

# Mérida, Yucatán

## Revised Itinerary — Final

March 4–16, 2026

### Trip Strategy

- Walk, bike, Uber/DiDi within Mérida
- Rent a car only on expedition days (two reservations confirmed)
- Prioritize early starts for heat + crowds
- Prefer private or very small-group experiences
- Anniversary dinner reserved at K'u'uk (Mar 11, 8:00 pm)
- Paola arrives Mar 12 — airport pickup at noon
- Río Lagartos boat tour confirmed: Sat Mar 14 at 9:00 am (4 hrs, capacity 4)
- Farewell dinner at Micaela Mar & Leña (Mar 15, Calle 47)

### Car Rental Reservations (Budget)

Rental	Dates	Vehicle	Confirmation #
#1	Sat Mar 7, 7:30am – Mon Mar 9	Suzuki Swift GLX	37756650US1
#2	Tue Mar 10, 7am – Sun Mar 15, 7am	Dodge Attitude SXT	37792010US4

### Daily Itinerary

 **Wed, Mar 4 — Arrival**

**3:07 pm** Arrive MID

**Afternoon** Check in, light walk in the neighborhood

**Evening** Casual dinner nearby

Quick grocery stop for breakfasts and simple dinners

 **Suggestions**

- Stock up on water, fruit, and coffee
- Scout neighborhood: taco stands, panaderías, pharmacy

## Thu, Mar 5 — Centro Walking Tour + Markets

**8:30 am** Plaza Grande — orientation, sillas confidentes, street photography  
**8:45 am** Catedral de San Ildefonso (closes 12:30 pm)  
**9:15 am** Palacio de Gobierno — Castro Pacheco murals (free)  
**9:45 am** Casa de Montejo — 1549 conquistador mansion (free)  
**10:15 am** MACAY — contemporary art museum (free)  
**11:00 am** Palacio de la Música Mexicana — interactive music museum (\$200 MXN)  
**12:30 pm** Teatro Peón Contreras — Carrara marble staircase (free galleries)  
**12:45 pm** Parque Santa Lucía  
**1:15 pm** Mercado Lucas de Gálvez — lunch (enter from Calle 56 side)  
**~3:00 pm** Return to Airbnb for siesta  
**Late PM** Parque La Plancha — Scissor-tailed Flycatchers  
**Evening** Dinner at La Chaya Maya (Calle 62) or Serenata Yucateca at Santa Lucía (Thu ~8:30 pm)

### Suggestions

- Palacio de la Música deserves 1.5–2 hrs; Manzanero hologram + rooftop terrace
- Serenata Yucateca: traditional trova music since 1965
- Parque La Plancha best late afternoon for flycatchers

### Photography Notes

- Late afternoon light on Paseo de Montejo mansions
- Scissor-tailed Flycatchers: 100–500mm at 200–400mm; salmon-pink flanks flash in flight

## Fri, Mar 6 — Birding Tour (Anchor Day)

**Early AM** Private birding tour with YucatanBirdingTours.mx (operator picks you up)  
**Lunch** Light meal in Mérida  
**Afternoon** Rest, download/review images, explore neighborhood

### Suggestions

- Ask guide about motmot/trogon locations for Uxmal/Dzibilchaltún
- Use free afternoon to scout Calle 47 or revisit Centro

### Photography Notes

- RF 100–500mm workhorse; bring 2× extender for distant perched birds

## Sat, Mar 7 — Sisal: Flamingos + Beach

**7:30 am** Pick up rental car #1 (Suzuki Swift)  
**~8:20 am** Arrive Sisal (~50 min via Carretera Mérida–Sisal)  
**8:30–11:00** Flamingo/shorebird photography at mangrove lagoons south and west of the port

Also: Reddish Egrets, Roseate Spoonbills, Brown Pelicans, Osprey  
**~12:30 pm** Seafood lunch: La Palapa de Soco, La Brisa del Mar, or Muelle de Sisal  
**Afternoon** Beach time east of the pier  
**~5:00 pm** Return to flamingo lagoons for golden hour/sunset (~6:10 pm)  
**~6:30 pm** Drive back to Mérida  
**Dinner** Cook at Airbnb — save energy for Uxmal tomorrow

 **Suggestions**

- Flamingos in estuary/lagoons south and west of town — ask locals for today's exact spot
- Mid-March: flamingos transitioning Celestun → Río Lagartos; Sisal on that corridor
- Cash only at most restaurants
- Beach palapas east of pier serve cold beer and ceviche

