

## My visit to MERIDA, Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico

By Olga Ramudo

I was fortunate enough to spend New Year's Eve in the wonderful colonial city of Merida, Mexico.

Aeromexico's nonstop service from Miami to Merida makes reaching the destination very convenient. Since I landed, I felt safe, in a peaceful environment, and welcomed by the Mexican people.

Merida dates back to 1542; it was founded by the Spanish conquistador Francisco de Montejo and built over an ancient Mayan city. Its beautiful colonial architecture takes you back in history.

The center of the city is comprised by a "plaza" surrounded by the Cathedral and historic buildings. Restaurants of all types and preferences are available throughout. Merida is a musical city with one of the highlights being the famous *Serenata Yucateca* at Santa Lucia Park every Thursday evening, where local groups play live *boleros*. *Guayabera* is the typical attire of Merida.

Numerous shops offer them in various styles, quality and craftsmanship, including off the rack or custom made choices.

I stayed at the Hotel Rosas y Xocolate, a luxury boutique hotel comprised of 17 suites. The owner purchased this property and restored it under his personal supervision. The results demonstrate what an outstanding job he did. His involvement in the day-to-day operation is evidenced by the quality of the hotel as well as the service provided. The property includes a restaurant on premises as well as a spa. The rooms are simply breathtaking, and the loca-



Left: Ruins of Chichen Itza. Above: Merida at night. Inset: Hacienda Misne.



Hotel Rosas y Xocolate

tion in the Paseo de Montejo could not be better.

A visit to Chichen Itza confirms why it is listed as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. It was founded in 445 AD as home to about 50,000 residents. The Mayan culture is breathed throughout.

One of the latest projects of the dynamic Secretary of Tourism of Yucatan has been electrical installations for a light and sound evening show in the ruins of Uxmal. It is absolutely breathtaking and certainly worth the visit.

My last two days were spent at the

Hacienda Misne, a century old restored mansion surrounded by beautiful foliage. The sounds of birds, a spa housed in a *bohio*, and a sense of well being are what you experience during your stay.

I returned back home, renewed, and ready to tackle the everyday rush of our daily lives!!!!



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Frankfurt-Munich	19	3 hrs, 10 min	4 hrs, 40 min	4 hrs, 10 min
London-Paris	18	2 hrs, 15 min	4 hrs, 40 min	6 hrs, 10 min
Milan-Zurich	7	3 hrs, 41 min	4 hrs, 25 min	5 hrs

Cruise travelers use the train from airport to port – significantly less costly than transfers or taxis, and take less time! Rail stations are located at many international airports.

## Travel Tipping Tips

When traveling, you always want to do the correct thing and basically need to know what is appropriate. Here are a few simple tips:

**South America**  
When you're bouncing around all points south, skip the tip on taxis... unless you're in Brazil or Argentina. There, they look for a 10% add-on for their driving skills. At restaurants, it's a little tricky. You'll want to add 10 to 15% to your bill, unless there's already a service charge.

**Europe**  
Hotel tips here are pretty standards, starting with \$2 per bag for bellmen who do your heavy lifting and \$2 for requests from the concierge.

**Africa**  
Hotel concierges can be an incredible help here, which is why you should be prepared to hand over at least \$2 for your request, or up to \$20 if you make it a bit outlandish.

**Australia and New Zealand**  
Spending time down under means tips all around. Eating out means a 10 50 15% addition. Grabbing a cab? Add 10% to the fare in Australia, but not in New Zealand; just round up.

**Asia**  
Visitors to China tend to take hotel cards, for which you should tip five to 10%. But in Hong Kong, tipping is a little more lax – just to round up on your fare.

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