

8 January 2009

Field Trip #1: Dzibilchaltún ruins and Progreso town

Along the pilgrimage that the ancient mayas performed towards the north of the Yucatan peninsula, they settled on those sites where they believed favored their development. Dzibilchaltún was one of those sites where grand buildings and cities were built, reflecting the great state of the art they had accomplished. For example, the Temple of the Dolls (Templo de las Siete Muñecas) is an imposing looking building on a pyramidal base with a short tower atop its roof. A monolithic stela stands at its front like a sentinel guarding its entrance. The doorways of the temple were built in exact solar alignment with the rising sun, such that the early rays pass through them on the Spring and Fall equinoxes, marking the beginning of planting season and the beginning of harvest season. Notorious are the carvings that can still be seen on Dzibilchaltún, which tell the story of the king Kukulcan. There is also a beautiful cenote called Xlaca, where visitors can swim.



Progreso is a laid-back port town where you can enjoy the true flavor of Mexico. Progreso has safe, tranquil beaches with no currents or tides, which makes them great for swimming, floating, windsurfing and jetskiing. Palm trees, fresh seafood, the seaside boulevard called the malecón (mah-lay-CONE) and the friendly local Mayan residents make Progreso a great place to visit.



Field Trip #2: Ría Celestún (flamingos)

One of the most beautiful ports of the Yucatan coasts, Celestún, lies just at 92 km northwest of Mérida, with many attractions worth visiting. Particularly long beaches, many of them virgin, with excellent sea food. However, the main attraction is the huge number of flamingos that come each year to Celestún, that turn the ría color pink. Flamingos can be observed at very short distances by small boat tours, guided by local people.



12 January 2009

Field Trip #1: Chichén Itzá ruins

The famous Mayan pyramids of Chichén-Itzá are over 1500 years old and are located only 75 miles from Mérida. The name Chichen-Itza is a Mayan word: CHI (mouth) CHEN (well) and ITZA (of the Itza tribe).. The magnificence of Chichén Itzá is well known over the world. Chichén Itzá was a major regional focal point in the northern Maya lowlands from the Late Classic through the Terminal Classic and into the early portion of the Early Postclassic period. The site exhibits a multitude of architectural styles, from what is called "Mexicanized" and reminiscent of styles seen in central Mexico to the Puuc style found among the Puuc Maya of the northern lowlands. The site is divided into three sections. The North grouping of structures is distinctly Toltec in style. The central group appears to be from the early period. The southern group is known as "The Old Chichen." All three can be seen comfortably in one day.



Field Trip #2: Loltún caves and Uxmal ruins

Loltún, which means "stone flower", is a subterranean paradise 110 km south of Mérida, where one can admire beautiful cave formations and 7,000 year-old fresco paintings.

Uxmal means "built three times" in the Mayan language, and though its name is a mystery, its beauty is not. As a World Heritage site, it is one of the best restored and maintained ruins in the Yucatan, and certainly one of the most magnificent. Uxmal was the greatest metropolitan and religious center in the Puuc hills in the late classical period; it is located about 50 miles southwest of Mérida.