 **Photography Notes**

- 100–500mm primary; 2× extender if light allows
- 16–35mm for habitat-wide flamingo landscapes
- Sunset: sun behind you (west) shooting east — golden light on pink birds
- Reddish Egrets: 1/2000+ shutter for feeding dance
- Water shoes for wading mudflats

 **Heads Up**

- Bring water, snacks, sunscreen, hat
- Bug repellent for mangrove areas

   **Sun, Mar 8 — Uxmal + Mucuyché Cenotes**

**7:30 am** Drive to Uxmal (~80 min)  
**~8:00 am** Arrive at opening; hire private guide  
**8:00–12:00** Explore Uxmal; photograph ruins + wildlife  
**12:30 pm** Drive to Hacienda Mucuyché (~20 min south)  
**Afternoon** Swim and photograph cenotes  
**Evening** Return to Mérida; cook or casual dinner

 **Suggestions**

- Arrive at 8 am to beat tour buses. Less crowded on Sundays
- Budget 3+ hours for guide + wildlife photography
- Mucuyché light beams best around midday

 **Photography Notes**

- Turquoise-browed Motmots on ruins — 100–500mm at 200–400mm
- White-nosed Coatis: wide angle with Pyramid of the Magician
- 16–35mm for cenote interiors

 **Heads Up**

- Full day — hydrate aggressively; midday heat intense

## **Mon, Mar 9 — Museum Day + Parque La Plancha**

**Early AM** Optional: drive to Dzibilchaltún (20 min) for motmots + Xlakah cenote

Return car #1 (confirm time with Budget)

**Late morning** Parque La Plancha — Scissor-tailed Flycatchers

**Midday** Gran Museo del Mundo Maya (open Mondays; 9am–5pm)

**Lunch** Calle 47 corridor

**Dinner** Estación 47 on Calle 47

### **Suggestions**

- Most museums closed Mondays — Gran Museo and MUGY are open
- Gran Museo: 2–2.5 hours; Maya cosmology and Caste War exhibits outstanding

### **Photography Notes**

- Scissor-tailed Flycatchers at La Plancha: 100–500mm at 200–300mm

### **Heads Up**

- Casa Montejo, MACAY, Palacio de la Música all closed Mondays

## **Tue, Mar 10 — Santa Bárbara Cenotes (Homun)**

**7:00 am** Pick up rental car #2 (Dodge Attitude)

**8:00 am** Depart for Cenotes Santa Bárbara, Homun (~55 min via Acanceh)

**~9:00 am** Arrive; choose bike, shuttle, or motorized train between cenotes

**Morning** 4 cenotes: Cascabel (cave), Chacsikin (semi-open), Xooch' (semi-open), Pool Cocom (open canyon)

Shower required before first swim; no sunscreen in cenotes; life jackets required/included

**~1:00 pm** Lunch at on-site restaurant (optional ~\$130 MXN add-on)

**Afternoon** Return to Mérida; rest / pool

**Dinner** MUGY — Museo de la Gastronomía Yucateca

### **Suggestions**

- 4 distinct cenotes vs. Cuzamá's 3 dark caves — much better variety and photography
- Motorized train, bikes, or shuttle between cenotes (no more horse carts)
- ~\$250–350 MXN/person; cash recommended
- Pool Cocom: dramatic canyon scenery + elevator for accessibility
- MUGY: museum + restaurant; do museum portion before dinner

### **Photography Notes**

- Photograph BEFORE swimming while dry

- 16–35mm essential for cave cenote Cascabel
- MP-E 65mm macro for limestone textures and roots
- Pool Cocom has best natural light

 **Heads Up**

- No sunscreen/insect repellent in cenotes — shower first
- Cash recommended; small bills

 **Wed, Mar 11 — Anniversary Day**

**Morning** Late breakfast / coffee at Airbnb

**Mid-morning** Drive to Chuburná Puerto (quiet beach, ~45 min)

Park near the pier for lunch; move car west to Playón Las Dunas for quiet beach

**Lunch** Costa Azul or El Amigo Miguel (seafood, palapa-style)

**Early PM** Return to Mérida

**Late afternoon** Strolling Paseo de Montejo / Santa Ana

**8:00 pm** Dinner at K'u'uk (reservation confirmed)

 **Suggestions**

- Chuburná is much quieter than Progreso — perfect for the anniversary
- Playón Las Dunas (west of pier) is the quietest stretch — bring umbrella, no palapas there
- K'u'uk: multi-course tasting menu, 2–2.5 hrs. Plan lighter lunch, late-afternoon rest
- Dinner finishes ~10:30 pm

