while biking cuts the trip to around 15 minutes. Aldea Zama is about a 20–25-minute walk from the town center and 30 minutes from the beach. From La Veleta to central Tulum, you're looking at a 10–20-minute walk, depending on your exact location. Getting to the Tulum Ruins from town takes roughly 45 minutes on foot or 10 minutes by bike.

Overall, while some areas of Tulum are walkable, especially within neighborhoods or short distances, the best way to get around efficiently and comfortably is often by bicycle or scooter, especially during the hot midday sun. Walking is doable, but keep in mind the lack of consistent sidewalks and lighting, especially outside of the town center.



Medical Care & Insurance

Tulum offers excellent healthcare facilities, including modern hospitals and clinics staffed by highly trained, English-speaking medical professionals. Health insurance is affordable, typically ranging from \$100 to \$200 monthly, providing comprehensive coverage and peace of mind for residents and long-term visitors. Tulum is exceptionally walkable, especially along the pedestrian-friendly Quinta Avenida, lined with lively shops, cafes, and entertainment venues. Beach walks between Calle 38 and Parque Fundadores are scenic and relaxing.



Visa Requirements for Americans

Great news for American visitors—no visa is needed for stays of up to 180 days in Mexico. If you plan to stay longer, Mexico offers straightforward temporary residency options perfect for digital nomads, retirees, or anyone wishing to extend their adventure. Tulum offers excellent healthcare facilities with many English-speaking medical professionals. Monthly insurance typically ranges between \$100–\$200, providing comprehensive coverage.

Final Thoughts



Tulum isn't just a destination—it's a lifestyle.
Tulum has a unique way of capturing your heart.

Because of its close proximity to the US, Tulum was always a favorite vacation spot for my family when my children were growing up. It also makes for a fabulous retirement spot for long term seekers, or a place for digital nomads to reside for a while.

Great news for Americans—It's so close to home and has no visa needed for stays up to 6 months! For longer stays, Mexico offers straightforward residency options, (see above) ideal for digital nomads and retirees alike.

Pack your swimsuit, sunglasses, and an adventurous spirit—Tulum awaits you with open arms, endless sunshine, and unforgettable experiences which I have personally enjoyed too many times to count! It's a fantastic place, especially if you're looking for a place not too far from the US, but still exotic and inexpensive at the same time!