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CULTURE & LIVING

If you need a real vacation, you need to travel to Tulum, Mexico

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The most magical destination



When we were younger, a vacation felt like a special time in the year, where we could truly cut off from the rest of our lives. But in the last decade or so, every time I've gone on a holiday, it feels like I'm living my usual life, just in another city. Because of social media, work emails always being on, and the regular FaceTime dates with friends and family back home, it may seem like we never actually left home even when we're on vacation. We're so connected to our comfort zone even when we are miles away, that no one really misses us when we are gone. Just until nine years ago, I would email almost 20 paragraphs about my day to a friend, and be so excited to open up my mailbox in the morning and read tomes about what was happening back home. This way, I'd still get a taste of my regular life in my own city, and get all the updates, while still feeling like I was actually abroad, disconnected, on vacation!

After almost a decade of sighing as I come back from a trip, feeling like I hadn't ever left, I went to a place this year that made me feel like I was truly in another world. Ever since I've been back, I've been telling anyone who will listen all about Tulum.

Where is Tulum?

Tulum is a small town in [Mexico](#), about two hours away from Cancun.

When is the best time to visit?

The best time to visit the island is around the end of May, or the start of June. The "hurricane season", as the locals call it, comes right after this time period. It ends around October, making the coming months, till December, perfect for a visit. It will be warm during this time, but not as hot as the rest of the year.

How to get there

Cancun is a mere three-hour flight out of New York, and Tulum is another two-hour drive away. Getting there is easy enough, because all you need is a flight and hotel booked. As long as you have a US visa, you're all set. Tulum itself spans across a 15-minute car ride. Imagine an L-shaped town—the vertical line is hotels and resorts with the most gorgeous beachscape you will ever see, and the horizontal line is the main town, with local restaurants, stores, and even a giant supermarket.

Where to stay

We were in Tulum for eight days, but I still could've used another two. The hotels are all gorgeous and rustic. The people and staff everywhere are so warm, even for regular hospitality standards. Every hotel will allow you to [spend a day on their beach](#), or by their pool (very few have pools though), for a small fee. So it doesn't matter where you stay; you can pop into any hotel for lunch and spend your day on the beach there.

I ended up staying next door to Pablo Escobar's home ([Casa Malca](#)). It is a hotel now, but it felt pretty badass to hang around there casually. [The Nomade](#) is a very popular hotel (we stayed for three nights), and it had the most beautiful beach. Bear in mind: it is very rustic, so if indoor bathrooms are your thing, this might not be the place for you. They also have yoga classes on the property every day, and the best cocktails by far at their bar every evening.

The second hotel we stayed at was called [Villas Las Estrellas](#). We got a giant room practically on the beach for a great price, the food was amazing, the staff was exceptional and it was a stone throw away from the best bars and restaurants in the area. The best part is that it has just 12 rooms, so you get a lot of attention. Another popular hotel in the area is the [Azulik Resort](#). We visited there for lunch, and were graced with a visual treat. Though, we heard that the rooms have no electricity to stay true to the rustic vibe of Tulum.

How to get around

Everyone in Tulum is on a bicycle, but since I don't know how to ride a bike, that wasn't an option for me. It didn't create too much trouble though, because there is a taxi everywhere you look—they are so easily available. We decided to rent a car instead, and kept it with us the whole time we were there. Rented cars can be found aplenty, and make navigating around effortless. Of course, if you are going for a cocktail at night, keep the car parked at the hotel and take a cab, or just walk instead.

What to eat

The food here is real Mexican food; not those Tex-Mex nachos and tacos we make for 'Tuesday Taco' night with store-bought cheese sauce. There were so many vegetarian options, and their spice level puts ours to shame. The best lunch I had was at The Nomade—even if you aren't staying there, I'd definitely recommend you spend a day on their beach and have lunch at their beach restaurant.

The main town area has rows of restaurants, all of which have a fun Mexican vibe too. One of my favourites was the [Rosa Negra](#). We had dinner twice at the restaurant, but went for drinks every night. They have fabulous cocktails and are one of the few places that are open till late in Tulum.

Honestly any place you eat in Mexico has just great food. At Tulum, they usually don't make the food spicy unless you ask for it, as they cater to a lot of American tourists, but will customise it for you if you ask for extra spice.

What to buy?

Tulum has some of the best hot sauces out there. Get your hands on the Habanero and ceviche sauces available at their massive grocery store—you can't miss it; there's only one! The main strip also has a number of boutiques with the most gorgeous [hippie-chic](#) clothes. They're slightly pricey, but definitely one of a kind. The main town area also has cute local Mexican stores to buy fun trinkets and box art from. We even bought a few hammocks, just because they were so beautifully made.

Scroll through the slideshow below for a peek at what my vacation in Tulum looked like.

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