 **Photography Notes**

- Morning beach light at Chuburná: 16–35mm for wide coastal shots
- Paseo de Montejo mansions in golden hour

 **Thu, Mar 12 — Birding Tour + Airport Pickup + Progreso**

**5:30 am** Mario: birding tour at Parque Ecoarqueológico Sihunchen with Ramón (Yucatan Birders)

**~10:00 am** Return from birding tour

**~12:30 pm** Regroup at Airbnb; head to Progreso (~35 min drive)

**Afternoon** Progreso beach + seafood lunch

Walk the malecón and the iconic 6.5 km pier; watch for pelicans and frigatebirds

**Evening** Return to Mérida; casual dinner or cook at Airbnb

 **Suggestions**

- Progreso restaurants: El Toro (est. 1946, legendary fried fish, free botanas on arrival — packed with locals), Crabster Seafood & Grill (malecón terrace, upscale seafood, great octopus), Eladio's (right by the pier, big portions)
- For a quieter option a few blocks west of the pier: Zal Marina (opened 2025, modern, peaceful setting, good Tikin Xic fish)

- The pier is a great walk for pelicans, frigatebirds, and the scale of the structure itself (longest in the world at 6.5 km)
- Beach: the stretch west of the pier is generally less crowded than east; bring cash for palapas and vendors
- Progreso bus from Mérida is cheap (\$17 MXN) from AutoProgreso terminal if you prefer not to drive

#### Photography Notes

- Brown Pelicans diving near the pier: fast shutter (1/2000+), RF 100–500mm
- Morning birding at Sihunchen: follow Ramón's lead on gear; RF 100–500mm + 2× extender

#### Heads Up

- Thursday can be busy at Progreso toward late afternoon — arrive by 1 pm for best parking and beach spots

## Fri, Mar 13 — Chichén Itzá

- 7:00 am** Depart for Chichén Itzá (~2 hr via toll road, ~\$237 MXN)  
**~9:00 am** Arrive; hire guide at entrance  
**9:00–12:30** Explore site with guide — head straight to El Castillo before crowds  
**~12:30 pm** Depart for Mérida (~1 hr 45 min via toll road)  
**~2:30 pm** Arrive Mérida  
**Afternoon** Rest, nap, pool — recovery for tomorrow's early start  
**Dinner** Light early dinner; in bed by 9 pm

#### Suggestions

- Valladolid is east of Chichén, not on the return route — skipping it saves 1.5 hrs of driving and preserves energy for Río Lagartos tomorrow
- Toll road (\$237 MXN each way) saves 30+ min vs. the free road — worth it today
- Aim to leave the site by 12:30 — crowds and heat peak after noon
- Light early dinner: cook at Airbnb or quick local spot; priority is sleep

#### Photography Notes

- Motmots and iguanas at Chichén: work the edges of the site away from crowds
- The Observatory (El Caracol) and the Thousand Columns area are less crowded and good for wildlife

#### Heads Up

- Tomorrow is a 6:00 am departure for Río Lagartos — set alarms, pack the car tonight
- Pack breakfast/snacks for the car, charge all camera batteries, format cards

## Sat, Mar 14 — Río Lagartos + Cenote Kikil

- 6:00 am** Depart Mérida (~3 hr drive)  
**9:00 am** Private boat tour (4 hrs): flamingos, mangroves, crocodiles

**~1:00 pm** Lunch in Río Lagartos village

**~2:00 pm** Drive south toward Tizimín; stop at Cenote Kikil (~45 min from Río Lagartos)

Open cenote, 40m diameter, community-run, set in landscaped gardens with restaurant and hammocks

**Afternoon** Swim and cool off at Kikil; continue to Mérida (~2.5 hrs from Kikil)

**Evening** Arrive Mérida; cook or very casual — recovery night

 **Suggestions**

- Las Coloradas skipped — owned by a salt company with tensions with environmentalists; very little wildlife present per our boat guide's advice
- Cenote Kikil is a perfect recovery stop: community-run, clean, peaceful, right on the Río Lagartos–Tizimín road
- No rush on return — car returns Sunday at 7 am
- Request boat captain position you with sun behind you relative to flamingo flocks

 **Photography Notes**

- 100–500mm primary; 2× extender for distant flocks on the lagoon
- Reddish Egrets: 1/2000+ for feeding dance
- Boat: brace on gunwale, high ISO handheld
- Crocodiles in mangrove channels: 100–500mm safe distance
- Cenote Kikil: 16–35mm for the dramatic open sinkhole surrounded by vegetation

 **Heads Up**

- 6+ hrs driving total — share duties among all three
- Pack breakfast/snacks for car
- Sun protection critical on open boat

 **Sun, Mar 15 — Final Day in Mérida**

**Early AM** Return rental car #2 by 7:00 am

**Morning** Market breakfast, coffee, final photography walk

**Midday** Shopping: handicrafts, hammocks, local souvenirs — Mercado Lucas de Gálvez or Mercado de Artesanías

**Afternoon** Rest, pack, review and organize trip photos

**Dinner** Micaela Mar & Leña on Calle 47 (reservation confirmed) — farewell dinner

 **Suggestions**

- Last chance for any Mérida spots you missed — revisit a favorite or explore a new corner
- Mercado de Gálvez artisan section (blue building, upper floor) has hammocks, embroidered huipiles, and pottery
- Micaela: try the octopus, the raw bar, and the wood-fired specialties — best seafood on Calle 47
- Consider a pre-dinner walk along Calle 47 for a final stroll through the gastronomic corridor

 **Mon, Mar 16 — Departure**

**Morning** Breakfast / brunch

**~11:30 am** Head to MID for 1:54 pm flight

 **Suggestions**

- Allow 2 hours for Uber + check-in
- Confirm Paola's departure plans

# Yucatán Wildlife Photography — Target Checklist

March (early–mid), Mérida & surroundings

## Coastal Wetlands & Mangroves

Río Lagartos · Sisal · Chuburná

### Birds (High Priority)

- American Flamingo — Río Lagartos (best) + Sisal, early morning, 100–500 @ 300–500mm
- Reddish Egret (dark & white morphs) — shallow lagoons, feeding dance, fast shutter
- Roseate Spoonbill — mangroves, lagoon edges, morning/late afternoon
- Boat-billed Heron — shaded mangrove channels, higher ISO
- Bare-throated Tiger Heron — mangrove creeks, morning

### Raptors / Others

- Osprey
- Brown Pelican
- Peregrine Falcon (occasional)

### Mammals

- Bottlenose Dolphin (occasional)
- American Crocodile (Río Lagartos boat tour)

## Dry Forest, Scrub & Maya Ruins

Uxmal · Chichén Itzá · Dzibilchaltún

### Must-Photograph Birds

- Turquoise-browed Motmot  — ruins, forest edges, 100–500 @ 200–400mm
- Yucatán Jay  — open forest, cenotes, morning
- Yucatán Woodpecker — dry forest, ruins
- Black-headed Trogon — shaded forest, early morning

### Raptors

- Laughing Falcon
- Gray Hawk

- Roadside Hawk

### **Mammals**

- White-nosed Coati — Uxmal, 100–500 or wide angle
- Agouti
- Yucatán Squirrel (endemic)

### **Cenotes & Semi-Tropical Forest**

*Santa Bárbara (Homun) · Hacienda Mucuyché · Cenote Kikil (Tizimín)*

### **Birds**

- Lesson's Motmot
- Mexican Sheartail  — open scrub, flowering areas
- Orange Oriole
- Altamira Oriole
- Social Flycatcher

### **Reptiles**

- Black Iguana (*Ctenosaura*) — 100–500 or macro
- Green Iguana

### **Urban Parks & Open Areas**

*Parque La Plancha · Paseo de Montejo*

### **Birds**

- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher  — La Plancha, wires/treetops, 100–500 @ 200–300mm
- Great-tailed Grackle
- Tropical Kingbird
- Great Kiskadee

### **Top 15 Priority Targets**

1. American Flamingo
2. Turquoise-browed Motmot
3. Reddish Egret (dark morph)
4. Roseate Spoonbill

5. Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
6. Yucatán Jay
7. Black-headed Trogon
8. Laughing Falcon
9. Boat-billed Heron
10. Yucatán Woodpecker
11. Mexican Sheartail
12. White-nosed Coati
13. Agouti
14. American Crocodile
15. Bottlenose Dolphin (bonus)

## **Lens Strategy**

**RF 100–500mm (workhorse)** — 90% of bird/mammal photography. Flamingos, motmots, raptors, coatis.

**2× Extender (selective)** — Distant flamingos/shorebirds at Río Lagartos and Sisal. Avoid in low light.

**EF 16–35mm f/2.8 (wide)** — Cenotes, flamingo habitat shots, ruins, coastal landscapes.

**MP-E 65mm Macro** — Iguanas, butterflies, flowers, cenote details.

**Support: Monopod + Ball Gimbal Head** — Fast deployment, maneuverable in tight spaces.